



Charles Sturt
University

SAGE Cygnet Award Application
Cygnet 1 | Academic
Promotions

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion
Division of People and Culture

Charles Sturt University - TEQSA Provider Identification:
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Name of Institution Charles Sturt University

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Charles Sturt University: SAGE Cygnet #1

Key Barrier: Promotion/Pathways for career development

Barrier type:

- Institution-wide Barrier
- Sub-group specific Barrier

Barrier description: Academic staff promotions process (loss of female representation as academic level increases)

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Glossary

Abbreviation	Definition
AP	Academic promotion/s
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CSU	Charles Sturt University
DPC	Division of People and Culture
DLT	Division of Learning and Teaching
DVC	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
EDI	Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
EDPC	Executive Director, People and Culture
EEO	Equal employment opportunity
FT	Full-time
PC/PPC	Promotion Committee/Professorial Promotion Committee
PT	Part-time
PVCLT	Pro Vice-Chancellor, Learning and Teaching
YVS	Your Voice Survey

1. Key barrier

Academic promotions process

This Cygnet application highlights Charles Sturt University's work to address declining success and application rates in the Academic Promotion process (AP) for women and staff working part-time.

Sub-barrier 1: Declining success rates for women

Sub-barrier 2: Variations in application rates across gender and employment type

Sub-barrier 3: Staff perception of support for career progression is less positive for academic staff

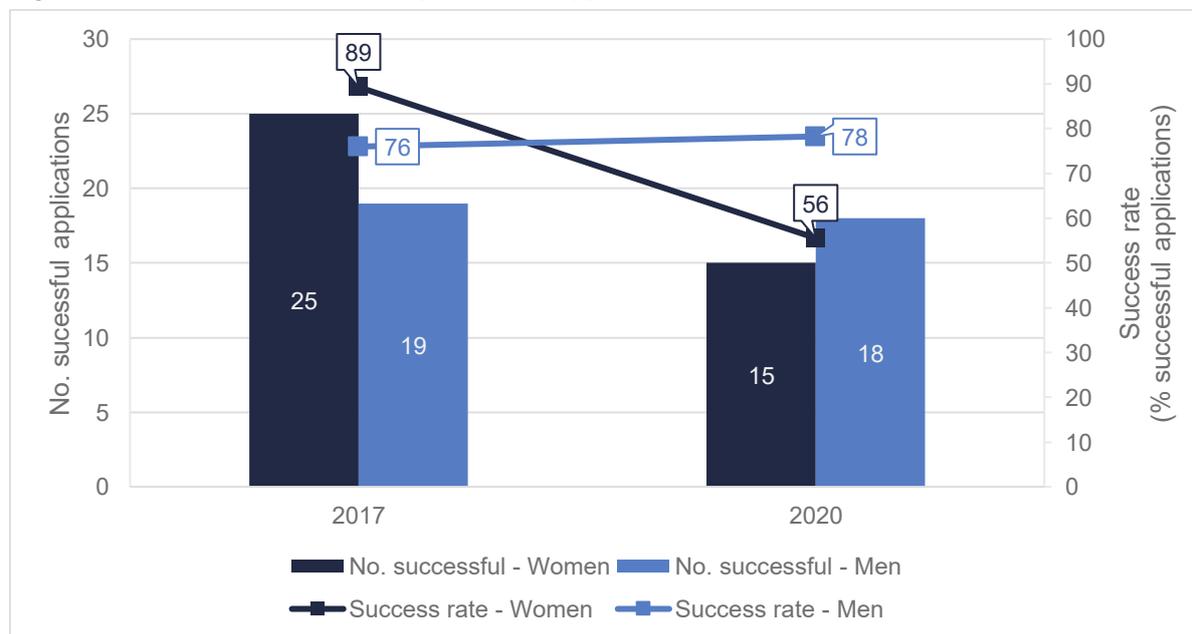
2. Evidence of barrier

2.1 Sub-barrier: 1: Declining success rates for women

EVIDENCE:

Data from Charles Sturt's Bronze application in 2017 showed that the overall AP success rate of women applicants was 13% higher than men¹, however an internal review of academic promotions in 2020 found the success rate of applications from women declined to 56% while the success rate of applications from men increased to 78% (Figure 1). AP data is maintained by the Division of People and Culture (DPC).

Figure 1. Success rate of academic promotions applications for women and men in 2017 and 2020.



¹ For the time period discussed in this application, no staff who are non-binary or another gender identity applied for promotion. There are very low numbers of non-binary or another gender staff employed as academics (n=1-3) so this application focuses just on women and men to avoid accidental disclosure of those staff.

Table 1. Promotion success rates for women and men in 2017 and 2020 by level at which they applied.

Level of applicant	2017 success rate		2020 success rate	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Level A	100% (n=5)	- (n=0)	100% (n=2)	- (n=0)
Level B	80% (n=12)	85% (n=11)	50% (n=6)	69% (n=11)
Level C	100% (n=7)	75% (n=6)	67% (n=6)	100% (n=3)
Level D	100% (n=1)	50% (n=2)	25% (n=1)	100% (n=3)

While 100% of women who applied for promotion to level B from level A were successful in both 2017 and 2020, there was a decrease in the success rate of women applicants at all other levels (Table 1). This decline was most pronounced for women applying for promotion from level D, however only one woman applied (with success) at this level in 2017, compared to four women applicants in 2020 (one was successful). The success rate of applications from men seeking promotion from level B also decreased between 2017 and 2020, however, success rates increased for men applying at levels C and D. No men applied at level A in either year (Table 1).

While Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) statements were introduced to the AP process in 2015 to assist with increasing application and success rates of women, they remained underutilised in 2017 and 2020 (Table 2). However, the success rate for EEO applicants was higher than the overall success rate in 2020 suggesting some maturing of the process.

Table 2. Proportion of applicants with EEO claims and impact on success rates in 2017 and 2020.

	% applicants with EEO claims	Overall success rate	Success rate - applicants with EEO claims
2017	32%	83%	68%
2020	47% (n=23)	67% (n=33)	70% (n=16)

* 2017 data is from Bronze application; headcount data is not available

2.2 Sub-barrier 2: Variations in application rates across gender and employment type

EVIDENCE:

There continued to be lower rates of part-time (PT) academics applying for promotion than full-time (FT) academics, a recognised barrier impacting more women than men. In 2017, 3% of PT academics applied for promotion (no women, two men) compared to 11% of FT academics (Table 3). The overall application rate for PT academics stayed the same in 2020 (3%), while the application rate for FT academics dropped to 8%, likely due to increased workloads during the COVID-19 pandemic (Table 3). Table 4 includes PT and FT headcounts for academic staff in 2017 and 2020.

Table 3. Proportion and number of FT and PT academics applying for promotion in 2017 and 2020, by gender.

