



**S A G E**

SCIENCE IN AUSTRALIA  
GENDER EQUITY

# SAGE Cygnet Awards

for the SAGE Athena Swan  
Accreditation Pathway

Monash University  
Application Form

# SAGE Cygnet Award Application

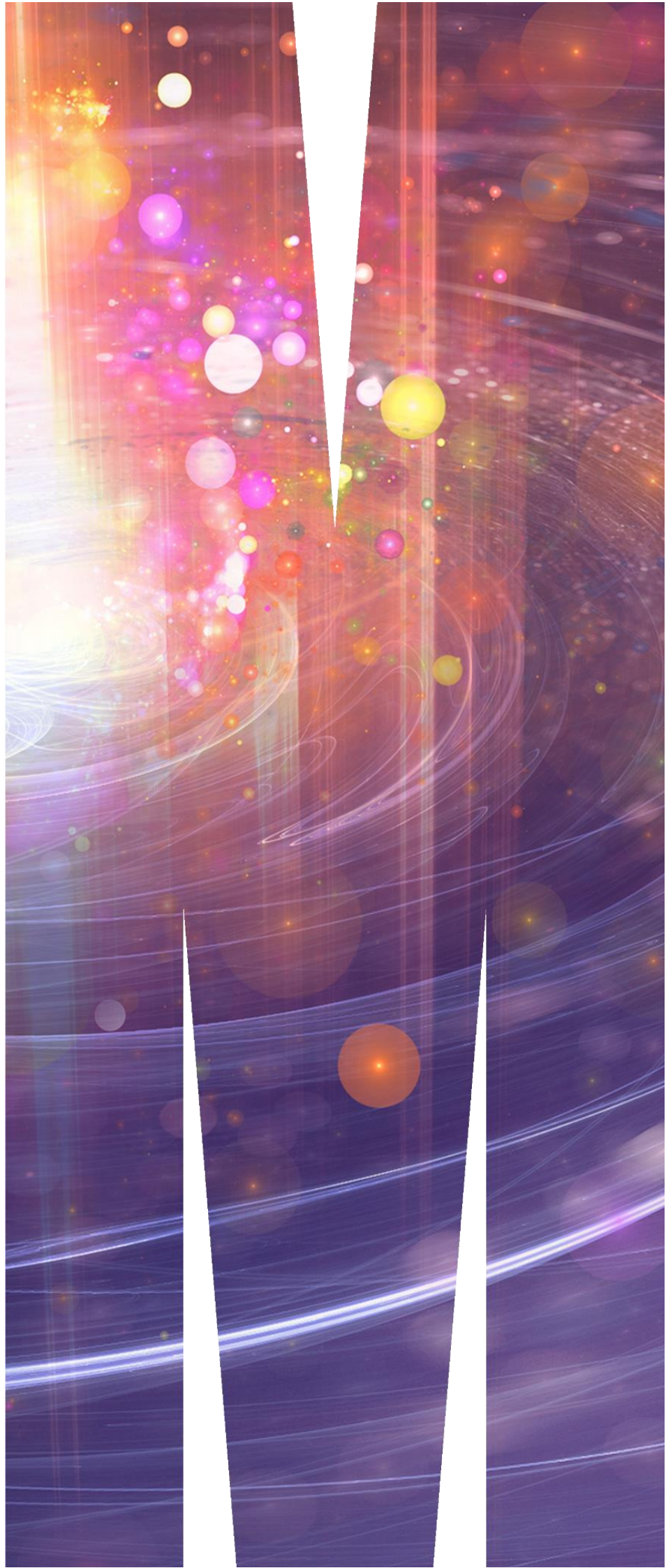
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# SAGE ATHENA SWAN CYGNET AWARD APPLICATION

Women's representation  
in senior academic  
roles in STEMM

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June 2024



## Acknowledgement of Country

Monash University recognises that its Australian campuses are located on the unceded lands of the people of the Kulin nations, and pays its respects to their elders, past and present.

Monash is committed to fostering a society that recognises, respects and includes Indigenous peoples, cultures and knowledge. The University will contribute to the creation of this society by working with and celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures and knowledge, as well as Indigenous peoples of other places where Monash has a campus or major presence.

Monash University is committed to supporting and contributing to:

- The Uluru Statement from the Heart process for a First Nations Voice to the Commonwealth Parliament of Australia; and
- Treaty discussions in the state of Victoria and the Yoo-rrook Justice Commission.



## Monash University: SAGE CYGNET #4

	Current Cygnet	Barrier
[Mandatory] Institution-wide barrier	✓	Underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions in STEMM
[Mandatory] Sub-group barrier		
[Please select] Institution-wide/Sub-group barrier		
Institution-wide		Relative to Opportunity in Academic Promotion
Sub-group barrier		Indigenous Recruitment

Section	Word limit	Actual Word Count
Cygnets Submission	2500	2483
Key Barriers		317
Evidence of Barriers		301
Activities and Outputs		289
Outcomes		1228
Impact		143
Future Action Plan		Table



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## KEY BARRIER

The Higher Education sector in Australia continues to experience gender disparities in senior academic roles, with multi-faceted structural and cultural barriers cited as the leading cause of women's underrepresentation. In Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine (STEMM) fields, the challenge is further compounded by the hyper competitive culture of STEMM research, fewer diverse role models, limited networking opportunities as well as unconscious bias in performance assessments.

The barriers addressed in this application describe major factors contributing to women's underrepresentation in senior academic positions within STEMM disciplines at Monash University. We recognise that these barriers hinder our collective ability to utilise the considerable talent pool within our highly educated workforce, where 60% of all academic positions are in STEMM.

### Scope

- In our institutional context, STEMM disciplines are represented by the Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Information Technology, Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, and Faculty of Sciences. It is worth noting that there are also pockets of STEMM-related research in other fields and faculties of the University, not presented in this application, that also benefited from our work.
- While the primary goal of this application is to demonstrate the effectiveness of multi-year strategies, programs, and initiatives in increasing the proportion of women in senior academic roles within STEMM, many of our interventions also supported women in the early and mid-career stages, thereby strengthening the overall pipeline of women candidates for senior positions.
- The sub-barriers associated with low confidence and understanding of the Achievement Relative to Opportunity Framework were thoroughly addressed as part of our first institutional Cygnet award. Therefore, actions related to improving assessments 'relative to opportunity' are mentioned in this application more succinctly to avoid repetition.
- The scope of this application does not include Monash University international campuses. Although we wish to acknowledge strong commitments and important progress made by our colleagues at Monash Malaysia.



## EVIDENCE OF BARRIER

### National Context

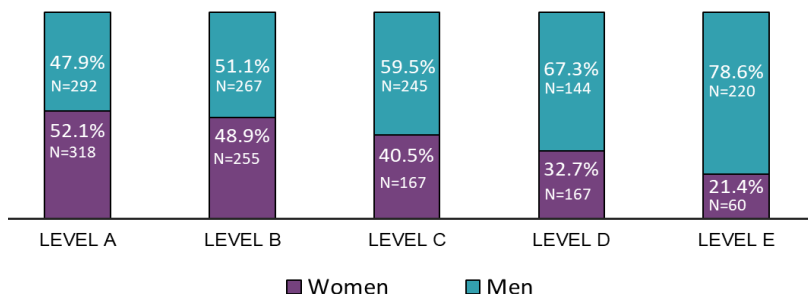
The commitment to advancing the careers of women and addressing gender disparities in STEMM was at the core of the Athena SWAN Charter when established in 2005 and introduced in Australia in 2015. According to Australia's STEM Workforce Report 2020, women accounted for 29% of all university-qualified populations in STEM disciplines, aligning closely with the 2021 national average of women's representation among academic staff in STEM fields in higher education.

However, gender disparities become particularly evident in senior academic positions within STEMM. The representation of women drops to 26.5% and 18% for Associate Professor (Level D) and Professors (Level E), respectively, underscoring the need for concerted efforts to close these gender gaps in academia.

### Monash University Data

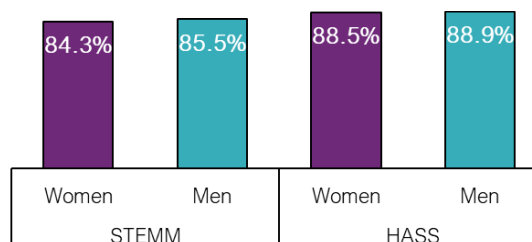
At Monash University, 61% of all academic positions are within STEMM disciplines, with women constituting 43% of STEMM academics in 2017. Our analysis during the 2016-2017 Athena SWAN self-assessment revealed notable gender imbalances, particularly in senior positions at Level D and E, as illustrated in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1 2017 Gender composition across academic levels in STEMM



Furthermore, we observed that the retention rate of academic women in STEMM was consistently lower than that of men in STEMM or that of women and men in HASS disciplines (**Figure 2**). Qualitative evidence pointed to several underlying sub-barriers contributing to this gender disparity, described below.

Figure 2 - 2019 retention rate of academic staff (A-E combined)



Additional evidence of barriers was drawn from consultation activities during the Athena SWAN self-assessment process, particularly through all-staff survey and focus groups, complemented by analysis of staff data (**Table 1**).

Table 1 - Key sources of qualitative data that informed the identification of barriers

Sources of qualitative data that informed findings of our self-assessment process		
Staff Equity Survey	2017	Monash University Athena SWAN Committee developed a bespoke Staff Equity Survey that was deployed to all academic staff gathering important insights into reasons for persisting gender disparities in STEMM. The response rate from STEMM academics was 20%.
Focus Groups	2017	Monash University Athena SWAN Committee commissioned an external consultant to facilitate a series of focus groups aimed at elucidating common challenges influencing the academic career progression of women in STEMM disciplines. Ten focus groups were held with a total of 47 staff (64% women).
Working Groups	2017	Working Groups were established for each theme of the Athena SWAN Bronze application, enabling staff to contribute on a range of topics, and make recommendations for Athena SWAN Actions.

