

SAGE Cygnet Award Application

Supporting gender
representation in STEM
through improving recruitment
practices







SAGE

SCIENCE IN AUSTRALIA
GENDER EQUITY

SAGE Cygnet Award Application

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Date of Application	October 2025
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UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY: SAGE CYGNET #3

	 Current Cygnet	Barrier
[Mandatory] Institution-wide barrier		Supporting gender representation in STEM through improving recruitment practices
[Mandatory] Sub-group barrier	#1	Supporting career pathways to academia for women in Engineering and IT
Sub-group barrier	#2	Attracting girls and women to Engineering and IT studies

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

UTS acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, the Boorooberongal people of the Dharug Nation, the Bidiagal people and the Gamaygal people upon whose ancestral lands our university stands. We would also like to pay respect to the Elders both past and present, acknowledging them as the traditional custodians of knowledge for these lands.

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We also gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the dedicated team who supported our Cygnet Programs. Their collaboration, expertise, and tireless efforts were fundamental to this report which is a testament to the collective commitment to excellence and shared purpose.

The Recruitment Cygnet Working Group included:

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- Prof. Ian Menz, Assoc. Prof. Lana McClements, Dr. Georgina Meakin, Prof. Steven Langford – Faculty of Science
- Elaine Pereira – Faculty of Health
- Dr. Berice Anning - Office of PVC (Indigenous Leadership & Engagement)
- Pam Price, Marie Heatherington, Mel Ali, Kyle Plant, Dominic Cozzupoli - People and Culture
- Mark So - Data Analytics and Insights Unit
- Dr. Kumudika de Silva, Rachel Gray, Ekaterina Frolov, Jo Tilly – Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion

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NOTES

Dimensions of diversity

Gender data is presented as sex (female/male) or gender identity (women/men). While reporting as sex is not our preference, we are constrained by the way data is collected and are currently working to improve our systems. Information on other genders is collected at appointment but has not been included in the following analyses as numbers are low and also to ensure consistency between datasets. The impending implementation of a new enterprise resource planning (ERP) system will enable us to gain a better understanding of our staff diversity. Other data gathering processes, e.g., surveys, allow us to collect more nuanced information on gender and cultural diversity.

Factors impacting desired outcomes

There have been two main constraints impacting this Cygnet. One was restricted recruitment during 2020-2022 due to COVID and again since 2024, due to implementation of operational sustainability measures at UTS. Slower than expected implementation of an updated ERP platform due to related financial constraints has also hampered delivery of regular verified reports on workforce processes including recruitment.

Glossary

Term	Description
ABI	Appointment by Invitation (or direct appointment)
BAU	Business as usual
CDAR-AP	Cultural Diversity and Anti-Racism Action Plan
CEE	School of Civil and Environmental Engineering (a school in the Faculty of Engineering and IT)
CompSci	School of Computer Science (a school in the Faculty of Engineering and IT)
F	Female/Woman
FEIT	Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology
FTE	Fulltime equivalent
Hiring manager	Convenor of recruitment panel
Level A, B and C, D and E	Academic employment levels Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor and Professor respectively.
M	Male/Man
MaPS	Mathematical and Physical Sciences (a school in the Faculty of Science)
Q	Quarter, when referring to calendar year periods
Science	Faculty of Science
SoLS	School of Life Sciences (a school in the Faculty of Science)
STEM	For this Cygnet, includes Faculties of Science and FEIT

1. KEY BARRIER

Recruitment practices impact the employment of women and other under-represented groups to STEM academic roles.

Sub-barrier 1: Recruitment policies and practices attributed to low recruitment of women and other under-represented groups

Sub-barrier 2: Inaccessible workforce demographic data spanning the recruitment lifecycle.

2. EVIDENCE OF BARRIER

2.1 Workforce data

Our Bronze Award application identified that while almost half of academic staff across UTS were female/women (47.4%), there were fewer in STEM (36.9%) (Figure 1). Only 28.3% were in senior roles (Level D, E or Senior Staff Group) and there were discipline-specific gender differences within STEM faculties (Table 1). In addition, overall, 1.6% of staff identified as Indigenous with only 0.9% in STEM faculties.

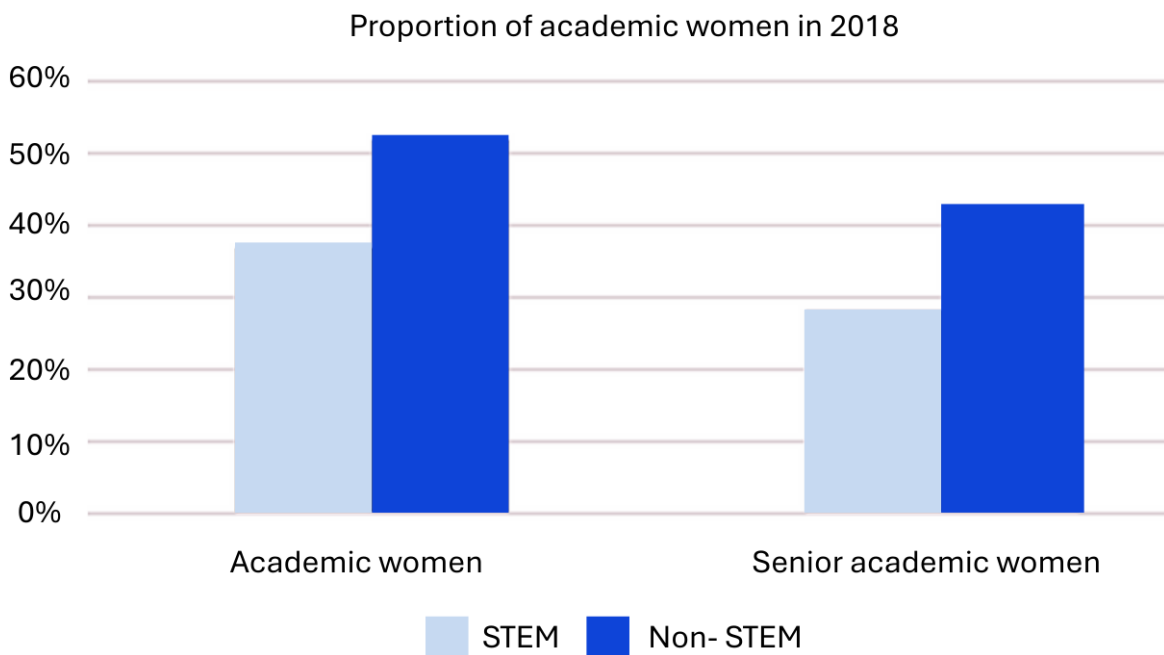


Figure 1: STEM vs non-STEM women in the workforce in 2018

Table 1: STEM staff by classification and sex in 2017

STEMM area	Classification	Male		Female		Total
		No.	%	No.	%	
SoA	Academic	19	54	16	46	35
	Professional	0	-	0	-	0
	Total	19	54	16	46	35
FEIT	Academic	255	86	40	14	295
	Professional	61	53	55	47	116
	Total	316	77	95	23	411
FOH	Academic	22	23	73	77	95
	Professional	12	19	51	81	63
	Total	34	22	124	78	158
GSH	Academic	14	25	42	75	56
	Professional	3	30	7	70	10
	Total	17	26	49	74	66
FOS	Academic	145	63	87	38	232
	Professional	46	41	67	59	113
	Total	191	55	154	45	345
TOTAL	Academic	455	64	258	36	713
	Professional	122	40	180	60	302
Total		577	57	438	43	1015

SoA=School of Architecture (no longer included in STEM cohort); GSH=Graduate School of Health (now included within Health); FOH=Health; FOS=Science; FEIT=Engineering and Information Technology

During the Bronze phase access to data and reporting was a labour-intensive process which impeded monitoring of workforce profile including during recruitment.

