

# University of Southern Queensland Institutional Context

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# Contents

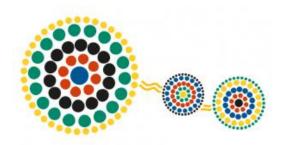
Acknowledgement of First Peoples	2
About the institution	3
Governance and structure	4
Strategic plans and frameworks	5
Demographic profile	7
The SAGE Athena SWAN journey	9
Key findings from the Bronze Award	12
The Cygnet Awards pathway	12
Contextual factors	13
Notes on data	13

# **Acknowledgement of First Peoples**

The University of Southern Queensland acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands and waterways where the University is located. Further, we acknowledge the cultural diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and pay respect to Elders past, present and future.

We celebrate the continuous living cultures of First Australians and acknowledge the important contributions Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have and continue to make in Australian society.

The University respects and acknowledges our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff, Elders and visitors who come from many nations.





## About the institution

The University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ) is a young, vibrant and student-centred university led by the values of Respect, Integrity, and Excellence. We are a medium-sized, regional university operating across three campuses in Toowoomba, Springfield and Ipswich, and two hubs in Stanthorpe and Brisbane, Queensland. Our network of campuses supports access to higher education and research and plays an important role in shaping the future of Queensland's regions.

UniSQ offers a mix of open and flexible education programs in business, education, law, arts, health, engineering, surveying, agriculture, and sciences (including paramedicine and aviation), to meet the needs of students, industries, and communities globally. The University is ranked first in Australia for graduate starting salary, and 76.7% of UniSQ's graduates are in full-time employment within four months of graduation (Good Universities Guide, 2022).

UniSQ is a recognised leader in online and blended education, allowing us to provide educational opportunities for local, national and international students. 75% of our student cohort is online, and we support a large mature-aged population as well as students from rural and remote areas and non-English-speaking backgrounds. 31% of our students come from low socio-economic or disadvantaged backgrounds and 52% are first-in-family, reflecting our commitments to equity and inclusion. We offer a range of equity programs, events, scholarships and education pathways to continue to expand this participation and improve the accessibility of higher education.

UniSQ delivers world-class research across our four flagships: Agriculture and Environment, Health, Space and Defence, and Regional Development. Researchers at UniSQ work directly with local communities, industry, and international partners on the issues that matter to our world. UniSQ climbed the 2024 QS World University Rankings to sit in the top 28% of the world's leading universities on this list, mainly driven by our ongoing research success.









Image 1: UniSQ campuses



## **Governance and structure**

UniSQ's governing body is the University of Southern Queensland Council, which is empowered under the University of Southern Queensland Act 1998 to set the strategic direction of the University. The Council represents university and community interests and is Chaired by the Chancellor, Mr John Dornbusch, and comprises official, appointed, elected and additional (co-opted) members. The Council is assisted in its operations by other leading governing bodies of the University including the Academic Board and Chancellor's Committee (Chart 1). Under the executive leadership of the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Geraldine Mackenzie, and several of the University's Deputy Vice-Chancellors, a range of Management Committees also contribute to the operations of the University (Chart 2).

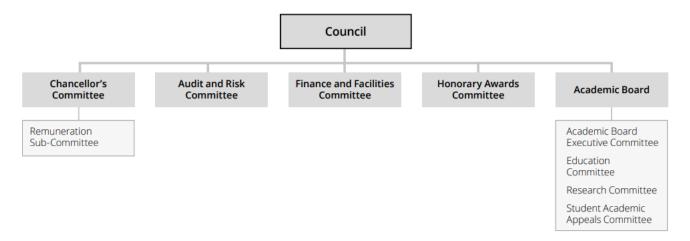


Chart 1: UniSQ Committee Structure (1)

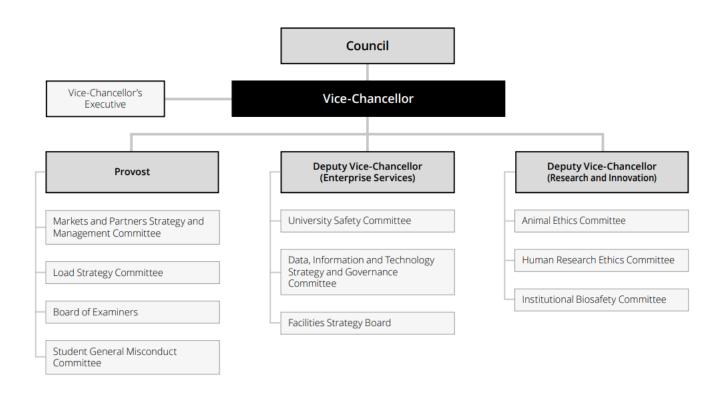


Chart 2: UniSQ Committee Structure (2)