## Evidence of Sub-barriers

Findings from our consultation activities enriched our understanding of reasons behind the so-called 'leaky pipeline' affecting gender equity in STEMM. The evidence of sub-barriers we gathered provided a solid foundation for the development of our comprehensive Athena SWAN Bronze Action Plan. In this application, the identified sub-barriers are presented across five key categories:

Figure 3 - Identified sub-barriers

1. The need to reaffirm institutional commitment to advancing gender equity
2. Addressing gender bias
3. Low confidence in the Achievement Relative to Opportunity Framework
4. Limited visibility and achievements of women and diverse role models in STEMM
5. Lack of tailored programs for women in STEMM

## 1. The need to reaffirm institutional commitment to advancing gender equity

Involvement of senior leaders in gender equity, and their advocacy for positive cultural change was identified as paramount. Both survey findings (Figures 4 and 5) and focus groups highlighted opportunities to strengthen leadership accountability for gender equity, and their roles as active champions of change. This sentiment was fittingly summarised by a focus group participant:

*“Senior leadership has got to be on board. Individuals can make a big difference when they’re in very senior leadership roles.” (Focus group participant; gender not stated)*

Figure 5 - 2017 survey results regarding inclusive culture

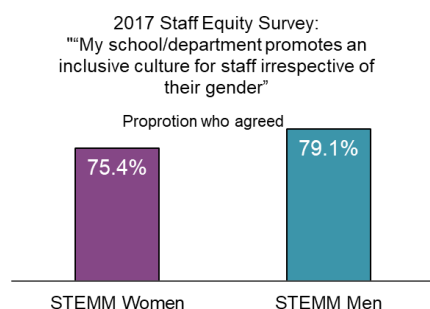
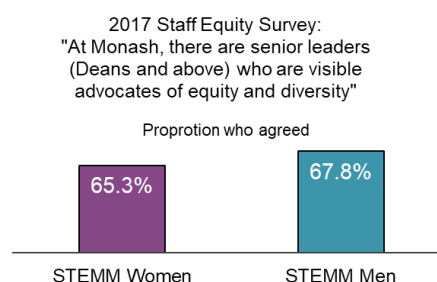


Figure 4 - 2017 survey results regarding leaders



## 2. Addressing gender bias

The detrimental impact of bias in decision-making emerged as a strong theme through focus groups with STEMM academics and subsequent consultation activities (2017). It was seen to influence decisions across the academic life cycle, including recruitment, promotion, access to career-enhancing opportunities. Participants expressed that unconscious bias was pervasive, influencing men’s behaviour towards women, which included women being taken less seriously than men in the pursuit of an academic career.

*“I think the biggest problem here is that we sit in a man’s head. Unconscious bias. I think it’s pervasive, I think it’s intractable and I think it governs all our behaviours in both men and women...”*  
(Woman; focus group participant)

*“I’ve become a bit more educated in recognising certain phrases that ...might have some red flags, and I realise that people here still have some unconscious bias I would say, they don’t realise that they are saying things that are not quite alright.”*  
(Woman; focus group participant)

Furthermore, focus group participants felt that it was important to recognise that people of all genders have unconscious gender biases and that this could be addressed by offering education.

*“So the managers need training about gender bias and about how to manage that because there’s a lot you can do about it by putting it on the table...”*  
(Woman; focus group participant)

### 3. Low confidence in the Achievement Relative to Opportunity Framework

A very low proportion of survey respondents expressed their confidence that decision-makers were assessing promotions relative to opportunity (Figure 6).

This sentiment was echoed by focus group participants who questioned the value of the Achievement Relative to Opportunity policy and felt there was significant room for improvements.

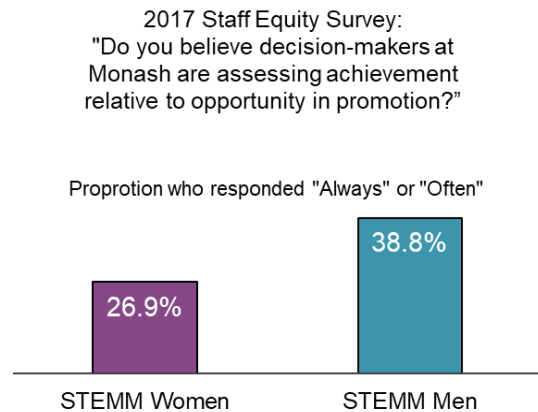
While men in STEMM were fairly optimistic about the positive role of our Achievement Relative to Opportunity policy, they wondered whether it really made a difference to women's careers.

*"Having sat on panels for 10 years, it's just people look at that section and I think largely discard it and just go based on track record compared to like versus unlike if you like. I think there's still a lot of work that needs to be done on understanding, truly understanding, what career interruption looks like basically"*  
(Man; focus group participant)

*"There needs to be a serious look at promotion for part time employees as there appears to be a lack of understanding for committees to judge what a part time person can achieve."*  
(Man; focus group participant)

Low confidence in the Achievement Relative to Opportunity Framework also manifested in analysis of promotion applications. In 2017 only 48% of promotion candidates in STEMM faculties chose to utilise 'relative to opportunity' section on their application (61% women; 41% men). While an improvement on previous years, we did not believe this had been reflective of the high prevalence of professional and personal circumstances experienced by academic staff, which merit 'relative to opportunity' considerations.

Figure 6 - 2017 Survey results regarding equity in decision-making



### 4. Limited visibility of women's achievement and diverse role models in STEMM

Another fundamental contributor to gender disparities in STEMM was the scant presence of diverse role models capable of challenging gender stereotypes. This insufficiency extended to the visibility of successful women academics within Monash University and their representation on panels, at conferences, and other speaking engagements external to Monash.

*"We need strong female role models that we can relate to...it's an issue because we don't have that many but Monash is doing quite good on that but it's hard to actually identify yourself, like I really struggle to - even if I don't have kids - to identify myself to someone who is high achieving male, it is harder."* (Woman; focus group participant)

*"Look around the student population on this campus, 90% of them look like me. Look around the plaques of notable researchers and just point out to me how many people look like me. And that's something that I didn't notice until I came back from the US... I suppose they treat me like any other normal person but when I look at these things I can't help but cringe a little bit."*  
(Woman; focus group participant)

## 5. Lack of tailored support for women in STEMM, such as networking, peer-support, access to leadership development

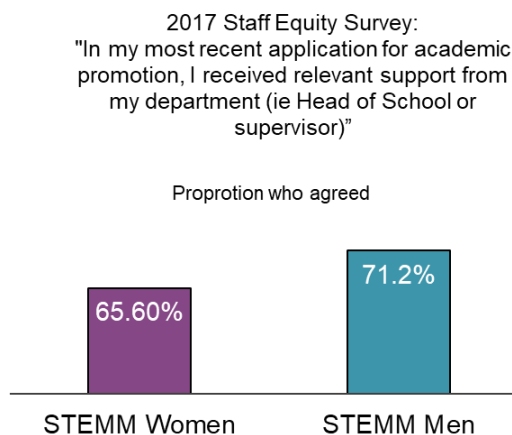
### Promotion Support

Support from faculties for women applying for promotion was seen as insufficient:

*“General workshop provided at the Faculty level on promotion was completely demoralising and made me decide to give no further consideration to applying for promotion.”*  
(Woman; focus group participant)

Findings from the Staff Equity Survey also confirmed ample opportunities for expanding promotion support, with only 65.6% of women in STEMM receiving relevant support from their department (Figure 7).

Figure 7 - 2017 Survey results regarding support for promotion from supervisors



### Leadership Development

Focus groups participants acknowledged Monash's commitment to developing its staff but there was a sense of frustration among women that access to leadership development seemed reserved for those in leadership roles. They noted its relevance and importance for career advancement and career progression and would have liked to participate earlier, before progressing to Professorial (Level E) positions.

### Access to Networking

Women also expressed feeling lonely in male dominated workplaces, and their sense of exclusion from networking opportunities was described as *“you kind of feel like you're locked out.”*

The demand for more formal networking opportunities emerged repeatedly through consultation activities, led by Athena SWAN at Monash.



## ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

During our Athena SWAN Bronze self-assessment, we realized that dismantling systemic barriers and achieving transformative change demanded a multi-faceted approach. While we upheld our commitment to supporting individuals (women and underrepresented groups in STEMM) through targeted programs, we also broadened efforts to bolster institutional commitment, address unconscious bias, promote equitable decision-making and influence important policy changes. We applied the same evidence-based approach in subsequent action plans.

Activities and outputs presented in this section represent a combination of commitments in the Athena SWAN Action Plan 2018-2022, Gender Equality Action Plan 2022-2025 as well as responses to the unforeseen impacts of Covid-19 pandemic on gender equity. They have been categorised thematically to reflect how we addressed key barriers:

1. Institutional commitment to advancing gender equity in STEMM
2. Addressing unconscious bias
3. Enhancing equitable decision-making
4. Improving visibility of women in STEMM, facilitating networking and peer connections
5. Tailored support for women's career progression



# 1. Institutional commitment to advancing gender equity in STEMM

Senior leaders' participation in gender equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives demonstrates commitment to advancing institutional goals, fostering accountability and amplifying organisational commitment to systemic change. **Table 2** outlines measures implemented to address the identified opportunities.