	Women applicants (% of full/part-time women academics)		Men applicants (% of full/part-time men academics)		Total applicants (% of full/part-time academics)	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
2017	28 (12%)	0 (0%)	23 (10%)	2 (13%)	51 (11%)	2 (3%)
2020	25 (8%)	2 (6%)	23 (8%)	0 (0%)	48 (8%)	2 (3%)

*Percentages are applications as a proportion of total women/men working part/full-time (see headcount in Table 4).

Table 4. Headcount of FT and PT women and men academics in 2017 and 2020.

	Woman academic headcount		Men academic headcount	
	FT	PT	FT	PT
2017	239	43	240	15
2020	313	35	279	24

While overall application rates by gender have remained consistent over time, there are variances across levels and gender. Of most concern are declining application rates between 2017 and 2020 for women at levels A (from 10% to 5%) and B (from 7% to 5%) (Table 5), given the higher proportion of women employed at levels A and B (Table 6). There was also a decline in applications from men at level C (from 8% to 3%), while applications from men at other levels remained relatively consistent (Table 5).

Table 5. Proportion and number of academic staff applying for promotion by gender and level in 2017 and 2020.

Level of applicant	Number of women applicants (% of women academics)		Number of men applicants (% of men academics)	
	2017	2020	2017	2020
A	5 (10%)	2 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
B	15 (7%)	12 (5%)	13 (8%)	16 (10%)
C	7 (9%)	9 (10%)	8 (8%)	3 (3%)
D	1 (3%)	4 (11%)	4 (9%)	4 (9%)
Total	28 (7%)	27 (7%)	25 (8%)	23 (7%)

*Percentages are applications as a proportion of total women/men working part/full-time (see headcount in Table 6).

Table 6. Academic headcount by level and gender in 2017 and 2020.

Academic level	Women headcount		Men headcount		% women	
	2017	2020	2017	2020	2017	2020
A	32	31	16	13	67%	70%
B	155	191	100	118	61%	62%
C	59	77	84	106	41%	42%
D	24	36	28	35	46%	51%
E	12	13	27	31	31%	30%
Total	282	348	255	303	53%	53%

2.3 Sub-barrier 3: Staff perception of support for career development including promotion is less positive for academic staff

EVIDENCE:

Employee perceptions of support for career progression are monitored through the annual Your Voice employee engagement survey (YVS). A YVS was conducted in 2017 and 2019 and recommenced in 2022 following a break due to COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021.

CSU's Bronze application identified that academic staff responded less favourably to questions in categories related to career planning and skill development, with favourable responses differing across academic levels (Table 7). In particular, staff at levels B to E responded least favourably about enough time and effort being spent on career planning. Generally, staff had the most positive response to the

career category question on developing skills needed for career progression. Overall responses to all questions were low, with skill development for level A staff being the only question with more than 50% positive responses (Table 7).

Table 7. Percentage of favourable responses to 2017 YVS questions related to career by academic staff compared to all staff.

YVS Question	All Staff (n=1615)	All academics (n=436)	Level A (n=32)	Level B (n=217)	Level C (n=125)	Level D (n=40)	Level E (n=22)
Enough time and effort is spent on career planning	30%	24%	38%	24%	20%	18%	36%
I am developing skills needed for career progression	41%	37%	53%	35%	35%	48%	48%
There are enough opportunities for my career to progress in CSU	34%	33%	35%	28%	28%	41%	45%

3. Progress (actions and outputs)

A thorough review of the AP policy and supporting documents was carried out in 2020 by an internal steering committee and key stakeholders, which identified the barriers listed in Section 1. In response, actions and improvements, which were enacted for the 2021 AP round, are listed in Table 8.

Table 8. SMART actions linked to sub-barriers

Sub-barrier	SMART action	Initiatives included
1. Declining success rates for women	Refine how equity is considered by AP committee to increase success rate of women equal to men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Simplified the assessment criteria including references to the University's 'core attributes', and the requirement for applicants to apply a percentage weighting to how their academic activities are considered. 1.2 Included all criteria in the Academic Promotions Guidelines to ensure clarity and transparency, minimise repetition of information and encourage robust consideration of all aspects of each application. 1.3 Ensured achievements continue to be considered relative to opportunity (EEO), by requiring promotion committee (PC) members to review applicants' EEO statements prior to the committee meeting as well as during deliberations. 1.4 Increased the gender representation requirements of promotion committees from the previous one-third women requirement to at least 40% (40:40:20) to reflect the University Council gender requirements and to ensure decision making is from a balanced gender lens. 1.5 Diversity and inclusion adviser included as advisory member of PC to advise on equity and unconscious bias. 1.6 Continuous improvement and monitoring via annual process review, participant surveys, and reports provided annually to Academic Senate,

		including reporting of AP data by level, location, gender, and EEO.
2. Variations in application rates across gender and employment type	Simplify the application process to increase the number of women and PT academics applicants to be proportionately equal to men applicant rates	<p>2.1 AP Policy, Procedure and Guidelines updated to include these initiatives.</p> <p>2.2 Redesigned application form to minimise repetition of required information and provide a clear template that allows applicants to build a more narrative-based case for promotion, based on experiences and achievements.</p>
3. Staff perception of support for career development including promotion is less positive for academic staff	Refresh information available to support staff involved with AP process	<p>3.1 Created new resources to guide applicants through the process including checklists, 'how to' advice, and live information sessions (with recordings available for later viewing). See Figures 2-4 below.</p> <p>3.2 Improved the university-wide AP mentor process, which has seen growth in the number of formalised mentorships for candidates. The new process allows prospective candidates to select a mentor from a published database and mentors and mentees are supported with resources and coaching. There are also drop-in sessions, and extra information is available to supervisors and mentors on the best ways to support applicants throughout the application process. The number of formal mentors available to candidates via the database was 32 in 2024.</p> <p>3.3 PC members required to complete online unconscious bias and inclusivity training tailored to the University context and delivered by the DPC Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team (EDI).</p>

The annual university-wide AP process is administered by the Division of People and Culture (DPC) in collaboration with the Office of the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic (DVCA). Changes to the process are communicated via the intranet and online information sessions for all interested academics, including applicants, supervisors, mentors and PC members. Applications for promotion to Level B are approved by the relevant Executive Dean, while applications to Level C are considered by a Promotion Committee, aiming for 40:40:20 gender representation (Action 1.2) and consisting of the following voting members:

- An Executive Dean (Chair)
- 3 academic staff at Level C or above (one from each Faculty)
- Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) (or nominee)
- Pro Vice-Chancellor Research (Performance and Governance) (or nominee)
- Pro Vice-Chancellor (First Nations Strategy) (or nominee).

Applications to Levels D and E are considered by a Professorial Promotion Committee, with 40:40:20 gender representation (Action 1.2) and the following voting members:

- Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) or Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Research) (chair)
- 3 academic staff at Level E (one from each Faculty)
- Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) (or nominee)
- Pro Vice-Chancellor Research (Performance and Governance) (or nominee)
- Pro Vice-Chancellor (First Nations Strategy) (or nominee)
- Up to three professors from one or more other universities, at least one of whom must have expertise in the scholarship of learning and teaching.