The University is made up of a number of supporting portfolios across four organisational divisions: the Vice-Chancellor's Division, Academic Division, Enterprise Services Division, and Research and Innovation Division. UniSQ delivers education and research through 13 schools, three research institutes (comprising nine research centres), and two externally funded research entities (Table 1).

Schools				
School of Agriculture and Environmental Science	School of Law and Justice			
School of Business	School of Engineering			
School of Creative Arts	School of Nursing and Midwifery			
School of Education	School of Psychology and Wellbeing			
School of Health and Medical Sciences	School of Mathematics, Physics and Computing			
School of Humanities and Communication	School of Surveying and Built Environment			
School of Law and Justice				

## **Research Institutes and Centres**

Institute for Life Sciences and the Environment (comprising the Centre for Applied Climate Sciences, Centre for Crop Health, and Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Systems)

Institute for Advanced Engineering and Space Sciences (comprising the Centre for Agricultural Engineering, Centre for Astrophysics, and Centre for Future Materials)

Institute for Resilient Regions (comprising the Centre for Health Research, Centre for Heritage and Culture, and Rural Economies Centre of Excellence)

## **Externally Funded Research Entities hosted by UniSQ**

Southern Queensland and Northern New South Wales Innovation Hub – one of eight national Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hubs supported by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry through the Future Drought Fund

Innovative Launch, Automation, Novel Materials, Communications and Hypersonics Hub (iLAuNCH) - supported by the Australian Government Department of Education through the Trailblazer Universities Program

Table 1: UniSQ's schools, research institutes, research centres and externally funded research entities

## Strategic plans and frameworks

UniSQ's Strategic Plan 2021-2025 articulates the University's aspirations for the period (Image 2). Building upon our strength as Australia's leading regional University, the Plan expresses the key commitments across Impact, Connections, People and Places that will enable realisation of the University's vision for innovation and excellence. The Strategic Plan is underpinned by UniSQ's core strategies, which include the Education Plan, Research Plan, Engagement Plan, International Strategy, First Nations Blueprint, and Student Success and Retention Strategy. Notably, UniSQ's Strategic Plan



commits to foster a safe, diverse and inclusive university culture and environment that enables everyone to achieve their potential.



Image 2: UniSQ Strategic Plan 2021-2025

UniSQ also has a number of enabling strategies that clearly articulate our commitments to diversity and inclusion (Table 2; Image 3).

**People Strategy:** enables the University to build a future-fit workforce in support of the UniSQ Strategic Plan. Reinforced by our core values, the People Strategy has been shaped across three connect pillars: people, purpose and place. The Strategy is dedicated to fostering a culture that is grounded in relationships and community, mutual respect, diversity and inclusion, and a strong commitment to ethics, integrity, accountability, collaboration and innovation.

**Diversity and Inclusion Framework:** supports our people to achieve their full potential in a fair, inclusive and diverse environment enabled by robust diversity and inclusion strategies, policies and initiatives. This framework is underpinned by the four pillars of enhanced capability, connection, measures and accountability, and embedded diversity and inclusion. The SAGE Action Plan is an example of core items of work UniSQ is undertaking to address diversity and inclusion within the scope of the Framework.

**Indigenous Student Success Program:** UniSQ is committed to improving higher education and employment outcomes for Indigenous Australians, and delivers on this promise through strategies including a range of education pathway programs, scholarships, outreach services, progression management services, and more.

Table 2: UniSQ's enabling strategies



# PEOPLE STRATEGY 2021-2025



# OUR ASPIRATIONS

The UniSQ People Strategy enables us to build a future-fit workforce in support of the UniSQ Strategic Plan across all four components:

- Build a better future with our communities
   Translate ideas and knowledge into opportunities
   Be innovative, engaged and forward-thinking
   Create vibrant hubs of education and research

Reinforced by our core values, our People Strategy has been shaped across three connected pillars: People, Purpose and Place.

