



University of
Southern
Queensland



SAGE Cygnet Award Application: Onboarding

Institution: University of Southern Queensland

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Glossary

Abbreviation	Term
ADOSP	Academic Development and Outside Studies Program
AS	Athena SWAN
ARC	Australian Research Council
ASBA	Athena SWAN Bronze Award
BaU	Business as usual
DVC	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
EBA	Enterprise Bargain Agreement
ECR	Early career researcher
GRS	Graduate Research School
HDR	Higher Degree by Research
HER	Higher Education and Research
HR	Human resources
ICT	Information and communication technology
HoS	Head of School
KIT	Keeping-in-touch
LGBTIQA+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, asexual and other sexually or gender diverse
NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council
OoR	Office of Research
PP	People Portfolio
PPSS	Planning and Performance Support Services
RISE	Research Information Solutions Ecosystem
R&I	Research and Innovation

SAGE	Science in Australia Gender Equity
SAT	Self-Assessment Team
STEMM	Science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine
TOIL	Time off in lieu
ToR	Terms of Reference
UniSQ	University of Southern Queensland
VCE	Vice-Chancellor's Executive
VC	Vice-Chancellor
WAM	Workload Allocation Model
WiS	Women in STEMM
WGEA	Workplace Gender Equality Agency

University of Southern Queensland: SAGE Cygnet #1

Barrier Type	Current Cygnet	Barrier
Institution-wide barrier	✓	Onboarding
Sub-group barrier		
Institution-wide/Sub-group barrier		
Institution-wide/Sub-group barrier		

Key barrier

The University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ) identified inconsistent onboarding as a key barrier to the retention and progression of both academic and professional staff at the institution. Research suggests an effective onboarding program supports new employees to feel motivated, productive, and remain engaged (Jeske and Olsen, 2022).

The University recognised that improving the onboarding process would reduce barriers and provide opportunities in two key areas. Firstly, a comprehensive and consistent onboarding program would ensure an equitable experience for all employees, including diverse cohorts and women in STEMM (WiS). This would enable new WiS employees to integrate into the University more quickly and engage with available opportunities and resources to support their ongoing development and progression. Secondly, a revitalised onboarding program would be an opportunity for the institution to educate all new staff, including staff who work with WiS and other diverse cohorts, about the values and culture of the institution and to embed expectations that foster a diverse and inclusive working environment.

Evidence of barrier

Staff engagement with onboarding

From 2016-2018, during the self-assessment period to support its Athena SWAN Bronze Award (ASBA) application, UniSQ offered an onboarding program for new staff, primarily focused on continuing and fixed-term employees. The program included a short, compulsory eInduction module (covering compliance obligations, diversity and inclusion principles, policies and procedures) for completion within the first week of employment. An optional in-person orientation and networking program (Onboard @ USQ) was also available within the first three months of employment. Supervisors were expected to conduct local onboarding with new staff; however, this was not monitored.

Participation by new academic staff in the onboarding program varied. STEMM staff engaged slightly less frequently than non-STEMM staff with both eInduction and the Onboard at USQ program (Table 1; Table 2). WiS also tended to engage less frequently than their male STEMM peers in both programs, though engagement improved year-on-year.

	2016				2017				2018				Total HC	Total %
	F		M		F		M		F		M			
	HC	%	HC	%	HC	%	HC	%	HC	%	HC	%		
STEMM	22	36%	15	67%	22	55%	35	66%	25	84%	17	82%	136	65%
Non-STEMM	10	50%	3	0%	14	86%	4	75%	10	90%	1	100%	42	71%
Total	32	41%	18	56%	36	67%	39	67%	35	86%	18	83%	178	66%

Table 1: eInduction completion rates for new and rehired academic employees 2016-2018. (Historical completion rates for professional staff unavailable.)

Note: HC = Head count of new employees. % = % of new employees who completed training.

	2017				2018				Total HC	Total %
	F		M		F		M			
	HC	%	HC	%	HC	%	HC	%		
STEMM	22	23%	35	40%	25	28%	17	29%	99	31%
Non-STEMM	14	43%	4	25%	10	40%	1	0%	29	38%
Total	36	31%	39	38%	35	31%	18	83%	128	41%

Table 2: 'Onboard at USQ' attendance rates for new and rehired academic employees 2017-2018. (Academic staff data unavailable prior to 2017. Historical completion rates for professional staff unavailable.)

Note: HC = Head count of new employees. % = % of new employees who completed training.

The Onboard at USQ program was paused in 2020 due to COVID-19, though the eInduction module continued to be a mandatory requirement for all new starters. Other training modules recommended for new starters include the Respect @ UniSQ module and the Indigenous Inclusion module. Respect @ UniSQ covers information about bullying, sexual assault and harassment, gender equity, bystander intervention, and diversity and inclusion, to support the University's aim to foster a values-driven culture through its principles of Respect, Integrity and Excellence. Respect @ UniSQ has been available but not mandatory since 2019. Data indicates low overall completion rates for new and rehired staff (16%) with non-STEMM academics slightly less likely to engage with the module than professional staff and STEMM academics (14% compared to 17%; Table 3).

		2019						2020				2021				2022				Total HC	Total %
		F		M		X		F		M		F		M		F		M			
		HC	%	HC	%	HC	%	HC	%	HC	%	HC	%	HC	%	HC	%	HC	%		
Academic	STEMM	10	30%	9	56%	0	-	13	31%	9	11%	14	21%	8	13%	24	0%	25	8%	112	17%
	Non-STEMM	8	13%	<6	100%	<6	100%	9	11%	8	0%	7	14%	7	14%	6	17%	10	10%	57	14%
	Professional	46	37%	18	39%	0	-	38	13%	16	13%	69	13%	26	12%	71	7%	38	16%	322	17%
	Total	64	33%	28	46%	<6	100%	60	17%	33	9%	90	14%	41	12%	101	6%	73	12%	491	16%

Table 3: Respect @ UniSQ training completion rates for new and rehired employees 2019-2022.

Note: HC = Head count of new employees. % = % who completed training.

The Indigenous Inclusion module explores themes central to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture as it applies to the workplace. This module was introduced in 2021 and made mandatory from 2022. The module had low uptake from new and rehired employees in its first year (2%). However, the module saw significant uptake improvements once mandated (86% overall in 2022), with STEMM academics and professional staff completing the training at slightly higher rates (82% and 90%, respectively) than non-STEMM academics (75%; Table 4).

