



S A G E

SCIENCE IN AUSTRALIA
GENDER EQUITY

SAGE Cygnet Awards

for the SAGE Athena Swan
Accreditation Pathway

Monash University
Application Form

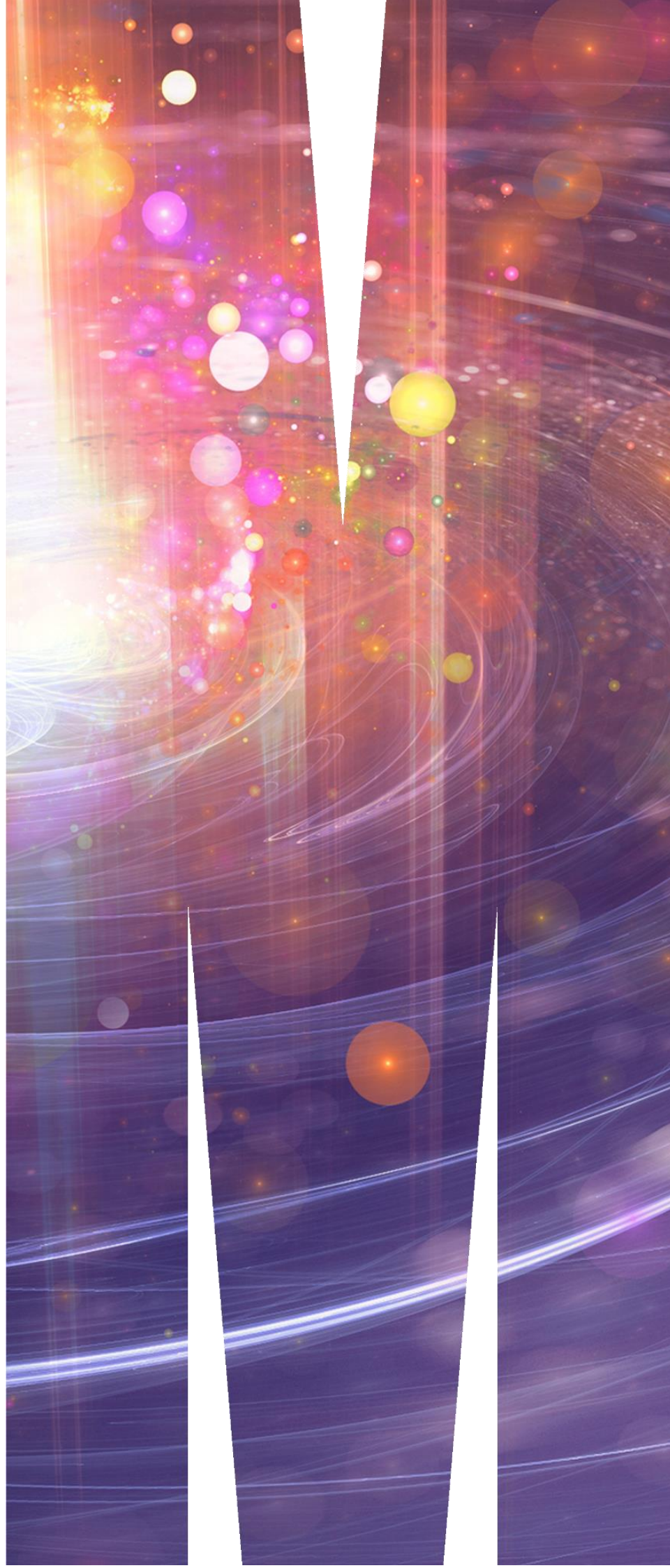
SAGE Cygnet Award Application

Name of Institution	Monash University
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SAGE ATHENA SWAN CYGNET AWARD APPLICATION

Faculty of Information
Technology:
Supporting academic
parents and carers

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 #3

	Current Cygnet	Barrier
[Mandatory] Institution-wide barrier		
[Mandatory] Sub-group barrier	✓	Faculty of Information Technology: Supporting academic parents and carers
Institution-wide		
[Please select] Institution-wide/Sub-group barrier		Relative to Opportunity in Academic Promotion
Sub-group barrier		Indigenous Recruitment

Section	Word limit	Actual Word Count
Cygnets Submission	2500	2145
Key Barriers		379
Evidence of Barriers		684
Activities and Outputs		232
Outcomes		605
Impact		245
Future Action Plan		Table



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KEY BARRIER

Monash University identified that caring responsibilities were profoundly affecting one's ability to maintain academic career momentum, remain competitive in research, and ultimately succeed.

Data from focus groups, commissioned in 2017 by the Athena SWAN Steering Group, revealed a range of systemic barriers associated with caregiving commitments and career interruptions, which had a cumulative impact on work experience, productivity, career progression, research competitiveness, and overall sense of wellbeing.

Building on these findings, and the Athena SWAN Bronze Action Plan (2018-2021), the Faculty of Information Technology (FIT) recognised the importance of developing comprehensive support for their academic staff to alleviate the challenges uniquely experienced by parents and carers.

Academic women, in particular, emphasised challenges in retaining their research momentum during and after periods of parental leave, as well as effectively managing their teaching load on their return to work from extended leave. While they adopted approaches to remain productive, such efforts left them feeling exhausted, excluded, and in many instances leaving academia.

Additionally, caregiving responsibilities affected academic staff of all genders in their ability to travel for work, thus impacting their participation in interstate or international conferences, hindering the establishment of important partnerships and collaborations necessary for leading international research.

These sentiments projected into the low retention rate of Faculty of IT academic staff in 2019, which stood as the lowest among all STEMM faculties at Monash, with figures of 72.1% for women and 79.3% for men.

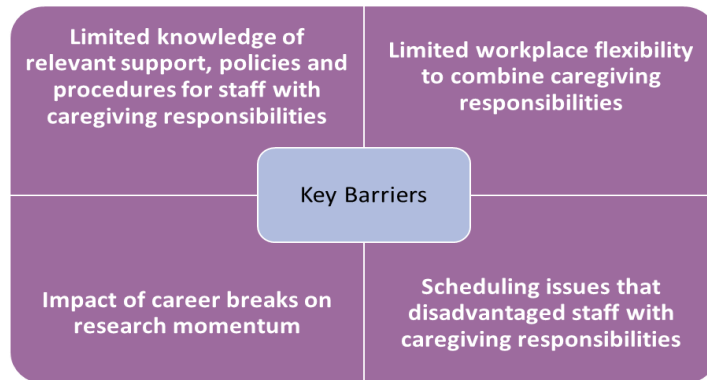
Addressing these challenges required a multifaceted approach, including cultural shifts to combat bias and break down traditional stereotypes around parenting roles, to encourage staff of all genders to actively participate in parenting/caregiving.

Scope

- While caregiving responsibilities also impact students and professional staff, this application focuses on the unique needs of academic staff.
- We acknowledge that the Outcomes and Impacts reported by the Faculty of IT cannot be attributed to singular initiative but rather the cumulative impact of many different initiatives, with some activities, policies and outputs being implemented Monash-wide, while others were faculty-specific.
- This application refers to parents/carers/caregivers as those who have responsibility for the care of a dependent. A dependent may include a child under the age of 18 years and/or completing their secondary education, an elderly parent or other relative with a disability or chronic medical condition.

EVIDENCE OF BARRIER

As part of our Athena SWAN Self-Assessment process (2016-2018), we identified the following key barriers relating to caregiving that were impacting academic staff in the Faculty of IT.