People
We continue to build a diverse, inclusive and capable community of people who share our strong sense of purpose and values.

Purpose
We will build a 'fit for purpose' people profile aligned to deliver outstanding student
experiences and outcomes and grow the quality and quantity of our research
outcomes and impact.

Place
We will create a place of work that is grounded in culture, Country and connection
and leverages technology to create collaborative virtual and physical spaces for our
people, students and communities.

We are focussed on fostering a culture centred around our values of Respect, integrity and Excellence; one that is grounded in relationships and community, mutual respect, diversity and inclusion, and a strong commitment to ethics, integrity, accountability, collaboration and innovation.

# OUR STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

It provides us the guidance to focus on

Becoming an engaged, outwardly focused, and adaptable organisation that can excel in a world of constant disruption

policy drivers.

Building on our signature strength of flexible, innovative education, the University is focused on creating and sharing knowledge, transforming lives and solving the problems that matter to our world.

Creating a University where people are unified through a shared purpose and direction with our First Nations perspectives intervoven into

We celebrate the living cultures of First Australians and recognise and respect the knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the vital role they play in the ongoing evolution of curl blevering.

As the future of work continues to transform, bringing with it ever-changing challenges and opportunities to attract, develop, engage and retain a high-quality workforce, we are re- imagining how we work at UniSQ.

Our People Strategy has been designed to or an environment where our people feel de connected to our vision, purpose and place have the capabilities, motivation and suppor

**PURPOSE** 

# OUR PERFORMANCE

- If measures or success mixed.

  yet have a highly oredentialled, capable and engaged workforce.

  We have a community of people who have the capability to engage, challengs and take measured risks.

  Our people reflect the diverse communities we serve.

  First Nations peoples are an integral part of our business.

  Our people feel connected, safe and valued.

- Purpose

  Our workforce composition meets the needs of the University

  We are recognised as University of choice for our people

  We deliver a 'people and positive experience first' approach for our clients
- clients We contribute to the Improvement within our communities

- The We have a highly engaged workforce
  Our people are agile, resilient and innovative
  Our ways of working are grounded in outture, Country and connection
  We embrace technology to support productive and efficient ways of
  working
- We will monitor progress to achieving our objectives using:
   Recruitment, progression and retention metrics
   Learning and development metrics
   Diversity and inclusion metrics
   Workforce plan horizons

# OUR STRATEGIES

### PEOPLE

WE ARE CONNECTED, INCLUSIVE AND HIGH PERFORMING

- where inclusive behaviours are recognised and rewarded Building capability in leaders and teams: We will support our people to growand develop the competencies, behaviours and specialist skills required to deliver industry leading education, student success and quality research (innovation, collaborator, impact, and build ideadership excellence within generates a shared vision for our people and creates high performing, accountable teams. Fostering an inclusive culture: We are connected by our shared values and purpose, recognising all voices of the diverse communities we serve, and will develop a culturally competent workforce that recognises the richness of First Nations peoples and perspectives.
- Health and wellbeing enhance engagement: We actively support the health and wellbeing of our people and enhance agile working with technology as an enabler

- Harnessing change: We will foster organisational agility and adaptability to align and structure our workforce to priorities

WE ARE CLIENT DRIVEN, EMPOWERED AND CREATE VALUE FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

- Leveraging the strength of our brand: We will proactively manage our employer brand and position in the market by establishing our reputation for excellence and distinctiveness and create an employee experience that makes us first choice for

WE ARE AN ENGAGED AND ENABLED

- Our ways of marinesing the power or technology and process automation. Our ways of working are client centered: We will design and redefine our ways and patterns of working to enable flexibility and rapid transformation, and achieve optimum balance between professional services and academic delivery.
- Our place of work: We will create environments, both physical and virtual, in which our people can demonstrate the value of their work through rewarding opportunities and career pathways
- Talent mobility: We will harness the skills and expertise of our people through internal talent pooling, talent mobilisation, and career pathway



# Demographic profile

Strategic Plan People Strategy 2021-2025

UniSQ employs over 1,600 staff members, as at January 2024, with professional staff comprising 61% of employees (Table 3). Women make up 49% of academic staff, 66% of professional staff, and 59% of the University's overall workforce. UniSQ's data collection methodology applies science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine (STEMM) and non-STEMM metrics to academic staff only, where women comprise 44% of STEMM academics and 56% of non-STEMM academics. Less than 1% of staff self-identify as non-binary or other gender.