The membership of either committee can be adjusted to ensure the committee has a thorough understanding of First Nations focussed achievements for First Nations applicants. A member of the

DPC EDI team is an advisory member to both committees and provides guidance on equity issues and unconscious bias (Action 1.4); the EDI team reports to the Director, People Strategy and Culture, who also has oversight of the administration of the AP process.

The EDI team developed and facilitated unconscious bias and inclusivity training for all staff bi-monthly. The training for PC members is based on these broader workshops, with content tailored specifically to academic career paths, highlighting lived experiences of women and marginalised groups through Australian and international research. The online session runs for 1.5 hours and covers: Understanding bias and privilege; how bias impacts academic careers; inclusive behaviours; and considerations when reviewing promotion applications. Feedback from PC members has been limited, however evaluations of the training delivered pre-COVID (3 hours, face-to-face) found 100% of participants believed they would “use the knowledge and skills gained from this workshop”.

Figure 2. Screenshot of online FAQs available to staff (Initiative 3.1)

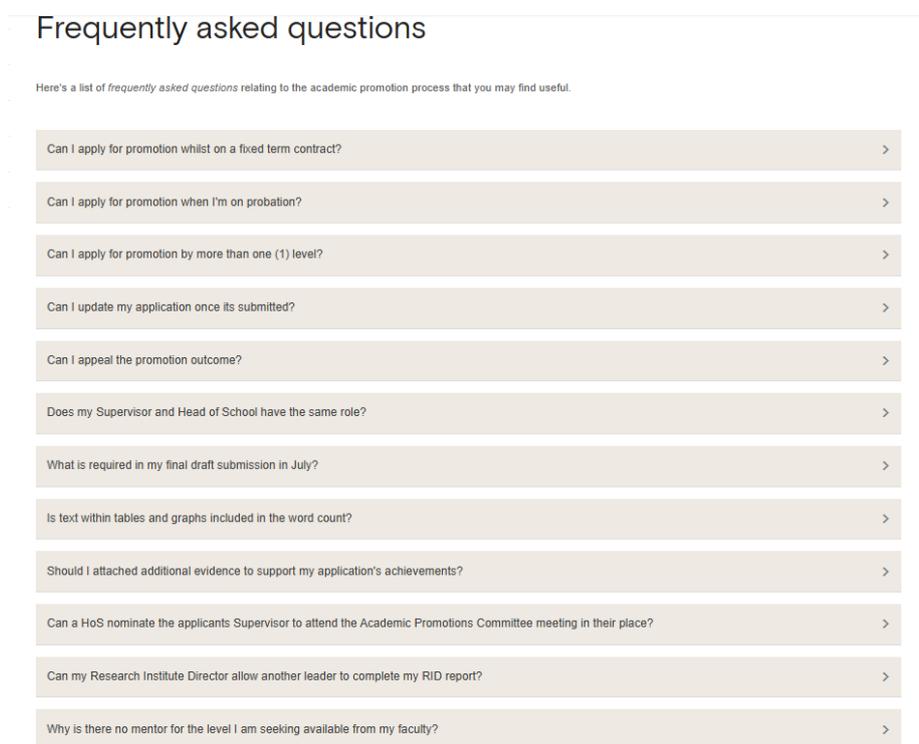


Figure 3. Screenshot of CSU’s academic promotions information page (Initiative 3.1).

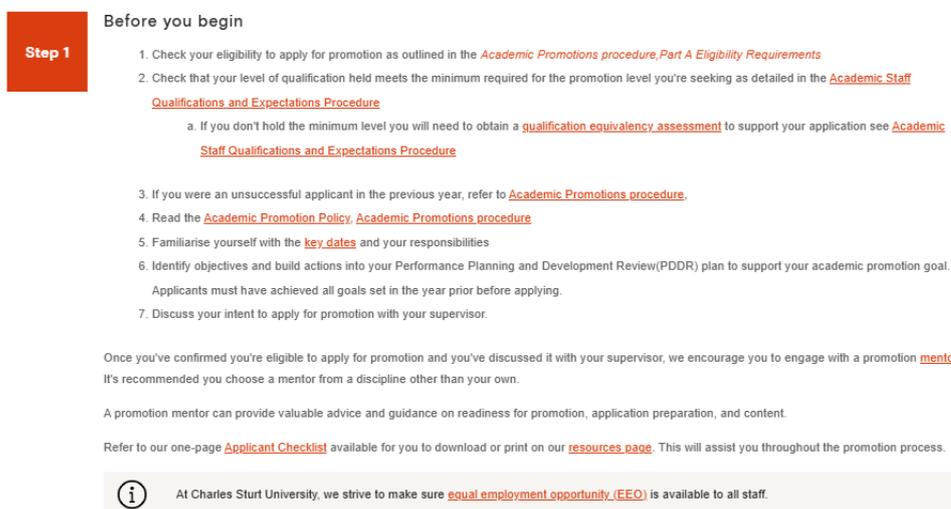
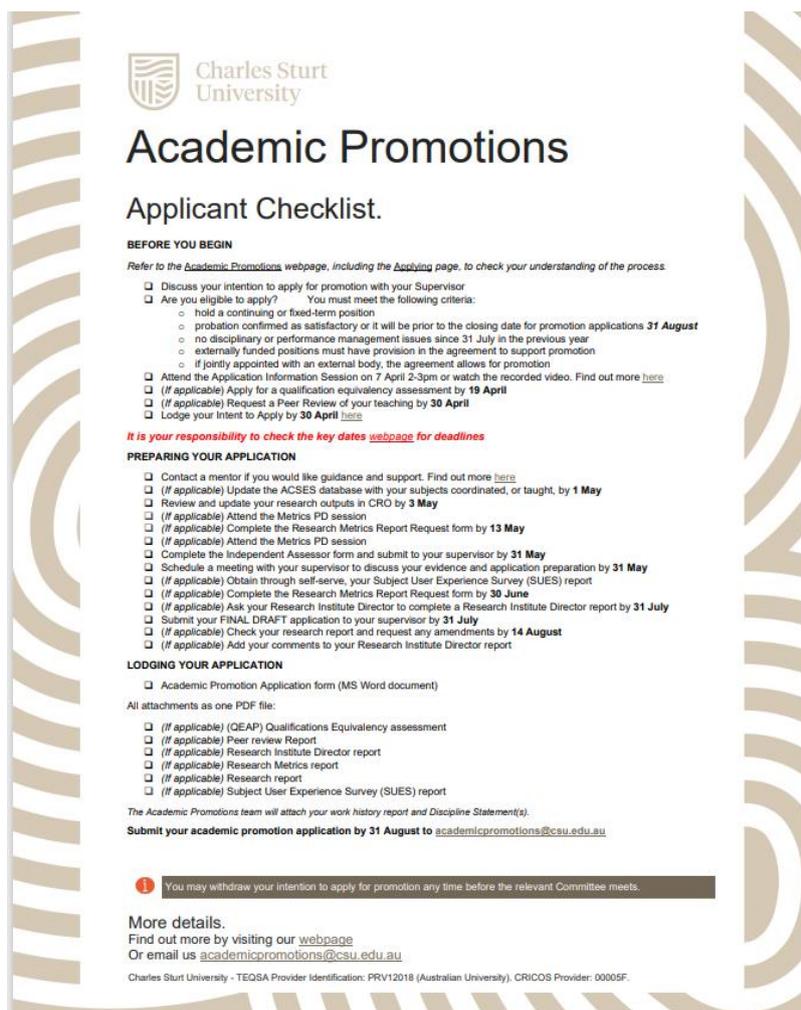