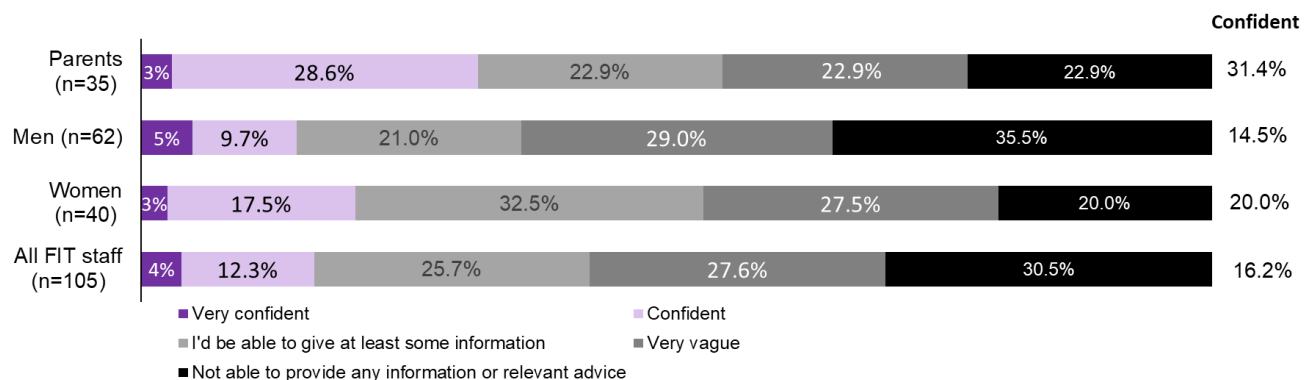
1. Limited knowledge of relevant policies and support for staff with caregiving responsibilities

Policies

Despite Monash's support policies and resources, only 16.2% of 105 Faculty of IT survey respondents in 2019 were confident in finding this information (Figure 1). Alarming, 30.5% said they couldn't provide any information. Participants struggled to locate resources for new parents and support for parental leave impacts on careers, repeatedly expressing confusion about accessing caregiving-related support, policies, and procedures.

“It’s hard to have knowledge about family friendly policies...it’s hard to know where to find them.”

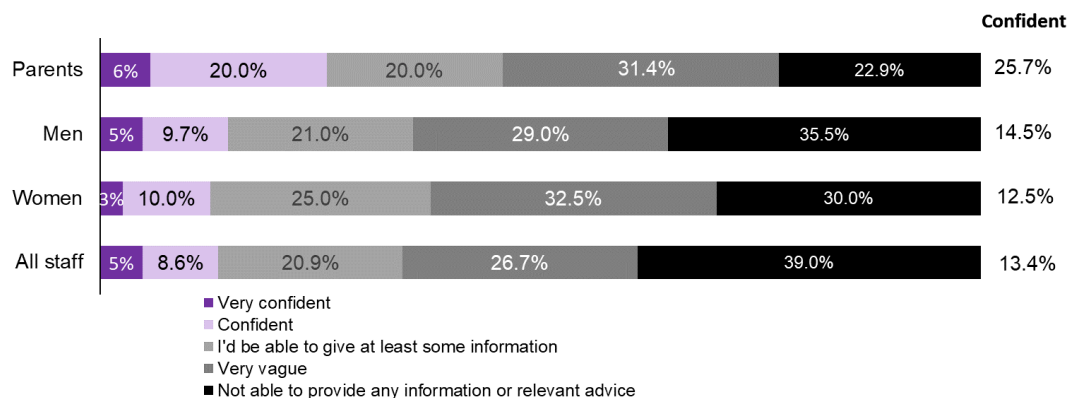
Figure 1 - Faculty of IT responses to “How confident are you in guiding someone to find help for expectant and new parents” (2019 Staff Equity and Diversity Survey)



Parenting rooms

While Monash University has ensured there are parenting rooms on all campuses and workplace locations, their promotion online was not necessarily sufficient and evidence confirmed that staff awareness was low (Figure 2). Qualitative data echoed our survey findings: “I knew there were parenting rooms but didn’t know how to find them.”

Figure 2 - Faculty of IT responses to “How confident are you in guiding someone to find parenting rooms (2019 Staff Equity and Diversity Survey)

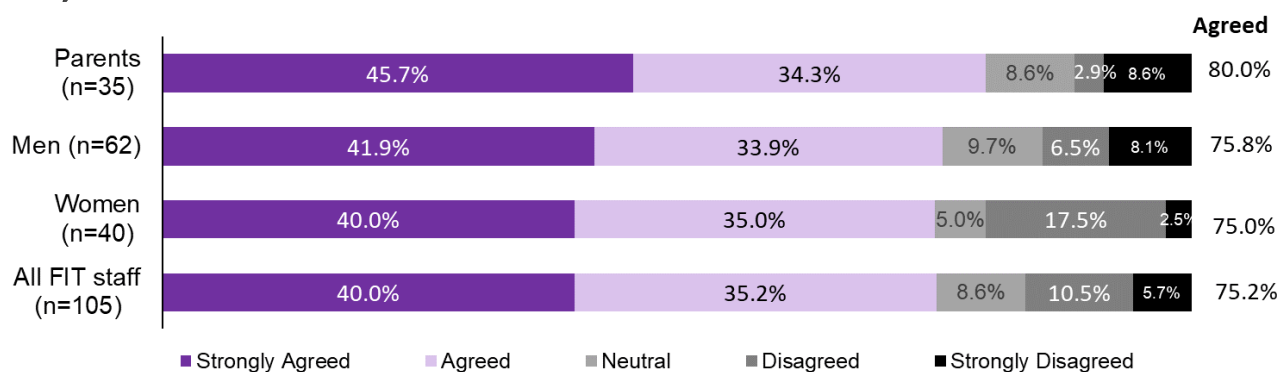


2. Limited workplace flexibility to combine caregiving responsibilities

Despite Monash’s well-established policies and processes to support flexible work, Faculty of IT survey respondents highlighted significant discrepancies in regards to how flexible work requests are managed at a local level when academic staff seek local agreements. This was evidenced by historically lower uptakes by academic staff of carers leave as well as part-time work.

Our 2019 Staff Equity and Diversity Survey provided a baseline for improvement (Figure 3).

Figure 3 - Faculty of IT responses to “I have the flexibility to manage work and personal commitments” (2019 Staff Equity and Diversity Survey)

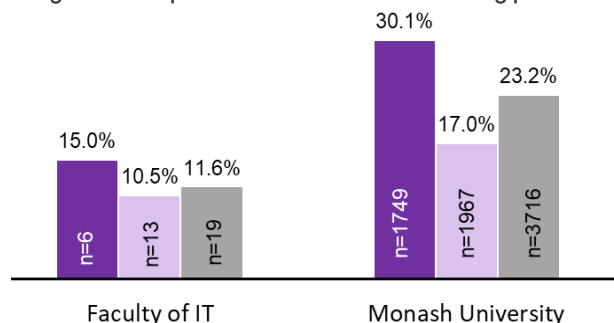


Aligned with these findings was the underutilisation of paid carer’s leave and part-time work arrangements, shown through the analysis of staff data. Despite 33% of Faculty of IT staff being parents/carers of dependent children, only 7.7% of academic women (n=3) and 8.3% of men (n=10) accessed carer’s leave in 2019.

Analysis of staff data showed the utilisation of part-time work by academic staff in the Faculty of IT was below the University-wide average, potentially indicating systemic issues where staff do not necessarily feel empowered to request flexible work arrangements (Figure 4).

Additionally, Faculty of IT staff felt that workload allocation guidelines for staff returning from prolonged leave were not transparent and consistent.

Figure 4 - Proportion of academic staff working part-time



The notion of gendered stereotypes, and gendered attitudes towards caregiving were also cited as barriers to equality:

“I’m a carer for my aunt and I was saying how hard it’s to juggle and how my brothers don’t take that role...and the male colleagues were sympathetic but they said ‘Oh but you know that the men have it hard too because we have to be the providers’, which really made it clear to me that this is the stereotype we’re facing where men are saying they are the providers and women’s job is to provide the care.”

3. Impact of career breaks on research momentum

One of key findings was career breaks and women’s disproportionate responsibility for children and others dependants had significant impacts on their ability to successfully maintain career momentum and achieve seniority. This was despite the measures put in place by the University such as generous parental leave provisions, on-site childcare, women’s career programs and measuring achievement relative to opportunity.

2017 focus group participant explained: “My energy is stretched in all directions because I know that if I want to keep up going up this hill with my career, I’ve got a kid, I’ve got my and family and I’m telling myself no, I’m not going to put them below my career, so it’s like there is a puzzle, which I’m sure some men have but most don’t.”