Table 2 - Actions designed to strengthen institutional commitment to gender equity in STEMM

Action Item	Implementation notes
1.1 Host Athena SWAN forums/events to engage with Monash community (Athena SWAN Action Plan 1.5)	<p>To sustain momentum by fostering ongoing dialogue and awareness, and to engage staff to drive cultural shifts, we have been hosting regular events and forums. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Athena SWAN - Addressing unconscious bias; all staff event (2018); 120 attendees</li> <li>• Accelerate Progress to advance gender equity in STEMM; all staff event (2023); 85 participants &amp; online streaming via Workplace platform</li> <li>• Amplifying women's academic success; all staff considering promotion (2023); 153 attendees including online participant</li> <li>• Understanding and overcoming barriers to gender equity in STEMM; all staff event (2024); 112 attendees &amp; online streaming via Workplace platform</li> </ul>
1.2 Encourage STEMM faculties to establish local gender equity committees (Athena SWAN Action 1.8)	<p>We recognised that localised efforts are capable of driving meaningful change at faculty and departmental levels. We supported STEMM Faculties in setting up their local committees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty of Engineering - EDI Committee established in 2020</li> <li>• Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, EDI Committee established in 2018</li> <li>• Faculty of Information Technology; EDI committee re-established in 2019, Associate Dean EDI position introduced in 2020</li> <li>• Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharm Sciences; Associate Dean EDI position in 2023</li> <li>• Faculty of Science; Associate Dean EDI position introduced in 2023</li> </ul> <p>In addition, all five HASS faculties established EDI committees (Arts; Business and Economics; Education; Law; Arts, Design &amp; Architecture), with representatives invited to join the Athena SWAN Steering Group.</p> <p><b>Governance structure</b></p> <p>As part of Monash University's governance structure, Chair of Athena SWAN Steering Group, and all Chairs of Faculty-level EDI Committees are ex-officio members of the university-wide overarching Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, which is reporting to the Vice-Chancellor's Executive Committee.</p>
1.3 Responding to gendered impacts of Covid-19 pandemic	<p>This initiative arose in response to the gendered impacts of Covid-19 pandemic. In 2020, Monash's Athena SWAN Committee developed a position paper "Advancing staff equity in STEMM in the face of COVID-19" which identifies the emerging equity impacts on University staff and presents a set of recommendations for leaders to adopt, in order to safeguard the gains made in retaining and supporting women and other under-represented groups in STEMM.</p> <p>All STEMM Deans signed up to these recommendations.</p> <p><a href="http://www.monash.edu/gender-equity/athena-swan/covid-19">www.monash.edu/gender-equity/athena-swan/covid-19</a></p>



<p>1.4 Visible commitment from senior leaders to gender equity, diversity and inclusion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed a video focused on promoting gender equity at Monash, featuring leaders including STEMM Deans and the Vice-Chancellor (2018)</li> <li>• Launched the Panel Pledge campaign, pledges received from senior leaders including 6 Deans and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), their names featuring on a publicly facing website (commencing 2018)</li> <li>• Produced a video featuring Deans committing to Panel Pledge, and inviting others to join, was developed and widely disseminated (2019)</li> <li>• A panel event featuring Provost, Deans and Chief HR Officer spoke about challenges and strategies to help accelerate progress to gender equity in STEMM (2022)</li> <li>• Commenced reporting the representation of senior academic women in STEMM through the University's annual Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Report to increase visibility of this gender equity metric (2020)</li> <li>• Incorporated commitments to intensify focus on gender equity in the University's Environmental, Social and Governance Statement (2021)</li> <li>• Developed and promoted a video, where the Vice-Chancellor reaffirmed her commitment to gender equity (2022)</li> </ul>
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Furthermore, to enhance the visibility of these commitments and Athena SWAN objectives, we ensured their integration into the University's strategic documents, endorsed by senior leadership:

- Athena SWAN Action Plan 2018-2021
- Workplace Gender Equality Strategy 2019-2022
- Gender Equality Action Plan 2022-2025
- Environmental, Social and Governance Statement 2021-2025
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Framework 2022-2030
- Institutional Key Performance Indicators Framework

## 2. Addressing Unconscious Bias

Table 3 - Actions developed to address unconscious bias

Action Item	Implementation notes
<p>2.1 Identify a suitable third-party provider to deliver training on unconscious bias (Athena SWAN Action 7.4)</p>	<p>The commitment to identify a suitably qualified provider and to pilot unconscious bias training sessions was fulfilled in 2018.</p>
<p>2.2 Pilot 10 training sessions on unconscious bias to academic staff in STEMM faculties at no cost to staff (Athena SWAN Action 7.5)</p>	<p>In addition to the ten pilot sessions funded by Athena SWAN budget between 2018-2019 (210 participants), STEMM faculties invested additional funding to ensure a larger proportion of their staff undertook this training (2019 onwards).</p> <p>Titled "Inclusive Leadership", the training on unconscious bias was integrated into the University's standard learning and development offerings, and has been running successfully ongoing ever since.</p>
<p>2.2 Ensure training on unconscious bias ("Inclusive Leadership") is available through Staff Development portal (Athena SWAN Action 7.7)</p>	<p>Retrospectively, we have been unable to report participation data fully as the learning and development system can only generate training completions for current (not past) employees.</p> <p>Completion of the training has become a requirement for certain staff groups, such as promotion committees (see Action 2.3). This is monitored by the Academic Performance and Policy team in Human Resources.</p>

<p>2.3 Amend 'Academic Promotion Committees Levels C-E Procedure' to require that promotions committee chair must be trained on unconscious bias (Athena SWAN Action Plan 4.6)</p>	<p>The Academic Promotion Procedure was updated in 2019 to ensure that the promotion committee is trained on unconscious bias. The expectation to complete Inclusive Leadership training extends to panel members, as well as recruitment panels and Outside Study Programmer (OSP) committees.</p> <p>The requirement in the context of academic promotion process is monitored by the Policy and Performance team in Monash HR, and training sessions are offered at no cost to staff who need to complete it.</p>
<p>2.4 Equip staff with understanding of the benefits of diversity, role of intersectionality, impact of unconscious bias, and importance of inclusive practices (Gender Equality Action Plan, 6.3.1)</p>	<p>Intersectionality training was initially trialled as a standalone module, and in 2023 incorporated in professional development training on i) Unconscious Bias; ii) Inclusion 101, and iii) Words at Work. We also widely promoted access to Pride in Diversity training “LGBTIQA+ Inclusive Practices”.</p> <p>Additionally, we hosted programs and forums during the University’s annual “Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Week” to raise awareness of inequalities, unconscious bias and expand staff understanding of intersectionality. We see this work as ongoing.</p>
<p>2.5 Consolidate and publish internal resources on unconscious bias, equal opportunity and the importance of diversity on decision-making bodies (Gender Equality Action Plan, 2.2.1)</p>	<p>In 2022, we developed a new website dedicated to equitable decision-making at Monash. This online hub of consolidated resources covers topics such as unconscious bias, importance of diversity on panels and inclusive hiring practices. This represents a completed project.</p>

### 3. Enhancing equitable decision-making

Table 4 - Actions developed to enhance equity in decision-making

Action Item	Implementation notes
<p>3.1 Improve 'Assessing Achievement Relative to Opportunity' guidelines with a particular focus on intersectionality (Athena SWAN Action Plan 4.1)</p>	<p>In 2020, Guidelines for Assessing Achievement Relative to Opportunity for Decision Makers have been revised to include stronger, clear and more diverse examples.</p> <p>The scope was clarified to include recruitment, promotion, confirmation of an academic appointment following a period of probation, performance development, outside study programme.</p>
<p>3.2 Host sessions on Achievement Relative to Opportunity (Athena SWAN Action Plan 4.2)</p>	<p>The inaugural sessions were held face-to-face at two campus locations in 2019. One of the two sessions was recorded and promoted through various channels where additional staff viewed it.</p> <p>Content of the sessions included varied examples and tips for candidates writing 'relative to opportunity' sections.</p> <p>In 2020, due to Covid-19 restrictions and while working from home, the sessions moved online and attracted an even larger audience (579 registrations) validating the need. Videos from 2020 and 2022 sessions were also recorded and disseminated.</p>
<p>3.3 Develop and implement training for decision-makers on Achievement Relative to Opportunity (Gender Equality Action Plan 2.2.3)</p>	<p>A cross-faculty working group was established to develop a new online module “Assessing Achievement Relative to Opportunity”, in partnership with an external provider and oversight of the Office of the Provost.</p> <p>The training was launched in August 2022 and following very positive feedback on the training’s content, senior leaders approved that the module become mandatory for academic leaders and academic supervisor from January 2023.</p>

## 4. Improving visibility of women in STEMM, facilitating networking and peer connections

Table 5 - Actions developed to improve visibility of women in STEMM, facilitating networking and peer connections