Figure 4. Image of Applicant Checklist (Initiative 3.1)



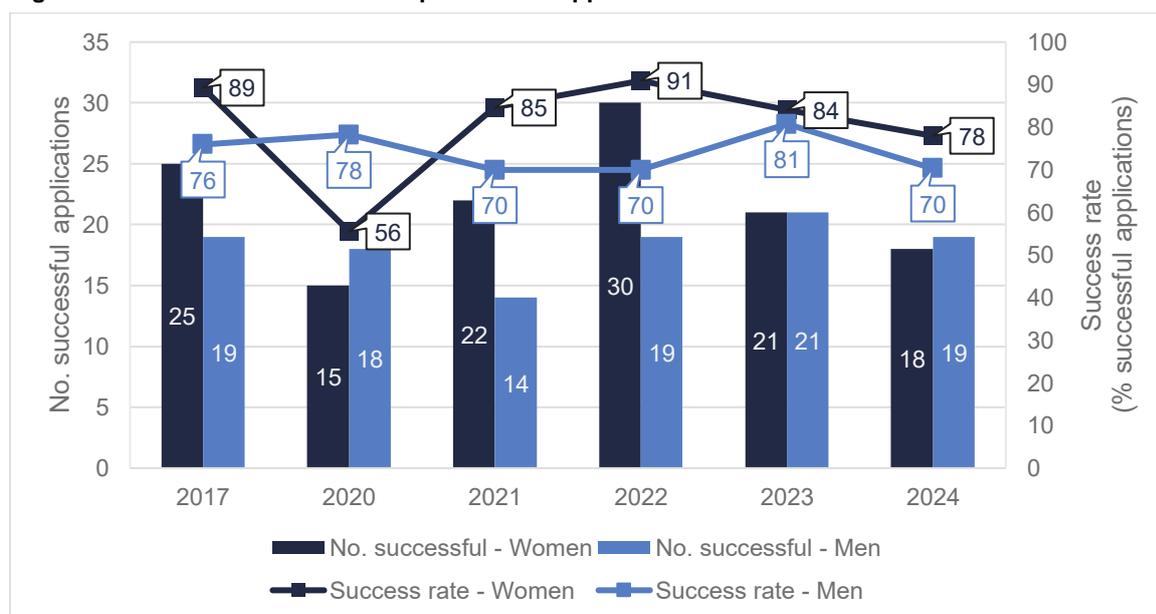
4. Outcomes

Please note: Data from 2017 shows the change from Bronze Athena Swan Application (awarded in 2017). Data from 2020-2024 show change from when recommendations from Bronze Application were fully implemented (start of 2020) to current data at time of Cygnet reporting.

4.1 Sub-barrier 1: Declining success rates for women

In 2020 the success rate of applications from women was 22% lower than men, in 2021 the success rate of applications from women increased to 85% exceeding the success rate of men by 15% (Figure 5). Since 2021, the success rate for women has consistently been higher than men (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Success rate of academic promotions applications for women and men from 2017 to 2024.



The number of applicants submitting EEO claims in 2024 nearly doubled from 2020, and the success rate of EEO applicants has continued to increase relative to the overall success rate (Table 9). Overall success rates of AP applications also increased by 7% during this time (Table 9).

Table 9. Proportion and number of applicants with EEO claims and impact on success rates in 2020 and 2024.

	% applicants with EEO claims	Overall success rate	Success rate - applicants with EEO claims
2020	47% (n=23)	67% (n=33)	70% (n=16)
2024	84% (n=43)	74% (n=37)	79% (n=34)

Success rates for women with EEO claims increased across all levels from 2020 to 2024, other than level A which was consistent at 100%, while there was a 4% decline in success rates for men with EEO claims in 2024 (Table 10).

Table 10. Success rates for applicants with EEO considerations by gender and level in 2020 and 2024.

Level of applicant	2020 success rates (number of EEO applicants)		2024 success rates (number of EEO applicants)	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Level A	100% (n=1)	- (n=0)	100% (n=2)	- (n=0)
Level B	50% (n=6)	60% (n=5)	80% (n=15)	91% (n=11)
Level C	80% (n=5)	100% (n=1)	100% (n=3)	80% (n=5)
Level D	0% (n=1)	100% (n=4)	50% (n=2)	40% (n=5)
Total	62% (n=13)	80% (n=10)	82% (n=22)	76% (n=21)

The increased applications from staff with EEO considerations and improved success rates for women and staff with EEO considerations indicate that the refinements to how EEO information is considered by AP committees (Initiatives 1.2-1.5), simplification of the application process (Initiatives 1.1, 2.1-2.2) and improved resources, information and support for applicants (initiatives 3.1-3.3) have positively impacted the number of applicants including EEO statements and outcomes for women and staff from key diversity groups.