		2021				2022					
		F		M		F		M			
		Head count	%	Head count	%	Head count	%	Head count	%	Total head count	Total %
Academic	STEMM	14	0%	8	0%	24	92% 22	25	72% 18	71	56%
	Non-STEMM	7	0%	7	14% 1	6	83% 5	10	70% 7	30	43%
Professional		69	1% 1	26	4% 1	71	92% 65	38	87% 33	204	49%
Total		90	1%	41	5%	101	91%	73	79%	305	50%

Table 4: Indigenous Inclusion training completion rates for new and rehired employees 2021-2022.

Note: % = % of new employees who completed training.

Staff satisfaction with onboarding

Results from the 2018 University-wide Voice Survey indicated that all staff, and in particular WiS, were dissatisfied with their onboarding experience (Table 5). Focus groups conducted during the ASBA self-assessment period highlighted that supervisor support was often low; for example, “I wasn’t told who to talk to. I walked the corridors until I found someone who could help” and “It was difficult to navigate the contact point” (WiS employees).

2018 Voice Survey	STEMM		Non-STEMM
	F	M	
Agree that “When people start in new jobs here they are given enough guidance and training”	38%	61%	44%

Table 5: Result from 2018 Employee Engagement Voice Survey (Voice Project) of academic and professional staff.

Further satisfaction and experience data was collected in 2022, with feedback sought from the 393 employees onboarded between 2020 and mid-2022 (Table 6), and supervisors who had onboarded new staff 2020-2022. Communications about opportunities to give feedback were circulated University-wide via online communications and meetings, and WiS were targeted by direct email. Despite these efforts, originally planned focus groups with STEMM staff were cancelled due to low uptake and last-minute cancellations, which may reflect the realities of a post-COVID working culture.

	Academic						Professional							
	F		M		X		F		M		X			
	HC	%	HC	%	HC	%	HC	%	HC	%	HC	%	Total HC	Total %
STEMM	30	8%	35	9%	<6	<1%	10	3%	8	2%	0	-	84	21%
Non-STEMM	40	10 %	29	7%	0	-	165	42%	75	19%	0	-	309	79%
Total	70	18%	64	16%	<6	<1%	175	45%	83	21%	0	-	393	100%

Table 6: Employees onboarded at UniSQ 2020 to mid-2022.

Note: HC = Head count of new employees. % = % of all employees onboarded in that period.

Quantitative data was collected via survey (n = 114; Table 7) using a rating scale where 1 = strong disagreement or dissatisfaction and 5 = strong agreement or satisfaction (Table 8; Table 9). Qualitative data was also collected via this survey, as well as via six one-on-one interviews with WiS and two focus groups with the People Portfolio (UniSQ's human resources [HR] department) staff members to identify gaps in the delivery of onboarding (Table 10; Table 11).

Satisfaction ratings indicated that new employees were overall neutrally satisfied with their onboarding experience and its effectiveness in preparing them for their role (Table 8). Women and men in STEMM, and also non-STEMM women, were slightly less satisfied with their onboarding experiences than men in non-STEMM disciplines.

Supervisors were dissatisfied to neutrally satisfied with the resources, training and HR support to onboard new employees (Table 9). Unfortunately, no female STEMM supervisors provided feedback, but female non-STEMM supervisors were more satisfied with the resources, training and HR support to onboard new employees than their male counterparts in both STEMM and non-STEMM disciplines.

Feedback indicated key onboarding pain points include difficulties in providing new employees with necessary ICT system access; the process is impersonal and formal; a lack of clear access points and orientation to onboarding resources; a lack of clarity about onboarding requirements and who is responsible for which processes; and a general lack of support from supervisors for employees, and from the People Portfolio for supervisors (Table 10; Table 11).

		Academic				Professional				Unknown		Total HC	Total %
		F		M		F		M		Unknown			
		HC	%	HC	%	HC	%	HC	%	HC	%		
Employees	STEMM	10	9%	4	4%	2	2%	0	-	0	-	16	14%
	Non-STEMM	12	11%	6	5%	34	30%	9	8%	0	-	61	54%
	Unknown	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	15	13%	15	13%
Supervisors	STEMM	0	-	1	1%	0	-	0	-	0	-	1	1%
	Non-STEMM	0	-	0	-	13	11%	4	4%	0	-	17	15%
	Unknown	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	4	4%	4	4%
Total		22	19%	11	10%	49	43%	13	11%	19	17%	114	100%

Table 7: 2022 onboarding survey participant demographics.

Note: HC = Head count of survey participants. % = % of all survey participants.

	STEMM		Non-STEMM		Unknown or undisclosed	Grand average
	F Average rating 1-5	M Average rating 1-5	F Average rating 1-5	M Average rating 1-5	Unknown or undisclosed Average rating 1-5	
Onboarding prepares employees for success in their role	3.2	2.7	3.5	3.7	2.9	3.2

Overall satisfaction with UniSQ onboarding experience	3.2	3	3.3	3.6	3.1	3.2
Grand average	3.2	2.9	3.4	3.7	3	3.2

Table 8: Employee satisfaction with onboarding 2020 to mid-2022 (survey results).

	STEMM		Non-STEMM		Unknown or undisclosed	Grand average
	F Average rating 1-5	M Average rating 1-5	F Average rating 1-5	M Average rating 1-5	Unknown or undisclosed Average rating 1-5	
Satisfaction with support from the People Portfolio to onboard new employees	-	3	3.5	3.3	2.8	3.2
Satisfaction with resources available to support onboarding new employees	-	2	3.5	3	2.8	2.8
Satisfaction with training and development provided to support onboarding new employees	-	2	3.5	2.8	2.2	2.6
Grand average	-	2.3	3.5	3	2.6	2.9

Table 9: Supervisor satisfaction with support to deliver onboarding 2020 to mid-2022 (survey results).