2.2 Recruitment practices

In 2019 in Science and FEIT, women were under-represented in the pool of applicants. In FEIT, where women graduates are under-represented in all disciplines, the proportion of women interviewed was greater than the applicant pool (Figure 2). However, the proportion of women appointed was lower.

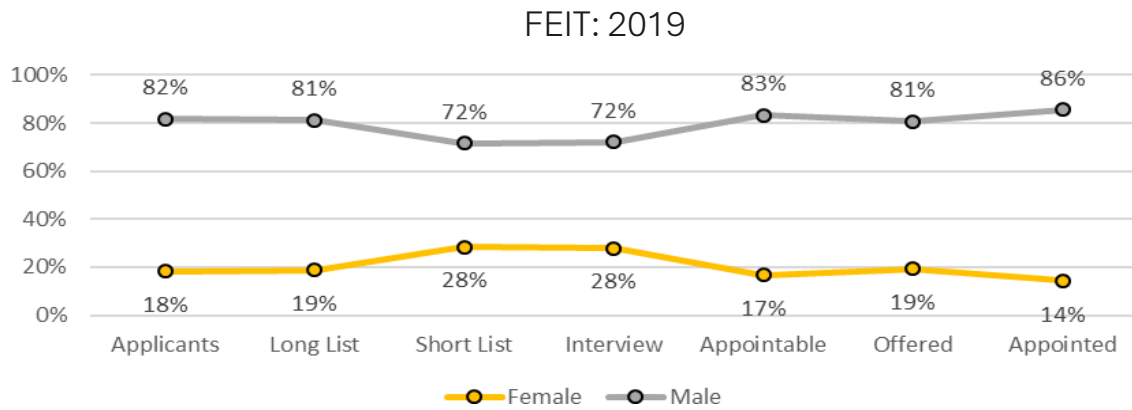


Figure 2: Recruitment in FEIT in 2019

In Science, 40% of applicants, 53% of interviewees and 64% of appointments were female/women (Figure 3). This coincided with Athena Swan pilot projects in the faculty, during the Bronze phase.

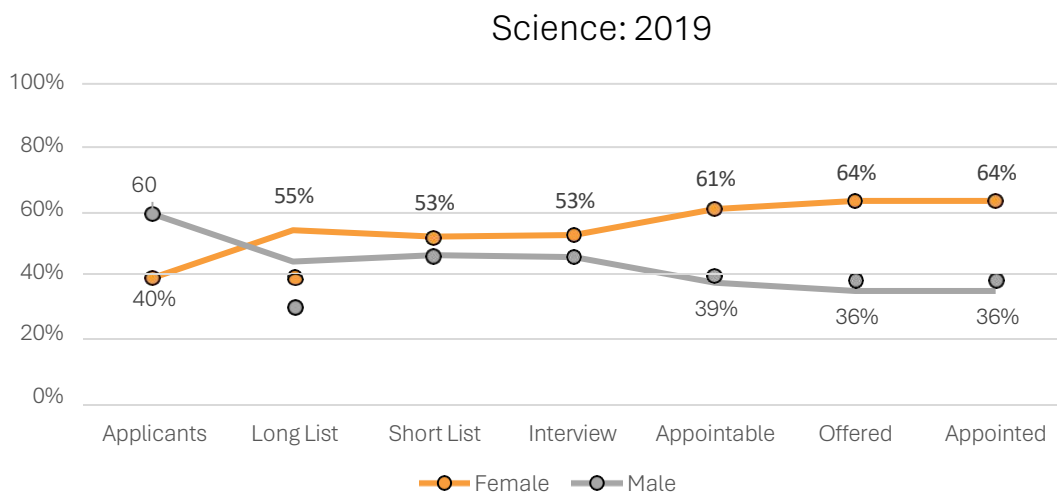
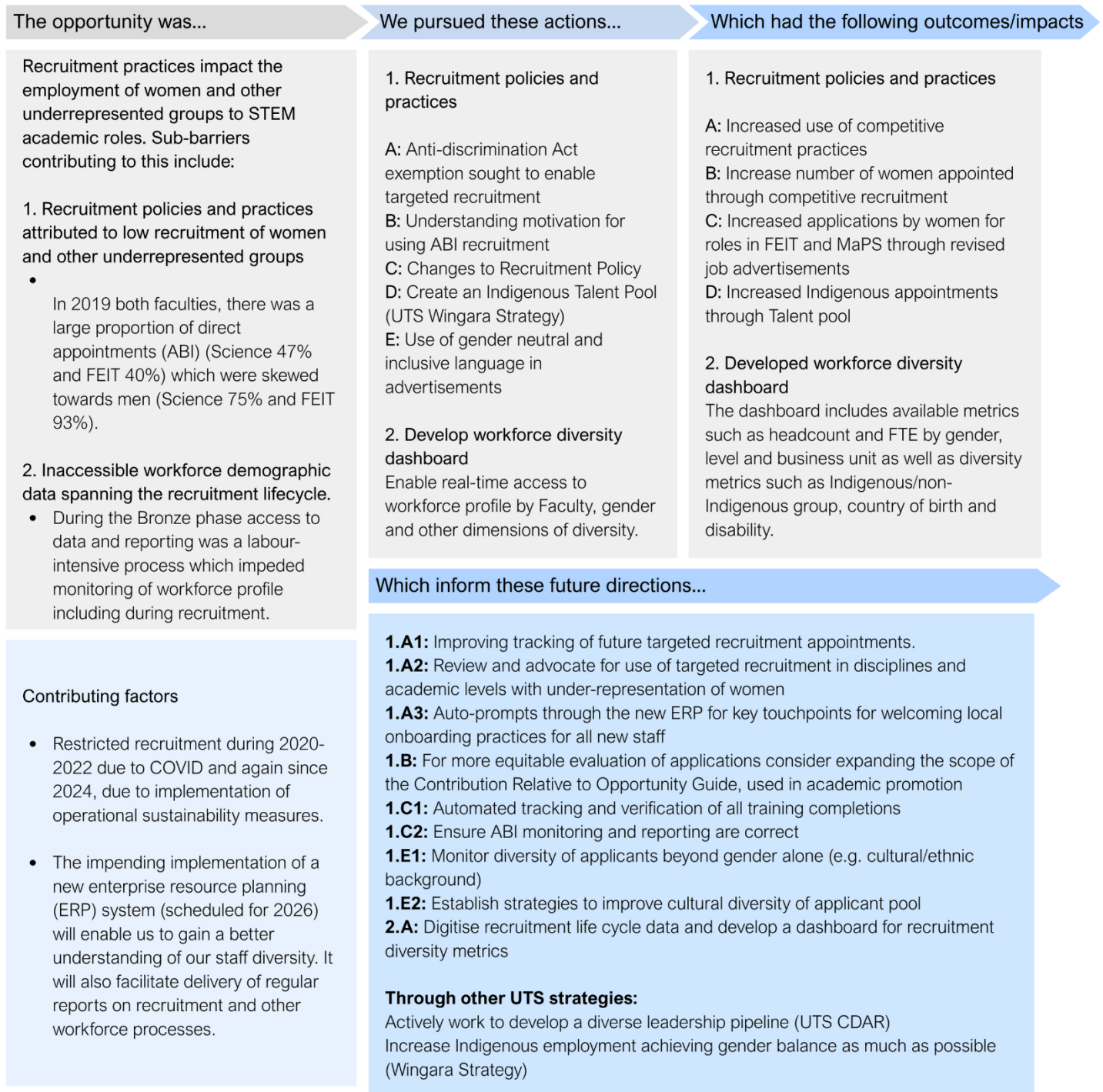