Caring responsibilities and career breaks associated with periods of parental leave were reported to profoundly affect women’s ability to maintain research career momentum and remain competitive in research. Several focus group participants said they faced a difficult decision whether to even return to work after parental leave.

“It was just really hard to get back to work, I was juggling with myself whether I should stay at home and be a stay-at-home mum or whether I should try to keep pushing through with the science, I guess I felt like often it’s women who have to go through that.”

2017 focus group participants recommended providing women returning from parental leave with teaching relief as a way to support women “rebuild their research careers. This would help women become competitive again”.

Caring responsibilities were also found to restrict staff’s ability to travel for research purposes (e.g., conferences) and participate in activities outside of core business hours. Faculty of IT staff noted that workload allocation for staff returning from parental and carer’s leave did not prioritise supporting the re-establishment of research activity:

“There is a need for research support for those with caring responsibilities and a readjustment of the research, education and service load, particularly after returning from parental leave.”

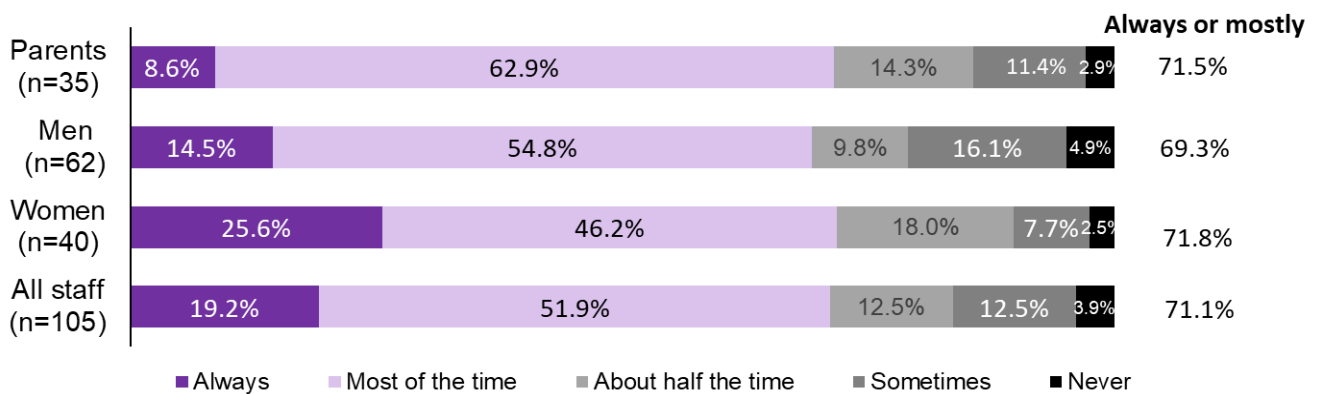
4. Scheduling issues that disadvantaged staff with caregiving responsibilities

Survey data revealed caregiving responsibilities restricted staff’s ability to participate in work activities outside of core business hours.

Faculty Meeting Times

An internal audit showed that only one third of STEMM departments had formal guidelines on family-friendly meeting hours. As of 2019, the Faculty of IT had no formal guidelines on family-friendly meeting hours, and survey data confirmed this was highly problematic. Indeed, less than three quarters of Faculty of IT staff (71.1%) said that meetings were held at times that make it easy for them to attend (Figure 5). This was the lowest result from all STEMM faculties at Monash.

Figure 5 - Faculty of IT responses to “How frequently meetings in your faculty are held at a time that makes it easy for you to attend” (2019 Staff Equity and Diversity Survey)



Subsequent analysis of Faculty of IT meeting data revealed reasons that helped substantiate these survey findings. For example, in 2019, Faculty of IT meetings were by default scheduled to be held in-person, a practice that was altered a year later by the adoption of hybrid working. Additionally, we found evidence of meetings that were regularly scheduled on the same day of the week, which made attendance difficult for some staff who have regular commitments on those dates.

This was reflected in the survey’s qualitative feedback:

“There are often meetings like our Town Halls, always scheduled on Monday morning”.

Staff of all genders noted the timing of meetings often coincided with drop-off and pick-up times: “I have found that certain meetings are always scheduled for 9am which is difficult”

“I’m a bit caught between the two myself. I have one girl in primary and another in the first year of high school and with my wife working full time I’m in a bind with school pickups. I come in early (8.30am) but I have to leave by 3pm, so any meetings set for then are no good for me.”

Faculty of IT survey respondent



ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

Monash University’s Athena SWAN Bronze Action Plan (2018-2022) highlighted the importance of supporting staff with caring responsibilities. A section dedicated to removing barriers for parents and carers focused on addressing the following three objectives:

- Support parents and carers through provision of accurate and accessible information (Table 1)
- Support parents and carers through tailored programs aimed at workplace flexibility and research support (Table 2, 3, 4)
- Support parents and carers through inclusive scheduling (Table 3)

This section presents information on relevant activities and outputs that were introduced and implemented centrally with the oversight of Athena SWAN Steering Group, and highlights the role of the Faculty of IT in adopting and expanding on these initiatives.

Additionally, the Faculty of IT sought to remove the identified barriers through a bespoke set of activities, that later became leading examples for other faculties to follow. Working closely with the Athena SWAN Steering Group, the Faculty’s commitment to advancing gender equity, diversity and inclusion can be further exemplified by the re-establishment of a Faculty-level Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee in 2019 (after an inactive period), and their subsequent appointment of an inaugural Associate Dean (EDI) position in 2020.

1. Supporting parents and carers through the provision of accurate and accessible information

Table 1 - Actions developed to improve knowledge of relevant policies, programs and support

Action Item	Implementation notes
Develop a new web presence promoting information on how Monash is supporting staff who are parents and carers (Athena SWAN Action Plan)	Completed: “Supporting Parents” website was developed to aid clarity of support available to Monash staff (launched in 2019) . The website is periodically revised and updated. Monash.edu/gender-equity/parents
Enhance the content of the 'Expectant and New Parents' Guide by including useful case studies/narratives from Monash staff (Athena SWAN Action Plan)	Completed: The Expectant and New Parents Guide simplifies information in relevant policies and procedures in relation to leave entitlements and preparing for parental leave. In 2020, the content was improved, now including narratives and testimonials of Monash staff (2020)
Increase visibility of available support through various communication channels (Athena SWAN Action Plan)	Ongoing: Developed a video featuring academic staff, including the Dean of the Faculty of IT, designed to promote gender equity, including flexible working and support for parents/carers (2019) Developed a networking group “Parents at Monash” available on the University’s social communication platform Workplace.

Action Item	Implementation notes
Improving knowledge and awareness within the Faculty of IT	The Faculty of IT took proactive steps to share and promote centrally developed policies and resources through various channels such as faculty town hall meetings, internal newsletters and email communications. This effort is ongoing and aimed to ensure better access to accurate information regarding the University's support for caregivers.
Ensuring support for parents and carers is perceived as relevant by staff of all genders	<p>By disseminating information widely through targeted channels, the Faculty intentionally pursued a gender-neutral approach to promote support for parents and carers, aiming to challenge prevailing stereotypes.</p> <p>In an effort to challenge gender stereotypes and promote equitable support for caregivers of all genders, the Faculty of IT sought to reduce the disproportionate burden of caring responsibilities traditionally placed on birthing parents, commonly women.</p> <p>Therefore, initiatives aimed at supporting parents and carers were explicitly promoted and available to staff of all genders. This included the Faculty of IT Carer Travel Grant as well as Workload Adjustments initiative, making it open to birthing parents, adoptive parents as well as partners of all genders.</p>
Improving knowledge of where to find parenting rooms	<p>In 2021, the Faculty of IT created an online map pinpointing the nearest parenting rooms, and collaborated with the Buildings and Property Division to ensure these facilities were suitable and fit for purposes, in both new and refurbished buildings.</p> <p>The Dean personally communicated this map, along with other pertinent support information, to all Faculty of IT staff.</p> <p>Furthermore, the Faculty of IT has reworked their intranet pages to provide staff with clear and comprehensive information about expressing and parenting rooms within Faculty buildings, including instructions how staff and supervisors can request a delivery of Mobile Breastfeeding Kits.</p>

