



SAGE

SCIENCE IN AUSTRALIA
GENDER EQUITY

SAGE Cygnet Award Application



WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY

**GENDER
EQUITY IN
COVID-19
RESPONSE**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

With respect for Aboriginal cultural protocol and out of recognition that its campuses occupy their traditional lands, Western Sydney University acknowledges the Darug, Eora, Dharawal and Wiradjuri peoples and thanks them for their support of its work in their lands across Greater Western Sydney and beyond.



Image Details

Those Who Came Before Us, 2021. Western Sydney University collaborative artwork.

Created by staff, students and community, under the cultural guidance of Allan McKenzie of Wiradjuri and Gamilaroi nations. On site for view in Chancellery foyer, Western Sydney University, Parramatta South Campus.

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GLOSSARY

Glossary of Western Sydney University Organisational Terms	
Acronym/Abbrev.	Full Title
ARtO	Achievement Relative to Opportunity
CEALD	Culturally, Ethnically and/or Linguistically Diverse
COVID	Coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, COVID-19
DVCREI	Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Research, Enterprise & International)
EA	Enterprise Agreement
ECR	Early Career Researcher
Faculty ECS	Faculty of Engineering, Computing & Science
Faculty SABEL	Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts, Business, Education & Law
HASS	Humanities Arts & Social Sciences
HDR	Higher Degree Research
HIE	Hawkesbury Institute for the Environment
ICS	Institute for Culture and Society
LGBTIQA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer, Asexual +
MARCS	MARCS Institute for Brain, Behaviour and Development
NBGD	Non-Binary or Gender Diverse
NDGEP	National Disasters, Global Events and Pandemic
NICM	National Institute for Complementary Medicine
NSW	New South Wales
SAGE-AL	SAGE Academic Lead
SAGE-PM	SAGE Programs Manager
SAGE-RL	SAGE Research Lead
SAGE-SAT	SAGE Self-Assessment Team
SoB	School of Business
SCDMS	School of Computer, Data and Mathematical Sciences
SoE	School of Education
SEDBE	School of Engineering, Design and Built Environment
SHCA	School of Humanities and Communication Arts
SHS	School of Health Sciences
SoL	School of Law
SoM	School of Medicine
SNM	School of Nursing and Midwifery
SoP	School of Psychology
SoSc	School of Science
SSS	School of Social Sciences
STEMM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics & Medicine
SWAG	SAGE Working Aggregate Group (SAT Subgroup)
THRI	Translational Health Research Institute
VC	Vice-Chancellor and President
VC-GEC	Vice-Chancellor's Gender Equity Committee
VC-GEF	Vice-Chancellor's Gender Equity Fund
WSU	Western Sydney University

A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

Gender

Western Sydney University (WSU) recognises gender diversity. WSU staff, students and community include women, men, non-binary and gender non-conforming individuals, all of whom are valued by the University.

As a standard, WSU SAGE uses the following representations in data:

- Women are represented in figures as W
- Men are represented in figures as M
- Non-binary or gender diverse people are represented in figures as X

Data for non-binary and gender non-conforming staff throughout the period of interest for this application is lower than WSU SAGE's minimum reporting threshold of 10. This data would be especially identifiable at disaggregation by discipline group or year. As such, the predominance of data provided in this document refers to WSU staff who identify as woman (W) or man (M).

Further gendered data analysis presented throughout this document (that is, any analysis beyond the simple presentation of data by raw numbers) also excludes non-binary and gender non-conforming data so as to protect against identifiability. For clarity, initial references are coupled with the caveat: (W/M Only). For concision, secondary references to these terms use only "gender" as their descriptor. Nevertheless, all references to "gender data" or "gender gap analysis" throughout the document should be read as gender referring to women (W) and men (M) only.

Indigenous / Non-Indigenous

Following WSU protocol, this document uses "Indigenous" as a collective term for people who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. As a correlative, the document uses "non-Indigenous" as a collective term to refer to staff who do not identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Cultural, Ethnic and Linguistic Diversity

Following consultation, Western SAGE uses "culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse" as a collective identifier for groups of staff or students of diverse cultural backgrounds, ethnicities, language groups and/or racialised minorities. For concision, this grouping of staff is represented in data and figures as CEALD.