Action Item	Implementation notes
4.1 Establish 'STEMM Women Academic Network' (Athena SWAN Action Plan 5.7)	The STEMM Women Academic Network was launched in December 2019, with the presentation from the Network's Executive Sponsor (a member of the University's senior leadership team). In the same year, the Network Chair was appointed and an Advisory Group set up, defining the Network's charter, objectives and deliverables.
4.2 Lift the visibility and achievements of women in STEMM (Gender Equality Action Plan 3.1.3)	<p>In partnership with the University's marketing and communication team, we begun profiling women in STEMM research through "Monash Lens". Where possible, we sought to highlight intersectional identities and promote achievements of staff who represent minorities in their fields, such as Muslim women, LGBTIQ+ women and Indigenous women.</p> <p>In 2021, an externally facing website was developed to highlight the visibility and achievements of academic women who are underrepresented in their fields, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, those from diverse backgrounds, sexualities or faiths, women with disabilities. This website titled "Women in STEMM" showcases diversity of talent at Monash, inspires future generations of STEMM students and helps facilitate cross-departmental connections.</p> <p>Most recently (2023), Monash launched a new "Create Change" campaign that showcases powerful stories of staff and students from marginalised backgrounds, and the positive impact they are making in their field of expertise.</p> <p>Our ongoing strategy is to also intentionally profile diversity of speakers at internal events.</p>
4.3 Maintain an active network of academic women in STEMM and beyond, to foster peer connections and help them thrive (Gender Equality Action Plan 2.1.6)	<p>The STEMM Women Academic Network consists of approximately 250 active members.</p> <p>In 2022, the Network hosted peer-mentoring networking sessions for women pursuing academic promotion. This initiative helped cultivate connections and provided essential peer support within the academic community.</p> <p>In 2023, a new chair of the STEMM Women Academic Network was appointed, catalysing a revitalisation of network activities. This was followed by promotion writing workshops for those planning to apply for promotion. The Network is further supported by the Athena SWAN Steering Group, ensuring sustainability and longevity of the Network. The requirement to support activities of this network is ongoing.</p> <p>Most recently, the Network celebrated the International Day of Girls and Women in Science. Total of 222 staff registered to attend this hybrid event, which was opened by a senior leader and featured a diverse panel of Monash women.</p>
4.3 Provide peer support for promotion applicants	In addition to annual Women's information sessions for promotion applicants, the University hosted its first Peer2Peer Promotion Support Networking Event in 2022, bringing together 83 future promotion applicants and experienced women Professors as mentors. The session provided a platform for forming new connections across STEMM faculties and was described by attendees as personalised and highly impactful.

4.5 Facilitate mentoring for academic women to support retention, connections and an improved sense of belonging	<p>In 2021, we expanded our biennial Women's Mentoring Program and launched the Global Staff Mentoring Program. A renewed communication strategy and significantly enhanced mentor/mentee matching technology allowed us to accommodate a much larger number of mentoring requests.</p> <p>In 2021, 65 academic women in STEMM were assigned a mentor in this program. Common goals included career planning, growing leadership skills, and identifying individual strengths.</p>
4.6 Promote participation in Superstars of STEM program	<p>Since the establishment of the "Superstars of STEM" program in 2017, Monash encouraged and supported women's participation in the two-year program, designed to challenge stereotypes, inspire younger generations and boost their careers.</p> <p>In 2019, 2021 and 2023 Monash was proud to have representatives selected to become Superstars of STEM and amplified their visibility through a variety of communication channels.</p>

## 5. Tailored support for women's career progression

Table 6 - Actions developed to support career progression of academic women in STEMM

Action item	Implementation notes
5.1 Pilot leadership programs for academic women in STEMM (Athena SWAN Action 5.8)	<p>Following the establishment of the STEMM Women Academic Network, we were impacted by Covid-19 lockdowns that initially delayed our offerings, and then we moved events to an online mode of delivery. All examples of activities here were offered to women at no charge, the cost was absorbed by the Athena SWAN Steering Group's budget. The focus of these masterclasses was informed by feedback and suggestions from Network members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managing Challenging Interactions (2020); 52 participants</li> <li>• Art of Influence (2020); 46 participants</li> <li>• Expanding Your Leadership Mindset (2021); 42 participants</li> <li>• Managing Self Through Uncertainty (2021); 34 participants</li> <li>• Channelling Your Voice: Impact and Engagement for Through Leaders (2021); 145 participants</li> <li>• Understanding self and your leadership vision (2022); 19 participants</li> <li>• Leading through influence (2022); 14 participants</li> <li>• Building your visibility and personal brand (2022); 19 participants</li> <li>• Leadership presence (2022 and 2023); 29 participants</li> </ul>
5.2 Remove barriers to promotion applications by 'dispelling myths'	<p>In addition to annual promotion information sessions for women, which Monash has hosted for the past 20 years, we sought to remove barriers to applying for promotion, which at times stemmed from staff sharing inaccurate anecdotal information.</p> <p>The "Dispelling Myths in Academic Promotion" (July 2023) was a webinar featuring a panel of experienced women Professors from different STEMM disciplines. This session was open to staff of all genders and attracted 288 staff.</p>
5.3 Strengthening promotion success for women and non-binary staff	<p>A two-day program was promoted to Network members (and beyond) who planned to apply for promotion in 2023, to participate in a program aimed at enhancing persuasive language and crafting a compelling story. "Amplifying Women's Promotion Success: Crafted a Compelling Story" attracted over 150 staff.</p>

<p>5.4 Career coaching</p>	<p>Professional career coaching, valued at \$2,500 per person was offered to all women awarded the Advancing Women's Success Grant.</p> <p>Aimed at early to mid-career academic women, this initiative supports the career pipeline of talented women in STEMM. Between 2017 and 2023, 100 women in STEMM were provided with access to professional career coaching as part of this scheme.</p>
<p>5.5 Local initiatives designed to support gender equity in STEMM</p>	<p>At a local level, STEMM faculties invested resources into initiatives designed to support women's career progression. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty of Information Technology launched Women's Research Accelerator Program, designed to help advance women's career aspirations, academic success as well as foster networking.</li> <li>• The Women in Technology (WIT) mentoring program that connect students with industry professionals to help expand their networks.</li> <li>• Faculty of Pharmacy launched HER Research Matters, a grass-roots driven collective that promotes, sponsors and fosters an inclusive leadership environment to enable all women in academic to reach their full potential. In 2021, this initiative was awarded the Vice-Chancellor's Excellence Award for Diversity and Inclusion.</li> </ul>



## OUTCOMES

To assess whether our actions and strategies helped remove the identified barriers to women’s representation in senior academic roles in STEMM, we examined key gender equity metrics.

1. We analysed trends in women’s representation across academic levels, which historically posed the greatest challenge to change.
2. We examined promotion application data from STEMM faculties, seeking to identify increases in the number of women among promotion applicants, promotion candidates who utilised ‘relevant circumstances’ as well as improvements in their promotion success rate.
3. Finally, we sought to understand whether women’s retention rates had improved, as a sign of the cumulative effectiveness of implemented actions.

In addition, we utilised the biennial Staff Equity and Diversity survey to examine changes in the perception of senior leaders as advocates of gender equality. Our evaluation approach is outlined in **Table 7**.

While we have made progress in the aforementioned metrics, we acknowledge there is still more work ahead. Therefore, we consider our successes as an encouraging sign that we are heading in the right direction, reinforcing our determination to continue these efforts.

Table 7 - Methods for measuring outcomes

Identified barriers	Activities/Outputs	Desired outcomes
1. The need to reaffirm institutional commitment to advancing gender equity	Activities 1.1 - 1.4, focusing on visible commitment of senior leaders, establishment of local EDI committees, fostering ongoing dialogue through events and forums.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved perception of senior leaders as advocates of gender equality (Survey)</li> <li>• Improved representation of women in senior academic roles</li> </ul>
2. The need to address gender bias	Activities 2.1-2.5, focusing on unconscious bias training for promotion panels, provision of resources and influencing policy changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved promotion success rates</li> <li>• Improved representation of women</li> </ul>
3. Low confidence in the Achievement Relative to Opportunity Framework	Activities 3.1-3.3 designed to improve equitable decision-making by expanding understanding of the Achievement Relative to Opportunity Framework.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved uptake of ‘relevant circumstances’ on promotion applications</li> <li>• Improved promotion success rate</li> </ul>
4. Limited visibility and achievements of women and diverse role models in STEMM	Activities 4.1-4.6 including the establishment of STEMM Women Academic Network, showcasing diversity of role models, providing peer support and mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved numbers of women applying for promotion</li> <li>• Improved representation of women</li> <li>• Improved retention rate</li> </ul>
5. Lack of tailored support for women’s career progression	Activities 5.1-5.5, outlining bespoke programs designed to support women’s development and career progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved numbers of women applying for promotion</li> <li>• Improved success rate</li> <li>• Improved retention rate</li> </ul>

# 1. Improved perception of faculty leaders as visible advocates of gender equity

Results from the three rounds of Staff Equity and Diversity Survey enabled us to measure improvements in the perception of faculty leaders who support gender equality.

Between 2017 and 2021, progress was achieved for STEMM academics of all genders (Figure 8). Where possible, we applied an intersectional lens in our analysis in order to understand different experiences.

We found that women from culturally diverse backgrounds (English not as their first language) have not experienced positive gains, indicating persisting systemic barriers for staff from culturally and racially marginalised backgrounds. This has informed the importance of additional future-focused actions (Actions 7 and 8).

We were unable to rerun the survey in 2023 due to the need to prioritise the administration of a mandatory all staff Employee Experience Survey under the Gender Equality Act.