2. Support parents and carers through tailored programs aimed at workplace flexibility and increasing research support

Table 2 – Promotion and development of targeted programs

Action Item	Implementation notes
Encourage participation in centrally operating programs for parents/carers	<p>The Advancing Women’s Success Grant is a flagship gender equity program designed to support the career progression of early- to mid-career academic women with carer responsibilities. Eligible staff can apply each year for up to \$11,000 to fund career building activities and extraordinary carer costs, associated with non-standard childcare arrangements and travelling for work with their dependents.</p> <p>Although the program has been in place for many years, the uptake by the Faculty of IT staff was historically minimal. Once the program restarted from a Covid-19 related pause (2020-2021) in 2022, the Faculty of IT began promoting this opportunity more actively to eligible staff through targeted emails to encourage uptake.</p>
Support additional travel costs for parents and carers	<p>Expanding on the successes of the centrally managed Advancing Women’s Success Grant, which includes a unique travel component for carers and their dependents, the Faculty of IT launched the Carers Travel Support Scheme in 2023. This initiative aims to specifically address the challenges carers face when traveling away from home to engage in academic activities like conferences, events, and fieldwork.</p> <p>Under this scheme, eligible staff can apply for a travel grant of up to \$3,000 to offset travel expenses. Notably, the program is designed to be inclusive and non-competitive, continuing until the allocated faculty budget is depleted. This ensures accessibility for all eligible staff members.</p> <p>A total of 19 eligible staff (13 women; 5 men; 1 gender not stated) received the Carers Travel Support Scheme and were able to fund travel support for their dependent/s and partners to accompany them on work-related travel. Others were able to fund travel for a family member to provide care for the dependents at home. This allowed all recipients to attend national and international conferences, which, without this funding support, would not have been possible.</p>
Focus on increasing workplace flexibility	<p>Since 2022, the Faculty of IT has intensified its communication approach towards caregivers, actively encouraging parents and carers of all genders to access paid carer’s leave.</p>
Flexibility in workload management	<p>The Faculty’s Workload Management Team now facilitates adjustments to workload for staff returning from carer’s leave. This allows greater flexibility in balancing research activities, without being overly burdened with teaching or service duties. These arrangements further ensure balance between returning to work with on-going carer responsibilities (see Table 4 for additional activities).</p>

Table 3 - Actions designed to mitigate impacts of Covid-19 on parents and carers

Alleviate the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on academic staff with caring responsibilities
<p>Position paper to safeguard gender equity in STEMM</p> <p>In 2020, the Athena SWAN Steering Group developed a position paper for the University leaders about the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on staff with caregiving responsibilities, noting the closure of schools and outside school hours programs in Victoria impacted working parents and carers with an unprecedented intensity.</p> <p>The Faculty of IT was a leading contributor in developing recommendations for leaders to adopt, including increased support for workplace flexibility, normalising work from home and introducing inclusive meeting times wherein all faculty/departmental meetings are only scheduled during family-friendly hours. Deans of all STEMM faculties at Monash, including the Faculty of IT, upheld the recommendations.</p> <p>Faculty of IT initiatives</p> <p>In line with these commitments, the leadership of the Faculty of IT took proactive steps to address the impact of Covid-19 disruptions by offering targeted support to academic staff with caring responsibilities. This included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Financial support valued at \$6,000 per person, to go towards their research endeavours. In 2022, the Faculty provided this support to 12 impacted academics (5 women; 7 men).2) Access to additional tutors to reduce the staff member's teaching hours, and alleviate barriers associated with research interruptions. This support was utilised by 15 staff (6 women; 9 men). <p>Both initiatives were inclusive and available to staff of all genders, allowing them to request either one or both options based on their individual circumstances. Eligible circumstances included parenthood of young children as well as caregiving responsibilities for elderly parents. Invitations to request support were extended to all Teaching and Research staff, and additionally, faculty leadership reached out to those whose circumstances were already known to them.</p>

Table 4 - Actions designed to support parents and carers before and after parental leave

Tailored research support for staff before and after parental leave
<p>Initiatives designed to reduce the impact of Covid-19 related research disruptions on parents and carers laid the foundation for establishing ongoing programs.</p> <p>Workload adjustments and access to additional tutors</p> <p>Since 2022, the Faculty of IT has led an important initiative aimed at bolstering support for Teaching and Research staff with caregiving responsibilities on their return from extended career interruption, such as parental leave or partner leave. To mitigate the potential impact of these breaks on academic success, and to help rebuild their career momentum, the Faculty’s Workload Management Team facilitates adjustments to workload for returning staff, allowing them to re-establish their research activities and more effectively restart their research momentum without being overly burdened with teaching or service duties.</p> <p>Since the program’s introduction, seven women benefited from the bespoke workload adjustments on their return to work. On average, this support equates to 367 research offset hours per person, cumulatively addressing approximately 2,500 hours of “lost” research time for the seven eligible staff.</p> <p>Funding to support research activities</p> <p>In recognition of the significant impact that career interruptions have on academic success, the Faculty of IT has dedicated funding to support staff who are commencing, or returning from, parental leave, based on the length of interruptions to the person’s career.</p> <p>This additional funding can be used flexibly to support the continuation of the staff member’s research by hiring a Research Assistant or covering other faculty-approved expenses to help accelerate research or boost career development. In 2023, three women (Teaching and Research) benefitted from this additional financial support, valued at \$60-70K per person depending on the length of leave taken.</p>

3. Supporting parents and carers through inclusive scheduling

Table 5 - Actions designed to promote inclusive scheduling

Establishing inclusive scheduling guidelines as the new norm
<p>Inclusive scheduling of meetings</p> <p>Since 2020, the Faculty of IT has implemented guidelines to ensure more equitable and inclusive meeting practices for staff caregiving responsibilities.</p> <p>In response to staff feedback, new standards were integrated into the Faculty guidelines, featuring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• shorter meeting times• hybrid participation via Zoom options• designated meeting-free days• scheduling key meetings outside school drop off/pickup times (all meetings are held between 10am-2pm). <p>Inclusive scheduling was driven both by Covid-19 related lockdowns, as well as the Faculty's steadfast commitment to achieve an important cultural shift, where the unique needs of staff with caregiving responsibilities were recognised, and relevant accommodations made.</p> <p>The Faculty's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee continues championing and monitoring inclusive scheduling across different departments.</p>



OUTCOMES

To evaluate the effectiveness of our implemented strategies, we utilised various data sources to measure and report on outcomes. This included analysis of staff data, University-wide Staff Equity and Diversity Survey (see **Table 6** for headcount of responses) and Faculty of IT-specific surveys.

In referring to the identified barriers, this section seeks to demonstrate:

1. Improved knowledge and awareness of relevant policies and programs for staff with caregiving responsibilities	Longitudinal Staff Equity and Diversity Survey 2019-2024 See Table 6 for headcount of survey responses from the Faculty of IT staff ¹
2. Improved experience with inclusive scheduling of Faculty meetings	
3. Enhanced workplace flexibility and support for staff with caregiving responsibilities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased uptake of carer’s leave by staff of all genders Increased uptake of part-time work by staff of all genders Improved staff retention rate 	Human Resources staff data 2019-2023

Table 6 - Headcount of Faculty of IT responses to the Staff Equity and Diversity Survey

Survey year	Headcount of survey responses received from Faculty of IT			
	All	Women	Men	Parents
2019	105	40	62	35
2021	107	50	53	49
2024	84	49	18	56

¹ We were unable to retrospectively calculate the proportion of survey respondents due to the challenge of determining the exact number of active employee who comprised the target group at that specific point in time

1. Improved knowledge and awareness of relevant policies and programs for staff with caregiving responsibilities

Improved awareness of initiatives to support staff with caregiving responsibilities

Through a wide range of activities aimed at communicating existing support for parents and carers, including programs, policies, resources and facilities, Faculty of IT achieved demonstrable progress in improving staff knowledge and awareness.