STEMM / HASS

The SAGE Athena Swan Bronze Institutional Award process required that organisational data be presented by discipline groupings of STEMM (Science, Technology, Mathematics and Medicine) and non-STEMM (all other discipline areas). As such, WSU's benchmark data for the Bronze Era (2015–2017) was produced in alignment with this requirement. Since 2017, WSU organisational restructures, including the reorganisation of Schools, the creation and dissolution of 'Clusters', and the establishing of Faculties has impeded data collection and has potential to cloud data comparisons in the current era. For the purposes of simple comparison against WSU's benchmark data, the Bronze Era discipline groupings are sustained in the current document, with the

exception that 'non-STEMM' has been retitled 'HASS'. For clarity, the following is a list of Schools and Institutes allocated to each discipline group.

STEMM Schools and Institutes

- Hawkesbury Institute for the Environment
- MARCS Institute for Brain, Behaviour and Development
- NICM Health Research Institute
- Translational Health Research Institute
- School of Computer, Data and Mathematical Sciences
- School of Engineering, Design & Built Environment
- School of Health Sciences
- School of Medicine
- School of Nursery & Midwifery
- School of Science

HASS Schools and Institutes

- Institute for Australian and Chinese Arts and Culture
- Institute for Culture and Society
- School of Business
- School of Education
- School of Humanities and Communication Arts
- School of Law
- School of Psychology
- School of Social Sciences

Academics employed in Divisions are counted in WSU totals but not allocated to STEMM or HASS groupings.

Brief data explainer

Western SAGE regularly uses two forms of gendered analysis (W/M Only) to determine GEDI barriers and outcomes at WSU:

- Raw Gendered Data: disaggregated data by gender, presenting raw numbers only. This analysis offers a straight-forward breakdown of data by gender, but does not take into account the 'background rates' of WSU staff by gender across WSU or within any discipline grouping.
- Cohort Gap Analysis: a simple gender gap analysis accounting for cohort proportions by discipline grouping relative to barrier/outcome performance data. That is, Cohort Gap Analysis provide contextualised and comparative data for relative organisational performance by gender and discipline grouping, for example: the proportion of STEMM women academics applying for promotion relative to the proportion of STEMM academics who are women at WSU.

Data for this Cygnet was captured, extracted and analysed up to 31 December 2024.



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WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY: SAGE CYGNET #3

	✓ Current Cygnet	Barrier <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ List the Barrier addressed in this Cygnet▪ List the Barrier for Cygnets already submitted
Institution-wide barrier	1	Flexible Work
Institution-wide barrier	2	Academic Promotions
Sub-group barrier	3	Indigenous Staff
Institution-wide barrier	✓	Gender Equity in COVID-19 Response
Sub-group barrier		WSU Parents & Carers

KEY BARRIER

Western Sydney University (WSU) received its Bronze Athena Swan Institutional Award in February 2020, three weeks prior to the first NSW Government restrictions imposed to manage the emerging COVID-19 pandemic. In April and May 2020, the United Nations, World Bank and Australia's Workplace Gender Equality Agency warned that the social and economic impacts of the pandemic stood to undo decades of progress toward gender equality, with impacts extending beyond the initial crisis period.¹ UN Secretary General Guterres urged institutions to put gender equity at the centre of COVID-19 responses.²

This Cygnet describes WSU's work to foreground gender equity in responsiveness to COVID-19 pandemic across the 2020 – 2023 period, including through:

- sector collaboration and leadership;
- leveraging GEDI governance structures and initiatives;
- targeting immediate supports for the most impacted groups, and;
- focusing internal policy commitments to ensure ongoing responsiveness.

EVIDENCE OF BARRIER

WSU experienced significant organisational disruption arising from COVID-19 circumstances. From March – May 2020 and June – October 2021, NSW 'stay-at-home' orders constrained staff and student movement. Six WSU campuses were located in 'LGAs of Concern' under the State's heaviest restrictions. With 15% of staff self-reporting high risk of COVID-19 infection (*r*=351, *MyVoice* 2020), a cautious approach to staff safety saw WSU campuses closed to non-essential activity from 16 March 2020 to 26 February 2022.

Alongside campus closures, organisational disruption (Table 1) included:

- rapid transition to remote work and teaching;
- intensification of domestic and international students' pastoral and administrative care;
- confinement of research and engagement activity to online environments;
- atypically high redeployment for professional staff;
- recruitment restrictions, and;
- administrative disruption to career development and academic promotions.