Figure 3: Recruitment in Science in 2019

In both faculties, there was a large proportion of direct appointments/appointments by invitation (ABI) (Science 47% and FEIT 40%), which were skewed towards men (Science 75% and FEIT 93%).

The program logic framework for this Cygnet is illustrated below.

UTS Athena Swan program Cygnet 3: Academic recruitment in FEIT and Science



3. PROGRESS (ACTIONS AND OUTPUTS)

3.1 Recruitment Policies and Practices

To address sub-barrier 1, we reviewed our recruitment policies and practices and implemented several actions to increase applications by women academics and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff (Table 2). Where further actions align with other UTS strategies, these are noted as associated with the relevant strategy.

Table 2: Key activities and desired outcomes related to policies and practices

Key Activity Area	Planned at Bronze or post-Bronze	Desired Outcome/Impact	Further Action ¹
Use of Anti-Discrimination Act exemption (Section 3.1A)	Bronze	To achieve strategic targets of 40% STEM academic women and 3% Indigenous staff by 2022 and 2023 respectively.	1.A1, 1.A2 and 1.A3. Aligns with Section 6.9 in Wingara Indigenous Employment Strategy 2019–2023 ²
Understanding motivation for using ABI in recruitment (Section 3.1B)	Post-Bronze	Maintain preference for competitive recruitment	1.B
Changes to Recruitment Policy (Section 3.1C)	Bronze	Increase academic women in STEM to achieve strategic target of 40% by 2022	1.C1 1.C2
Creating an Indigenous Talent Pool (Section 3.1D)	Post-Bronze	To achieve strategic target of 3% by 2023	Aligns with Section 6.10 in Wingara Indigenous Employment Strategy 2019–2023 (now extended to 2026)
Use of gender neutral and inclusive language in advertisements (Section 3.1E)	Bronze	Increase academic women in STEM to achieve strategic target of 40% by 2022	1.E1 and 1.E2 Aligns with UTS CDAR-AP ³
Development of a workforce diversity dashboard (Section 3.2)	Bronze	Provide easy access to workforce data in real-time to decision-makers.	2.A

¹See Section 6 for details; ² Strategy extended to 2026; ³UTS CDAR-AP (Cultural Diversity and Anti-Racism Action Plan) is to be released in 2026

3.1A Anti-Discrimination Act exemption to enable targeted recruitment.

As part of the Bronze Action Plan, UTS applied for and was granted an exemption under section 126 of the Anti-Discrimination Act, 1977 (NSW) to recruit women into STEM disciplines and to recruit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to achieve strategic targets of 40% and 3% respectively. The exemption is in place until 2030. This exemption was specifically used for targeted women-only recruitment in FEIT and the School of Mathematics and Physical Sciences (MaPS) where representation of women was low (18% and 30% respectively). The focus for recruitment of Indigenous staff was for academic roles.

Without a robust digitised method of tracking these appointments, it was challenging to track the individuals who had been recruited in this way. Institutional knowledge was limited with high staff turnover during COVID. We only identified four academic women (two each from FEIT and Science) who had been appointed through this process. While women-only recruitment is one way of increasing the pipeline, a risk is the perception by colleagues that the initiative is unfair, that it is 'reverse discrimination' or not based on applicant's 'merit'.

Through individual interviews with these women in 2024-25 we aimed to better understand their local on-boarding experiences and identify where better support could be provided.

[ACTION 1.A1 Improving tracking of future targeted recruitment appointments.](#)

[ACTION 1.A2 Review and advocate for use of targeted recruitment in disciplines and academic levels with under-representation of women.](#)

3.1B Understanding motivation for using ABI recruitment

Focus groups with FEIT and Science hiring managers identified drivers for choosing ABI vs competitive recruitment. We invited 10 ‘frequent recruiters’, identified as those who had run more than 3 recruitment rounds that year, to reflect on factors influencing their choices prior to open discussion (Table 3).

Table 3: Factors influencing STEM hiring managers choice of recruitment method

Appointment by Invitation	Competitive
Retain staff they have trained and have relevant specialist skills	Expand current expertise and culture in the team
Reduce risk of the unknown (e.g., culture fit, unknown skill set)	Exposure to a broader range of candidates
	Having to review numerous applications is a disincentive
	Could be a biased process since evaluation is frequently focused on metrics such as publications

ACTION 1.B For more equitable evaluation of applications consider expanding the scope of the Contribution Relative to Opportunity Guide, used in academic promotion.

3.1C Changes to Recruitment Policy

The Recruitment Policy was reviewed (2021) and now mandates a gender ratio for panelists (maximum two-thirds of any one gender) and inclusion of people from diverse backgrounds on recruitment panels. Where a panel does not meet gender or diversity requirements, it must be documented (outlining all efforts made to achieve representation) and approved by the relevant senior executive for the area. Unconscious bias and cultural awareness training has also been made mandatory for everyone involved in recruitment decisions.

ACTION 1.C1 Automated tracking and verification of training completion is required prior to appointment to a recruitment panel.