Figure 6 - Faculty of IT responses to “How confident are you in guiding someone to find help for expectant and new parents (Staff Equity and Diversity Survey, 2019-2024)

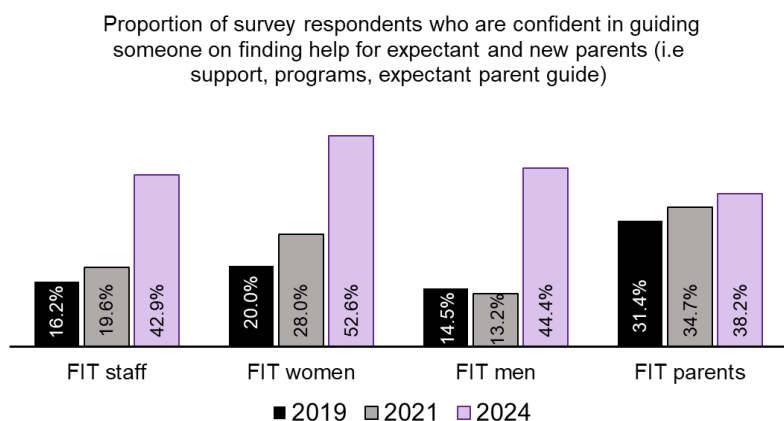
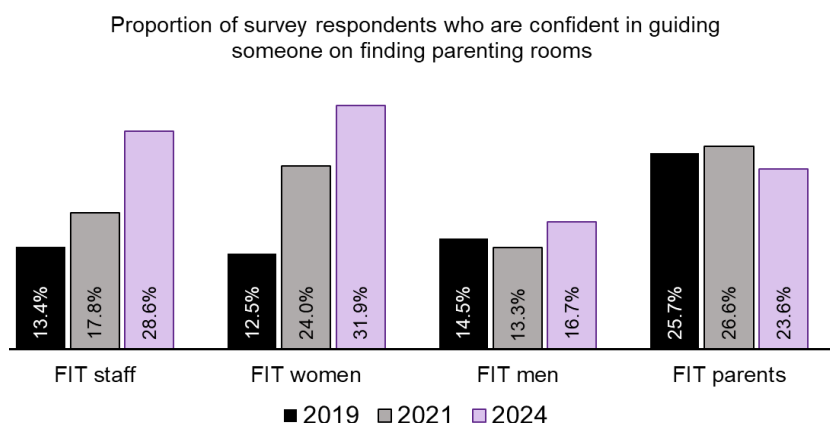


Figure 7 - Faculty of IT responses to “How confident are you in guiding someone to find parenting facilities (Staff Equity and Diversity Survey, 2019-2024)



As indicated in Figure 6, staff confidence in relation to guiding someone to find help for parents and carers has surged from 16.2% in 2019 to 42.9% in 2024.

These improvements were notable among women, with considerable increases also observed among men (rising from 14.5% in 2019 to 44.4% in 2024).

Moreover, while our focus was on measuring confidence by combining “very confident” + “confident” responses, there were also positive changes in terms of the proportion of staff who said “I’d be able to give at least some information in guiding someone in locating expectant and new parent resources (from 25% in 2019 and 2021 to 41% in 2024).

When considering confidence in finding parenting rooms, there were encouraging signs of progress between 2019 and 2024, rising from 13.4% in 2019 to 28.6% in 2024 (Figure 7).

However, we also acknowledge that less than one third of Faculty of IT staff are currently aware of the locations of parenting rooms. This confirms more needs to be done and we remain vigilant in our endeavours.

Note: In 2024, survey uptake by men was low (18 vs. 62 and 53 in previous rounds), as detailed in Table 6. This means that men’s responses may not be statistically representative of the broader group, and may still indirectly indicate prevailing gendered perceptions that caregiving responsibilities may be less relevant to men.

Another positive outcome was the improved uptake of the Advancing Women’s Success Grant by Faculty of IT women with caregiving responsibilities (Table 7).

The Advancing Women’s Success Grant Program faced underutilisation by Faculty of IT academics initially. Through intensified communication efforts within the Faculty, employing targeted channels and other concerted strategies to encourage eligible staff to apply, the Grant Program received 5 FIT applications in 2023, marking the highest number on record (Table 7).

Additionally, the success rate has seen a considerable improvement over the past two years.

Table 7 - Faculty of IT participation in the Advancing Women's Success Grant (2019-2023)

Year	Application count	Successful applicants	Success rate
2019	2	0	0%
2020	4	1	25%
2021	Program did not run due to Covid-19		
2022	1	1	100%
2023	5	2	40%

2. Core Faculty meetings are held during inclusive meeting times

To gain insights into staff perceptions of inclusive meeting times, the Faculty of IT ran a subset of Staff Equity and Diversity survey items in early 2024.

Figure 8 - Faculty of IT agreement with inclusive meeting times (Staff Equity and Diversity Survey)

Proportion of staff who responded "Always" or "Most of the Time" to "How frequently meetings in your faculty are held at a time that makes it easy for you to attend?"

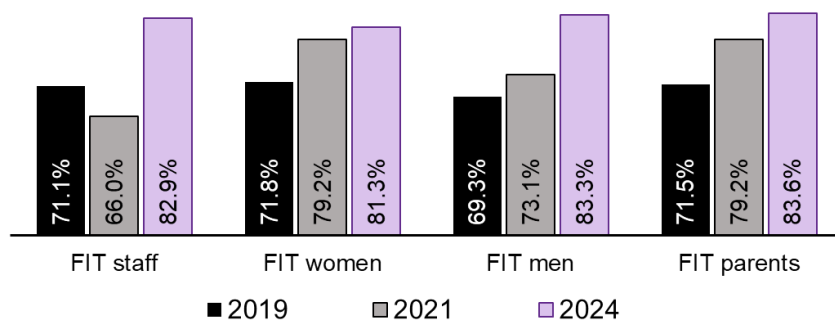


Figure 8 shows that progress was recorded across all genders. Parents and carers, who comprised 66.6% of all survey respondents in 2024 (Table 6), expressed the strongest agreement rate with inclusive meeting times, standing at 83.6%.

Importantly, in 2024, no survey respondent said “never” (compared to 4% that did in 2019) and only 10% of staff reported ‘sometimes’ (compared to 12.5% in 2019).

An audit of Faculty of IT meeting times highlighted key improvements, noting that in 2022 and 2023, all Dean’s Advisory Council meetings and all Faculty town hall meetings were held during family-friendly times between 10am-2pm, with a hybrid option always available.

While all efforts are made to hold departmental meetings between 10am-2pm, with a hybrid option, our audit revealed that there are still some exceptional occasions when departmental meetings have had to be held outside this time period. The Faculty of IT continues monitoring inclusive scheduling, with the EDI’s committee oversight.

3. Enhanced workplace flexibility and support for staff with caregiving commitments

Results from our longitudinal Staff Equity and Diversity Survey allowed us to examine experiences of FIT staff in relation to workplace flexibility.

Between 2019 and 2021, we noticed sharp increases in the agreement rates (Figure 9) and acknowledge that Covid-19 brought about significant changes in the way we work, with workplace flexibility becoming more prevalent due to the necessity imposed by lockdowns.

Improvements carried out to 2023 for parents and carers, although there was a slight decrease in improvements for other staff groups.

An analysis of disagreements, as depicted in Figure 10, revealed a reassuring trend indicating that barriers to workplace flexibility are steadily diminishing.