		F	M
STEMM	Employees	Getting access to relevant ICT systems is disjointed and it's unclear where to go to troubleshoot	Getting access to relevant ICT systems is disjointed and it's unclear where to go to troubleshoot
		High expectation on employees to already understand the University systems and culture, even if coming from industry	Lack of clear access points and orientation to onboarding resources (though resources, training and programs are comprehensive and informative)
		Lack of clear access points and orientation to onboarding resources (though resources, training and programs are comprehensive and informative)	Poor coordination of space and equipment allocation for new staff
		Lack of support from supervisor	Poor onboarding support for casual staff
		Lack of support to understand some of the important things necessary to succeed in role (e.g., not immediately informed about the Academic Expectations Framework)	
		Onboarding is impersonal and formal	
	Supervisors	N/A	Unnecessarily complex administration to provide employees access to relevant systems
Non-STEMM	Employees	Getting access to relevant ICT systems is disjointed and it's unclear where to go to troubleshoot	Getting access to relevant ICT systems is disjointed and it's unclear where to go to troubleshoot
		Lack of clear access points and orientation to onboarding resources (though resources, training and programs are comprehensive and informative)	Lack of clear access points and orientation to onboarding resources (though resources, training and programs are comprehensive and informative)
		Lack of information about employee benefits	Onboarding is impersonal and formal

		Lack of information about roles and responsibility of the broader team, work area, etc.	
		Lack of support from supervisor	
		Onboarding is impersonal and formal	
		Poor onboarding support for casual staff	
		Work areas and colleagues are generally welcoming and helpful	
	Supervisors	Available training and resources are compliance-focused and lack a 'welcoming' style	Available training and resources are compliance-focused and lack a 'welcoming' style
		Available training and resources do not include guidance to onboard remote and/or casual staff	Available training and resources do not include guidance to onboard remote and/or casual staff
		Getting access to relevant ICT systems is disjointed and it's unclear where to go to troubleshoot	Lack of standardised approach to onboarding
		Lack of resourcing/support to effectively onboard new employees	
		Unnecessarily complex administration to provide employees access to relevant systems	

Table 10: Staff experience of onboarding 2020 to mid-2022 (based on qualitative feedback).

Currently works well	Availability of comprehensive resources (e.g., supervisor and employee guides, induction checklists)
	Automation of communications to nominated emails
Currently doesn't work well	Onboarding is impersonal and formal
	Supervisors have a lack of awareness and knowledge of onboarding requirements
	Lack of resource utilisation (e.g., supervisor and employee guides, induction checklists)
	First-day issues that cannot be resolved until the new employee has commenced (e.g., login troubleshooting)
	Simple information is not readily available (e.g., Network Drive set-up, VPN Connection, Policy Library, system navigation)
	Most work areas are too understaffed to effectively onboard (e.g., may onboard the new employee for the first day or week but not have time to provide comprehensive ongoing support and guidance)
	Contingency planning for onboarding new employees (e.g., supervisor is away when the new employee starts)
	No clear onboarding process/program in place for remote employees
No clear process ownership (who is responsible for what parts of onboarding?)	

Table 11: People Portfolio employee experience of supporting onboarding 2020 to mid-2022 (based on qualitative feedback).

The feedback aligns with the general pattern of inconsistency found while reviewing onboarding over 2022, wherein different work areas have varied understanding and approaches to onboarding staff, and new employees have vastly different experiences. This pattern indicates that new staff are not

consistently set up to understand and practice diversity and inclusion in their work area, or to connect with the University's tools and resources to support their career success and progression (particularly important for WiS).

Actions and outputs

In response to the feedback gathered about the inadequacies of onboarding at the University, an Onboarding Improvement Project (OIP) was initiated in 2022. The OIP used a design thinking approach to identify improvement opportunities and implement tangible solutions to make onboarding more effective for both WiS and all UniSQ staff. The project extended beyond the key actions identified in the SAGE Action Plan. The identified solutions were mapped to the 4 Cs model of onboarding, which categorises employees' onboarding requirements across four distinct levels (Bauer, 2013):

Compliance	Employee compliance with basic legal and policy-related rules and regulations
Clarification	Employee understanding of new role and related expectations
Culture	Employee understanding of formal and informal organisation norms
Connection	Employee integration into the workplace in the areas of interpersonal relationships, information networks, employee voice networks and more

Following thorough employee data collection and analysis, sector benchmarking, and assessment of the policy and procedure landscape at UniSQ, a series of design workshops were undertaken to determine opportunities for improvement and necessary outputs across the levels of compliance, clarification, culture, and connection (Table 12).

4 Cs level	Themes (Reflection of current state improvement opportunities)	Design principles (Incorporating current state plus best practice, benchmarking, and research)	Solutions (Organised by primary connection to the 4 Cs levels)
Compliance	<i>Information overload:</i> Multiple communications are sent to new employees and supervisors prior to the new employee's commencement, overloading people with information.	An improved UniSQ onboarding program should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be explicit and clear (for participants, supervisors, and service providers) • Be personal and warm to welcome employees into the UniSQ community • Support supervisors to effectively onboard new employees • Provide user-friendly and easily accessible (and discoverable) key information and resources • Incorporate a differentiated (risk-informed) approach tailored to distinct employee groups • Be administratively efficient and leverage available digital technology 	1. Onboarding program overview 2. Onboarding policy and procedure
	<i>Data and system duplication:</i> New hires complete information over multiple forms and multiple systems.		
	<i>Lack of academic focus:</i> Especially work health and safety for academics and women in STEMM disciplines.		
Clarification	<i>Inconsistent:</i> Both process and experience. Variability (inter- and intra-) across position type, position level, organisational unity, supervisor skill, knowledge provision, and information provided prior to commencement.		3. Central portal 4. PeopleSoft configuration 5. Pre-commencement preparations
	<i>Hidden and complex:</i> There is a wide range of resources and information available to employees across multiple systems resulting in a steep learning curve and difficulty in discovering required information.		
	<i>Unclear:</i> Roles and responsibilities for the onboarding experience are unclear. Little overall coordination of overall experience. Disconnect between People Portfolio and supervisors.		