4.2 Sub-barrier 2: Variations in application rates

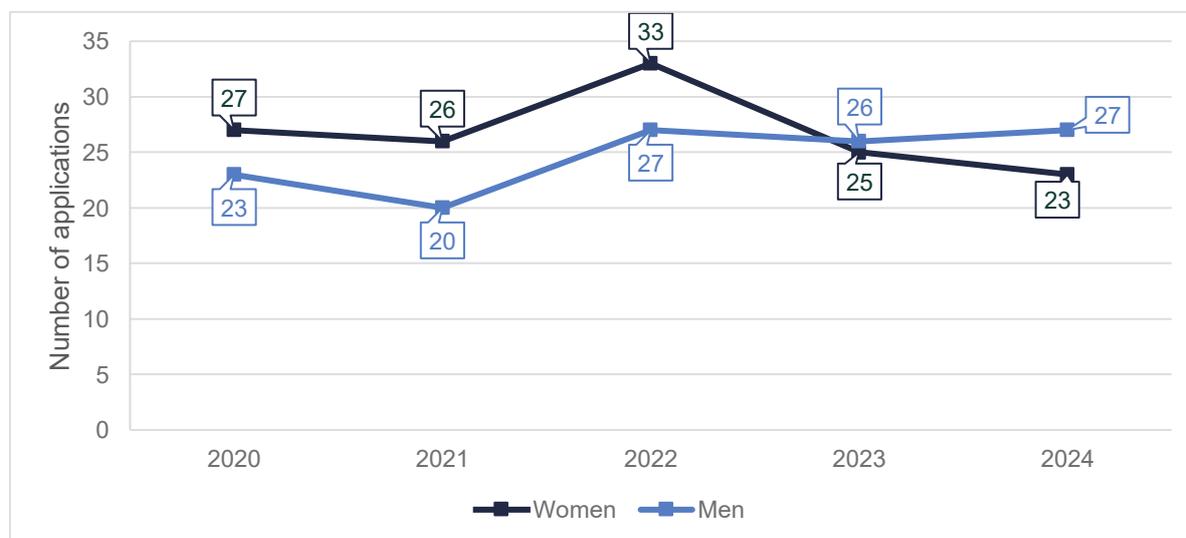
Application rates for PT academics were lower than FT academics in 2020 and have remained at similar rates through to 2024 (Table 11). In 2024, one PT male academic applied compared to no PT male academics in 2020 (Table 11). The decrease in applications from FT women aligns with an overall decrease in applications from women between 2020 and 2024 (Figure 6). This suggests that changes to simplify the AP process (Initiatives 1.1, 2.1, 2.2), and refreshed information and support available to applicants (Initiatives 3.1, 3.2) had little effect on application rates for PT academics.

Table 11. Application rates in 2020 and 2024 by gender and employment type.

	Women application rates (women applicants/women headcount)		Men application rates (men applicants/men headcount)		Total application rates (total applicants/total headcount)	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
2020	8% (25/313)	6% (2/35)	8% (23/279)	0% (0/24)	8% (48/479)	3% (2/58)
2024	4% (19/439)	5% (4/86)	7% (26/354)	3% (1/32)	6% (45/793)	4% (5/118)

Although overall application numbers did not change from 2020 to 2024, applications from women decreased from 27 to 23, while applications from men increased from 23 to 27 (Figure 6). The post-COVID spike in applications in 2022 (7 more applications from both women and men) suggests that the impacts and disruptions of the pandemic on research, teaching and the work- and home-lives of potential applicants may have impacted decisions to apply for promotion during the pandemic (Figure 6). This appears to have had a bigger impact on women's application rates in 2023 and 2024.

Figure 6. Academic promotions applications from men and women from 2020 to 2024.



Analysing application numbers by gender, level and as a proportion of total headcount shows that in 2024, men (8% application rate) were 1.6 times more likely (relative likelihood) to apply for a promotion than women (5% application rate), and this gap increased from 2020 (Table 12). The largest difference in application rates in 2024 was between men and women at level D with 2% of women applying compared to 12% of men (Table 12). The proportion of women applying for a promotion at levels A and B remained similar between 2020 and 2024 but decreased for women at levels C and D (Table 12). Application rates from men at levels A and B also remained similar but increased at levels C and D (Table 12).

Table 12. Proportion of applications in 2020 and 2024 by gender and level

Academic level	Proportion of women applicants (women applicants/women headcount)		Proportion of men applicants (men applicants/men headcount)		Women as proportion of total headcount	
	2020	2024	2020	2024	2020	2024
A	5% (2/31)	4% (2/53)	0% (0/13)	0% (0/21)	70% (31/44)	72% (53/74)
B	5% (12/191)	5% (15/278)	10% (16/118)	9% (13/151)	62% (191/309)	65% (278/429)
C	10% (9/77)	4% (5/113)	3% (3/106)	6% (7/109)	42% (77/183)	51% (113/222)
D	11% (4/36)	2% (1/55)	9% (4/35)	12% (7/59)	51% (36/71)	48% (55/126)
E	(13)	(26)	(31)	(46)	30% (13/44)	36% (26/72)
Total	7% (27/348)	5% (23/525)	7% (23/303)	8% (27/386)	53% (348/651)	58% (525/923)

Between 2020 and 2024, there was a 25% increase in applications from women at level B, while there were decreases in applications from women at level C (by 44%) and level D (by 75%) (Table 13). Conversely, applications from men at level B decreased by 19% while applications more than doubled from men at level C (a 133% increase) and increased by 75% for men at level D (Table 13). Future actions will consider these variations in application rates across gender and level (Further action 6.3).

Table 13. % Change in applications from men and women at all levels between 2020 and 2024.

	% change overall	% change women	% change men
Level A	0%	0% (n=2)	0% (n=0)
Level B	0%	25% (n=12/14)	-19% (n=16/13)
Level C	0%	-44% (n=9/5)	133% (n=3/7)
Level D	0%	-75% (n=4/1)	75% (n=4/7)

This data suggests the simplified AP process (Initiatives 1.1, 2.1, 2.2), and refreshed information and support available to applicants (Initiatives 3.1, 3.2) were holistic and made the process more accessible to both men and women and did not improve application rates for women as intended.

In 2024, applicants could submit EEO statements across five equity groups and eight categories of personal circumstances (Table 14). Of the 42 applicants (50% men and 50% women) who submitted an EEO statement in 2024, 15 had claims in one or two categories. Slightly more women than men had claims across three or more categories (Table 15).

Table 14. EEO categories and number of applicants in 2024 (n=42)

EEO category	Applicants
I am from a culture, religion or ethnic group different from the dominant one in Australia	16
I am a person with disability and/or a chronic condition	4
I am gender diverse and/or of diverse sexuality	1
I am a First Nations person	2
I am a carer for someone with disability and/or a chronic condition	8
Part-time work	8
Parental leave	2
Caring responsibilities	23
Injury/Illness (physical or mental)	11
Family and domestic violence	3
Working in a gender (male/female) dominated discipline or field	4
Covid 19	26
Other	15

Applicants also provided a statement about how these circumstances impacted their access to opportunity. Changes to the wording about cultural background resulted in an increase in applicants selecting this category, however no applicants addressed this aspect in their statement, despite research suggesting this group is likely to experience discrimination and bias in student evaluations and research collaborations, among other barriers².

Table 15. Number of EEO claims in 2024 by gender

	Women	Men	Total
1-2 claims	7	8	15
3+ claims	15	12	27

The increased usage of EEO statements by applicants, along with higher success rates for those who submit EEO claims, suggests that actions designed to increase consideration of equity within the AP process (Initiatives 1.2, 1.4-1.5, 2.1-2.2,3.1-3.3) have been effective. The 25% higher rate for women with 3 or more EEO claims (15 women compared to 12 men, Table 16) suggests women's lived experiences and access to opportunity may be more complex than men, however the higher success rate for women with EEO claims (82% compared to 72% men, Table 10) shows the process adequately considers these complex circumstances.