To mitigate overuse of ABI, requests were scrutinised prior to approval by the Provost in the immediate post-Bronze period and pre-dates changes in the policy which now recommends competitive recruitment as the default. When reporting on recruitment in 2020-22 we identified inaccuracies due to lack of quality assurance in tagging ABI hires. Evaluating data quality has not progressed with concurrent changes to information systems and organisational sustainability measures.

ACTION 1.C2 Ensure ABI monitoring and reporting are correct.

3.1D Creating an Indigenous Talent Pool

Creating an Indigenous Talent Pool at a pan-university level combines end-to-end campaign management for Identified positions with community engagement. This strategy is led by UTS's Indigenous Talent Acquisition Specialist who is a member of the UTS Athena Swan Recruitment working group. In addition to direct placements, recruitment outcomes are supported by sharing potential candidate profiles with suitable faculties and divisions including FEIT, Science, and Health. This ensures Indigenous talent is visible across the university and matched to opportunities that align with workforce needs. We maintain engagement with our talent pool through regular check-ins, tailored support, and professional development pathways, which support both retention and ongoing pipeline growth.

Actions related to faculty Indigenous staff employment planning aligns with Section 6.10 in Wingara Indigenous Employment Strategy 2019–2026

3.1E Use of gender neutral and inclusive language in advertisements

Post-Bronze Award, advertisements were assessed for gender neutral language using an online gender decoder in an *ad hoc* manner in Science and FEIT. Some were revised through consultation with FEIT women academics. In this case study, women applicants were 16% for both junior (Level A/B) and senior (Level D/E) roles at a time when women academics in that school were <10% (Outcome 1.3).

In 2023, we reviewed and refined job advertisements to ensure language was gender neutral and inclusive and emphasised UTS's commitment to equity. We trialed this in Science and FEIT in 2024 and found that gender neutral language increased likelihood of women applying to FEIT and SoLS (Section 4.1C). This strategy is now being implemented across UTS through recruitment templates.

Action 1.E1 Monitor diversity of applicants beyond gender alone (e.g., cultural/ethnic background). Ensuring data accuracy for reporting on Indigenous staff statistics aligns with Section 6.9 in Wingara Indigenous Employment Strategy 2019–2026.

ACTION 1.E2 Establishing processes to improve cultural diversity of applicants during recruitment, especially for senior leadership roles. This aligns with the UTS Cultural Diversity and Anti-Racism Action Plan (CDAR-AP).

3.2 Development of a workforce diversity dashboard

Through a Bronze Award action, aiming to provide easy access to workforce data in real-time to decision-makers, we built a Workforce Diversity Dashboard using the Power BI platform. While we previously had access to data on gender, the dashboard includes new metrics such as headcount, FTE by gender, level and business unit as well as other available diversity metrics such as Indigenous/non-Indigenous group, country of birth and disability (Figure 4).

In 2025, 57% of staff voluntarily shared diversity information. The dashboard now includes data from 2017 to 2025 allowing easy access to monitor trends in workforce representation.

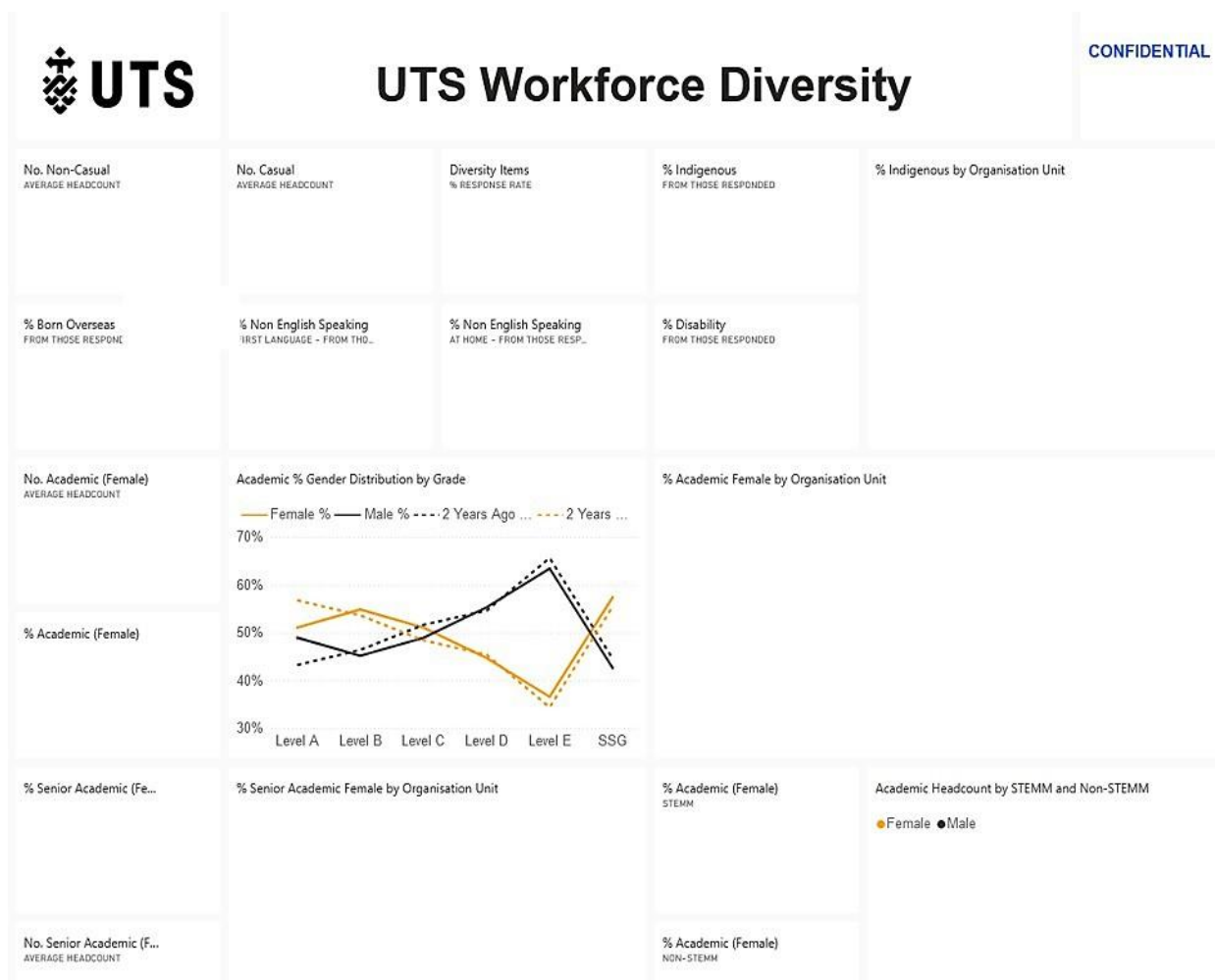


Figure 4: Representation of Workforce Diversity Dashboard

Recruitment lifecycle data is independent of this dashboard and reporting remains a manual process.