Culture	<i>Disconnected from purpose:</i> A foundational introduction to the strategy, values, mission, and vision for the organisation is not consistently provided nor supportive of two-way culture creation.		6. In-person orientation + networking 7. Supervisor training
	<i>Focused on role:</i> Little focus is placed on providing foundational knowledge about UniSQ strategies and norms (for example, flexible work, benefits, two-way behavioural expectations (informal/sub-culture), academic expectations, D&I strategy, UniSQ's structure, etc.).		
Connection	<i>Impersonal:</i> A large amount of onboarding information is communicated via email, with very little scheduled networking opportunities with colleagues or peers.		8. Buddy program 9. Onboarding evaluation
	<i>Lack of measurement:</i> There is little oversight of the employee experience of onboarding and integration into the workplace.		

Table 12: Onboarding improvement themes, design principles and solutions.

Compliance solutions

An Onboarding Program Overview was developed to outline the onboarding process, provide clarity about roles, timelines, and expectations in the delivery of onboarding, and connect stakeholders to support resources. The overview provides governance for onboarding stakeholders to successfully deliver an employee onboarding experience in alignment with their outlined role descriptions, responsibilities, and timeframes for key milestones. The overview applies to all employees, including casual, continuing and fixed-term, and senior executive appointments.

Relevant policy instruments were reviewed and a streamlined approach to procedural guidance was implemented, enabling an agile and flexible approach to continuous improvement of the onboarding experience. The Performance, Development and Recognition Policy was updated to incorporate critical elements such as the simplification of responsibilities and clarification of personnel required to undertake onboarding.

Clarification solutions

A dedicated Onboarding at UniSQ internal site was developed as a central, online portal to overcome inconsistent and unclear information. The site was developed in alignment with the Onboarding Program Overview and comprises six subsections (Table 13; Image 1). The site also links to other UniSQ intranet sites to aid navigation and information accessibility, and incorporates both audiovisual and written content to appeal to various learning styles and accessibility requirements.

SharePoint site subsection	Content
Our UniSQ	Provides information specific to the sector and the institution including brand, history, strategy, values, governance and locations.
Our Community	Provides information specific to the employee experience including benefits, capability development, employee networks, recognition and reward, inclusion, health and wellbeing.
Our Systems	Provides information and linkage to university systems, training and set-up.
Our Academics	Provides information specific to academics including inductions, expectations, workload management, capability development and mentoring.

Managing Onboarding	Provides information specific to managers onboarding a new employee to connect to available resources, training, systems and policies.
Senior Executive Onboarding	Provides integral information specific to organisational leadership, including the financial and human resource business partner model.

Table 13: Onboarding at UniSQ SharePoint site content.

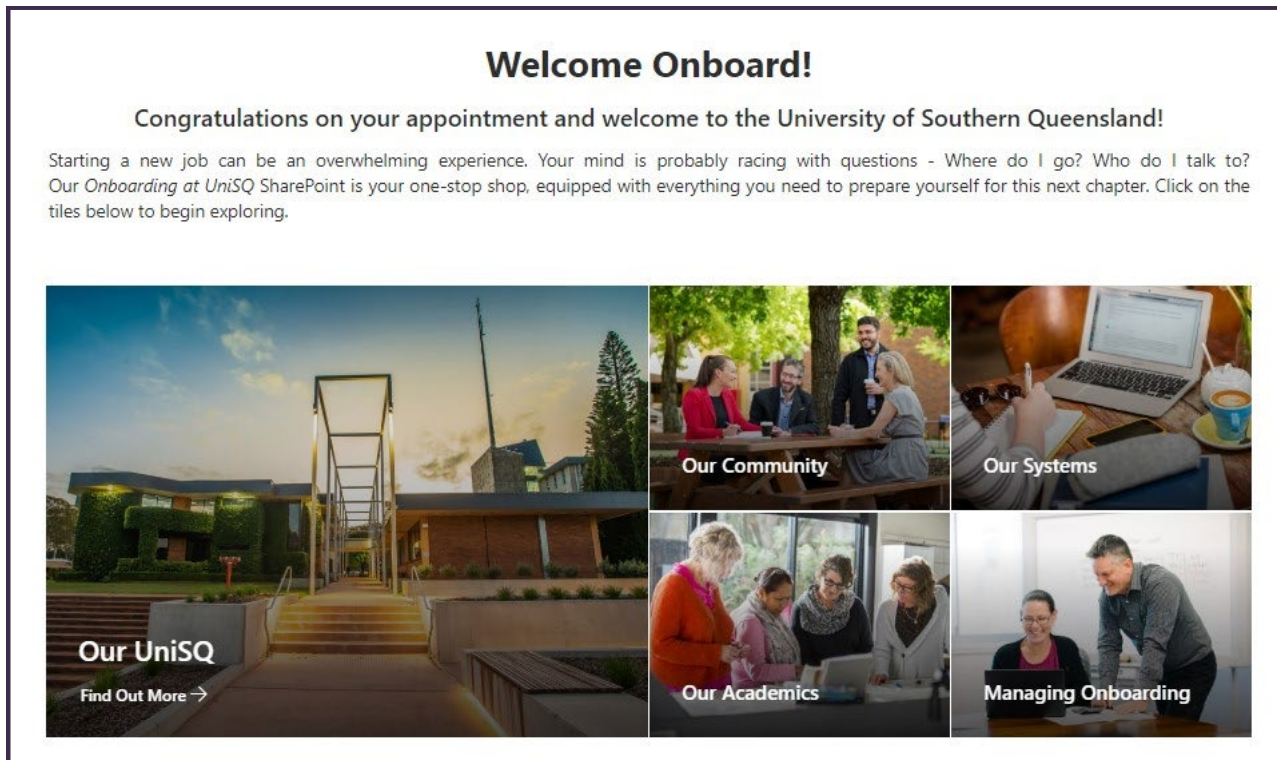


Image 1: Opening page of Onboarding at UniSQ SharePoint site.

The need for consistent and clear communications were addressed through the implementation of automated systems communications (Table 14). These communications guide new staff and their supervisors through the onboarding stages and alleviate manual workload for People Portfolio staff to focus on candidate care rather than processing requirements. A key change is that new WiS employees (and their supervisors) receive key onboarding information over time when they need it, rather than just receiving a single bulk information email at the start of the process.