Figure 8 – 2019 and 2021 Survey results regarding leaders

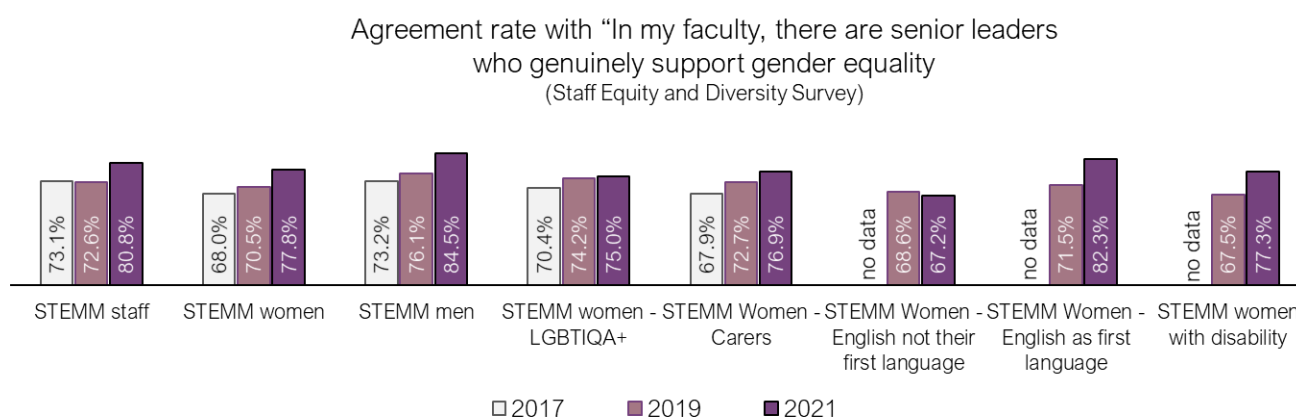


Table 8 - Number of respondents and improvements in agreement with "In my faculty, there are senior leaders who genuinely support gender equality"

Group of respondents	Headcount of survey respondents			Change in agreement rate	
	2017	2019	2021	2017-2021	2019-2021
STEMM academics	486	1030	406	7.7%	8.2%
STEMM women	245	621	230	9.8%	7.3%
STEMM men	239	389	168	11.3%	8.4%
STEMM women - LGBTIQA+	27	31	12	4.6%	0.8%
STEMM Women - Carers	179	267	104	9.0%	4.3%
STEMM Women - English not their first language	no data	121	67	no data	-1.4%
STEMM Women - English as their first language	no data	491	158	no data	10.8%

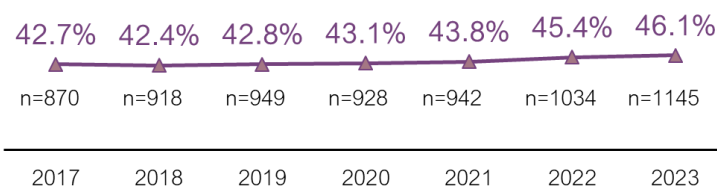
## 2. Improved representation of women in senior academic roles

### Key highlights

- Between 2017 and 2023, the proportion of women in academic roles in STEMM improved from 42.7% in 2017 to 46.1% in 2023 (Figure 9).
- During this period, the headcount of academic women in STEMM increased from 870 to 1145, marking a 31.6% growth, compared to a 14.4% increase in the headcount of men (Table 9).
- With the exception of Level A, women's representation improved across each subsequent academic classification B to E in STEMM (Figures 11-14). Despite the decreased representation at level A, the headcount continued improving but disproportionately increased for men.
- Most notably, between 2017 and 2023, the proportion of women among Associate Professors (Level D) increased by 8.4 percentage points, and by 6.8 percentage points among Professors (Level E), showing encouraging evidence of dismantling systemic barriers to career progress that take years to manifest in data (Figures 13-14).

Figure 9 - 2017 to 2023 Women's representation in STEMM

Levels A to E combined - STEMM Women



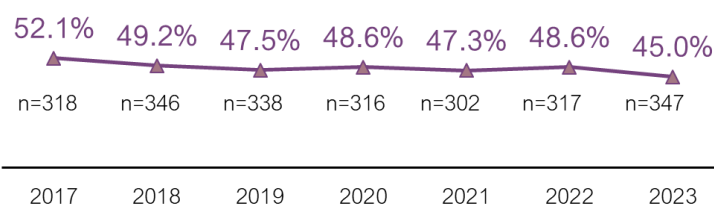
#### 2017-2023 A-E combined

In 2023, women's representation in STEMM roles reached 46.1%.

Their headcount improved from 870 to 1145, representing 31.6% growth. In comparison, the headcount of academic men in STEMM increased at by 14% from 1168 to 1336.

Figure 10 - 2017 to 2023 Women's representation at Level A in STEMM

Level A - STEMM Women

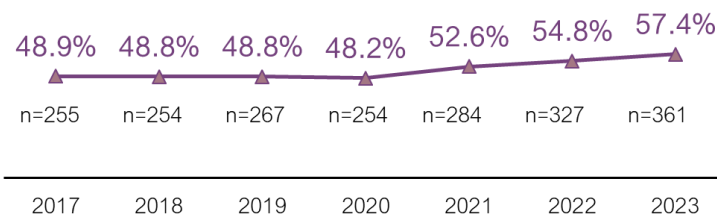


#### 2017-2023 Level A change

Historically, women's representation at Level A (Assistant Lecturer) has been at parity but decreased slightly in recent years, reaching 45% in 2023. That year, a higher number of women than men were promoted to Level B, reflecting observed increases in promotions at Level B. Despite the decrease in women's representation, their headcount at Level A continued to grow.

Figure 11 - 2017 to 2023 Women's representation at Level B in STEMM

Level B - STEMM Women



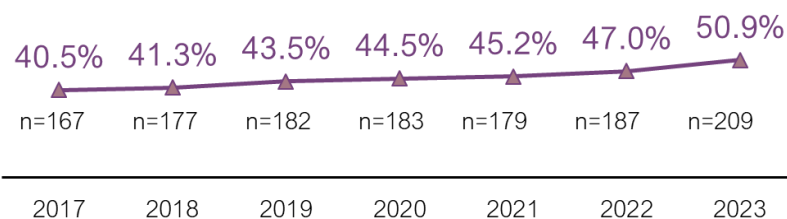
#### 2017-2023 Level B change

Improvements in the representation of women at Level B in STEMM were observed from 2021 onwards, resulting in a notable uplift by December 2023, reaching 57.4%. The headcount of women at Level B increased significantly, from 255 in 2017 to 361 in 2023 (41.6% growth), while the headcount of men remained stable at 267 in 2017; and 268 in 2023.



Figure 12 - 2017 to 2023 Women's representation at Level C in STEMM

Level C - STEMM Women

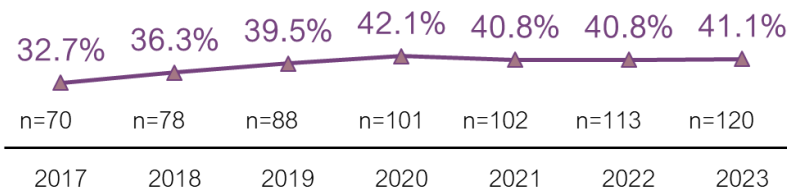


**2017-2023 Level C change**

This employment level experiences frequent changes due to movements associated with promotions from B to C and from C to D. Between 2017 and 2023, the headcount of women increased steadily, with a slight dip in 2021. In 2023, women's representation exceeded 50% for the first time, which strengthens the pipeline for senior academic roles (D and E). No growth was observed in the headcount of men, highlighting the effectiveness of targeted efforts focusing on women.

Figure 13 - 2017 to 2023 Women's representation at Level D in STEMM

Level D - STEMM Women

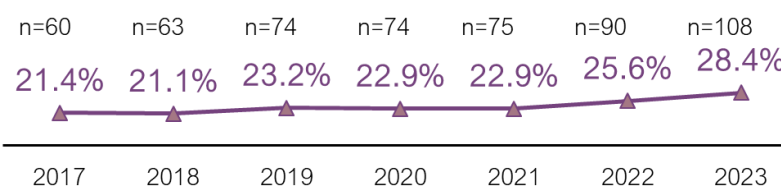


**2017-2023 Level D change**

The percentage of women among Associate Professors (Level D) surged by 8.4 percentage points from 32.7% in 2017 to 41.1% in 2023, signifying accelerated progress compared to stagnant trends before 2017. Particularly noteworthy is the 71.4% increase in the headcount of women at Level D, rising from 70 to 120, contrasted with a mere 19.4% increase for men (Table 9). This underscores concerted efforts at enhancing gender diversity in senior academic roles.

Figure 14 - 2017 to 2023 Women's representation at Level E in STEMM

Level E - STEMM Women



**2017-2023 Level E change**

In 2023, the headcount of women Professors in STEMM exceeded 100 for the first time, marking an 80% increase from 60 in 2017 to 108 in 2023.

Women's representation also rose by 7 percentage points. Although gender parity has not yet been reached, this growth rate accelerated compared to the period from 2011 to 2017, when women's representation at Level E increased by only 3 percentage points.

Table 9 - Percentage change in the headcount of academic staff in STEMM between 2017 and 2023

Level	Women	Men
Level A	9.1%	44.5%
Level B	41.6%	0.4%
Level C	25.1%	17.6%
Level D	71.4%	19.4%
Level E	80.0%	23.6%
Grand total	31.6%	14.4%

### 3. Improved applications for promotion

To evaluate the impact of initiatives aimed at supporting women's career progression, we analysed academic promotion data for the past 6 years.<sup>1</sup> As part of the annual academic promotion round, applications are processed in the second half of year one and outcomes are reported in the first half of year two. Outcomes presented below refer to the application year.

- Between 2017/18 and 2022/23 promotion rounds, the number of academic women in STEMM applying tripled (from 28 to 84), whereas it only increased by 37% for men (from 54 to 74) (Figure 15). Note: it was not possible for us to report on promotion application rates. The difficulty stems from the challenge of accurately identifying the eligible cohort of academic staff for each relevant promotion round.
- Promotion success rate for academic women improved significantly from 67.9% to 94.0% (up by 26.2%), compared to a 5% increase for men (from 81.5% to 86.5%) (Figure 16).