² Fan Y, Shepherd LJ, Slavich E, Waters D, Stone M, Abel R, et al. (2019) Gender and cultural bias in student evaluations: Why representation matters. PLoS ONE 14(2): e0209749. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0209749>

4.3 Sub-barrier 3: Staff perception of support for career development

There has been consistent growth in positive responses (agree and strongly agree) to questions about career opportunities for academics (n=479) since the 2017 YVS, with encouraging improvements at levels B, C and E (Table 16). This indicates that staff at these levels are feeling increasingly supported in their career development reflecting positively on the enhancements made to the academic promotions process (Initiatives 3.1-3.2). Level E academic staff reported feeling significantly more positive across all career opportunity questions, particularly regarding the time and effort invested in career planning (Table 16). Respondents at this level have likely engaged in the AP process multiple times and may have observed meaningful improvements in both the support provided during the promotions process and the structures underpinning academic career development. Additionally, six Level E academic staff members are shortlisted annually to serve on the professorial committee (with three participating in the committee), so from 2017-2024 at many have likely gained insight into updates and their impacts from a committee perspective.

While responses at levels A (primarily staff with no experience of the AP process) and D in 2024 showed more negative views on skill development and career opportunities compared to 2017 (Table 16), the reasons for this are not yet clear. These will be explored further as part of our future actions (Action 6.3).

Table 16. % change between 2017-24 for YVS questions in the Career Opportunities category from academic staff compared to all staff (YVS not run in 2020 due to restrictions related to pandemic)

YVS Survey Question	% change from 2017						
	All staff	All academics	Level A	Level B	Level C	Level D	Level E
Enough time and effort is spent on career planning	10%	13%	1%	15%	12%	7%	20%
I am developing skills needed for career progression	11%	15%	-9%	20%	20%	-8%	19%
There are enough opportunities for my career to progress in CSU	8%	10%	13%	17%	9%	-16%	8%

NB: Number of academic staff respondents to YVS 2024: Level A=24, Level B=223, Level C=120, Level D=63, Level E=49.

Overall staff perceptions of support for career development improved across the university between 2017 and 2024, with particularly notable gains around academic staff. This suggests that initiatives aimed at increasing support (3.1-3.3) have delivered a positive impact.

5. Impact

At the conclusion of the annual AP process participants from key stakeholder groups (applicants, supervisors of applicants, mentors and committee members) are surveyed via an anonymous survey. Each group receives a set of tailored questions that include quantitative rating scales and open-ended questions to capture their experiences across the promotions process.

Quantitative questions asked participants to rate the helpfulness of specific resources, while qualitative, open-ended questions explored what worked well, what could be improved, and general reflections on the process. The surveys assess the impact of implemented actions on participants' confidence, ease of engagement, and overall satisfaction with the promotions process.

In 2024, 42% of applicants (n=21, 50 in total), 33% of supervisors (n=9, 27 total), 20% of mentors (n=5, 25 in total) and 44% of committee members (n=7, 16 total) completed the survey. The data collection process used in 2024 did not include demographic information such as level, gender, diversity groups, or whether applicants were successful or had submitted an EEO statement. The desire to capture demographic data will be explored in 2025 (Further action 6.5) to assist with identifying further areas for improvement.

A thematic analysis of open-ended responses, using inductive (allowing themes to emerge from the data) and deductive coding (informed by the goals and actions of the AP changes) was mapped to institutional SMART actions to assess the impact of changes and identify areas for further improvement. Survey data revealed four key themes, explored in the next section, reflecting both the impact of implemented actions and opportunities for further action.

5.1 Mentoring and support

Mentoring (Action 3.2) was recognised across participant groups as a valuable component of the academic promotions process. Feedback suggests some inconsistency in mentoring based on the experience level of the mentor and their understanding of mentoring requirements (Table 17).

Table 17. Participant feedback about mentoring.

<i>"Having a mentor worked well for me. This was an invaluable part of the process. My mentor was objective and provided excellent and strategic advice" (Applicant 11)</i>
<i>"The mentoring was great" (Applicant 12)</i>
<i>"My direct manager was an incredible, positive support" (Applicant 10)</i>
<i>"It would be good to have appointed/external mentors that could spend time at the start highlighting the strengths, and then provide feedback to draft. The supervisor and mentor are often too involved with their own busy schedules or too involved with the candidate to provide objective, practical feedback" (Applicant 7)</i>
<i>"The mentor assigned to me was new to the role and provided little guidance on the process, feel that mentoring could be improved in this way" (Applicant 2)</i>
<i>"Previous experience as an applicant and current experience as an applicant has given me a good understanding of the processes and a strong familiarity with the requirements for the level the mentee was applying for" (Mentor 1)</i>
<i>"Greater clarity and education is needed in the roles of applicants and mentors to avoid tension around roles and responsibilities" (Mentor 2)</i>
<i>"Generally I was clear about what I needed to do and there was adequate information and advice to support me" (Supervisor 4)</i>
<i>"One of the applicants that progressed did not notify me that they were applying, so no support or guidance was able to be given" (Supervisor 10)</i>

Insights from participants highlight the need for clearer role definitions and shared expectations between mentor and mentee to support constructive and consistent mentoring relationships, as well as ongoing support for less experienced mentors to develop their skills and knowledge of the mentoring process.

Applicants in 2024 rated the advice and guidance of their mentors higher than that of their supervisors (Table 18). Mentors reported high confidence in their ability to support applicants with supervisors expressing less confidence in being able to provide advice and guidance (Table 18). This could have been impacted by the fact that several supervisors were supervising multiple staff members who were applicants while mentors usually only have one mentee to support.

Table 18. Summary of applicant ratings (0 = least helpful, 10 = most helpful) to questions on the helpfulness of mentors and supervisors and the confidence of mentors and supervisors to provide guidance to applicants (0 = least confident, 10 = most confident) and supervisor understanding of their roles and responsibilities in the 2024 AP process.

	Average rating	Min. rating	Max. rating	Range	No. responses
Applicant rating of Mentor advice/guidance	8.2	4	10	6	13
Applicant rating of Supervisor advice/guidance	6.6	0	10	10	16
Mentor confidence in providing advice/guidance to applicants	9.3	8	10	2	4
Supervisor confidence in providing advice/guidance to applicants	7.5	3	10	7	8
Supervisor understanding of their own role/responsibilities	7.8	3	10	7	8

Overall, while mentoring is clearly valued and often effective, the feedback across groups identified that further improvements would be beneficial (Further action 6.2).

5.2 Application form

The redesigned application form (Action 2.2) was recognised by those with previous Academic Promotions experience as an improvement on previous versions, however, some responses highlight the need for further refinement (Table 19).