Action 2A Digitise recruitment life cycle data and develop a dashboard for recruitment diversity metrics.

4. OUTCOMES

4.1 Recruitment policies and practices

The review of our recruitment policies and practices and subsequent actions taken to increase applications by women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics have led to the outcomes documented in this section.

4.1A Increased use of competitive recruitment practices

In the past, ABI recruitment was common practice and impacted gender representation in STEM. Through policy changes implemented in 2021, which nominated competitive recruitment as the default, and strengthened compliance through requiring Provost approval for ABIs, we reduced the use of ABI in both FEIT and Science overall (Figure 5).

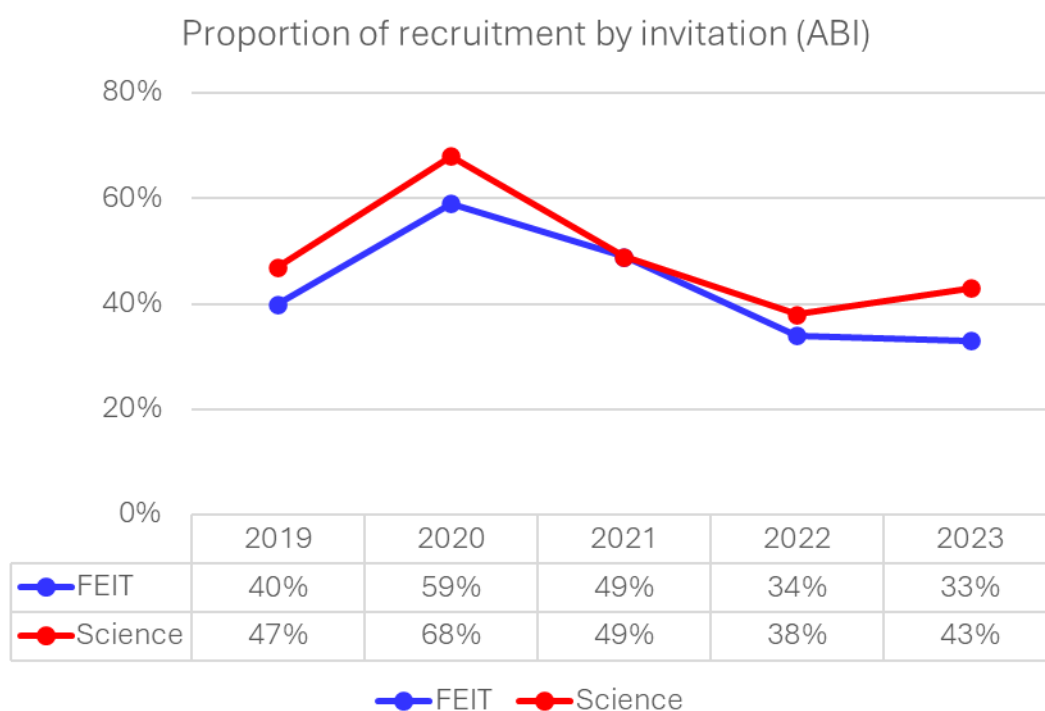


Figure 5: Overall proportion of ABI recruitment

In particular, we reduced ABI appointment of men in FEIT from 93% in 2019 to 41% by 2020 and in Science, from 75% to 30% in 2020 (Table 4). While formal policy change did not occur until 2021, urgent action was taken by the Provost to mitigate overuse of ABI. Increased scrutiny of ABI requests is reflected in the sharp reduction in ABI in the immediate post-Bronze period. Despite some annual variation, these proportions have been maintained to 2023 with only 22% of men recruited by ABI in 2023. During this analysis, we identified data verification as an issue. For example, we are unable to differentiate between new hires and contract extension.

See [ACTION 1.C2](#).

Table 4: ABI and competitive recruitment in FEIT and Science 2020-2024*

FEIT	2020			2021			2022			2023		
	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total
Competitive	12	20	32	27	39	66	55	73	128	39	65	104
	15%	25%	41%	21%	30%	51%	28%	37%	66%	25%	42%	67%
ABI	15	32	47	17	47	64	17	50	67	17	35	52
	19%	41%	59%	13%	36%	49%	9%	26%	34%	11%	22%	33%
Total	27	52		44	86		72	123		56	100	
	34%	66%		34%	66%		37%	63%		36%	64%	

Science	2020			2021			2022			2023		
	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total
Competitive	8	5	13	15	22	37	28	17	45	30	19	49
	20%	13%	33%	21%	31%	51%	39%	24%	63%	34%	22%	56%
ABI	15	12	27	15	20	35	14	13	27	21	17	38
	38%	30%	68%	21%	28%	49%	19%	18%	38%	24%	20%	44%
Total	23	17		30	42		42	30		51	36	
	58%	43%		42%	58%		58%	42%		59%	41%	

*see Evidence section for 2019 data; F=female; M=male

4.1B Increased number of women appointed through competitive recruitment

In Science, more women are now being hired through competitive processes (Figure 6). In FEIT the number of women being appointed through competitive recruitment was increasing rapidly until 2022 but dropped in 2023. Overall, in the period under consideration there has only been a slight increase in appointments of women in FEIT (Table 4 and Figure 6). Nevertheless, hiring managers shifting to appoint more women through competitive recruitment is a step in the right direction. It will allow UTS to continue refining our recruitment processes to enable recruitment of women. FEIT currently recruits academic women at a higher rate (36%) than national university completions for women in these fields (21%, STEM Data Monitor, 2023 data) as well as women in related industries (17%, STEM Data Monitor, 2023 data).