Figure 9 - Faculty of IT staff agreement with survey item "I have the flexibility I need to manage work and other commitments" (2019-2023)

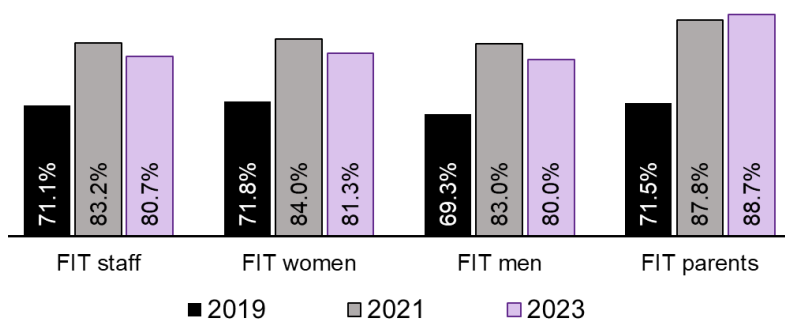
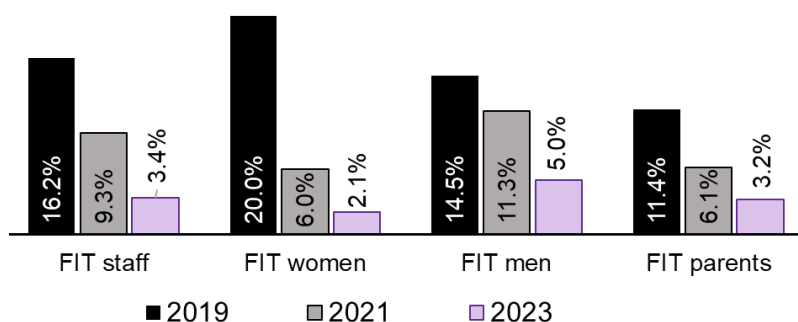


Figure 10 - Faculty of IT staff disagreement with survey item "I have the flexibility I need to manage work and other commitments" (2019-2023)



Improved uptake of carer's leave by academic staff of all genders

In addition to changing perceptions in relation to support for flexibility, we further examined staff data by comparing uptake of carer's and part-time work over the past five years.

Table 8 - Headcount of Faculty of IT academics who accessed carer's leave (2019-2023)

Year	Number of staff accessing carer's leave		
	Women	Men	All
2019	3	10	13
2020	8	10	18
2021	9	14	23
2022	13	20	33
2023	17	22	39

Between 2019 and 2023, the number of academic staff who accessed carer's leave has tripled, from 13 in 2019 to 39 in 2023 (Table 8).

While the increase was most significant for women, men's doubled uptake has demonstrated effectiveness of the Faculty's multifaceted approach to promoting support for parents of all genders. As HR records do not hold information on a staff member's parenthood status, we are unable to provide a data breakdown beyond gender.

To obtain a more comprehensive picture, the uptake of carer's leave was examined as the proportion of staff in the Faculty of IT (Figure 11). Results of this analysis revealed emerging evidence that active and open promotion of carer's leave for staff of all genders has helped to effectively challenge traditional stereotypes.

Figure 11 - Proportion of Faculty of IT academic staff who utilised carer's leave (2019-2023)

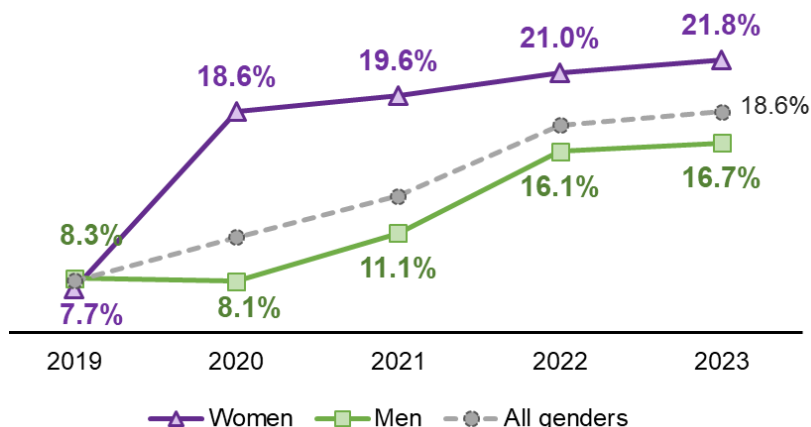


Figure 11 shows the uptake of carer's leave, presented as a percentage of staff. Women's uptake experienced an initial increase during the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic and maintained a consistent level, reaching 21.8% by 2023. Conversely, men's uptake progressed at a slower pace, with their uptake peaking in 2022 and 2023.

Improved uptake of paid partner leave

Access to paid partner leave, available to staff upon the arrival of their child, has seen minimal change over the past five years. In 2019, only 2.5% eligible Faculty of IT academic staff accessed this leave, a figure that rose slightly to 3% in 2023. We correlated this with the declining birth rate in Australia, which saw a drop from 1.9 in 2012, to 1.7 in 2021 and 1.63 in 2022. In this context, even a small, incremental increase in uptake of paid partner leave represents a positive trend.

Increased uptake of part-time work by academic staff of all genders

By normalising part-time work for men, the Faculty of IT sought to challenge traditional gender stereotypes and the notion that caregiving responsibilities should predominantly fall on women. Analysis of uptake of part-time work revealed encouraging increases in the number and proportion of academic men choosing to work part-time (Table 9). In 2019, only 11.6% academics in the Faculty of IT were engaged on part-time basis (10.5% of men and 15% women), which increased to 19.1% by 2023 (16.8% men and 23.7% women).

Table 9 - Number and proportion of FIT academic staff who work part-time (2019-2023)

Year	Headcount of academic staff working part-time			Proportion of academic staff working part-time		
	Women	Men	All Genders	Women	Men	All Genders
2019	6	13	19	15.0%	10.5%	11.6%
2020	9	11	20	20.5%	8.4%	11.4%
2021	9	10	19	16.7%	8.1%	10.7%
2022	28	20	48	22.0%	8.1%	12.8%
2023	23	31	54	23.7%	16.8%	19.1%

4. Improved retention of academic staff

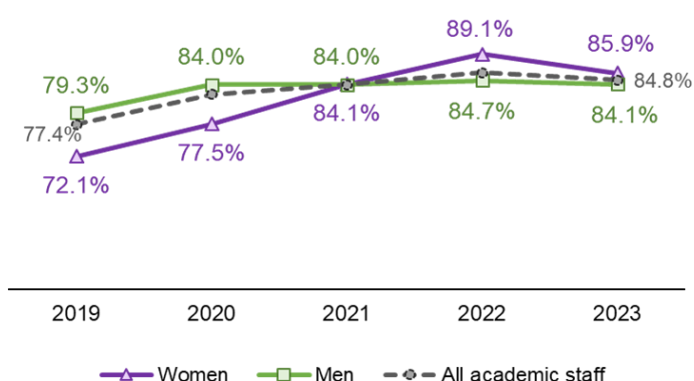
The Faculty of IT recorded improvements in the retention rate of academic staff over the past five years. In 2019, the rate lagged behind the University average by 14.1 percentage points, with a notable 7.2 difference between women and men.

By 2022, the Faculty of IT marked a significant milestone as the retention rate of women surpassed that of men for the first time in the analysed period, reaching 89.1% (Figure 12).

A small decrease was observed at the end of 2023. However, the initial gender gap has narrowed to 1.8%. Other factors such as sector-wide employment contract changes in 2023 may have also influenced these figures in 2023.

This will be monitored closely going forward.

Figure 12 - Retention rate of academic staff in Faculty of IT (2019-2023)



IMPACT

We invited and analysed feedback using different data collection methods and multiple sources, outlined in Table 10. This enabled us to gather evidence of impact in addressing the identified barriers:

Evidence of positive impact	Barriers addressed
1. Improved experience for staff with caregiving responsibilities: workplace flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited knowledge of relevant support, policies and procedures for staff with caregiving responsibilities • Limited workplace flexibility to combine caregiving responsibilities • Impact of career breaks on research momentum • Scheduling issues that disadvantaged staff with caregiving responsibilities
2. Improved experience for staff with caregiving responsibilities: supporting research momentum	
3. Improved experience for staff with caregiving responsibilities: inclusive scheduling	