		F		М		x				
		НС	%	НС	%	нс	%	Total HC	Total %	
Professional		671	40%	352	21%	0	0%	1,023	61%	
Academic	STEMM	182	11%	228	14%	0	0%	410	24%	
	Non- STEMM	135	8%	105	6%	<6	<1%	241	14%	
	Total	988	59%	685	41%	<6	<1%	1,674	100%	

Table 3: UniSQ staff distribution January 2024





Image 4: UniSQ staff at Learning and Teaching orientation, 2019

UniSQ's student population, as at January 2024, consisted of 11,738 students comprising 64% women, 35% men and <1% non-binary or other gender (Table 4). The majority of our students are in undergraduate courses (73%), with 17% in postgraduate coursework, 5% in postgraduate research, and 5% in non-award courses.

	F		М		x			
	НС	%	НС	%	НС	%	Total HC	Total %
Undergraduate	5,726	49%	2,850	24%	28	<1%	8,604	73%
Postgraduate (coursework)	1,283	11%	692	6%	<6	<1%	1,979	17%
Postgraduate (research)	276	2%	316	3%	<6	<1%	593	5%
Non-Award	263	2%	295	3%	<6	<1%	562	5%
Total	7,548	64%	4,153	35%	37	<1%	11,738	100%

Table 4: UniSQ student distribution January 2024





Image 5: Students at UniSQ Open Day 2022

# The SAGE Athena SWAN journey

In October 2017, UniSQ became a member of SAGE. UniSQ committed to participating in the Athena SWAN pilot program by undertaking a self-assessment process and applying for Athena SWAN Bronze Award accreditation. The self-assessment and application timeline is outlined below:

2017: UniSQ established a self-assessment team (SAT) chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation). The SAT comprised a diverse range of UniSQ employees (17 female, nine male) that included members of senior leadership. The SAT was divided into one core group and four thematic Working Parties to gather and analyse data to contribute to the development of UniSQ's Bronze Award submission.

2018-2019: Broad engagement and consultation occurred across the University to develop and refine the Bronze Award submission.

2019: UniSQ submitted its application for a Bronze Award, which was unfortunately deemed unsuccessful. The SAGE peer review panel commended UniSQ's honest reflection on disparities in diversity and inclusion at the University, while also identifying areas for further attention.

2020: The SAT reconvened to critically review and revise UniSQ's four-year Action Plan. After resubmitting in late 2020, UniSQ became a successful recipient of a SAGE Athena SWAN Bronze Award.





Image 6: SAGE Public Forum at UniSQ, 2019

To support the delivery of the SAGE Action Plan, several project officers were appointed to coordinate and monitor the program over 2021-2024. Project officers were appointed for different terms and at different times within varying work areas, with their roles often contributing to a range of functions (not only SAGE program delivery.) These frequent changes in ongoing program support were due to a range of challenges including the COVID-19 pandemic and the resourcing capacities of different work areas.

To govern program delivery, UniSQ established a SAGE Athena SWAN Committee chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation) and comprising a diverse range of employees (Table 5). Membership criteria was developed to ensure strong representation from STEMM disciplines, as the original Bronze Award submission highlighted inequities in UniSQ's STEMM disciplines as a key focus.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) (Chair)

Project and Policy Coordinator (Committee Services Officer)

Director (Media and Strategic Communications) or nominee

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs) or nominee

Representative from the Graduate Research School, nominated by the Dean (Graduate Research School)

Two women from STEMM disciplines where women are underrepresented, nominated by the Executive Deans



Two men from STEMM disciplines, nominated by the Executive Deans

Representative from the Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Chief People Officer or nominee

Executive Director of a Research Institute, nominated by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)

Representative who identifies as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

Representative who identifies as having multicultural/international background

Representative who is a member of the UniSQ Ally Network

Representative who identifies as transgender and/or gender diverse and/or intersex

Student representative from a STEMM discipline

HDR student representative who is a woman and from a STEMM discipline

Table 5: Membership criteria for the SAGE Athena SWAN Committee

To embed UniSQ's SAGE program into the University's governance structures, the SAGE Committee delivers quarterly and annual reports to various levels of university leadership via the Vice-Chancellor's Executive, Chancellor's Committee, and University Council. To embed the program into the institutional community more broadly, an online SAGE dashboard highlights and celebrates features of the program and connects employees with relevant systems and opportunities (Image 7). The SAGE program coordinator also participates in various Committees and employee networks including the Diversity and Inclusion Committee; Diverse Genders, Sexualities and Sex Characteristics Committee; the Ally Network, and the Women's Network to regularly share updates and information on the progress of the SAGE program.