Communication	New employee type	Communication timeframes	Communication details
New employee welcome and onboarding guide activation	Casual, continuing and fixed-term, and senior executive	Return of new employee's signed offer letter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides username and temporary password Linkage to HR Self Service to commence onboarding Outlines available supports
Supervisor onboarding guide activation	Casual, continuing and fixed-term, and senior executive	Return of new employee's signed offer letter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linkage to HR Self Service to commence onboarding Outlines available supports

Pre-start reminder	Casual, continuing and fixed-term, and senior executive	1 week prior to new employee's start date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Copied to the supervisor for reminder and awareness Reminder of upcoming start date Linkage to HR Self Service to commence onboarding Outlines available supports
First day welcome	Casual, continuing and fixed-term, and senior executive	New employee's start date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Copied to the supervisor for reminder and awareness Confirmation of having made the 'right' decision in joining UniSQ Linkage to HR Self Service to undertake onboarding requirements Outlines available supports
Halfway check-in	Continuing and fixed-term	<i>Continuing and fixed-term</i> : End of month 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Copied to the supervisor for reminder and awareness Linkage to HR Self Service to undertake onboarding requirements Outlines available supports
Onboarding complete	Casual, continuing and fixed-term, and senior executive	<i>Casual and senior executive</i> : End of week 1 <i>Continuing and fixed-term</i> : End of month 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Copied to the supervisor for reminder and awareness Reminder to complete end of onboarding experience survey Linkage to People Portfolio SharePoint to utilise 'engaged employee' resources Outlines available supports

Table 14: Automated onboarding communications

Probation-specific communications were also created and automated to introduce a proactive approach to probation management and intervention, and improve clarity and engagement regarding role expectations (Table 15).

New employee type	Communication timeframes	Communication details
Professional Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start of month 2 Start of month 5 Confirmation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure awareness of probation process requirements, for the new employee and supervisor. Connection to HR Self Service to record keep employee probation progress. Prompt facilitation of probation reviews, in alignment with applicable policies and procedures. Linkage to available supports for support, training and intervention.
Academic Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start of month 2 Start of month 12 Start of month 24 Start of month 30 Start of month 36 Confirmation 	
Senior Executives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start of month 2 Start of month 10 Start of month 12 Confirmation 	
English Language Teaching Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start of month 2 Start of month 3 Start of month 8 Start of month 11 Start of month 12 Confirmation 	

Table 15: Probation automated communications

Culture solutions

To provide a timely and warm welcome to the University, a personalised orientation call is provided to all new employees one week before commencement. This approach revitalised the former Onboard at USQ session that was only held three to four times a year. The orientation is supported by a standard



operating procedure, responsibilities overview and FAQ sheet, and has been embedded into business-as-usual processes. This is followed up by communication at the conclusion of onboarding to link new employees to capability development, employee networks, recognition programs and wellbeing resources, to provide further opportunity for networking and organisational integration.

An Onboarding at UniSQ online training module was also developed to upskill supervisors, who act as the primary point of contact for each new employee and convey not only role information, but also organisational norms and expectations (Image 2). The module aligns with the Onboarding Program Overview to guide supervisors through the requirements of each onboarding phase, outlining information, examples, and resources for supervisors to enact these requirements.

