



SAGE

SCIENCE IN AUSTRALIA
GENDER EQUITY

SAGE Cygnet Award Application

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Acknowledgement of Country

The University of Queensland (UQ) acknowledges the Traditional Owners and their custodianship of the lands on which we work. We pay our respects to their Ancestors and their descendants, who continue cultural and spiritual connections to Country. We recognise their valuable contributions to Australian and global society.

University of Queensland: SAGE CYGNET #3

Career Progression for Academic Women Programs



THE UNIVERSITY
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Key Barrier: Career/Professional development

Barrier type:

- Institution-wide Barrier ⁱ
- Sub-group specific Barrier ⁱ

Barrier description: Lack of promotion and development advice and support for Level D and Level E Academics

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List of Abbreviations and Key Terms

Abbreviation	Definition
Academic Level A	Associate Lecturer / Research Associate
Academic Level B	Lecturer / Research Fellow
Academic Level C	Senior Lecturer / Senior Research Fellow
Academic Level D	Associate Professor
Academic Level E	Professor
APD	Annual Performance and Development process
CASAW	Career Advancement for Senior Academic Women (D to E)
CHRO	Chief Human Resources Officer
CPW	Career Progression for Women (C to D)
OCC	Organisational Culture and Capability
PRO	Performance Relative to Opportunity
UQ	University of Queensland
WDI	Workplace Diversity and Inclusion
Workday	UQ's Human Capital Management System

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Note on Gender Terms

We acknowledge that the LGBTQIA+ community is richly diverse and that the language we have used may not encapsulate all identities and histories of our staff and students across diverse genders, sexualities, and bodies. Note that historical staff survey data collected for our SAGE Bronze application (2014-2018) and reproduced here conflates sex and gender. We have assumed male correlates to man and female to woman gender identities for the purpose of this document. We also acknowledge that this assumption may not fully represent the identities of the persons included in these datasets

1. KEY BARRIER

Lack of promotion and development support for Level D and Level E Academics

In 2018, while preparing the SAGE Athena Swan Bronze application and Action Plan (Bronze Award), the University of Queensland (UQ) identified a lack of promotion and development support such as targeted professional development programs and mentoring opportunities for Level C, D and E women academics.

Three sub-barriers were identified:

1. **Inconsistent promotion practice and consideration of performance relative to opportunity (PRO)**

Women experience variability in how promotion policies, procedures, and criteria are applied, including inconsistent recognition of performance relative to opportunity.

2. **Difficulty accessing advice on promotion potential and/or career development support**

Women report limited access to clear, constructive advice on promotion readiness, career progression, and development pathways relative to their male peers.

3. **Limited access to senior women role models**

Due to the disproportionate representation of men versus women at Level E, women experience fewer opportunities to engage with senior women role models who can provide guidance and advocacy on career progression.

2. EVIDENCE OF BARRIER

2.1 Inconsistent promotion practice and consideration of performance relative to opportunity (PRO)

The Bronze Award identified variation in the application of promotion practice across and within different organisational units at the University. UQ initiated a new Annual Performance and Development (APD) process for appraisal and promotion in 2022/2023. However, Cygnet 1 revealed further work was required to reduce inconsistencies across the institution.

UQ's All Staff Survey (2018) discovered that identification mechanisms for potential promotion candidates ranged from active ('tapping on shoulder' linked to appraisal outcomes) or inactive (self-identification, email to all staff). The survey further suggested that inactive processes may be disadvantaging women, who may wait to be invited to apply instead of applying at the earliest opportunity. While this was an assumption (not data-based) in the Bronze Award, a proactive talent identification framework/process was identified as a potential solution. Action NC2.5 in the Bronze Award recommended we "Deliver targeted interventions directed towards STEM women from Level B onwards, to improve retention, promotion and progression outcomes."

The new APD process includes an explicit PRO question. Table 1 below (from Cygnet 1) compares survey data in 2022 with promotion data in 2023 and 2024 as to the use of PRO statements. It shows that the inclusion of this question led to an immediate increase in the

number of academics seeking promotion who include a PRO statement to support their application (no data from 2025 is available at the time of submission).

Year	2022		2023		2024	
	Promotion survey		Promotion data		Promotion data	
	Used PRO statement	No PRO statement	Used PRO statement	No PRO statement	Used PRO statement	No PRO statement
Women	42% (36)	58% (50)	81% (107)	19% (25)	78% (124)	22% (35)
Men	33% (26)	67% (53)	75% (115)	25% (38)	67% (102)	33% (50)
Total	62	103	221	63	226	86

Table 1: Use of PRO Statement in promotion application comparison sourced from 2022 Promotion Survey and promotion rounds data 2023 and 2024.

However, despite the inclusion of the PRO question in the written application, a survey of staff who undertook the promotion process in 2024 demonstrates that discussions around PRO are not always taking place, particularly discussions about work/life balance, which only occurred in 44% of cases. Table 2 shows the responses to this survey.

During the last 12 months, have you had an Annual Performance Review or similar? What was covered?	Women	Men	Total
Yes - and work life balance was discussed	39%	52%	44% (68)
Yes – and my career development needs were discussed	70%	82%	75% (115)
Yes – and support for my career progression was discussed	72%	71%	72% (110)
Yes - and promotion opportunities were discussed	62%	71%	66% (101)
No	3%	0%	2% (3)

Table 2: Promotion survey 2024: During the last 12 months, have you had an Annual Performance Review or similar? What was covered? N=153.

2.2 Difficulty accessing advice on promotion potential and/or career development support

The under-representation of women in senior academic positions at UQ is a long-standing issue. While initiatives have increased women’s representation at Levels B and C, there is still a gap at the higher academic levels, most significantly, at Level E.

The 2018 Athena Swan UQ Staff Engagement Survey highlighted that the absence of adequate support and a standardised framework for performance development disproportionately disadvantaged academic women.

Data collected from the 2017 All Staff Survey on Promotion (Figure 1) also indicated that there was a lack of transparency, lack of support from management and unclear translation of criteria into eligibility for promotion, indicating that informal/formal conversations about the process of development and promotion were not occurring. Lack of support from management was identified as the issue of greatest divergence between men and women. This was seen as one of the contributing factors to the significant underrepresentation of women in senior academic roles at the university.