Table 10 - Sources of qualitative data and feedback

Staff Equity and Diversity Survey (2021; 2024)	Developed by Monash’s Athena SWAN Steering Group, the survey was administered in 2019 and 2021. Unfortunately, we were not able to run it in 2023 due to the need to prioritise all staff Employee Experience Survey mandated by the Victorian Gender Equality Act. Therefore, in early 2024, the Faculty of IT administered a subset of the questionnaire locally to enable reporting on progress against key benchmark questions (n=84; 58.3% women; 21.4% men; 2.4% non-binary; 66.7% parents/carers).
Employee Experience Survey (2023)	The survey was developed by the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector. Qualitative feedback was analysed from Faculty of IT respondents (n=119; 40.3% women; 50.4% men; 1.7% non-binary; 53% parents/carers).
Athena SWAN in-depth staff interviews (2024)	Interviews were conducted with staff who expressed interest in sharing in-depth accounts of their lived experience (n=7). This opportunity was promoted faculty-wide, supplementary to the survey administered at the same time.
Faculty of IT EDI Staff feedback survey (2023)	In 2023, the Faculty of IT EDI Committee developed and released a survey to gain staff feedback on EDI initiatives. Qualitative feedback from this survey was analysed (n= 24, 54.2% women, 41.7% men, 4.1% non-binary or gender not stated).
Feedback from recipients of targeted support for parents/carers (2021-24)	Feedback was analysed from “Supporting Parents and Carers Survey” the Faculty of IT ran in 2022 (n= 13, 69% men, 31% women; 100% all parents/carers). Additionally, targeted interviews were conducted with Faculty of IT staff in 2024, who received a form of support upon their return from extended carers’ leave (n=5; 4 women, 1 man). Feedback from Faculty of IT recipients of the Advancing Women’s Success Grant was also examined.
Feedback from other key stakeholders	We invited feedback from key stakeholders (academic and professional staff) who were involved in the development of Faculty of IT initiatives: Dean of Faculty of IT, Inaugural Associate Dean (EDI) in the Faculty of IT, Associate Dean (EDI) – current, Senior HR Business Partner

Summary of key findings

The Faculty of IT has witnessed positive changes in the experiences of academic staff with caregiving responsibilities, thanks to a multifaceted approach that supports inclusive practices, policies, enhances workplace flexibility, and develops targeted initiatives:

- Workload adjustments and additional research time was appreciated by academic carers returning to work after leave.
- Efforts to challenge gendered perceptions and support caregivers of all genders were recognised by staff.
- Considerable support was expressed for the Faculty of IT Carers Travel Support Scheme, with recipients highlighting its instrumental role in career development and facilitating participation in important conferences. Feedback from staff of all genders underscored the scheme's practicality and impact on family support during travel.
- Recipients of funding reported significant research outputs and impacts, demonstrating the tangible benefits of these support mechanisms.
- Faculty of IT staff expressed appreciation for policies that support work-life balance, such as scheduling meetings within working hours and providing online options for attendance, particularly benefiting parents and caregivers. These shifts in scheduling practices were seen as significant improvements, reflecting the faculty's commitment to promoting an inclusive and supportive workplace culture.



1. Improved experience for staff with caregiving responsibilities:

Workplace flexibility

Workplace flexibility and adjustments supported staff with caregiving responsibilities to pursue their careers

Through the Faculty of IT survey, staff with caregiving responsibilities (n=24) noted that improved workplace flexibility allowed them to feel supported and understood:

“I returned from maternity leave last year and have a one year old. The initiative such as 'return to work adjustments' has helped me to continue pursuing my career without any fear of being left behind.” - *Anonymous feedback - Faculty of IT survey*

“The faculty has made me feel very supported and the needs I have as a carer were understood by the faculty” and “as a primary carer I feel so supported.” - *Anonymous feedback - Faculty of IT survey*

“To have a baby as an academic is challenging because the career break can be substantial. The faculty’s workload adjustments and flexibility helped me ease back into work and also launch research ideas. The support has shown me how much the faculty values work-life balance.” - *Anonymous feedback - Faculty of IT survey*

Similar impact was observed by others, who were not necessarily recipients of the support. A senior HR Business Partner, who has been supporting the Faculty of IT, commented on the faculty’s proactive journey in supporting academic parents commented in an interview:

“The Faculty of IT has implemented some fantastic initiatives. One I've been actively engaged in is supporting parents as they transition back to work after parental leave. This involves providing eligible staff with workload adjustments within the faculty, granting them additional research time. The aim is to alleviate some of the challenges posed by parental leave and caregiving responsibilities, allowing these staff members to focus more on their research and gradually build momentum back in their academic careers.” - *Senior HR Business Partner*

There has been also recognition that carer support does not just relate to those caring for children, but also those caring for elderly family members, which also tends to place extra burden on women.

“I think it is important that the University recognise that elder care as well as care of children is a big issue, and I appreciate that they are doing that.” - *Anonymous feedback - Faculty of IT survey*

This commitment was formalised as an action item, aiming to ensure ongoing communication and acknowledgment by IT faculty leaders of support for caregivers, including those providing elder care (refer to Further Actions 2.2).

Challenging and dismantling gendered perceptions and barriers associated with caregiving responsibilities

There has been an improved recognition that the needs of all carers across all genders are supported by the Faculty. Through surveys and interviews, staff commented on the support shown by supervisors for gender equality:

“My Department is very inclusive and my supervisor is amazingly supportive of gender equality and cultural diversity in a genuine and real way. I am very proud of this and feel it is an excellent model for inclusiveness for other workplaces.” *Interview participant, academic woman from culturally and linguistically diverse background*

“I can say the Faculty of IT is committed to dismantling barriers faced by...carers and caregivers”

This was echoed by the inaugural Associate Dean (EDI), noting that bespoke training for supervisors will help further enhance the adoption of inclusive practices.

“Our supervisors continue to play a critical role in fostering an inclusive culture by enabling workplace flexibility and translating procedures into practice.”

There has also been feedback from staff who expressed that more needs to be done:

“I think it is important to continue to work towards equal policies for mothers and fathers to enable us all to spread caregiving load.” *Anonymous feedback - Faculty of IT survey*

This finding aligns with commitments in the University’s Gender Equality Action Plan, with oversight and input from the Athena SWAN Steering Group.

2. Improved experience for staff with caregiving responsibilities: Supporting research momentum

Targeted travel grants for carers made a positive difference

There was considerable support for the Faculty Carers Travel Support Scheme. As three recipients (academic women) noted:

“When I was traveling to the academic conferences, other academics were amazed by the fact that there was support from my faculty for this.”

“It [the grant] has enabled me to do important things for my career development”.

“... made it possible for me to take part in important career development travel and presenting at three conferences. I would not otherwise have been able to take part without this support, and it enabled important working opportunities.”

Benefits have been felt by staff of all genders, as one recipient noted (man):

“The faculty’s carers travel support was very straightforward to apply for. My partner’s shifts fall outside of available childcare, so with the scheme we were able to get a relative to look over the kids while I attended an important conference. It meant my family had practical support when I was travelling.”

We invited feedback on research support for caregivers from other staff in the faculty. There was a sense of pride and celebration that the Faculty of IT has invested resources to address known barriers for caregivers:

“The travel support scheme is incredibly valuable and a major achievement, congratulations! It was not available when I would have needed to use it, but having this support would have made a huge difference for me at the time.” and another noted “I hope this scheme continues”. *Anonymous feedback - Faculty of IT survey*

Increased participation in the Advancing Women’s Success Grant Program has also generated positive feedback, demonstrating its effectiveness in helping staff with caregiving responsibilities alleviate impacts of career interruptions, support overall academic success. Faculty of IT recipients shared:

“This grant was really helpful in terms of boosting my academic performance while I was on my maternity leave. It was used to hire a Research Assistant to help me to do some experimental work. We have a quality submission out of this. Moreover, I really love the coaching program in the grant.” - *Program participant; Level B academic woman who was subsequently promoted to Level C*

“This grant is very helpful. It enhanced my research by allowing me to hire a research assistant for conducting research. I really appreciate it.” - *Program participant; Level B academic woman*

The commitment to continue the Faculty of IT Carer Travel grant is captured in the Action Plan, item 3.2.