Figure 15 – Count of promotion applicants from STEMM 2017/18 to 2022/23

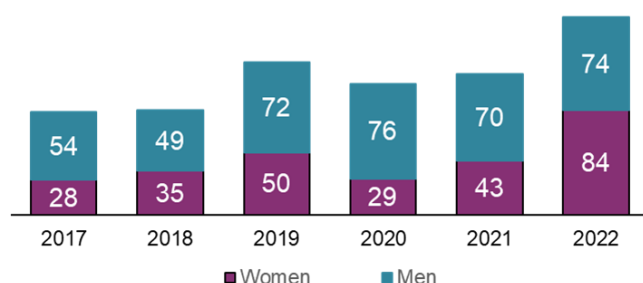


Figure 16 - Promotion success rate in STEMM 2017/18 to 2022/23

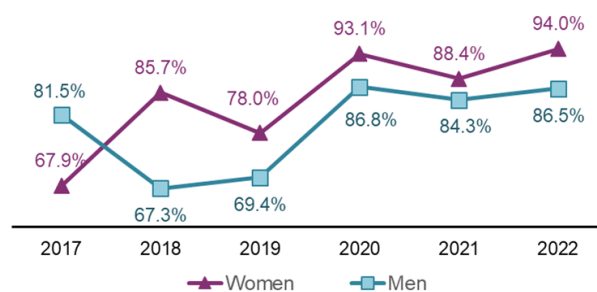


Table 10 – Number of promotion applications and promotion outcomes of academic staff in STEMM

Application round	Promotion applicants		Successfully promoted		Promotion rate	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
2017/18	28	54	19	44	67.9%	81.5%
2018/19	35	49	30	33	85.7%	67.3%
2019/20	50	72	39	50	78.0%	69.4%
2020/21	29	76	27	66	93.1%	86.8%
2021/22	43	70	38	59	88.4%	84.3%
2022/23	84	74	79	64	94.0%	86.5%

The number of successfully promoted STEMM women quadrupled, soaring from 19 in 2017/18 to 79 in 2022/23. Their success rate likewise saw a significant rise, from 67.9% to 94% during this period.

While improvements were also evident for men, the 2022/23 promotion round marked a milestone: for the first time, the number of successfully promoted women in STEMM surpassed that of men (Table 10).

While examining promotion data by faculties could offer valuable insights for the purposes of this application, the smaller population size presents challenges for drawing broader conclusions, particularly given that initiatives supporting STEMM women were not specific to individual faculties. Instead, we opted to compare achievements in STEMM with promotion outcomes in HASS.

Our analysis revealed that in HASS, the number of women's applications did not show any particular increase over the past six years; from 43 in the 2017/2018 application round to 44 in 2022/2023 (2% change). In contrast, the annual application count increased by 39% for HASS men during this time, from 28 to 39. Although the promotion success rate improved in HASS, reaching 82% for all genders (up from 65% for women and from 71% for men), the success rate for women in STEMM was notably higher at 94% (Table 10), indicating the effectiveness of targeted interventions (up from 67.9% in 2017/2018).

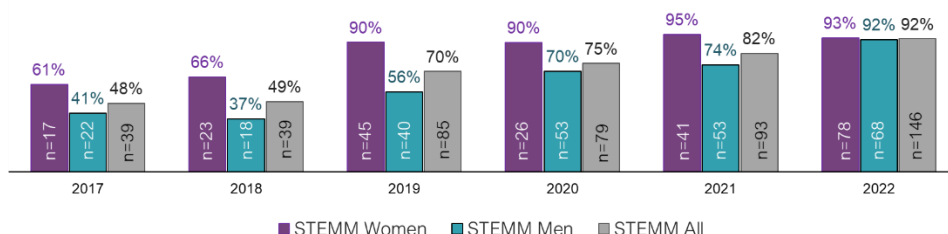
<sup>1</sup> Promotion rounds take place annually, with the most recent data available at the time of writing being the 2022/2023 promotion round.

## Achievement Relative to Opportunity

The proportion of promotion candidates who utilised 'relevant circumstances' on their applications rose from 48% in 2018 to 92% in 2022, with increases observed for both women and men (Figure 17).

Note: Data from the 2023/2024 promotion round are not available because outcomes are yet to be finalised.

Figure 17 - Proportion of Promotion Applicants in STEMM who utilised 'Relevant Circumstances'

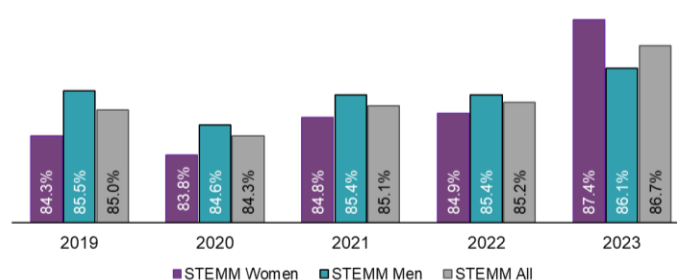


## 4. Improved retention rate

We had anticipated that the implementation of a multi-faceted strategy aimed at supporting women's career progression, facilitating networking and fostering connections would result in an improvement in women's retention rate.

Between 2019 and 2023, women's retention rate<sup>2</sup> improved considerably, by 3.1 percentage points. In comparison, men experienced a more modest increase of 0.6 percentage points. In 2023, women's retention rate surpassed men's retention rate for the first time (Figure 18).

Figure 18 - Retention rate of academic staff in STEMM 2019-2023



Analysis conducted across primary organisation units indicated progress in retaining academic women in all STEMM faculties (Table 11). Between 2019 and 2023, within each STEMM faculty, the retention rate for women showed a more pronounced improvement compared to that of men. This underscores the effectiveness of multi-year programs and initiatives dedicated to fostering gender equality outcomes.

Table 11 – Women's retention rate in STEMM Faculties 2019-2023

STEMM Faculty	Women's retention rate					2019-23
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
Faculty of Engineering	76.1%	82.3%	73.9%	76.8%	78.5%	2.3%
Faculty of Information Technology	72.1%	77.5%	84.1%	89.1%	85.9%	13.8%
Faculty of Med Nursing & Health Sci	86.6%	85.0%	86.6%	89.6%	88.8%	2.2%
Faculty of Pharmacy & Pharm Science	80.9%	82.6%	82.6%	75.3%	90.1%	9.3%
Faculty of Science	80.2%	82.5%	78.8%	69.5%	87.3%	7.1%
<b>STEMM Women Total</b>	<b>84.3%</b>	<b>83.8%</b>	<b>84.8%</b>	<b>84.9%</b>	<b>87.4%</b>	<b>3.1%</b>

Table 12 – Men's retention rate in STEMM Faculties 2019-2023

STEMM Faculty	Men's retention rate					2019-23
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
Faculty of Engineering	84.3%	80.7%	81.8%	80.4%	82.7%	-1.7%
Faculty of Information Technology	79.3%	84.0%	84.0%	84.7%	84.1%	4.8%
Faculty of Med Nursing & Health Sci	87.1%	86.2%	87.0%	87.8%	88.0%	0.9%
Faculty of Pharmacy & Pharm Science	88.5%	81.4%	82.2%	87.4%	86.7%	-1.8%
Faculty of Science	85.9%	87.0%	87.4%	85.8%	87.3%	1.4%
<b>STEMM Men Total</b>	<b>85.5%</b>	<b>84.6%</b>	<b>85.4%</b>	<b>85.4%</b>	<b>86.1%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>

Note: We have not been able to analyse retention rates by individual academic levels. The challenge and complexity lie in accurately capturing the impact of staff movements, such as promotions, across different classification levels. For instance, if a staff member is promoted from a lower to a higher academic level, they might be considered retained in terms of overall employment but no longer retained within the initial classification level.

<sup>2</sup> Staff Retention rate was calculated by tracking individual employees over 12-month periods. 2019 retention rate represents the proportion of employees who were employed on 31 December 2018 and remained active employees as of 31 December 2019.

## 5. Improved governance structure

Over the past seven years, we have realized another significant outcome in enhancing the governance structure of committees and groups dedicated to advancing gender equality, diversity, and inclusion throughout the University. This evolution underpins our institutional commitment, evident in the establishment of Faculty-level Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committees. Furthermore, formal appointments to Associate Dean (EDI) roles in three STEMM faculties now demonstrate a proactive approach to embedding these principles within our organisational framework.

Chairs of Faculty-level EDI Committees are members of the Athena SWAN Steering Group, which is tasked with promoting and advancing gender equality, diversity, and inclusion across the University. In this capacity, Faculty representatives play an important role in supporting the objectives of Athena SWAN, identifying challenges, barriers, and opportunities, contributing to the implementation of the Gender Equality Action Plan (2022-2025), actively championing the Athena SWAN principles to drive positive change, and promoting inclusive workplace practices through an intersectional lens.

The Chair of Athena SWAN Steering Group, along with Chairs of Faculty-level EDI Committees, are also ex-officio members of the University-wide overarching Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. This structure facilitates provision of regular updates to the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee and serves as a channel for communication with senior management on gender equity matters as well as diversity and inclusion more broadly.