Staff Survey Comments - Promotion

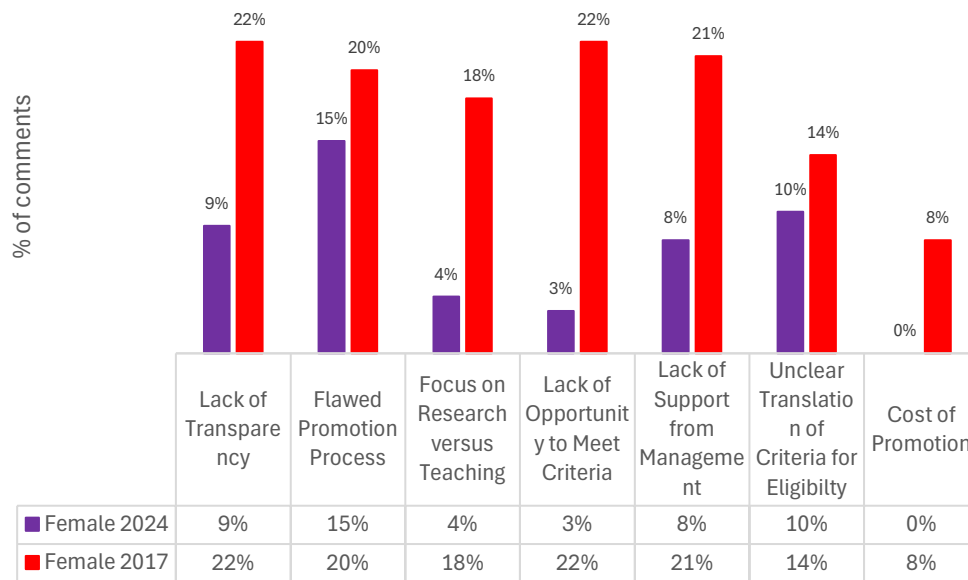


Figure 1: All staff survey 2017 - qualitative data: thematic analysis of narrative statements addressing promotion and development, N = 454

Further evidence from the Bronze Award (Figure 2), identified that only 28% of STEM Academic women and 35% of non-STEM Academic women agree that there is sufficient support for promotion at the university.

ACADEMIC: I feel there is sufficient support regarding promotion at UQ

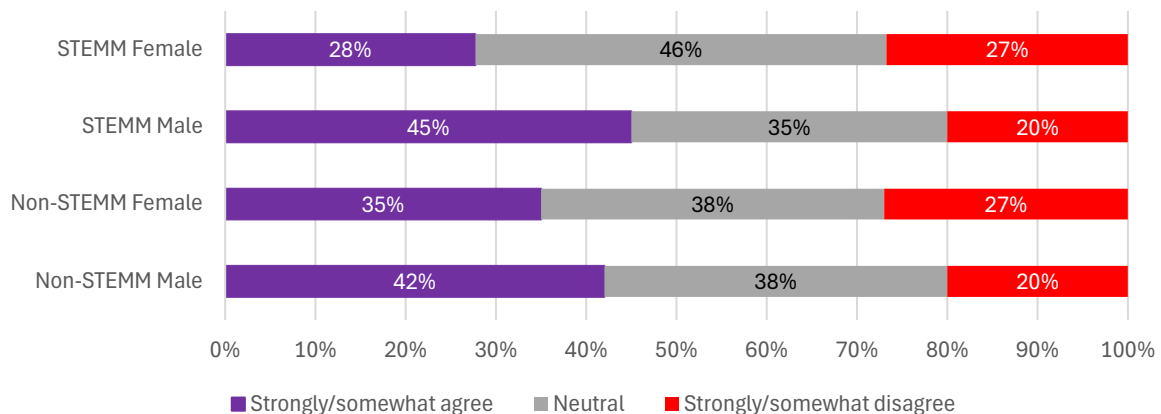


Figure 2: All staff survey 2017 - STEM and Non-STEM male and female academic staff responses to question regarding support for promotion at UQ

2.3 Limited access to senior women role models

The Bronze Award identified that UQ had only recently begun to trial methods for increasing the visibility of women in senior academic roles or providing information regarding how to contact or access their expertise. Table 3 is an extract from the Bronze Award showing early mechanisms for increasing the visibility/accessibility of senior academic women role models used by UQ's 11 faculties and institutes.

Number of faculties/institutes undertaking measure	Potential role modelling measures
7 of 11	Monitor speakers/presenters to ensure balanced gender/other diversity for some events
6 of 11	Offer financial support for gender-specific events/programs/industry engagements
5 of 11	Run programs/events/seminars addressing gender diversity
1 of 11	Won't speak at or financially support panels/seminars without balanced gender representation
3 of 11	Websites with dedicated gender diversity information (main page and/or separate sections)

Table 3: Visibility/Accessibility measures reported by the 11 Faculties and Institutes in the 2017 All Staff Survey.

Likewise, Table 4 shows the results of an audit undertaken for the Bronze Award, which identifies a significant difference in the proportion of women invited to speak at Faculty/Institute level events. This provides further evidence of the limited visibility and access to senior level women academics provided during 2015 to 2018.

Work Area	% Women invited to speak at events			
	2015	2016	2017	2018
STEMM Institutes	-	30%	42%	43%
STEMM Schools	27%	35%	39%	40%
Non-STEMM Faculty	-	24%	39%	32%
Whole of UQ Average	-	-	-	37%

Table 4: Snapshot data showing the proportion of women who are invited speakers at UQ/Faculty/Institute events over a three-year period

3. PROGRESS (ACTIONS AND OUTPUTS)

Table 5 summarises actions relating to the sub-barriers identified.