Table 19. Participant feedback about the application form

“The new format for the application had a logical flow and guided my application process well.” (Applicant 14)

“The only issue was the format and issues around pasting information into the template. Space was sufficient and kept me to key points” (Applicant 9)

“The form is overly complex and repetitive. Existing institutional data should be used instead of requiring staff to re-enter it (e.g. qualifications, research output etc.)” (Applicant 4)

“The form, specifically the text fields built into the word doc were hard to format. For example weblinks demonstrating impact could not be included nor could pictures be included such as graphs. I ended up not using the fields within the document for this reason” (Applicant 17)

“It took weeks to craft the text and then had to edit to make word count” (Applicant 3)

“Accessibility of information and application form need improvement” (Mentor 2)

“The evidence was provided in zip files that made it easy to navigate in PDF” (Committee Member 7)

“Appeared to be some duplication” (Committee Member 4)

Insights from participants suggest that whilst the application form provides a useful guide for some applicants, the format and structure of the form was challenging for others. Some accessibility issues were raised and duplication of required information was noted.

Similarly, quantitative data reflected mixed experiences with the form. Applicants rated its ease of use at an average of 6/10 indicating room for improvement. Committee members reported a smoother experience with the form’s structure and data with an average ease of use score for reviewing applications of 8/10 (Table 20).

Table 20. Summary of applicant responses to rating questions about the ease of use of the AP application form and committee member responses to rating questions on the ease of reviewing applications (0 = very easy, 10 = extremely difficult).

	Average rating	Min. rating	Max. rating	Range	No. responses
Applicant ease of form use	6	2	9	7	18
Committee ease of reviewing applications	8	6	10	4	6

Overall, while changes to the application form have improved it from previous versions, these findings highlight the need for further refinement of the form’s structure and functionality to ensure it is both accessible and representative of diverse academic contributions (Further action 6.1).

5.3 Resources and Information

The resources and information provided (Actions 2.1, 3.1, 3.3) were broadly recognised as important supports in the AP process by all stakeholder groups. Overall, the updated resources were appreciated, but feedback across groups highlighted variability in their usefulness, accessibility and clarity (Table 21)

Table 21. Participant responses about resources and information

“The information and support provided to showcase evidence for Teaching is excellent” (Applicant 7)

“The framework, with the differing levels, made it easy to understand what I needed to show” (Applicant 9)

“There was guidance on the process and the documentation which worked well” (Applicant 12)

“There were a lot of different resources to access but it didn’t all sit in an easy to find place” (Applicant 17)

“The checklist was good but there wasn’t always information to support all the sections and what your requirements were as an applicant e.g. the profession statement part was confusing” (Applicant 1)

“The list of dates and what needs to happen at each stage on the promotions website was helpful and allowed us to keep on track and not miss any deadlines or steps in the process” (Mentor 1)

“The information sessions were good and having clear timelines and tasks are helpful” (Supervisor 4)

Formal, written resources such as Policy, Procedure and Guidelines (average 7.9/10) and CSU Guide to Evidence in Promotion (average 7.4/10) were rated more highly than live or recorded information sessions (average 6.3/10) for all participant groups. Unconscious Bias training, a requirement for all Promotions Committee members, was rated least helpful of the available resources and information (Table 22).

Table 22. Applicant ratings on the helpfulness of new academic promotions resources ('How helpful were the following resources in preparing and applying for academic promotion? (0=least helpful, 10 = most helpful).

NB: Table includes all types of resources participants were asked to rate in the survey; not all groups were asked about the same resources

Resource	Average (out of 10)	Min. rating	Max. rating	Range	No. responses
Applicants					
Live drop-in information sessions	5.5	1	10	9	15
Policy, Procedure and Guidelines	6.7	0	10	10	18
CSU guide to evidence in promotion	6.3	0	10	10	18
Mentors					
Recorded information sessions (for applicants)	7.3	6	8	2	3
Recorded information sessions (for supervisors)	7.3	5	9	4	3
Policy, Procedure and Guidelines	9.3	8	10	2	4
CSU guide to evidence in promotion	9	6	10	4	4
DPC website resources	7	5	9	4	3
Supervisors					
Recorded information sessions (for applicants)	5.7	4	8	4	3
Recorded information sessions (for supervisors)	5.8	4	7	3	5
Policy, Procedure and Guidelines	7	3	10	7	8
CSU guide to evidence in promotion	7.1	5	10	5	8
DPC website resources	7	4	10	6	8
Committee Members					
Policy, Procedure and Guidelines	8.6	4	10	6	7
CSU Guide to evidence in promotion	7	3	10	7	7
Unconscious Bias Training	5.4	1	10	9	5
Evaluator Reports	7.1	1	10	9	7

Overall, these results demonstrate that resources, especially the formal, written resources that provide guidance on the Academic Promotions process, are valued by all participants, Challenges in accessing the required information will be addressed in future (Future actions 6.2 and 6.4).

5.4 Processes

The updated academic promotions process (Actions 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 3.2) was viewed differently across participant groups, with committee members generally describing it as fair and inclusive, while applicants and supervisors raised concerns about transparency, clarity, and engagement (Table 23)

Table 23. Participant responses about processes

<i>"I liked the teaching peer review, it was a positive process for me" (Applicant 4)</i>
<i>"Feedback was somewhat helpful, it would be good to have an idea of how the application was benchmarked across peers also in the running for promotion at the same level" (Applicant 17)</i>
<i>"Meeting the Head of School was useful. Talking with someone from the actual committee would have been valuable" (Applicant 12)</i>
<i>"The peer review of teaching now requires detailed reflection with evidence, making it feel like a second full teaching section. This duplication may not be clear to the committee but adds unnecessary burden" (Applicant 4)</i>
<i>"Whilst I found it a little tedious to write in a self-inflating, self-congratulatory manner, it is always good to reflect on the things that you have done/achieved and innovations that you have introduced" (Applicant 1)</i>
<i>"Remove student subject evaluation surveys as evidence of effective teaching due to their inherent ethnicity and gender bias" (Applicant 17)</i>
<i>"The current mechanisms (across Australia- not just here) are so unbelievably opaque that it really seems committees can make decisions entirely on subjective ideas alone. It is not sufficient to say supervisors should know" (Applicant 8)</i>
<i>"I would like to have the opportunity to defend my application or speak to it like you would a thesis, it's a great deal of work the part that i don't like is being excluded from decision making meetings with the reliance on the document" (Applicant 9)</i>
<i>"Reviewing the applications and amount of time for discussions worked really well" (Committee Member 1)</i>
<i>"Process was very smooth all round. Strong consensus" (Committee Member 3)</i>
<i>"I enjoyed being part of the academic promotions committee and learned a lot in the process" (Committee Member 1)</i>
<i>"Meetings with the mentee and the opportunity to work with her without too much time pressure - so the long timeframe that is part of the process was helpful in giving us time to work together" (Mentor 1)</i>
<i>"I enjoyed the whole process" (Mentor 2)</i>
<i>"Onus seems to be on individual supervisors to know and understand changes in process which isn't efficient and can lead to patchy practice and multiple understandings" (Supervisor 1)</i>
<i>"It is a standard process that was easy to understand" (Supervisor 9)</i>

Applicants rated their level of satisfaction with the academic promotions process as 3/10 while other participants were not specifically asked to rate the process. These responses suggest that ongoing data collection and process improvement is necessary to ensure that all participants are engaged with and have a thorough understanding of the academic promotions process (further actions 6.1 and 6.5)

5.5 Equal employment opportunity (EEO) provisions

Surveys of participants did not ask about the EEO provisions of the AP process, however feedback amalgamated from an external review of the AP process in 2024 (unable to be attributed) and two PC members is provided in Table 24. These comments demonstrate staff perceptions of the importance of EEO statements in the application process and support the quantitative data which shows that the number of applicants submitting EEO statements in 2024 nearly doubled from 2022 with the success rate of EEO applicants continuing to increase relative to the overall success rate.