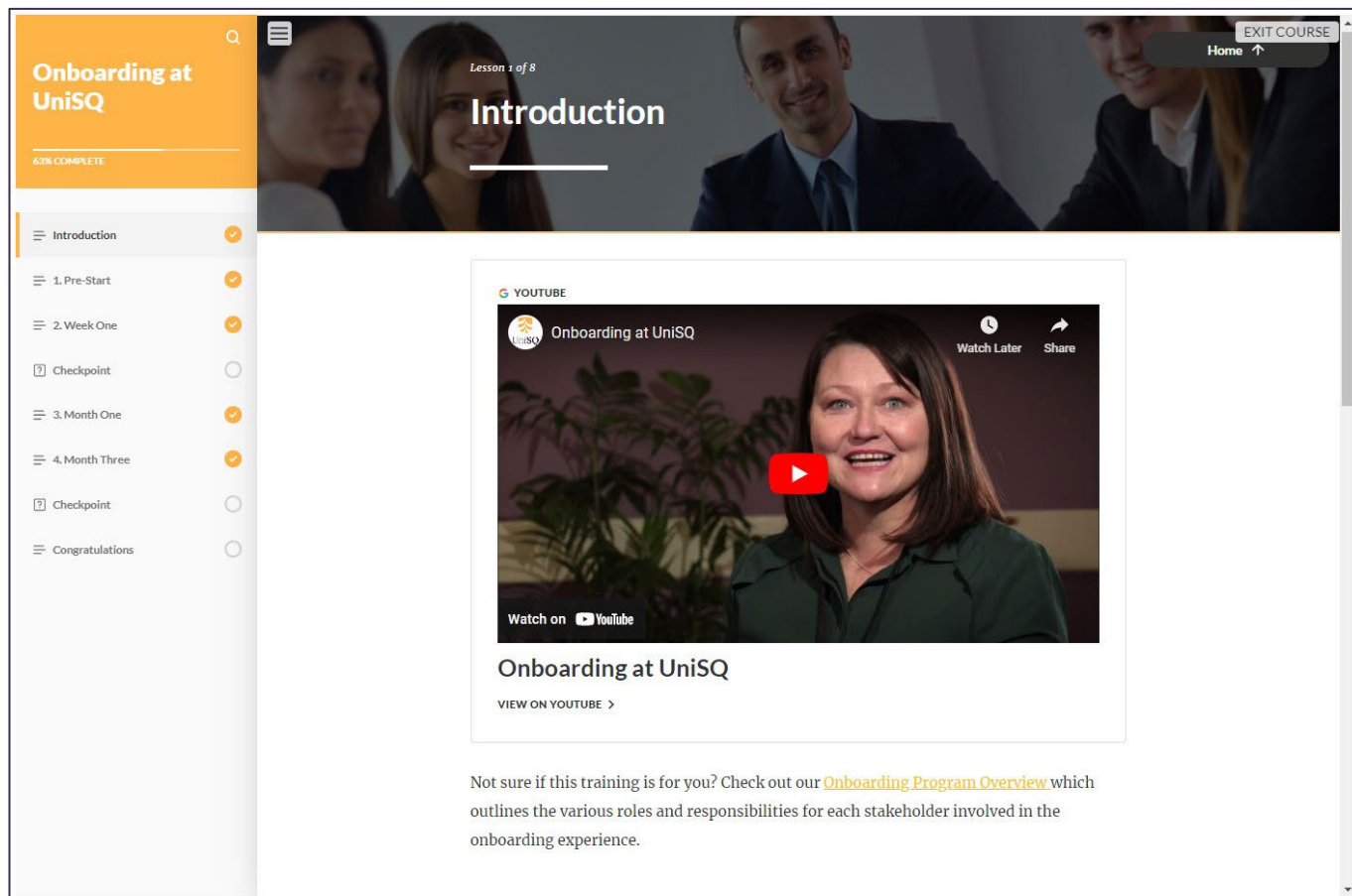


Image 2: Opening page of Onboarding at UniSQ supervisor training module

Connection solutions

A buddy program was implemented specifically for new WiS and First Nations employees, to provide a more tailored and collegial onboarding experience for these cohorts. Though First Nations staff were not originally identified as a focus cohort for this Cygnet, collaboration across University work areas identified the value of tailored onboarding to this cohort. To ensure consistency and optimal candidate care, the People Portfolio deliver the program by contacting the specified cohorts and their work areas to coordinate a suitable buddy.

The University previously had no evaluation methods for its onboarding, and so ongoing evaluation mechanisms were introduced to provide oversight of the employee experience and identify opportunities for continuous improvement. These evaluation mechanisms include:

Experience surveys	New employees automatically receive an onboarding experience survey for completion upon conclusion of their onboarding. The survey is embedded in the University's human resource management system and the aggregated results are automatically published to the UniSQ Information Centre dashboard, which is available to all employees.
Annual surveys	People Portfolio distribute a survey at the conclusion of each calendar year to new employees onboarded in the past twelve months and their supervisors. The survey is structured in alignment with the Four Cs Framework and measures the program's functionality and effectiveness to identify areas for improvement and intervention.
Targeted feedback	On an ad-hoc basis, targeted feedback is sought from new employees who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, new employees who identify as women and are classified in STEMM positions, supervisors and process owners. This provides identified cohorts the opportunity to share individual experiences and identify further support mechanisms they might require.

Outcomes

Staff engagement with onboarding

Staff engagement with induction training improved significantly following the rollout of the new onboarding program. Induction training includes compliance requirements and online training modules that cover strategic updates, employee obligations, employee safety and legislation and policy relevant to employment at UniSQ. Historically, academic completion rates for mandatory online training and in-person orientation were approximately 66% and 41%, respectively. The new onboarding experience ensures 100% of academics receive a personalised orientation call, and the completion rate for the required mandatory online training is now approximately 93% for all staff (and approximately 91% for academics; Table 16).

		F		M		Total head count	Total %
		Head count	%	Head count	%		
Academic	STEMM	33	91% (30)	39	92% (36)	72	92% (66)
	Non-STEMM	11	82% (9)	13	92% (12)	24	88% (21)
Professional		101	96% (97)	44	89% (39)	145	94% (136)
Total		145	94% (136)	96	91% (87)	241	93% (223)

Table 16: Induction training completion rates for new and rehired employees 2023.

Note: HC = Head count of new employees. % = % who completed training.

The Respect @ UniSQ training module, which covers information about bullying, sexual assault and harassment, gender equity, bystander intervention, and diversity and inclusion, was also made mandatory as part of the refreshed approach to onboarding. The module had a 76% uptake rate from all onboarded staff over 2023 (Table 17), which is a marked 60% improvement on the 16% uptake rate of

2019-2022. Professional staff were more likely than STEMM academics to engage with the training (82% compared to 71%) in 2023.

		F		M		Total head count	Total %
		Head count	%	Head count	%		
Academic	STEMM	33	73% (24)	39	69% (27)	72	71%
	Non-STEMM	11	36% (4)	13	77% (10)	24	58%
Professional		101	81% (82)	44	84% (37)	145	82%
Total		145	76% (110)	96	77% (74)	241	76%

Table 17: Respect @ UniSQ training completion rates for new and rehired employees 2023.

Note: HC = Head count of new employees. % = % who completed training.

The Indigenous Inclusion module exploring themes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in the workplace unfortunately saw a drop in new and rehired staff uptake from 86% in 2022 to 54% in 2023 (Table 18). While the program is still mandatory and made more accessible through the new onboarding program, this may reflect that the module was highly internally advertised in 2022 (when it first became mandatory) and so received higher than typical engagement at that time.

		F		M		Total head count	Total %
		Head count	%	Head count	%		
Academic	STEMM	33	42% (14)	39	51% (20)	72	47% (34)
	Non-STEMM	11	18% (2)	13	38% (5)	24	29% (7)
Professional		101	60% (61)	44	66% (29)	145	62% (90)
Total		145	53% (77)	96	56% (54)	241	54% (131)

Table 18: Indigenous Inclusion training completion rates for new and rehired employees 2023.

Note: HC = Head count of new employees. % = % who completed training.

Impact

Staff satisfaction with onboarding

The improvements to the onboarding experience have resulted in an increased level of employee satisfaction. Satisfaction ratings are collected via automatic survey to staff who have been recently onboarded (n = 154 over quarter three and quarter four of 2023; Table 19). At the end of 2023, overall satisfaction with onboarding was rated an average 4.2 out of 5 by employees (Table 20). This was an increase from an average of 3.2 out of 5 in 2020-2022. This significant improvement in a relatively short period of time is attributed to the design approach wherein employee feedback was gathered, and solutions developed in an iterative approach with employees and supervisors to create a better onboarding experience. The slightly lower ratings from STEMM women compared to STEMM men highlight the importance of continually monitoring onboarding satisfaction, to identify ongoing opportunities to improve the experience for this cohort.

		F		M		Total HC	Total %
		HC	%	HC	%		
Academic	STEMM	1	1%	4	3%	5	3%
	Non-STEMM	1	1%	0	0%	1	1%
Professional	STEMM	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
	Non-STEMM	15	10%	6	4%	21	14%
Other/Unknown	STEMM	21	14%	9	6%	30	19%
	Non-STEMM	64	42%	33	21%	97	63%
Total		102	66%	52	34%	154	100%

Table 19: Q3-Q4 2023 employee onboarding survey participant demographics.

Note: HC = Head count of survey participants. % = % of all survey participants.