Sub-Barrier	Action	Outputs	Identified in Bronze Plan?	Desired outcome
1. Inconsistent promotion practice and consideration of performance relative to opportunity (PRO)	Continue to improve on variable nature of APD practice across UQ. Develop PRO guidance and training.	Clearly articulate in writing the expectations for specific roles in the APD process (e.g., Heads, Supervisors, Staff, HR) including checklists for key actions (where appropriate). Maintain focus on building centrally-delivered programs aimed at supporting staff career and development.	Yes. Related to NC4.5 Also Cygnet 1 Further Action 1 and 3, respectively.	More consistent approach to APD followed by all supervisors.
2. Difficulty accessing advice on promotion potential and/or career development support	Review existing promotion support programs for women academics across the University.	Review of program in 2020. Review of program in 2023/24	Yes. Related to NC2.5.	Identify any changes required to meet needs of cohort. Complete review by Q.1 2024.
	Redesign targeted support programs based upon areas of greatest gender disparity, prior program feedback and current understanding of best practice.	2024 and 2025 course design refreshed to address review findings.	Yes. Related to NC2.5.	Programs redesigned to respond to feedback and best practice by Q.2 2024.
	Link redesigned programs to the new APD and promotions framework	Refreshed C-D and D-E courses linked to APD and promotions framework	Yes. Related to NC2.5.	New program content directly linked to APD and promotions framework by end 2023.

Sub-Barrier	Action	Outputs	Identified in Bronze Plan?	Desired outcome
	Deliver and assess new programs for Level C and Level D academics seeking promotion.	2024 and 2025 courses delivered and evaluated (2024 only)	Yes. Related to NC2.5.	2024 program delivered and evaluated by Q2 2025 2025 program delivered and evaluated by Q2 2026
3. Limited access to senior women role models	Create and launch a network for women academics at Level E, "Women at E" to support these academics and to provide mentoring and role-modelling to women seeking promotion	<p>Women at E network launched in 2024.</p> <p>Level E women have established mentor relationships with course participants and act as expert panel members.</p> <p>In early 2024, 6 Level E women academics nominated and selected to act as the leadership and delivery team for both courses.</p>	No	<p>Women at E network launched.</p> <p>Mentor relationships established.</p> <p>Involvement of Level E women in program design and delivery.</p>

Table 5: Progress (actions and outputs) on addressing barriers

3.1 Inconsistent promotion practice and consideration of performance relative to opportunity (PRO)

In Cygnet 1, UQ reported on the development of a new APD and Promotions framework in 2022/2023. Further actions were identified to address practice inconsistencies and the need for PRO to be taken into consideration.

While the new Annual Performance Development (APD) process has been widely adopted and has led to significant gains in participation and quality, feedback from staff surveys and consultation groups identified variable implementation across different organisational units. Similarly, the introduction of a dedicated PRO section within the promotion application template has substantially increased its use and visibility, feedback from surveys and focus groups indicates that further work is needed to ensure consistent understanding and application of PRO across the University.

PRO guidance is included in policy and in staff and managers' guides to the APD process, and targeted work is underway to address these inconsistencies through the renewed career development programs targeted towards women described in section 3.2.

3.2 Difficulty accessing advice on promotion potential and/or career development support

UQ offers two programs supporting women's promotion to higher academic levels: *Career Progression for Women (C to D)*, established in 2014, and *Career Advancement for Senior Academic Women (D to E)*, established in 2015. The programs focus on building confidence and networks in preparation for promotion in the following three years and strengthening UQs pipeline of women leaders. As an action of the Bronze Award, a review of these programs was undertaken in early 2020, however implementation of the review was hindered by the Covid 19 pandemic.

A second review was conducted in 2023/2024. Both reviews considered participant feedback as well as an examination of the literature around best practice for women-only development programs. These two sources informed and reinforced the rationale for program elements as well as changes to delivery emphasis.

These reviews identified a need for greater emphasis in three areas:

- Providing a deep understanding of the UQ promotion processes (aligned with sub-barriers 1 and 2)
- Providing greater access to networks that can offer advice on promotion (aligned with sub-barrier 2)
- Providing greater access to senior women role models and informal mentors (aligned with sub-barrier 3)

The renewed programs offered post 2024 remain largely the same. Figure 3 shows the promotional material of these programs for 2025. A key element in the design and delivery of the refreshed courses and the differentiating factor between the C to D and D to E programs is their anchoring in the new APD and Promotion process such that content has been designed to reflect expectations and requirements set out in the new systems at Level D and Level E respectively, including new sessions in both courses which support participants in their understanding of the detailed requirements to progress to Level D or E, developing

an aligned personal promotion plan, including development of draft responses to application questions, and strategies to navigate UQs systems and expectations.

To address identified disparities between STEMM and non-STEMM women in Level D & E positions, EOIs from potential participants were considered relative to STEMM/non-STEMM discipline to ensure that the cohort of successful candidates were proportionally representative of the overall make up of UQ.

A further evolution to the post 2020 deliveries is a more inclusive definition of eligibility. For both courses, the eligible audience is defined as either Level C or D persons who identify or may be perceived as women in the workplace, including cisgender women, transgender women, and non-binary people who may be perceived as female or feminine (regardless of their gender identities). In 2025, the EOI form was updated to include the question “how do you describe your gender identity” with a free text response field to allow participants the freedom to answer in a way that aligns best with their identity.

For academic women and non-binary people at Level C who are pursuing career progression to Level D.

Leadership
A/Prof Deanne Garnaway (ITaLI)
Professor Kylie Tucker (SBMS)
HR Consultant Rebecca Hale

For academic women and non-binary people at Level D who are pursuing career progression to Level E.

Leadership
Professor Jessica Mar (AIBN)
Professor Kelly Matthews (ITaLI)
HR Consultant Brydie Bailey

AT A GLANCE

- Continues the two programs previously run by Emerita Professor Polly Parker (BEI) and Jennifer Wetheriff (HR)
- Revised budget and format with a more distributed facilitation model
- Supports UQ's strategic objectives and has enabled the achievement of SAGE Athena SWAN awards
- Current UQ figures: 43% Women at Level D, 31% Women at Level E
- Successfully relaunched Career Progression for Women (C to D) in 2024
- 24 Level Ds accepted for D to E starting in August 2025

3. Women at E (Profs) Network

Connects UQ's 200 women professors to support ongoing senior leadership development that contributes to the increase of women in senior leadership roles at the school, faculty, and pan-UQ levels. Started in 2024 by a group of women academics who host 2-3 events per year.