# IMPACT

## 1. Methodology

To assess the impact of our strategies, programs and initiatives, we have periodically collected and analysed feedback from staff, both beneficiaries of our targeted interventions as well as decision makers and leaders (Table 13). In particular, we sought to explore and understand the impact, and future opportunities, in relation to identified barriers:

- Institutional commitment to advancing gender equity
- Perception of gender bias
- Confidence in equitable decision-making, facilitated by the Achievement Relative to Opportunity Framework
- Visibility of women and diverse role models in STEMM
- Effectiveness of programs tailored to women in STEMM

Wherever feasible, participation data from focus groups and surveys were included in Table 19. However, given that these activities were intended to enrich our understanding of qualitative impact and capture the depth of staff experiences, this section refrains from quantifying individual points of feedback.

Table 13 – Sources of qualitative data and feedback

Sources of qualitative data and feedback		
Focus Groups	2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender equity focus groups were conducted by an external facilitator, collecting insights from 60 participants (43 women; 13 men; 1 gender diverse).</li> <li>• Promotion support focus groups were conducted by an internal facilitator, gathering feedback from 45 participants,</li> </ul>
All-staff surveys - qualitative responses	2021 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff Equity Survey in 2021: 1009 comments were received and analysed (total 971 respondents) across different topics</li> <li>• Employee Experience Survey in 2023: 1136 comments were received and analysed (total 1965 respondents)</li> </ul>
Targeted survey for panel members	2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A bespoke survey was developed to assess progress in equitable promotion practices. 150 senior staff who served on promotion committees in the past, were invited by the Provost to take part. 28 responses were received; gender was not collected.</li> </ul>
Feedback from beneficiaries	2019 - 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback on programs and initiatives was analysed through multiple sources. This included analysis of staff feedback on professional development, which the Talent Development team routinely sends to all training participants (ie Leadership Development masterclasses, Unconscious Bias training, Achievement Relative to Opportunity online module).</li> <li>• Additionally, anonymous feedback was invited following the conclusion of events and activities, such as those targeting members of the STEMM Women Academic Network.</li> </ul>

## Summary of key findings

- Gender equity at Monash is seen as strategic goal and a priority, not 'nice to have'
- Visibility of women in senior positions is seen as indicative of an important cultural change, inspiring further advancements
- Positive acknowledgement that training on unconscious bias is useful and impactful, with further opportunities to continue training managers and supervisors to sustain and deepen the understanding and application of unbiased practices
- Assessments 'Relative to Opportunity' are better understood and utilised
- Targeted programs for women in STEMM are effective and networking opportunities are perceived as valuable.

## 2. Improved institutional commitment to gender equity

### Gender equity as a strategic imperative

A key theme arising from our focus groups was that Monash has made positive steps in recognising and promoting gender equity as a strategic imperative. Staff commented that if there is an issue, senior leaders take it seriously and that data is collected and reported to provide evidence of progress.

*"I can say I've been at Monash now for 11 years and the transition over that period of time where this really becomes almost a standing agenda item in most executive meetings, that is certainly, that's only happened in the last sort of few years, probably three or four years, but prior to that less, much less so. So it really is front of mind I think in most of the strategic discussions."*

Focus group participant, man, academic

### Women in leadership

Another positive step forward, described by focus group participants, was the increase in the number of women in executive roles, and the demonstrable commitment to gender equity. The improved number of women in the most senior roles at the University was seen as indicative of a culture undergoing change, signalling progress towards greater gender diversity and inclusivity:

*"I find that quite powerful when I think about the sector in Australia as a whole to have our VC, our Provost and our DVC are all women... that's something quite noticeable for me."*

- Focus group participant; man, professional

*I think there's lots of really fantastic women now in leadership positions too, it's quite unique in Monash, there's been a real shift just recently actually where I think the VC, the DVC and the DVCR and the DVCE, they're all women now."*

- Focus group participant, woman, academic

*I've been at a couple of universities in Australia, and I think the leadership is more diverse and so there's the phrase "you have to see it to be it" and I do think that when people look at Monash they see women at all levels.*

- Focus group participant; woman, academic

Focus group participants spoke positively about the ways in which these leaders support greater diversity, inclusion and gender equity at the University.

### 3. Improved perception around gender bias

#### Effectiveness of training

Staff who undertook training on unconscious bias between 2022 and 2023 commented on gaining helpful insights into adopting new perspectives and building better workplace culture through inclusion:

*"I came away with a lot of ideas of how to improve inclusivity in my team and across the school."*

*"The strategies on how to encourage a diverse range of discussion and voices in committee meetings was very useful."*

However, some found the focus on gender restrictive and expressed that other dimensions of a person's identity could be effectively incorporated into unconscious bias training content: *"How about age, sexuality, religion."*

Acknowledging that Monash has done a lot of work in raising awareness of unconscious bias, focus group participants further suggested that more explicit efforts needed to redress *"the unconscious favouritism that makes men appear as natural leaders, natural professors and the perfect people to be making the decisions around hiring and promotion."*

*"...what the University doesn't have is a process, a formal process for recognising unconscious and conscious bias . . . I think there's lots of really complex stuff there and even though we have unconscious bias training we don't have any process of how to account for that and to make it conscious and to make it part of all of the decision-making processes when it comes to promotion and grants and assessing someone's performance even and teaching. So yeah, I think there's a lot more that we could do around that."*

- Focus group participant, woman, academic

Similarly, qualitative responses from the Employee Experience Survey confirmed that more can be done in bias awareness.

*"Train managers to understand their unconscious biases and be more flexible, understanding and aware with leadership."*

- Survey respondent; woman

This feedback confirmed that while progress has been made, the journey of proactively addressing unconscious bias in the workplace, and educating the University community, needs to continue (**See Actions 1, 2, 3**).

### 4. Improved confidence in equitable decision-making and the Achievement Relative to Opportunity Framework

#### Effectiveness of a training module

Staff who completed training on Assessing Achievement Relative to Opportunity between 2022 and 2023 praised the module for its content and effectiveness. This feedback, collected through routine evaluation forms by the Talent Engagement and Development team, represents the vast majority of experiences.

*"One of the best modules I have completed recently, really well designed, with realist and appropriate content"*

*"I found it beneficial as I now better understand how equitable assessments have to be made. I confirm that I really like the scenario-based approach. I found the cases very meaningful, and well-crafted to deliver a powerful message."*

The impact of the training was echoed through the majority of qualitative feedback:

*"I found it rather helpful in terms of how you think about the impact of personal circumstances on someone's ability to attend to various aspects of their workload. The different perspectives expressed by the panel members alerted me straight away to bias and prejudice, as well as the need not to compare a candidate to someone else, particularly not to your own experience if it was different from the candidate's experience."*

On a very few occasions where feedback was less positive, participants noted: *"I scored this less because I am already very aware of how relative to opportunity works."*

### Support for candidates

When equipping promotion candidates with tips and strategies to effectively and objectively prepare the 'relative to opportunity' statements, we invited feedback from members of promotion committees on whether they observed any change over time. From the 28 responses received, there was a strong consensus that the quality of these statements has improved:

*"A high proportion of applicants now provide relative to opportunity statements, which reduces the stigma that was previously attached to such statements. Applicants have also improved the information that they have included in these statements, such as explaining more explicitly how their performance was affected by their circumstances, by referring to quantitative and/or qualitative aspects of performance."*

*"Yes, I think this is working well for promotions and the quality of statements is excellent. "*

### Support for decision-makers

We asked promotion committee members whether information pertaining to assessing achievement relative to opportunity helped them feel more supported and have a greater understanding of how to assess promotion applications more equitably.

Feedback collected through a targeted anonymous survey highlighted that the resources developed for promotion committee members on conducting equitable assessments were particularly educational and impactful.

*"Yes, the training and materials provide confidence to take into consideration structural gendered bias within the promotion process. As well, the increased awareness by the assessment committee as a collective has allowed for more collegiate and equitable voices to be heard during the discussion of applications and promoted more effective assessments as a whole."* - Promotion Committee member; 3 years committee experience

Feedback from one Promotion Committee member included an insightful note that the barriers persist for applicants before they apply for promotion, when seeking support from supervisors. Focus groups also highlighted that despite recent efforts to improve the promotion application process, it was still perceived as too long and a "huge amount of work".

While acknowledging improvements in addressing bias and promotion panels "placing much more emphasis on achievement relative to opportunity", women with caregiving responsibilities were those most likely to express concern at the amount of work required to prepare an application.

Enhancing support for academic caregivers and dismantling barriers to their advancement within the academy remains at the forefront of Monash University's Athena SWAN Steering Group (**See Actions 1, 3, 4, 5, 6**).



## 4. Enhanced visibility of women and diverse role models in STEMM

### Visibility of women in senior roles

Women who attended focus groups spoke about being inspired by seeing women in multiple executive roles and of the role modelling they provided. This was particularly the case for women working in STEMM:

*"I've been to a couple of universities in Australia, and I think the leadership is more diverse here...there's the phrase "you have to see it to be it" and I do think that when people look at Monash, they see women at all levels." - Focus Group participant; academic woman*

*"The thing that impresses me, and is unique to Monash, is the number of women in leadership. I am in STEMM and to have every leader above me (VC, Dean and Head of School) as a woman is amazing and pretty much unheard of in STEMM."*

### Advocacy for gender diversity on panels

While the impact of Monash's Panel Pledge initiative was difficult to quantify, signatories shared examples of how they challenged gender disparities on panels and conferences.

*"I'd like to report my first 'win' from the Panel Pledge - I was a keynote speaker at an international conference last week and I noticed they were organising an all-male panel. So I contacted them and told them about the pledge. And they fixed it!"*

When an internal seminar series proposed a panel composed exclusively of men, a line-up of Panel Pledge signatories were quick to challenge the lack of gender diversity, asserting to the organisers:

*"There is no excuse for having an all-male panel of presenters."*

Finally, focus groups participants spoke about flaws in a system that relies on self-nomination.