	STEMM		Non-STEMM		Grand average
	F (N = 22) Average rating 1-5	M (N = 13) Average rating 1-5	F (N = 80) Average rating 1-5	M (N = 39) Average rating 1-5	
Onboarding prepares employees for success in their role	3.9	4.2	4.3	4	4.1
Overall satisfaction with UniSQ onboarding experience	4.2	4.5	4.4	4.2	4.3
Grand average	4.1	4.4	4.4	4.1	4.2

Table 20: Employee satisfaction with onboarding 2023 (survey results). 5 = strong agreement or satisfaction and 1 = strong disagreement or dissatisfaction.

Qualitative feedback is also captured on an ongoing voluntary basis via the automatic survey delivered to new employees. 81 responses to the question “How can the onboarding experience at UniSQ be improved?” were received from a possible 154 survey participants in 2023. The majority of responses were positive and suggested the onboarding program required no or few changes; for example, “Excellent onboarding experience. No improvement is required” and “I had no issues and appreciate the detailed information and friendly assistance” (Table 21). Several rehired employees also noted that the experience was an improvement on the onboarding of several years ago; for example, “I think People Portfolio has done a great job with the onboarding process with all the emails especially before starting and for the first few weeks. I've worked here before and this wasn't in place and can definitely say it's a great positive change.”

Feedback gathered also highlighted some common themes for improvement, such as the need to tailor onboarding for different staff types (in particular remote and casual staff); onboarding resources needed to be updated and could be more interactive and engaging (e.g. through use of videos, activities and in-person sessions); the navigation between tabs and documents could be made simpler; and the overall program could be shorter. For example, “Some of the training was a bit repetitive and took a long time” and “I wonder if it could be streamlined at some point for different types of employees” (Table 21).

What worked well / positive and neutral feedback

Selection of exemplifying responses to survey question: "How can the onboarding experience at UniSQ be improved?"

"Excellent onboarding experience. No improvement is required."

"Nice easy experience. Nil improvements required."

"I am very satisfied with the onboarding process at UniSQ, I do not think anything needs to be improved. It is very easy to follow, understand and complete."

"I had no issues and appreciate the detailed information and friendly assistance."

"The guides and training were all easy to access within the Onboarding short form, I have no suggested improvements at this time."

"It is a lot better than it was a few years ago."

"No improvement needed. Very happy with onboarding training."

"For the role I am in I found the experience to be satisfactory and cannot think of any improvements at this time."

"I think People Portfolio has done a great job with the onboarding process with all the emails especially before starting and for the first few weeks. I've worked here before and this wasn't in place and can definitely say it's a great positive change."

Suggestions for improvement

Selection of exemplifying responses to survey question: "How can the onboarding experience at UniSQ be improved?"

"I found some gaps retaining to more information regarding processors. This is currently being updated by our Team and Team Leader/Manager so that future employees will be equipped with greater details."

"It was very good, thorough but easy to complete online. As I will just be a casual employee working remotely most of the time (providing external supervision), the onboarding process felt overly arduous at times compared with the role I will be taking. I wonder if it could be streamlined at some point for different types of employees."

"Some of the training was a bit repetitive and took a long time. As a casual staff member, I was not paid to complete the training which took up most of a day - compensation for onboard training should be considered for casual staff."

"I think there could be improvement made to the system in terms of being able to easily identify those courses that are mandatory and be located in a single place on the system rather than multiple places. It would make it more intuitive and user friendly."

"Communication of what email will be used for any correspondence and when to expect onboarding / documentation. After providing requested information the only correspondence I heard from UniSQ was from my supervisor asking if I had received any onboarding material as he had received a limited email with onboarding congratulations. This was 5-6 weeks with no correspondence and during the commencement of contract."

"I feel as though there is a large amount of information to take in from the online modules and your brain gets overloaded by mid-afternoon. It may be helpful to split the day up between some online training and some practical training to also help put the knowledge you have learnt online into practice while it is fresh in your head."

"I think I may have arrived at a time of heavy changes in the systems because a lot of resources seem outdated and I will receive different advice from different staff so it can consume a lot of time for basic tasks and the info hub hyperlinks can send me in circles. Also, this system can be counter intuitive as I can complete all available tasks on a page only to be told it is still in progress."

"Providing a on-campus session would be great."

"There need to be transcripts provided for all the videos - this is an inclusion thing that should already be implemented.

Also, make sure the spelling is Australian English, not American.

I can't put in my bank information because it doesn't recognise the name of my bank.

It won't save my TFN.

I have completed the Mandatory Training - Respect, First Nations, Annual Compliance - but it doesn't show up on the onboarding banner."

"The multiple pop-ups and links opening in different tabs makes it quite convoluted to proceed through."

“Some of the onboarding training was not up to date (e.g., references to and activities around the two faculties which have been disbanded).”
“More interactive.”

Table 21: Qualitative feedback from employees onboarded 2023.

Feedback on the supervisor experience of onboarding is not routinely collected, and so qualitative and quantitative feedback was sought via an ad hoc survey in late 2023. Feedback was sought from all 106 supervisors who have delivered onboarding since the rollout of the new onboarding program, however only six responses were received.

On a rating scale where 1 = strong disagreement or dissatisfaction and 5 = strong agreement or satisfaction, supervisors indicated satisfaction with the support from the HR division to onboard new employees, and neutral satisfaction to satisfaction with the resources, training and development available to provide onboarding (Table 22). This is an approximate one-point jump in satisfaction on each measure since the rollout of the new onboarding program.

Qualitative feedback indicated supervisors appreciated having a clear, guided process to follow, but that there is still some uncertainty around the onboarding process and that it can be quite lengthy (Table 23). Suggestions for improvement indicated clear directions and more training to deliver onboarding would be valuable, which suggests that the new onboarding program and its resources may still be underutilised; this will continue to be addressed through automated communications and as the new program becomes more embedded in business-as-usual processes over time.

Satisfaction with support from the People Portfolio to onboard new employees	4.3 (up from 3.2 in 2022)
Satisfaction with resources available to support onboarding new employees	3.7 (up from 2.8 in 2022)
Satisfaction with training and development provided to support onboarding new employees	3.5 (up from 2.6 in 2022)

Table 22: Supervisor satisfaction with support to deliver onboarding 2023 (survey results).