Leadership group
Professor Lauren Ball (HMBS), Professor Jodie Copley (HMBS), Professor Rhonda Faragher (HASS), Professor Anna Johnston (HASS), Professor Kelly Matthews (ITaLI), and Professor Kate O'Brien (EAIT)

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CREATE CHANGE

CH/CO/05 002018 - TEG/SA/PW/12/20

Figure 3: 2025 Academic Women's Programs on a Page

The Bronze Award identified that there was a gender divergence in Academic roles for STEMM Academics from Level B onwards and for non-STEMM academics from Level C onwards. However, as noted in UQ's Cygnet 1 application and in Figure 4 and Figure 5 below,

improvements to the APD and Promotion processes, alongside other interventions, have seen the gap close across all Academic Levels C-E for both cohorts. As such, the plans noted in the Bronze Award to introduce a bespoke level B to C program were put aside.

3.3 Limited access to senior women role models

An identified weakness of the 2014 to 2020/2022 programs was reliance on a limited delivery team as well as access to discipline diverse mentors and role models for participants. To overcome this, the following strategies were adopted:

- In early 2024, an EOI process was undertaken to identify six Level E women who would act as the leadership and delivery team for both courses, supported by the UQ Human Resources Leadership Development Organisational Culture and Capability (OCC) Team. These roles were successfully filled in mid-2024.
- The 'Women at E' network was launched in 2024, comprising a network of 200 women professors. The steering group facilitates meetings and events and provides Level E mentors for the courses as well as panel experts for course panel sessions. Events scheduled by 'Women at E' are also attended by course participants as part of course learning elements (see Figure 4).

In 2024, the Women at E Network held two activities:

- A launch event with the Vice-Chancellor (approx. 90 attendees), which helped shape the Network's direction
- A celebration for women Associate Professors promoted to Professor attained by around 50 members.

Table 6 provides a snapshot of the events held or planned for 2025.

Event and format	Attendees	Date	Description
On Leadership <i>(Hybrid)</i>	50-60	3 March	Hosted and curated by the Women at E Network and open to all, the "On Leadership" series features professors and established leaders from and beyond UQ. Once a year or when opportunity strikes (we have a visiting scholar, etc). Featured Professor Tracey Bunda and facilitated by Kate O'Brien.
Retreat: Planning and Legacy for Women Professors <i>(In person)</i>	21 (plus 3 facilitators) from UQ, UTAS, QUT	15-18 June	Focused on what matters, planning, alternative plans, and connection including voices in your head versus listening to yourself, intention setting, and a different way of leadership (relational, community building over competitive individualistic)
Emerita Professor panel <i>(In person)</i>	50	10 October	Panel of Emerita Professors reflecting on their experiences of retirement and what they see as really mattering in academic life

Table 6: 2025 Women at E Network events

4. OUTCOMES

Table 7 summarises outcomes of the actions discussed above.

Sub-Barrier	Action	Outputs	Identified in Bronze Plan	Desired outcome	Outcome status
1. Inconsistent promotion practice and consideration of performance relative to opportunity (PRO)	Continue to improve on variable nature of APD practice across UQ. Develop PRO guidance and training	Clearly articulate in writing the expectations for specific roles in the APD process (e.g., Heads, Supervisors, Staff, HR) including checklists for key actions (where appropriate). Maintain focus on building centrally-delivered programs aimed at supporting staff career and development.	Yes. Related to NC4.5 Also Cygnet 1 Further Action 1 and 3, respectively.	More consistent approach to APD followed by all supervisors.	Written expectations: achieved. Training development: Further action
2. Difficulty accessing advice on promotion potential and/or career development support	Review existing promotion support programs for women academics across the University.	Review of program in 2020. Review of program in 2023/24	Yes. Related to action NC2.5.	Identify any changes required to meet needs of cohort. Complete review by Q1 2024.	Achieved
	Redesign targeted support programs based upon areas of greatest gender disparity, prior program feedback and current understanding of industry best practice.	2024 and 2025 course design refreshed to address review findings.	Yes. Related to action NC2.5.	Programs redesigned to respond to feedback and best practice by Q.2 2024	Achieved

Sub-Barrier	Action	Outputs	Identified in Bronze Plan	Desired outcome	Outcome status
	Link redesigned programs to the new APD and promotions framework	Refreshed C-D and D-E courses linked to APD and promotions framework	Yes. Related to action NC2.5.	New program content directly linked to APD and promotions framework by end 2023.	Achieved
	Deliver and assess new programs for Level C and Level D academics seeking promotion.	2024 and 2025 courses delivered and 2024 course evaluated	Yes. Related to action NC2.5.	2024 program delivered and evaluated by Q.2 2025 2025 program delivered and evaluated by Q.2 2026	Further action
3. Limited access to senior women role models	Create and launch a network for women academics at Level E, "Women at E" to support these academics, plus to provide mentoring and role-modelling to women seeking promotion	<p>Women at E network launched in 2024.</p> <p>Level E women have established mentor relationships with course participants and act as expert members on panel sessions.</p> <p>In early 2024, 6 Level E women academics nominated and selected to act as the leadership and delivery team for both courses</p>	No	<p>Women at E network launched.</p> <p>Mentor relationships established.</p> <p>Involvement of Level E women in program design and delivery.</p>	Achieved

Table 7: Outcomes of actions to address barriers

4.1 Inconsistent promotion practice and consideration of performance relative to opportunity (PRO)

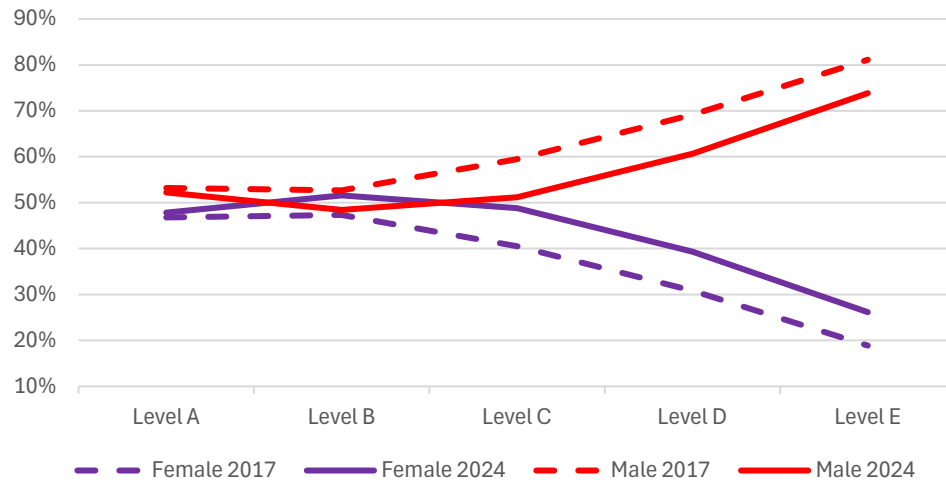
UQ's new Annual Performance Development (APD) and Promotions Framework establishes a clear, consistent, and equitable approach to academic performance and career progression. Introduced in 2022/2023, the framework redefined academic performance criteria to give equal weight to research, teaching, service, and supervision, and embedded these within a structured annual APD process linked directly to promotion applications. Supported by comprehensive training and new digital systems, the framework ensures that all staff engage in regular, developmental performance conversations that explicitly address career progression and promotion readiness. This alignment has led to a substantial increase in APD participation, improved quality of feedback and goal setting, and higher rates of promotion applications and success for women. However, staff have reported inconsistencies in practice and the need for greater consideration of PRO.