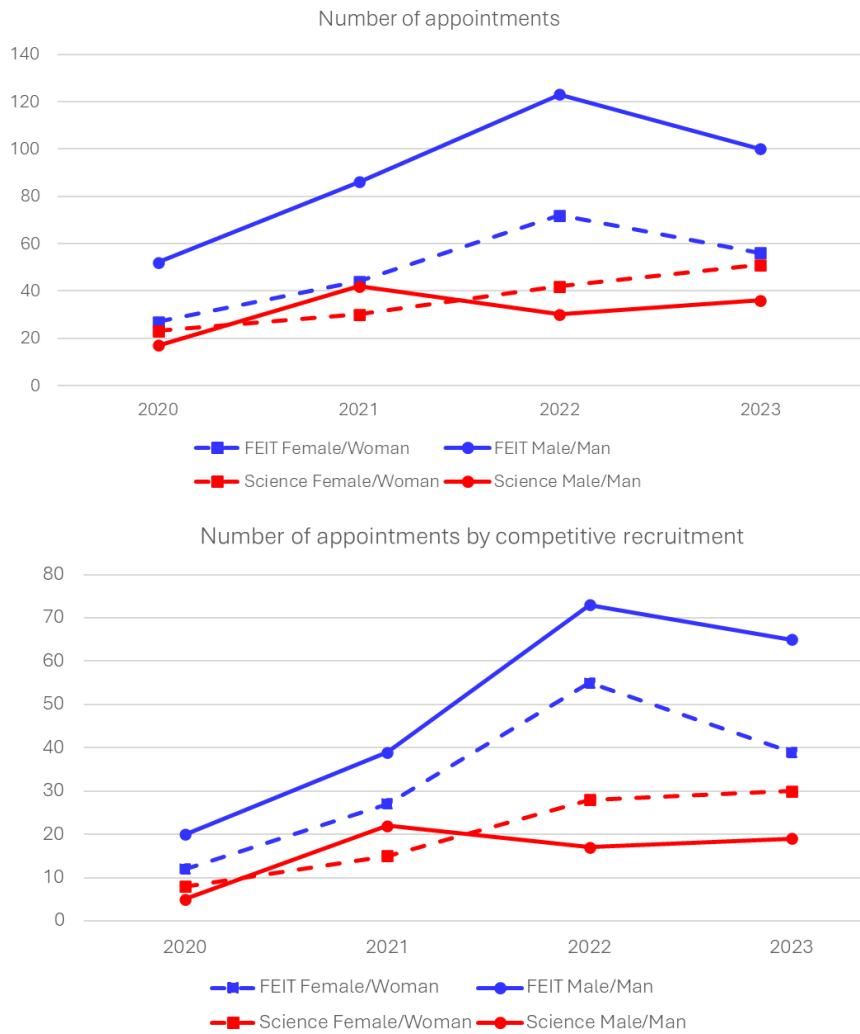


Figure 6: Total and competitive recruitment appointments by gender in FEIT and Science

Due to limited recruitment recently combined with an inability to track the recruitment lifecycle at scale, we evaluated a subset of hires in 2024 (Table 5). This was through a process adopted in the most recent UTS enterprise agreement which came into effect in 2023 and provided for eligible casual staff to be offered a continuing position through a competitive process open to internal candidates. This process resulted in more women (FTE) being recruited than men in Science and FEIT.

Table 5: Appointments by FTE in STEM during conversion of casual to continuing roles in 2024

	Gender	Level A	Level B	Total FTE
Science n=7	F	4.1	1	5.1
	M	1.7		1.7
FEIT n=10	F		8	8
	M		2	2

F=female; M=male

The majority of new recruits in Science (6 of 7) and FEIT (9 of 10) were also from a culturally diverse background.

Although hiring managers noted benefits of using competitive recruitment, they perceived that the process could also be biased due to inequitable application assessment. See [ACTION 1.B](#).

4.1C Increased applications by women for roles in FEIT and MaPS through revised job advertisements

The pool of women applicants for FEIT and MaPS is impacted by a broader under-representation of women in these disciplines. By using gender neutral language and emphasising our commitment to equity in job advertisements, we increased the proportion of women in the applicant pool.

In the case study when there were increased women applicants for a role in FEIT (Section 3.1E), senior leaders took this opportunity to expand available positions from one to three and appointed three women to those roles. While this does not represent broad structural change, it does demonstrate the commitment of our decision-makers to take advantage of opportunities to improve representation of women in STEM. It is gratifying to note that these 3 women academics continue to excel and have subsequently achieved academic promotions.

In 2024, revised job advertisements were used for 5 roles in 2 schools in FEIT, with the non-revised version used as a control group for 2 roles in the same schools. As shown in Table 6, when the revised version was used, the proportion of women applicants was greater; 118% more likely when compared within the school or 57% more likely when compared with other schools in FEIT. Similarly, when gender was not specified by the applicant, applications were 45% more likely when the revised content was included.

Table 6: Proportion of applicants for Level A-B roles in FEIT in 2024

	F % (n)	F Relative Risk*	M % (n)	M Relative Risk*	U % (n)	U RR	Total
Revised ad CEE+CompSci (5 roles)	31% (39)	2.18 compared to Control 1 and 1.57 compared to Control 2	57% (71)	0.66 compared to Control 1 and 0.79 compared to Control 2	12% (15)	1.45 compared to Control 2	125
Control Group 1 CEE+CompSci (2 roles)	14% (4)		86% (24)		(0)		28
Control Group 2 Other FEIT (10 roles)	20% (43)		72% (156)		8% (18)		217

NOTE: Control group advertisements did not include emphasis on commitment to equity

* Relative risk = Probability (or proportion) in group of interest ÷ Probability in comparison group

F=female; M=male; U=gender unspecified

Gender representation in the 2 Science schools is different: 57% academic women in SoLS and 32% in MaPS. The use of the revised job ad was evaluated for each. In SoLS, the proportion of women applicants was the same (39%) in the pilot and control groups (Table 7).

Table 7: Proportion of applicants for Level A-C roles in SoLS in 2024

	Women (n)	Women Relative Risk	Men (n)	Men Relative Risk	Total
Revised ad group	39% (17)	1.0	61% (27)	1.0	44
Control Group	39% (18)		61% (28)		46

NOTE: Control group advertisements did not include emphasis on commitment to equity

Similar to FEIT, in MaPS, the revised ad had a positive overall effect. The proportion of female/woman applicants was marginally higher and they were 13% (Relative Risk 1.127) more likely to apply when the revised ad was used (Table 8).

Table 8: Proportion of applicants for Level A-C roles in MaPS in 2024

	Women (n)	Women Relative Risk	Men (n)	Men Relative Risk	Total
Revised ad group	26% (30)	1.13	74% (86)	0.96	116
Control Group	23% (14)		77% (47)		61

NOTE: Control group advertisements did not include emphasis on commitment to equity

4.1 D Increased Indigenous appointments through Talent Pool

The Indigenous Talent Pool has grown since its inception in 2022. There were 5 placements prior to the appointment of a dedicated Indigenous Talent Acquisition Specialist in 2023. The pool now maintains over 50 active members with more than 100 applications received since its establishment, across diverse role types. So far in 2025, we have successfully placed 11 candidates (Table 9), demonstrating strong alignment with the Wingara Indigenous Employment Strategy and UTS 2030 Strategy.

Table 9: Appointment of Indigenous staff in 2025 through Talent Pool or by application

	Talent pool	Direct Application
STEM	6	1
Non-STEM	5	4

Through this combination of proactive talent matching, targeted campaigns, and ongoing candidate engagement, the strategy continues to drive strong outcomes for Indigenous employment at UTS.

4.2 Workforce demographic data spanning the recruitment lifecycle.

The Workforce Diversity Dashboard allows real-time access to workforce headcount and FTE by gender and other characteristics (Figure 4) allowing senior leaders to monitor their local area workforce profile. However, implementing a digitised system for recruitment lifecycle reporting has not progressed as desired because of organisational changes to the IT and People and Culture units. See [Action 2.A](#).