Table 24. Comments on EEO provisions from 2024 AP committee members and from an in-depth AP process review.

“EEO statement is sector leading as staff have the opportunity to comment on impact on achievements.”

“Equity issues handled well at CSU, but need to consider further what equity should look like at a regional university.”

“EEO process well conducted in promotion panel.”

“Equity groups are well considered.”

“CSU has arguably been a national leader when considering gender-based equity and it is highly likely that a reasonable equitable solution to gender-based career constraints is in the advanced stages of development.”

“More staff are becoming comfortable with providing EEO statements as we’re building trust.”

“Really value the inclusion of EEO and advice of the equity adviser, the discussions are very fair. It’s so good that we do this when others don’t” (Committee Member 6).

This process is such a breath of fresh air, I’ve never seen anything like it before, it’s great having an EEO adviser [on the committee]. I’ve worked at a number of universities and I’ve never seen anything like this (Committee Member 7).

Academics from other universities who sit on the PPC provided positive feedback about Charles Sturt’s EEO process within the committee meeting each year. The 2024 external review endorsed the value of EEO processes, and outcomes of the review included strengthening wording relating to EEO practices in the AP policy and procedure which has been enacted for the 2025 round.

6. Further action

Charles Sturt University identified declining success rates for academic women applying for promotion compared to men, and lower application rates for academics working PT (compared to FT), women at levels A and B, and men at level C. It was also identified that academic staff had lower perceptions of support for career development compared to non-academics. To address these gaps, we focused on improving these measures by revising and simplifying the AP process, strengthening equity considerations, and refreshing information and structures to better support AP applicants.

These changes delivered strong outcomes in success rates, with women achieving an 8% higher success rate than men and applicants with EEO claims achieving a success rate 10% above the overall average. However, the impact on application rates was mixed. Application rates for PT academics remained unchanged, as did rates for women at level B and men at level A (with only a 1% decrease at levels A and B respectively). Application rates for women at levels C and D declined by 6% and 9% respectively.

Encouragingly, YVS results improved significantly (favourable responses up 10–15%), and feedback from AP participants highlighted positive impacts such as valuing mentors, resources, and EEO processes. Suggestions for further improvement included simplifying the application form and process. Additional SMART actions are outlined below to continue addressing application rates for women academics and applicants from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Action name or reference	Rationale/evidence	Actions & outputs (description)	Timeframe (start & end)	Person/Group responsible for implementing action	Senior Leader accountable for action delivery	Desired outcomes, targets or success indicators
6.1 Further simplification of AP process	Previous process changes did not achieve higher application rates for women or PT staff. Applicant feedback that the process/time-commitment is too onerous.	<p>Eligibility checks moved to start of process, using a checklist with the applicant's supervisor (previously this may not occur until after the application was submitted).</p> <p>Referees (rather than evaluators) required for applications from level B and C, helping make process more akin to a job application.</p> <p>Reintroduce work function weightings to assist applicants to strengthen their case for application in their strongest domain.</p> <p>Review application form for usability, to reduce repetition and provide institutional data</p>	To be implemented for 2025 application round.	<p>Process is administered by DPC in collaboration with Provost & DVC (Academic)</p> <p>Supervisor of applicant to ensure checklist is completed and discuss/give feedback on eligibility to apply and validity of cited evidence</p>	Provost & EDPC	<p>Increased application rates for women (equal to men at all levels) and PT academics.</p> <p>Increased perceptions of career development support</p>

Action name or reference	Rationale/evidence	Actions & outputs (description)	Timeframe (start & end)	Person/Group responsible for implementing action	Senior Leader accountable for action delivery	Desired outcomes, targets or success indicators
		sources where available.				
6.2 Updated mentoring process	Feedback from participants and committee suggests mentors have a positive impact on the quality of an application and are especially valuable earlier in an academic career	Mentee/mentor resources updated including tips on how to select a mentor, and a mentor database created Further consultation with current mentors on ways to improve process and how to better support mentors and mentees	To be implemented for 2025 application round	AP team (administers the process)	Provost & EDPC	More applicants utilise mentors Quality of applications improves Increased success rates
6.3 Explore targeted program to support career progression for women academics at levels A-B and C-D	Application rates for women at levels C and D declining, percentage of women at levels C, D and E lower than men, while higher proportion of women are at levels A and B	Consider program/s that support women to apply for promotion, such programs may include skill building, earlier mentoring and other targeted support	To be considered in 2026 and may be implemented for future promotions rounds	Process is administered by DPC in collaboration with Provost & DVC (Academic) Possible collaboration with DLT/Teaching Academy	Provost, EDPC, PVCLT	Increased number of applications from women academics at levels C and D Gender parity of academics across all levels A-E
6.4 Tailored information and support for staff from	CALD staff are not using EEO statements in the AP process to fully explain challenges of	Training/knowledge building for CALD staff in use of EEO statements	To be considered in 2026 and may be implemented for future promotions rounds	Process is administered by DPC in collaboration with Provost & DVC Academic	Provost, EDPC, PVCLT	Increased number of CALD staff using EEO statement

Action name or reference	Rationale/evidence	Actions & outputs (description)	Timeframe (start & end)	Person/Group responsible for implementing action	Senior Leader accountable for action delivery	Desired outcomes, targets or success indicators
CALD backgrounds	being a CALD academic and the impacts of this on their career progression and access to opportunities	Targeted support and information sessions specifically tailored to CALD staff Consideration of pairing CALD applicants with CALD mentors where appropriate		Possible collaboration with DLT/Teaching Academy with further support from CALD Employee Network and Champions		Increased number of CALD academic staff being promoted across all levels
6.5 Capture demographic data as part of AP participant surveys	Unable to analyse qualitative data from AP participants from gender or intersectional perspective, potentially missing an opportunity to better understand the experience of participants	Explore possibility of adding demographic questions to participant surveys; Noting the small number of participants and response rates within each group, this needs careful consideration as to how to maintain anonymity	To be considered in 2026 and may be implemented for future promotions rounds	AP team (administers the process)	Provost & EDPC	Ability to analyse survey responses by gender and intersectional groupings to identify any differences in experiences