Minimal data is available to fully measure the success of these initiatives given the fact that only two full cycles have taken place. We can already see in Table 1 that there has been an increase in the use of PRO statements, and in Table 2 that conversations are beginning to include PRO concepts such as work-life balance.

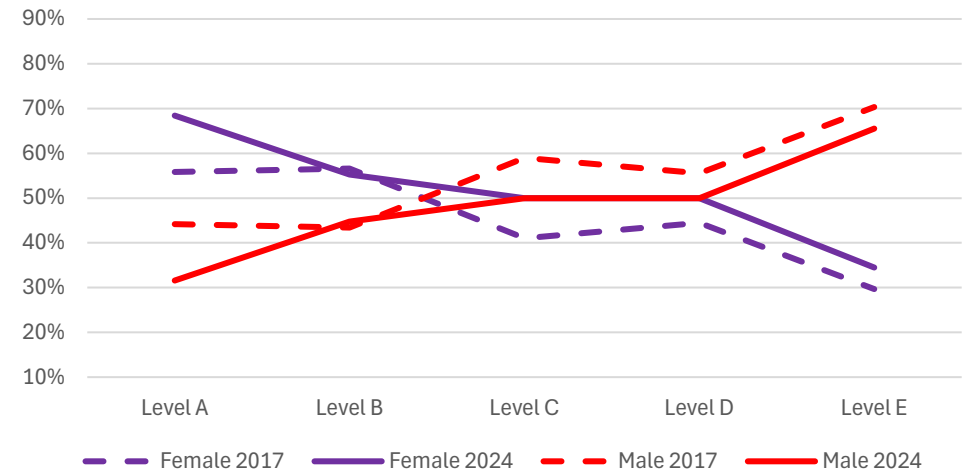
4.2 Difficulty accessing advice on promotion potential and/or career development support

The CPW (C to D) and CASAW (D to E) programs in 2024 and 2025 each had 24 participants selected from across the organisation. As noted in Cygnet 1, and evidenced below in Figure 4 and Figure 5, the combined effect of promotion related interventions has resulted in an increase in the number of women being promoted into Level D and E roles. This has resulted in a significant narrowing of the gap between men and women at Levels B, C and D for both STEMM and non-STEMM disciplines between 2017 and 2024. At Level A, women outnumber men in non-STEMM disciplines while being close to parity in STEMM disciplines; at Level E, there remains a larger difference between numbers of men versus women, however the numbers are moving towards gender parity.

STEMM Academic profile, 2017 and 2024



non-STEMM Academic profile, 2017 to 2024



	2017 Female	2017 Male	2024 Female	2024 Male	Change over time
Level A	47% (366)	53% (416)	48% (359)	52% (392)	Roughly equal, no change
Level B	47% (274)	53% (305)	52% (327)	48% (307)	Roughly equal, no change
Level C	41% (160)	59% (235)	49% (208)	51% (218)	Increased representation of women, roughly equal
Level D	31% (78)	69% (175)	39% (120)	61% (185)	Increased representation of women, men remain majority
Level E	19% (67)	81% (288)	26% (102)	74% (288)	Increased representation of women, men remain majority

	2017 Female	2017 Male	2024 Female	2024 Male	Change over time
Level A	56% (43)	44% (34)	68% (26)	32% (12)	Increased representation of women, women remain majority
Level B	57% (103)	43% (79)	55% (84)	45% (68)	Slight decrease in representation of women, women remain majority
Level C	41% (57)	59% (82)	50% (70)	50% (70)	Increased representation of women to achieve parity
Level D	44% (48)	56% (60)	50% (64)	50% (64)	Increased representation of women to achieve parity
Level E	30% (27)	70% (64)	34% (40)	66% (76)	Increased representation of women, men remain majority

Figure 4: STEMM Academic staff profile comparison between 2017 and 2024, showing % and n.

Figure 5: Non-STEMM Academic staff profile comparison between 2017 and 2024, showing % and n.

Data from a survey of staff on their attitudes towards promotion at UQ in 2024 (Figure 6) shows a dramatic change in staff perceptions of barriers to promotion. Both men and women reported lower levels of concern in relation to all of the themes identified as part of the Bronze Award. Guidelines have been developed to provide consistent understandings of roles and responsibilities, and further work is required in providing supervisors and staff with centrally-developed and delivered training about the APD roles and responsibilities.