Impact of academic funding to support parents and carers before and after parental leave

This initiative has been perceived as highly successful. Indeed, the positive outcomes of the initiative have driven the “faculty to reassess support for caregivers more generally and create additional initiatives.” - *Inaugural Associate Dean EDI*

Recipients of academic research funding support were invited to provide feedback on the research impacts that have resulted from this funding initiative. Their feedback was unanimous in the value of the initiative, specifically in supporting their academic success and research outputs, as exemplified by the following quote from one of the recipients:

“The teaching support helped me focus more on my research activities and on supervising my PhD students. At the beginning of 2022, two of my PhD students commenced their studies, allowing me to spend considerable time helping them narrow down their research topics and catch up with the literature (having returned from maternity leave). We managed to write two survey papers at the end of 2022 as a result, which were submitted last year to the ACM Computing Survey (CORE A*). One of these was recently published, while the other is under revision. The published paper has had a significant impact, attracting 24 and 42 citations”. *Recipient of academic research funding support; woman via feedback form*

“The research support led to four publications (Q1 journals).” *Recipient of academic research funding support; man, via feedback form*

Impact of academic funding to support parents and carers before and after parental leave (cont.)

“The additional academic funding was highly beneficial, as it allowed me to purchase a local workstation with a powerful GPU for my student to develop advanced deep learning models for time series classification. So far, he has published four papers in top venues, and one paper is currently under review. I am confident that without this local workstation, we could not have achieved such results in just two years.” - *Recipient of academic research funding support; woman, via feedback form*

“I am very appreciative of the support by the faculty. With the extra funding received, I was able to hire two RAs to help with research work and get two publications in late 2022 and 2023. I presented this paper at an international conference in 2023. I also got some time early in 2023 to prepare for one ARC DP application and one ARC Industry Hub that were both awarded”. - *Recipient of academic research funding support; woman, via feedback form*

However, one recipient did note that while the funding was useful, it did not satisfactorily mitigate the career disruptions they had experienced and further work is still needed in this area:

“The extra money is useful, but due to family I cannot do research travel as much as I used to ... so it is a very slow recovery.” - *Recipient of academic research funding support; woman, via feedback form*

There was also some useful feedback to remind us of the importance of more comprehensive onboarding for new hires to ensure they are made aware of these programs from the start of their appointment:

“As a new staff member, I have never heard of many of these programs. Those I have heard of were simply by word-of-mouth if someone mentioned them to me but advertising the initiatives for new staff would be beneficial.” *Anonymous feedback – Faculty of IT survey*

This feedback informed the development of actions 1.1 and 1.2.

3. Improved experience for staff with caregiving responsibilities: Inclusive scheduling

New standards around equitable and inclusive meeting arrangements proved effective

Qualitative section on the recent survey yielded comments on inclusive scheduling of meetings, with Faculty of IT staff commenting that:

“Having an online option to attend meetings and events has helped staff with family commitments.”
– *Academic woman; feedback from in-depth interview*

“A lot of flexibility is now given for people who have family duties, illness, and other issues which is incredibly helpful.” – *Academic woman, feedback via Employee Experience Survey*

Succinctly summarised by the Inaugural Associated Dean (EDI) of the Faculty of IT: “We have introduced and integrated new standards around equitable, inclusive meeting arrangements to our Faculty guidelines to enhance workplace wellbeing. We also established and encouraged meeting-free Fridays and a full meeting-free week to alleviate stress and fatigue caused by online working during the pandemic.” Through interviews with Faculty of IT staff, it became apparent that these standards have been well adopted and perceived as the new norm.

Staff also acknowledge that Covid-19 helped achieve important shifts in the workplace:

“I suppose the pandemic has moved almost everyone to flexible at home/at work arrangements, out of necessity, so it seems to be working OK” – *Academic woman, feedback via Staff Equity and Diversity survey*

The continued promotion of inclusive scheduling and flexible work arrangements has been deemed paramount and has been included in the action plan (5.1, 5.2).

New standards around equitable and inclusive meeting arrangements proved effective (cont.)

Feedback on inclusive meeting times showed positive impact of the Faculty's culture on parents and carers:

"As a parent of school-aged and preschool-aged children, there are some policies that make it much easier . Such as I don't have any classes scheduled after 3pm, which allows me to do school pick-up as this is very important to me. Meetings are also held within times that do not include drop-off and pick-up times. There is one meeting that just has to be at 4pm as this is the only time everyone is available. But the team has ensured that it is on-line so I can join from wherever I may be with the kids and there are never any questions asked if I can't make it because I am caring for my family".

– *Academic woman via in-depth interview*

"There has been some shift in consistency marking meetings [i.e., meeting to discuss calibration of grading of undergraduate assignments]. These meetings used to always be held on weekends or at 8pm. This was so hard with family. Now they are always held in working hours and recorded to assist staff with family. This is makes things so much better".

– *Academic woman via in-depth interview*

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"Having an online option to attend meetings and events has helped staff with family commitments."

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"There has been some shift in consistency marking meetings [i.e., meeting to discuss calibration of grading of undergraduate assignments]. These meetings used to always be held on weekends or at 8pm. This was so hard with family. Now they are always held in working hours and recorded to assist staff with family. This is makes things so much better".

– *Academic woman via in-depth interview*

FURTHER ACTIONS

Ref. No.	Rationale/Evidence	Actions & Outputs	Timeframe (start & end)	Responsibility/Accountability	Success Measures
1.	Consultations revealed that the onboarding phase is vital for sharing essential information with employees. It's also crucial to promote policies, procedures, and support programs for parents and carers right from the start.	<p>1.1. Enhance Faculty of IT onboarding pack</p> <p>1.2 Enhance Monash University's information in the onboarding online portal with a section on supporting parents and cares</p>	<p>Q3 2024 – Q1-2025</p> <p>Q4 2024 – Q2 2025</p>	<p>Faculty of IT Associate Dean EDI Strategy and Planning Specialist</p> <p>Staff Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Monash HR</p>	Improved awareness of relevant policies, procedures and support programs, evidenced by FIT survey results
2.	While strides have been made in promoting flexible work and various leave options for parents and carers of all genders, we need to sustain these efforts and ensure clarity that caring extends to Elder care. This includes professional development for supervisors to ensure they are equipped with knowledge and understanding of inclusive practices, and managing hybrid/flexible teams.	<p>2.1 Provide targeted training for supervisors on inclusive practices, managing hybrid teams and supporting flexible work. (identify provider, pilot training; conduct evaluation; roll out)</p> <p>2.2 Ensure regular communication from Faculty of IT leaders regarding support for caregiving, including elder care.</p>	<p>Q4 2024 – Q2 2025;</p> <p>Then annually</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Faculty of IT Associate Dean EDI Strategy and Planning Specialist Supported by Staff Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Monash HR and by Talent Engagement and Development, Monash HR</p> <p>Dean, Faculty of IT Faculty of IT Associate Dean EDI</p>	<p>Feedback from supervisors who completed the training indicates their improved confidence in implementing inclusive practices, managing hybrid teams, and supporting flexible work arrangements post-training.</p> <p>Smaller gender gap in the adoption of flexible work options and relevant leave</p>
3.	Feedback regarding the research support and carer travel grant has shown their positive impact on staff. It's crucial to maintain this commitment going forward.	<p>3.1 Continue offering targeted research support to parents and carers ta FIT</p> <p>3.2 Continue offering FIT carer travel grant.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Faculty of IT Associate Dean EDI Strategy and Planning Specialist</p> <p>Faculty of IT Associate Dean EDI Strategy and Planning Specialist</p>	<p>Retention and career progression of employees with caregiving responsibilities;</p> <p>Academic outputs attributed to the research support</p>
4.	Faculty of IT staff require access to suitably equipped parenting and expressing rooms at relevant campus locations; however these facilities can, at times, provide varying level of standard.	Annual audit of parenting facilities and expressing rooms available to all Faculty of IT staff; report results to Building and Property Division and request updates if needed.	Annually	Faculty of IT Associate Dean EDI Strategy and Planning Specialist	Improved staff satisfaction with parenting facilities, evidenced by focus groups and local surveys
5.	Inclusive scheduling has shown to be highly impactful for staff with caregiving commitments; we will continue championing inclusive scheduling to promote this practice more widely	<p>5.1 Continue championing inclusive scheduling within the faculty</p> <p>5.2 Share inclusive scheduling practices with other faculties;</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Q3 2024</p>	<p>Faculty of IT Associate Dean EDI Strategy and Planning Specialist</p> <p>Faculty of IT Executive</p>	Improved responses to questions regarding inclusive scheduling, by parents and carers of all genders