5. IMPACT

5.1 Women in STEM

Through the combined effects of recruitment and retention (academic promotion and flexible work Cygnets), representation of STEM academic women has increased in the post-Bronze period (Figure 7). In 2022, we achieved our Bronze Action Plan target of 40% academic women in STEM, with representation increasing to 43% by 2024 (Figure 7). Our Indigenous representation has increased from 1.6% to 2.1% in 2024 (Figure 8) however we are yet to achieve our target of 3%.

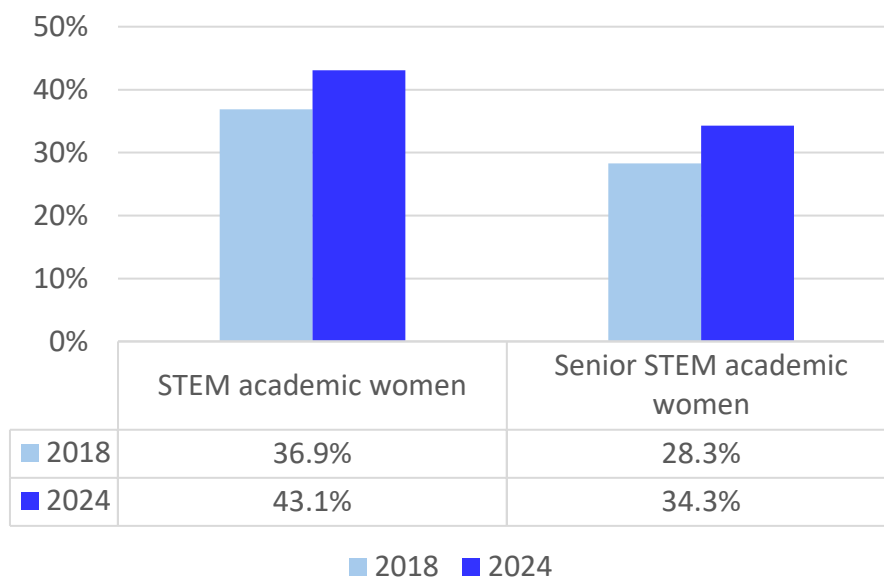


Figure 7: Comparison of STEM academic women between 2018 and 2024

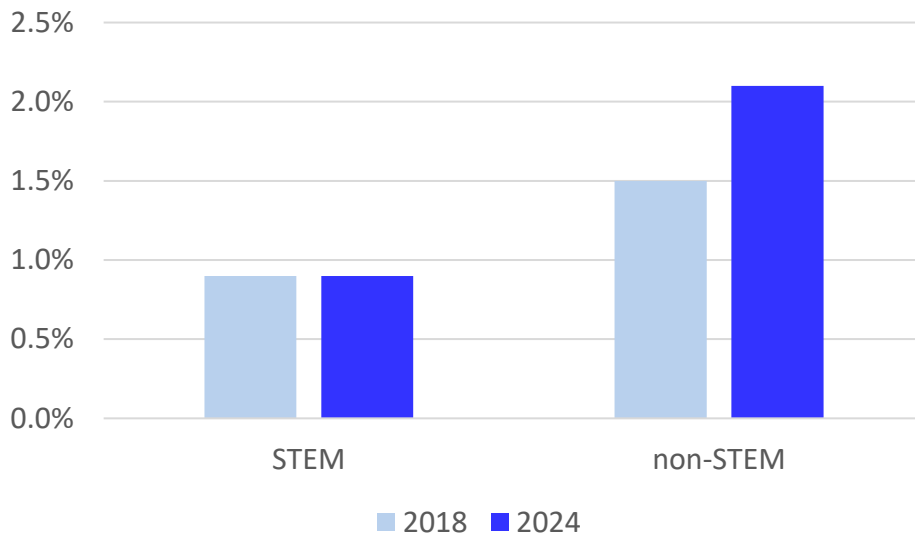


Figure 8: Representation of Indigenous staff between 2018 and 2024

Through a combination of changes to policies and practices and creating awareness of the impact of decision-maker choices, we have increased the number of female/women applicants and appointments in male/men-dominated STEM disciplines.

The actions in this Cygnet, as well as other initiatives across UTS underpin an inclusive culture, where equity is taken seriously in decision making. Participating in unconscious bias and cultural awareness training is mandated by policy for all recruitment and promotion panel members. However, changing behaviours cannot ultimately be mandated by policy. With advocacy from Deans/HoS in FEIT and Science, the majority of their key decision-makers (Heads of Disciplines and above, faculty/school managers) have completed a suite of equity training modules focused on mental health and cultural humility. Impact of these types of actions can be slow to take effect and are often intangible. However, interviews with academic women highlight their perceptions of working in supportive environments.

We interviewed 4 academic women (2 each from Science and FEIT) who had been appointed through targeted recruitment (Section 3.1A) to evaluate their perception of and experiences during the process. These staff all reported a positive overall experience. They viewed the process as being advantageous and felt that it indicated that UTS has a culture which is supportive of women. These women are currently Associate Professors, Professors or Associate Deans.

“The fact that it was a woman-only position was an incentive; it gave me a good feeling – that UTS is supporting women and I like that” – [REDACTED]

“I viewed this as an opportunity as it halves the pool” – [REDACTED]

One of the interviewees reported that she felt encouraged to apply by the warm and encouraging tone in the response to her enquiry about the position.

“the way [my current supervisor] wrote in the emails is so supportive and encouraging, - [REDACTED]

“I felt welcomed even before I arrived; I got the offer and I came here several times before I made the decision” – [REDACTED]

The women interviewed said that senior leaders also played a key role in creating a welcoming supportive environment.

“The first thing when I came is [the Head of School] took me around to introduce me to everyone and show me how everything works... it just felt quite comfortable and supportive.” – [REDACTED]

He [my supervisor] made my life much easier. He also gave me enough time to settle into the role. He was on annual leave when I started so he put me in touch with someone to support me – [REDACTED]

ACTION 1.A3 Auto-prompts through the new ERP for key touch-points for welcoming local onboarding practices for all new staff is needed.

UTS’s NSW Anti-Discrimination Act exemption for targeted recruitment is valid for another 5 years and could be used judiciously to improve representation of women in specific disciplines or at senior levels where needed. There is a need for further review and advocacy for use of targeted recruitment in disciplines and academic levels with under-representation of women. See [Action 1.A2](#). Observations from Level B recruits in 2024 reiterate that the supportive environment for women in STEM persists. Of the ten continuing Level B roles advertised for eligible casual academics in FEIT, eight appointed were women (Table 5). Four women from multicultural backgrounds were interviewed to understand their experiences. Their stories were showcased on the Faculty intranet (Figure 7).