Staff Survey Comments - Promotion, 2017 and 2024

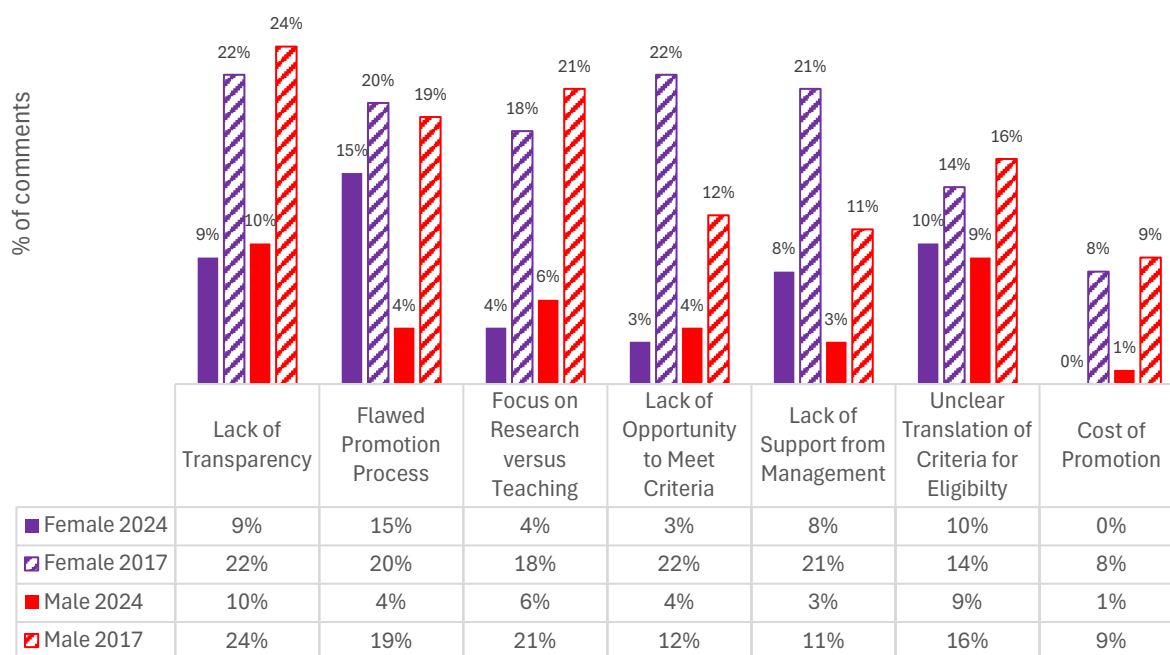


Figure 6: Comparison between 2017 and 2024 all staff survey on promotion - thematic analysis of narrative statements addressing promotion and development

Table 8 highlights all-staff engagement survey data that shows that favourable responses (ie “agree” or “strongly agree”) to questions relating to career development are increasing for women academics at levels C and D (note that because of the way that data is reported, we are unable to view data by level).

Question	2022 favourable	2024 favourable	2025 favourable
I am satisfied with the career development opportunities I can access at UQ	64%	61%	67%
I have access to the learning and development activities I need to progress my career	68%	64%	72%
UQ demonstrates a genuine commitment to diversity and inclusion	75%	69%	75%

Table 8: Favourable all-staff survey responses by women academics at levels C and D in 2022, 2024 and 2025 to selected items relating to career development

The data shows that an overall recovery in confidence following a period of decline in 2024, but the pattern across items suggests more than a simple rebound with 2025 scores being higher than those for 2022. The data indicate a renewed sense of opportunity and access, especially in relation to learning and development, which saw the strongest gain (from 64% to 72%). This improvement likely reflects targeted investment in capability-building (career development programs) and clearer understanding of pathways available for progression.

By contrast, satisfaction with overall career development opportunities has not risen as strongly, suggesting that staff now see more opportunities to build skills but still experience limits to advancement. The restoration of confidence in UQ’s commitment to diversity and inclusion (back to its 2022 level of 75% after a 2024 dip) suggests that cultural trust and visibility of action have been regained, yet not necessarily deepened.

Taken together, the data reflect tangible progress in enabling mechanisms (learning and development access) and rebuilding confidence in institutional intent (diversity and inclusion). However, perceptions of career progression may indicate that systemic and structural barriers may persist, even as enabling conditions improve. Sustaining and translating these attitudinal gains into measurable advancement outcomes will be key to long-term impact.

Figure 8 and Figure 8 provide evidence from the post-program survey after the refreshed CPW course completed in 2024. They demonstrate a high level of agreement by participants on items relating to the barriers addressed in this application.

2024 CPW Post-Program Survey Responses As a result of participating in this program ...

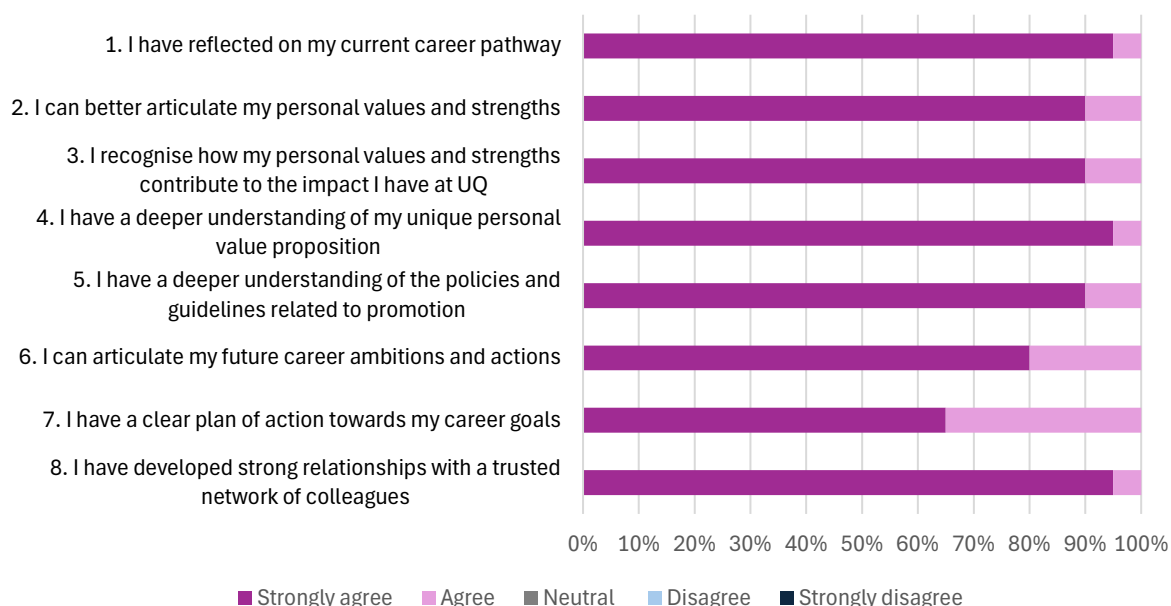


Figure 7: 'Have Program Expectations Been Met' Survey (n=20)

2024 CPW Post-Program Survey Responses

Thinking about your CPW experience, please rate the extent to which you agree with the following:

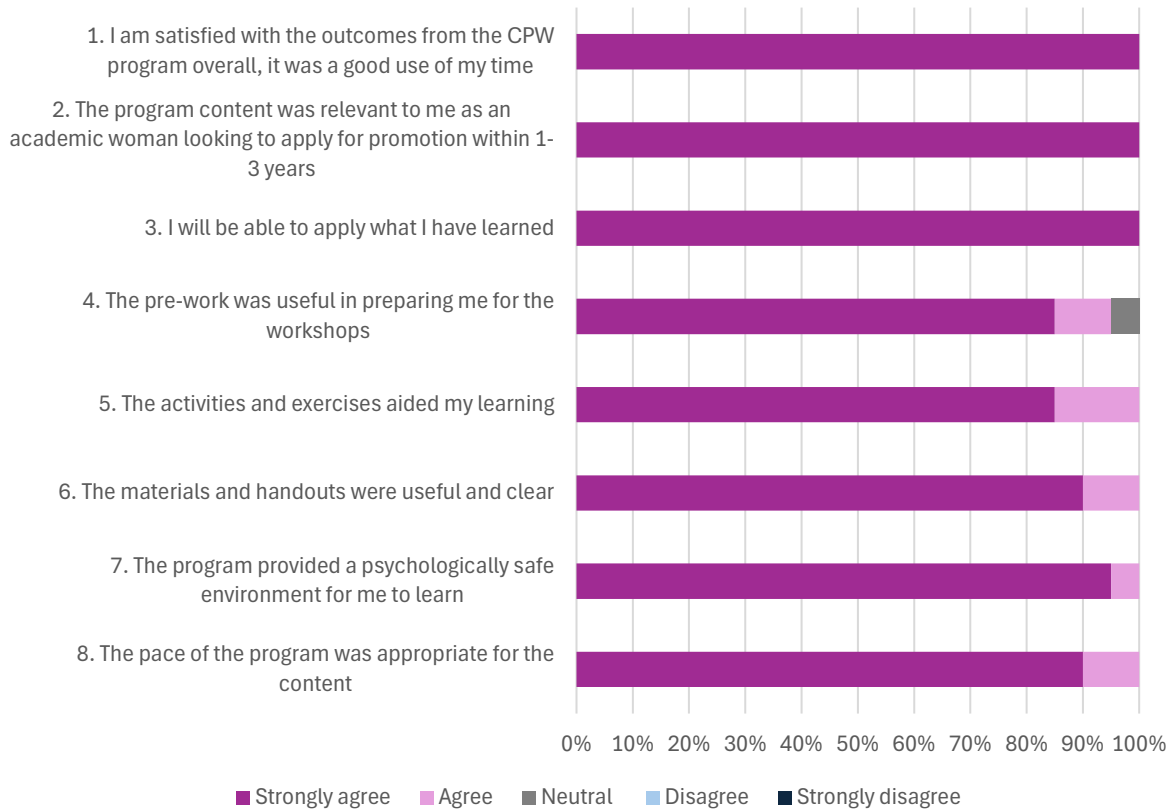


Figure 8: 'What was your experience of the program?' Survey (n=20)

When asked whether they would recommend the course to a colleague, 19 of 20 respondents selected 10 on a 0-10 scale (10 being most likely to recommend). Responses to the survey clearly indicate that the sub-barriers 2 and 3 are being addressed. However, there remains room to further address the key outcome measure "I have a clear plan of action towards my career goals". Further analysis of the course and follow up interviews with the renewed course cohort graduates will need to be undertaken to understand this result (see Further Action 3).

4.3 Limited access to senior women role models

The Women at E network continued its work in 2025, with 64 women professors answering a call to provide mentorship to CPW and CASAW course participants. These informal arrangements allowed each participant to engage with two or three professors to discuss their experience, seek advice, and receive support in developing their promotion application. The program strengthens community and ensures ongoing connection after promotion. Feedback from course participants is discussed in Table 9 in the next section.

5. IMPACT

"You may not realize just how much impact this program has on us. It's hands-down the most meaningful and transformative program I've ever been part of. I honestly believe the workplace would be a much better place if everyone had the chance to experience something like this"

– 2024 Program Participant (R17)

To gather program participant feedback in relation to the impacts and outcomes of the renewed program we undertook a post-program evaluation survey of the 2024 CPW program. The survey was sent to all participants with 20 out of 24 responses being received. The average time taken on responses was 37 minutes and 18 seconds. In addition to the quantitative responses, summarised in Figure 7 and Figure 8, the survey included six text boxes which asked the following questions:

1. Reflecting on the program topics and activities, what were the top three most impactful for you, and why?
2. What was the highlight of your experience in this program?
3. Was there a lowlight in the program?
4. Do you have any feedback for the facilitators?
5. Do you have any suggestions for how we can improve the program?
6. Do you have any final comments or thoughts you would like to share?

A manual thematic analysis of text responses to these six questions was undertaken to identify respondent program participant views regarding the delivery of the key learning elements. Despite the general nature of the six questions asked of participants, responses clustered around four specific key areas of the program design in addition to the overall impact. Exemplary quotes provided and commentary summarised in Table 9.

Theme	Commentary	Exemplary responses
Overall impact of the Program	Many noted that they now had the tools and confidence to go for promotion, either in the upcoming or future rounds. The range of inputs in the course are also a feature of responses. Respondents cite the many inputs ranging from self-understanding, confidence, networking, role-models, authenticity, pathways to promotion and alignment to the promotion process.	<i>"This program was ideal for me at this career stage. It has and will change me personally and professionally. I have a renewed energy and purpose, underpinned by understanding and visualising my personal values and value proposition and how they align to those of UQ. I will continue to check in and check out onwards." (R4)</i> <i>"It has boosted my confidence, extended my academic network and clarified my career goals. The promotion processes focused activities and insights have been very useful. I am seriously considering applying in 2025." (R11)</i>
Safety and Support	As Kassotakis (2024) notes, an overarching element for the success of women only career development programs is the need to	<i>"I loved the positive vibe created throughout the program and connecting with likeminded women." (R14)</i>