Survey Participant	<u>What works well</u> Responses to survey question “What worked / what did you like about your experience of onboarding the new employee(s)?”
Participant 1	“This is an oddly worded question - following the first. I LOVE UniSQ because of its flat democratic management structure - the culture in our school is truly outstanding - about HoS leadership and her relationship with DVC but also about senior academics and how we all get on. In respect of ONBOARDING I hate the approach - it is impersonal - over focused on online “lonely” work and exhausting People Services are FABULOUS when you can find the right email/person to email - ditto for LTSS support - trying to find who to email about pays???? (not good)”
Participant 2	“Checklist in HR Self-service”
Participant 3	“Clear system to follow, succinct, good support and training.”
Participant 4	“Based mainly on my own experience”
Participant 5	“It is appreciated having the guided process for the onboarding of new employees. With so many things to think about with regards to training and settling the new person in, I enjoyed knowing that the onboarding guide was prompting me through the process.”

Participant 6	"The staff member had been a previous casual member so onboarding was a little bit different than an entirely new staff member. This made it easier to get to the tasks at hand."
Survey Participant	<u>What doesn't work well</u> Responses to survey question "What did not work / what did you not like about your experience of onboarding the new employee(s)?"
Participant 1	"too many do it yourself modules which are exhausting - much of the material is based upon knowledge of how to access uconnect - there is nothing about acronyms - whole new language here - you search for forms and get policies - finding forms here is a total nightmare - I am still quite new myself and cannot find stuff - GET RID OF THE GENERIC EMAILS AH LTSSetc...what a nightmare to learn when you are new - what is wrong with people's names??? They have 2 inboxes anyway....learning StudyDesk via an online tutorial - nightmare material - needs to be augmented with face2face advice and prompting and mentoring"
Participant 3	"Takes too long."
Participant 4	"No formal instructions"
Participant 5	"As a new Manager myself, I was unsure what the workflows were. I had a little difficulty in assisting my new staff members with what their obligations are in the onboarding module."
Participant 6	"The uncertainty of onboarding a new staff member that has been a casual staff member already."
Survey Participant	<u>What can be improved</u> Responses to survey questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "What additional support would you like to assist you in the onboarding of new employees?" • "How can the onboarding experience at UniSQ be improved?"
Participant 1	"More Face2face support - nothing in WAMS to onboard new staff - should be paired up with a go2 mentor in the team - but members of my team said where are the WAMS hours for this sort of support???"
Participant 3	"The task candidate list and functionality could be updated, feels quite clunky moving between files and keeping track of each candidate in long lists."
Participant 4	"Clear directions on what to do"
Participant 5	"Personalised suggestions catered to the role of the new employee (training module suggestions maybe)" "I found the onboarding is superior to anything I have used at other organisations, so wonderful! The only improvement would be to add an ICT component to it? I have so far been unsure as to when to order equipment, phone extensions etc., so am wondering if this could be introduced as a prompt in the process??"
Participant 6	"There should be potential training for a person that steps into a position where they supervise employees, in regards to what they should be doing for onboarding. Currently I have seen no information regarding that and had to go to People Services and my manager for all the information."

Table 23: Qualitative feedback from supervisors who onboarded employees 2023.

Conclusion/Summary

In response to the University identifying onboarding as a key barrier for WiS and other employees, a dedicated project was established. The project used a design thinking approach to delve further into the issue with employees (in-person and via surveys), examine the current state at the University, benchmark across the sector, and analyse the available data. A range of improvement opportunities were identified using the 4Cs model as an organising framework. Using an iterative design and development approach, the onboarding experience at UniSQ was completely revitalised. Key improvements include personalised orientation phone calls, clarity on roles and responsibilities, a central, point of truth information source for new employees and supervisors, dedicated training for supervisors, mandatory online training, targeted buddy program, and a modern online activity guide approach that clearly steps out what each employee and supervisor has to undertake at each stage of the onboarding program. New employee feedback is now automatically captured as part of the onboarding experience and is published transparently for everyone in the University to see. The impact of the new approach to onboarding has been significant already, evidenced by increases in staff engagement and satisfaction with onboarding in the first year of the program. As more feedback is received and actioned, it is anticipated that continuous improvements will be made and the program further refined to support both WiS and other UniSQ employees.

Further Actions

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	Data highlights that STEM academic staff are less likely to engage with Respect@UniSQ training than professional staff.	Leaders in academic and STEM work areas to promote staff engagement with Respect@UniSQ or equivalent training.	Annual	Heads of School, Executive Directors of Institutes and Centres	DVC (R&I), Provost, CPO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvements in Respect@UniSQ or equivalent training uptake from STEM academics year-on-year Data gathered to evaluate ratings of inclusive work culture from STEM academic staff, and improved ratings year-on-year
2	Uptake of Indigenous Inclusion training is low despite its status as mandatory training.	Leaders in all work areas and supervisors onboarding new staff to promote staff engagement with Indigenous Inclusion or equivalent training.	Annual	Heads of School, Executive Directors	CPO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvements in Indigenous Inclusion or equivalent training uptake from STEM academics year-on-year Data gathered to evaluate ratings of inclusive work culture from First Nations staff, and improved ratings year-on-year
3	HR-led initiative to provide women in STEM and First Nations staff with an induction buddy as part of onboarding was paused in 2023 due to workforce capacity.	People Portfolio to coordinate the allocation of induction buddies for new diverse staff.	Annual	Associate Director (Diversity and Talent Strategy)	CPO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuous positive ratings of onboarding experience from new diverse staff.
4	Staff report the onboarding process should be tailored for different staff types (in particular casual and remote staff).	People Portfolio to review the current guided onboarding process and develop different processes for different staff types.	2024-2025	Associate Director (Organisational Development and Capability)	CPO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuous positive ratings of onboarding experience from all new staff.
5	Data indicates STEM women were slightly less satisfied with their onboarding experience in 2023 than STEM men.	People Portfolio to continue monitoring staff onboarding satisfaction ratings via the internal data dashboard to identify ongoing opportunities to improve the experience for this cohort.	Annual	Associate Director (Organisational Development and Capability)	CPO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification and implementation of strategies to improve the onboarding experience for women in STEM.

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