FEIT Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology FEIT Home

Casual Academic Conversion | Staff Profiles

Check out the profiles of academic casual staff who have successfully transitioned to permanent roles. These profiles highlight the dedication, achievements, and contributions of individuals who have made a lasting impact within the faculty, showcasing their growth and commitment to ongoing professional excellence.

Excerpts from interviews with Level B academic women of multicultural background in FEIT:

I've also benefited from being part of a vibrant academic community that really values diversity and encourages interdisciplinary approaches. I think that is the highlight of working at UTS and with the team I am part of.

Through FEIT, I joined my first women's network, the Women in Engineering in IT network. That has been an immense help.

FEIT has provided tremendous support, even though it's been a short time frame, through many collaborative opportunities, professional development programs and a strong focus on innovative teaching practices.

As an immigrant, it's really hard to find jobs – you are always asked for domestic experience, local experience. So pursuing my PhD at UTS opened doors for me to work as a casual academic in FEIT, and then they provided the opportunity for the pathway from casual to permanent employee as a full time lecturer.

Figure 7: Level B academic women in FEIT emphasise the importance of the supportive culture in their faculty.

5.2 Indigenous staff

The recent strategic change to recruitment of Indigenous staff through creating an Indigenous Talent Pool, led by our Indigenous Talent Acquisition Specialist had a positive impact on increasing the number of Indigenous staff at UTS. In 2025, 11 appointments were made through this process across STEM and non-STEM units (Table 9). Through the Indigenous talent pool we have now appointed a Director, Indigenous Education in FEIT. In this role the Director works to promote Indigenous culture and knowledge through immersive technologies and pedagogical approaches.

6. FUTURE ACTIONS

In this Cygnet, we pursued actions to mitigate practices impacting recruitment of women in STEM and Indigenous staff, which had been identified in our Bronze Award application. We changed policy to move away from gender-biased direct appointments (ABI) to make competitive recruitment the default, used an anti-discrimination exemption to advertise women-only STEM roles, used gender neutral language in STEM job ads and created a talent pool to accelerate recruitment of Indigenous staff. We have achieved, and exceeded, our target of 40% academic women in STEM. However, while we continue to increase representation of Indigenous staff, we are yet to achieve this target.

There is still much to do to improve collection of data on dimensions of diversity, providing recruitment reports to key decision makers and activating strategies to ensure a truly diverse pool of applicants.

Our next steps and future actions are noted in the table below.

In addition, two other UTS strategies align with the underlying principles of this Cygnet: the Wingara Indigenous Employment Strategy and the CDAR-AP.

The Wingara Strategy (2019–2026) is led by the PVC (Indigenous Leadership and Engagement). Specific alignment is related to faculty Indigenous staff employment planning (Section 6.10 of Strategy) and ensuring data accuracy for reporting on Indigenous staff statistics (Section 6.9 of Strategy).

Final approval for the CDAR-AP is currently underway. It focuses on experiences of non-Indigenous culturally and racially marginalised students and staff and is co-led by the PVC (Indigenous Leadership and Engagement) and the PVC (Social Justice and Inclusion). Establishing processes to improve cultural diversity of recruitment applicant pool aligns with actions in the CDAR-AP.

Action reference	Rationale/ Evidence	Actions & Outputs	Timeframe (start & end)	Person/ Group responsible for implementing action	Senior Leader accountable for action delivery	Desired Outcomes/ Targets/ Success Indicators
1.A1	Currently we are unable to identify staff hired through targeted recruitment processes in ERP systems.	Improving tracking of future targeted recruitment appointments	Aligned with ERP implementation Q3 2026 to Q4 2028	Manager Talent Acquisition, People and Culture	Executive Director, People and Culture	Ability to identify staff hired through targeted recruitment processes in ERP system. Embed reliable feedback loops to evaluate employment experience and increase retention.
1.A2	The Anti-Discrimination Act exemption is valid for another 5 years and could be used judiciously to improve representation of women in specific disciplines or at senior levels where needed.	Review and advocate for use of targeted recruitment in disciplines and academic levels with under- representation of women.	Q2 2026 to Q4 2030	Dean of FEIT and Dean of Science	Head of Talent Acquisition and Reward	Included as a strategy for improving representation of women in underrepresented units in STEM
1.A3	Advocacy from Deans and Heads of School is important for inclusive onboarding practices for new hires.	Auto-prompts through the ERP for key touchpoints for welcoming local onboarding practices for all new staff.	Aligned with ERP implementation Q3 2026 to Q4 2028	Head of People Operations	Executive Director, People and Culture	Normalise supportive social practices for local onboarding practices for all new staff.
1.B	Factors influencing STEM hiring managers choice of recruitment methods	For more equitable evaluation of applications expand the scope of the Contribution Relative	Aligned with ERP implementation Q3 2026 to Q4 2028	Manager Talent Acquisition, People and Culture	Head of Talent Acquisition and Reward	Expand scope of Contribution Relative to Opportunity Guide to include recruitment.

		to Opportunity Guide, used in Academic promotion				
1.C1	Recruitment panel eligibility checking relies on manual processes.	Automated tracking of and verification of training completion is required prior to appointment to recruitment panel.	Aligned with ERP implementation Q1 2027 to Q4 2028	Manager Talent Acquisition, People and Culture	Executive Director, People and Culture	Improve efficiency of verifying recruitment panel prerequisites.
1.C2	Recruitment data from 2020–22 showed inaccuracies due to inadequate quality assurance in tagging ABI hires.	Ensure ABI reporting is correct.	Aligned with ERP implementation Q1 2027 to Q4 2028	Manager Talent Acquisition, People and Culture	Executive Director, People and Culture	Improve ABI reporting rigour, identifying all new ABIs. Support for monitoring ABI appointments by gender in workforce dashboard
1.E1	Lack of data on diversity of applicant pool beyond gender	Implement processes which collect applicant diversity dimensions.	Aligned with ERP implementation	Manager Talent Acquisition, People and Culture	Executive Director, People and Culture	Monitor diversity of applicants beyond gender alone (e.g., cultural/ethnic background).
1.E2	Lack of data on diversity of applicant pool beyond gender	Establish processes to improve cultural diversity of pool of potential applicants during recruitment, especially for senior leadership roles	Q3 2026 to Q3 2027	Manager Talent Acquisition, People and Culture CSJI	Head of Talent Acquisition and Reward	Develop strategies to improve diversity of applicant pool beyond gender for senior leadership roles. Improve diversity of staff in senior leadership roles beyond gender parity.

2.A	Inability to easily report on recruitment lifecycle	Digitise recruitment life cycle data and develop a dashboard for recruitment diversity metrics.	Q4 2026/Q1 2027–2028	Manager Talent Acquisition, People and Culture	Executive Director, People and Culture	Increase the accessibility of data related to the recruitment lifecycle.
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