Theme	Commentary	Exemplary responses
	<p>provide an '...opportunity to work in a safe environment without fear of judgment or reprisals from male peers.'</p> <p>Responses clearly indicate that the participants felt 'safe', 'supported', part of a 'sisterhood' or 'community' and 'respected'.</p>	<p><i>"A general highlight was the very real and very empowering sense of 'sisterhood' - of care, support, celebration and connection among the group." (R7)</i></p> <p><i>"All the workshops and activities nurtured a safe space to build a community with other women (from our CPW course and previous iterations) so that I feel supported and that I have a leadership community I can turn to on the journey into UQ leadership." (R16)</i></p>
Promotion Practicalities	<p>Participants valued the process of self-understanding through values, strengths and weaknesses, followed by an understanding of the specific overarching leadership requirements and context of promotion at UQ, and through mentors the specifics within faculties and institutes, followed by drafting applications and practicing of pitches.</p>	<p><i>"Feedback provided on draft promotion documents submitted (as well as the mock interview) were very impactful as it got me started on the writing and receiving feedback to improve it. Being linked with peers means we can share our feedback and continue to help each other through that. The mock interview was another aspect that helped me understand the work I need to do to truly be prepared for promotion interview." (R2)</i></p> <p><i>"Being encouraged/gently pushed to prepare promotion documents and pitch - trying to see and articulate a personal proposition statement. It was hard but valuable." (R16)</i></p>
Mentoring, Role Modelling and Visibility	<p>The impact of having a wider delivery group of Level E women for the program, the foundation of 'Women at E' as a source of a broader range of speakers and panellists, peer coaching and mentoring as well as talks by senior university leaders was reflected in the survey data. A key feature of participant statements for this theme is the personal connections made by the participants with different role models/speakers in connecting their personal journey with that of a 'like' senior woman at UQ.</p>	<p><i>"Connecting, sharing and learning about others and their stories that resonate with my experiences was a highlight." (R13)</i></p> <p><i>"Presentations by and opportunities to hear from and talk with senior mentors and UQ leaders was impactful because it demystified/broke down myths about leadership and promotion processes. It was also impactful because it really helped (particularly the group work with the senior mentor) crystalise and discuss in depth/receive advice on promotion processes (ie. feedback on personal proposition statement, career summary). It also provided opportunities for leaders to know who we were, which is a great opportunity to have had." (R3)</i></p>
Networking	<p>Participants highlighted the new relationships formed and the key role</p>	<p><i>"The relationships that have been forged are my highlight. There are so many highlights, but I think this is the greatest gift of this</i></p>

Theme	Commentary	Exemplary responses
	these relationships will play in moving towards promotion. A key feature of this theme is that the new connections/networks act not only as one that can be turned to for advice but also one of support, solidarity and empowerment.	<p><i>program because this will help the group going forward and will consequently help others.” (R2)</i></p> <p><i>“The biggest highlight, though, was the networking. Meeting so many inspiring women through triads, mentor groups, and especially the dinner with senior leaders was truly impactful. I rarely work with female colleagues in my day-to-day role, so building these connections - and even some real friendships - was incredibly meaningful.” (R17)</i></p> <p><i>“My key highlight was the networking and having someone believe in me.” (R1)</i></p>

Table 9: Summary of post-program feedback from renewed programs

In understanding what more needs to be done we asked participants of the latest program to offer suggestions for improvement. Participants identified that they would appreciate even more time with mentors, particularly in the context of their future promotions (see Further Action 4).

“Mentor group time involvement outside the workshop was minimal” (R13)

Given the participants are all successful women academics, one participant highlighted that the course should provide academic evidence to participants around leadership models and career development (see Further Action 5).

“...I would have appreciated more structured guidance on readings/podcasts/videos that align with the themes we explored, especially literature grounded in academic, feminist and critical leadership perspectives....This would have helped deepen the theoretical framing and offered more diverse model of leadership that resonate within a university context...” (R6)

One participant raised the potential for psychosocial harm hearing about colleague’s personal experiences of gender bias, discrimination and inequality. It will therefore be important for continuing to prioritise the application of a psychological safety lens during program delivery and evaluation (see Further Action 5).

“...It was emotionally heavy to witness how systemic issues persist across the sector, especially when so vulnerably shared by peers.” (R9)

6. FURTHER ACTION

Please note that further actions for sub-barrier one are not documented below, as they are captured in the Further Action Plan of Cygnet 1.

Table 10 summarises further actions relating to the barriers discussed in this application.

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
1. Undertake follow up interviews with the renewed course cohort graduates around how to improve clear career goal setting	The lower results for “I have a clear plan of action towards my career goals”. Being the key convergent outcome of the program.	Identify areas for improvement from interview data.	Q1 and Q2, 2026	Director, Organisational Culture and Capability	Chief Human Resources Officer	A deeper understanding of what further inputs to the programs could provide greater clarity/certainty around a plan of action for career goals.
2. Compile data over time	Collect and aggregate course feedback as an ongoing source to assist in maintaining program effectiveness	Set up data base of program participant responses to end course surveys	Q1 and Q2, 2026 and then annually	Director, Organisational Culture and Capability	Chief Human Resources Officer	A bank of evidence to help inform the content and pedagogy of future programs.
3. Follow up progression of cohort at 1 - 3 Years	A key metric indicating the success of the programs would be in assessing time to promotion relative to prior years	Work with UQ HR team to track participant progress post program delivery	Q4, 2026	Director, Organisational Culture and Capability	Chief Human Resources Officer	A database of participants that can be compared to promotion data maintained by the University.

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
4. Examine possibility of Program Alumni to continue to meet and to act as future mentors and sponsors	The benefits of the program can continue and be 'paid forward' as well as providing another source of role-models and mentors for future programs	UQ OCC Team to examine resourcing for potential to add this element to the programs.	Q2 and Q3, 2026 and then annually	Director, Organisational Culture and Capability	Chief Human Resources Officer	Provide formal ongoing networking and support for course participants
5. Review program content taking participant feedback into account	Course participants provided detailed and rich feedback, including areas for improvement which can be considered as the program content is reviewed for continuous improvement.	Identify areas for improvement from feedback survey data.	Q2 and Q3, 2026 and then annually	Director, Organisational Culture and Capability	Chief Human Resources Officer	Updated course content will be responsive to the needs of participants.

Table 10: Further SMART Actions