Image 7: Excerpt from the first webpage of the SAGE dashboard



## **Key findings from the Bronze Award**

UniSQ's SAGE Action Plan summarised the key findings (and suggested solutions) of the Bronze Award self-assessment under five key themes:

Leadership and Governance

Recruitment, Pathways and Onboarding Career Development and Progression

Career Breaks and Flexible Working

Organisation, Culture and Inclusion

Actions and solutions under these themes were developed to systematically address the primary areas of inequity at the University. While many actions focused on reducing the barriers for women in STEMM, as these were the areas where key inequities were identified, they were also developed to have high impact across numerous staff cohorts or all staff, where applicable.

## The Cygnet Awards pathway

In 2021, SAGE Australia evaluated the effectiveness of the SAGE Athena SWAN pilot program. To transition the pilot into a sustainable business model for participating organisations, SAGE announced the Cygnet Awards in late 2021.

In early 2022, in line with the Cygnet pathway, UniSQ revised the SAGE program of work to prioritise actions in the following five Key Priority Areas:



Onboarding

STEMM Pipeline

Career Development Parental Leave

These areas were identified through thorough assessment of the Bronze Action Plan progress to date; in-depth analysis of which barriers had the greatest negative effect on the attraction, retention or progression of underrepresented and/or marginalised groups of staff in the organisation; and consultation across various work divisions to identify which actions were most sustainable and achievable. The identification of these five Cygnet areas also took into consideration how improvements to programs and systems could be made to benefit not only underrepresented staff groups, but also the wider staff community.



## **Contextual factors**

A number of factors over the course of the Athena SWAN Bronze Award validity period have impacted the scope and progression of the SAGE program at UniSQ. As experienced across the higher education and research sector, the COVID-19 pandemic had wide-ranging impacts on finances, ways of working, and institutional priorities. The University conducted a voluntary severance program in 2021, which accepted 34 applications (53% male and 47% female), with six of these applications at levels D and E (one female). An early retirement scheme was also conducted in 2022, which accepted 70 applications (50% male and 50% female, with four of these at levels D and E (2 female). These schemes contributed to staff turnover and distribution trends in those years, and naturally also to team restructures and redistribution of workloads, capacity and priorities across affected work areas.

UniSQ has operated at a budget deficit over the last several years, which has impacted the ability to initiate or progress some of the SAGE program initiatives previously thought possible when developing the Bronze Award SAGE Action Plan. Budgetary considerations have impacted the resourcing for dedicated project officers to work on the SAGE program; for example, the original Action Plan called for a primary project officer to coordinate the program over the life of the program, but due to financial considerations this role became responsible for numerous functions besides the SAGE program between 2022-2024. Similarly, several roles within the human resources portfolio that contributed significantly to SAGE program initiatives were kept vacant when these officers left the University in 2023, again due to budgetary considerations. Specific impacts on particular initiatives are outlined in each relevant Cygnet application.

While changes across the sector and within the University have impacted resourcing for the SAGE program, UniSQ maintains a strong dedication to equity and diversity for both students and staff. This dedication is reflected in our values, strategic plans, and targeted programs and initiatives to improve the study and working experience of marginalised and/or underrepresented groups.

## Notes on data

The following notes on data should be considered for all UniSQ-submitted Cygnet Award applications:

- Where available, data is provided for the gender categories of 'F, M, and X'. Where no data has been collected from non-binary or other gender participants (due to participants not identifying a non-binary gender or system limitations), X is omitted from the data.
- Where available, data is provided for both academic and professional staff. In some instances, historical data was manually collected and the difficulty of re-sourcing this data has led to only academic or only professional staff data being included.
- Where available, data is provided split by STEMM/non-STEMM. The use of this metric to capture
  data is inconsistent across systems and methodologies, and so this metric is not provided where
  not available.





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