*"For example, academics are expected to put themselves forward for conference presentations, editorial positions, leadership roles and for promotion but women, people of colour and other under-represented groups are less likely to self-nominate for these opportunities than men." (Focus Group participant - academic woman)*

*"I think that we already know that people that are at a disadvantage in all sorts of social sectors they tend to self-nominate a lot less frequently, so I think there needs to be ways to identify these people earlier and help them through the system a bit better." (Focus Group participant - academic man)*

We have put forward actions to address these findings (**See Actions 7a, b c**).

## 6. Effectiveness of programs tailored to women in STEMM

### Academic promotion support

Our new two-day program "Amplifying Academic Promotion Success Program" targeted women and gender diverse staff who were planning to apply for academic promotion, reaching more 150 staff.

Feedback from participants was unanimous, confirming the positive impact of this initiative:

*"I have been at Monash for over 20 years and this is the best session on advancing women in academia I have ever attended. Congratulations on not only the information provided at the session but especially the positive energy and 'you can do it' attitude to breaking the glass ceiling."*

*"This was one of the best interactive sessions I've attended, thank you for organising this."*

*"The program was highly valuable to understand where I stand with my case in comparison to others. The environment was so supportive and productive."*

*"These two workshops were so informative and helpful, providing much needed guidance in the written application process, along with support amongst colleagues on the same journey. They made such a difference for me."*

*"I think it really got me determined to submit [promotion application] this year but it's a lot of work."*

### **Advancing Women's Academic Success**

Targeting academic women with caregiving responsibilities, this gender equity flagship program has been instrumental in supporting the success and retention of women at critical junctures of their careers, as well as bolstering the leadership career pipeline.

*"This grant produces a great deal of support for someone like myself who has caring commitments with a dependent child that I single-parent and also elderly parents with cancer that I actively support. This program helped strengthen my academic partnerships across the world, as well as support the advancement of early career researchers at Monash who work with me in a research assistance role."*

Participants provided many tangible examples of the program impact, such as:

*"Since getting the support of this funding, I have had more than ten peer reviewed journal articles published and my Google Scholar H index has risen to 28. I have also since been selected to represent the university in international research projects and lead the establishment of a global seminar series with internationally esteemed researchers in this area across the world."*

*"I have benefitted from the award of the funding. It has enabled me to translate research data which was collected in a foreign language."*

The coaching component of the program was described by many as transformative in the long-term:

*"I found the coaching incredibly powerful and valuable. It opened my eyes to what coaching could achieve and how different this is to mentoring relationships. It gave me strategies to build my leadership skills and plan my career progression. My coach was great and had some understanding of academic environments."*

*"The coaching component was incredibly valuable, built confidence, and supported me to prepare for and submit a promotion application (level B to C) in 2022. The application was successful and I was promoted in mid-2023."*

We will ensure this coaching program continues (**see Action 6**).

### **Effectiveness of networking**

Networking opportunities and events for women and non-binary staff were seen as fulfilling an important role, especially for women in STEMM fields where they are the minority. The establishment of the STEMM Women Academic Network has catalysed a significant ripple effect across the University, fostering an inclusive platform for women to connect and thrive. Through its dedicated private discussion forum, as well as access to professional development and networking events, the Network has demonstrated its capacity to cultivate a culture of empowerment and advancement.

Succinctly summarised and echoed by STEMM Women Academic Network members:

*"Thank you for setting up this forum, it's great to be connecting with others in the SWAN network!"*

*"Being in the room, fully engaged with others, was worth its weight in gold."*

*"These networking opportunities are great, I feel energised connecting with women in our STEMM departments. Knowing that others are navigating similar challenges helps build a sense of solidarity and shared purposes. We can support each other in our goals."*

Since the Network's launch, members have been provided with access to leadership training at no cost to participants, which was seen as an important removal of barrier to leadership development.

## Leadership development

Feedback collected on each leadership program through anonymous evaluation forms over the years was analysed and thematically aligned against the following categories:

1. Skill enhancement – topics such as communication, negotiating, influencing.
2. Confidence building – amplifying women’s voices, increasing their visibility
3. Networking opportunities – participants described the value of leadership programs as “tremendous” and commented how such programs not only impart practical skills but also foster introspection and clarity of purpose:

*“I walked away with a better understanding of self and my leadership vision.”*

*“Additionally, the importance of networking and peer support emerged repeatedly as a key factor: Interacting with other participants was incredibly helpful.”*

Participants unanimously valued access to leadership development prior to advancing to more senior positions. There was no negative feedback. However, while women were highly supportive and appreciative of women-only programs, especially when these activities provided opportunities for women to meet other colleagues to share information and experiences, they also commented that this takes time, and this time is being used by men to directly produce academic work.

It is very challenging to eliminate this time disparity and there is ample evidence that women-only programs are impactful. As a potential approach to mitigate this issue, the Athena SWAN Steering Group will advocate for the formal recognition of mentoring activities in workload allocation (**see Action 9**).

## FURTHER ACTIONS

Ref. No.	Rationale /Evidence	Actions & Outputs	Timeframe	Responsibility	Accountability	Success Indicators
1.	Despite efforts to address unconscious bias in the workplace, focus group participants pointed to the pervasive nature of bias as a leading cause behind gender inequities. They highlighted the need for ongoing training on unconscious bias and enhancing its adoption beyond gender.	Review and improve the University's current offering on unconscious bias to ensure it sufficiently incorporates intersectionality, beyond gender.	Q3-Q4 2024	Talent, Engagement and Development Staff Equity Diversity and Inclusion, Monash HR	Chief People Officer	Improved perception of value / positive feedback on unconscious bias training
2.		Remove barriers to access by providing unconscious bias training to staff at subsidised rates or no cost.	From Q1 2025	Talent, Engagement and Development Staff Equity Diversity and Inclusion, Monash HR		Increased uptake of training in 2025 compared to previous years
3.		Enhance existing resources on Monash website to provide examples of how unconscious bias affects decision-making	Q4 2024	Staff Equity Diversity and Inclusion, Monash HR		Decision-makers are better equipped to mitigate unconscious bias, evidenced by survey findings

Ref. No.	Rationale /Evidence	Actions & Outputs	Timeframe	Responsibility	Accountability	Success Indicators
4.	Focus groups provided strong evidence that targeted programs for women need to continue, including support for academic promotion applicants and funding support for women with caregiving commitments.	Continue to provide and evaluate the effectiveness of “Amplifying promotion success” program for women and non-binary staff	Ongoing	Athena SWAN Steering Group Staff Equity Diversity and Inclusion, Monash HR	Provost and Vice-President Chief People Officer	Promotion success rate of program participants  Improved promotion applications by staff from diverse backgrounds; by part-time employees
5.		Host annual celebration to recognise the International Day of Women and Girls in Science and their intersectional identities	Ongoing	Athena SWAN Steering Group Staff Equity Diversity and Inclusion, Monash HR	Chief People Officer	Improved perception of leadership commitment to gender equity, diversity and inclusion in STEMM
6.		Continuation of the Advancing Women’s Success Grant program; a targeted initiative for early to mid-career women with caregiving responsibilities	Q4 2024	Staff Equity Diversity and Inclusion, Monash HR	Vice-Provost Academic Affairs Chief People Officer	Improved retention of academic women with caregiving commitments Improved progression for target groups (B-C; C-D)
7.	Focus Groups revealed systemic issues in relation to the concept of self-nomination, where academic staff have to put themselves forward for promotion. It was recognised that staff from culturally diverse backgrounds are often reluctant to do so, missing out on career progression opportunities.	Seek to gain more nuanced understanding of application data: a) Enhance current reporting capabilities by developing indicators for cultural diversity and linguistic diversity, derived from a staff member’s country of birth. b) Analyse and report promotion applications and outcomes through intersectional lens. c) Proactively identify women and non-binary staff who have not applied for promotion in a specified period of time and request an update on career plan support from their supervisors/Head of School.	Q3 2024	Staff Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Monash HR  Workforce Analytics team, Monash HR	Chief People Officer	Detailed report on academic promotion outcomes is developed for the Vice-Chancellor’s Group through equity indicators  Improved promotion applications and outcomes for staff from culturally diverse backgrounds

Ref. No.	Rationale /Evidence	Actions & Outputs	Timeframe	Responsibility	Accountability	Success Indicators
8.	Through survey results and focus groups, we identified the need to provide targeted support to members of marginalised communities	<p>a) Develop a pilot peer mentoring program for women and non-binary staff from diverse communities to foster their sense of connection and belonging</p> <p>b) Facilitate networking opportunities, access to development and workshops at no cost to participants</p> <p>c) Evaluate the pilot program and adjust accordingly</p>	<p>Q2-Q4 2024</p> <p>Q3-Q4 2024</p> <p>2025</p>	Staff Equity Diversity and Inclusion, Monash HR	Chief People Officer	<p>Strong interest and engagement level from eligible staff (rich representation from various backgrounds and communities)</p> <p>Participant satisfaction through post-program survey</p> <p>Participant feedback on the relevance and usefulness of accompanying activities</p> <p>Retention rate of participants over time</p>
9.	Women's participation in programs like networking, mentoring, and knowledge sharing, while beneficial, is creating an imbalance in productivity and career advancement opportunities due to the additional service load they undertake. This is further compounded by women's underrepresentation in STEMM.	Develop a proposal to ensure that contributions to networking, mentoring, and knowledge sharing are formally recognised and valued in workload allocation and performance evaluations.	Q4 2024 – Q1 2025	Athena SWAN Steering Group	Provost and Vice-President	Proposed policy change is supported and implemented