All academics (including Research-Only staff) were called upon to do all they could to support teaching continuity and students' pastoral care. In 2021, pandemic-associated financial impacts also necessitated Voluntary Separations and organisational change processes.

¹ United Nations (2020), *The Impact of COVID-19 on Women*, Policy Brief. <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/policy-brief-impact-covid-19-women>; de Paz, C., Muller, M., Munoz Boudet, A.M., and Gaddis, I. (2020). *Gender Dimensions of the COVID-19 Pandemic*, Policy Note. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstreams/7eb56ff6-3546-5d94-b45c-2c37fa64d2bc/download>; Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) (2020), *Gendered Impacts of COVID-19*, 11 May. https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/Gendered%20Impacts%20of%20COVID19_0.pdf

² Guterres, A. (2020). "Put Women and Girls at the Centre of Efforts to Recover from COVID-19", *Statement by the UN Secretary General*, 9 April. <https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/put-women-and-girls-centre-efforts-recover-covid-19>

Table 1. WSU COVID-19 Disruptions, 2020 - 2022

WSU COVID-19 Disruptions, 2020 – 2022					
Item	Cohort Affected	Disruption	Initiated	Completed	(n)
CAMPUS-BASED WORK AND SERVICES					
Campus access	All staff & students	Restricted (essential only)	16 Mar 2020	22 Feb 2021	49 wks
			25 June 2021	1 Dec 2021	22 wks
	Unvaccinated staff & students	Restricted (essential only)	1 Dec 2021	26 Feb 2022	13 wks
University events	All staff & students	Cancelled	16 Mar 2020	30 Nov 2020	37 wks
		Moved online	30 Nov 2020	22 Feb 2021	12 wks
		Moved online	25 June 2021	25 Oct 2021	17 wks
Early Learning Centres (Campus childcare)	Parents & carers	Operational (Access subject to NSW Health advice)	21 July 2021	18 Oct 2021	13 wks
RECRUITMENT & REDEPLOYMENT					
Staff Recruitment	Casuals	Restricted (existing contracts honoured)	Mar 2020	Feb 2021	50 wks
	All staff	Restricted (VC review)	June 2020	Feb 2021	39 wks
Position Redeployment	7% Professionals (77% women)	Temporary redeployment to student services and learning support	16 Mar 2020	30 Nov 2020	37 wks
TEACHING					
Onshore UG & PG Coursework	International students & academics	Restricted (if offshore at start date)	4 Feb 2020	9 Jan 2022	2 yrs
UG lectures	UGs, academics & learning support staff	Moved online	16-31 Mar 2020	Hybrid continuing	2+ yrs
UG tutorials, seminars, & workshops	UGs, academics & learning support staff	Moved online	16-31 Mar 2020	31 Dec 2020	42 wks
			25 June 2021	24 Oct 2021	17 wks
PG coursework	PGs, academics & learning support staff	Moved online	16-31 Mar 2020	31 Dec 2020	42 wks
			25 June 2021	24 Oct 2021	17 wks
UG, PG & HDR practice-based teaching (e.g., lab work)	Relevant students, academics & technical staff	Restricted	30 Mar 2020	7 Sept 2020	23 wks
			25 June 2021	24 Oct 2021	17 wks
HDR supervision	International HDRs & academics	Moved online	4 Feb 2020	9 Jan 2022	2 yrs
	Domestic HDRs & academics		30 Mar 2020	30 Nov 2020	35 wks
			25 June 2021	24 Oct 2021	17 wks
RESEARCH					
Onshore HDR research	International HDRs	Restricted (if student offshore at start date)	4 Feb 2020	9 Jan 2022	2 yrs
Access to on-campus research facilities	Academics, technical staff & HDRs	Restricted	30 Mar 2020	30 Nov 2020	35 wks
		Restricted	25 June 2021	24 Oct 2021	17 wks
	Unvaccinated staff & students	Restricted	25 Oct 2021	27 Feb 2022	18 wks
International research & field work	Academics & HDRs	Restricted	5 Mar 2020	1 Feb 2022	99 wks
International conferences	Academics & HDRs	Restricted	5 Mar 2020	1 Feb 2022	99 wks
Local and interstate research, fieldwork & conferences	Academics & HDRs	Restricted	30 Mar 2020	30 Nov 2020	35 wks
			25 June 2021	24 Oct 2021	17 wks
CAREER DEVELOPMENT & PROGRESSION					
Staff training	All staff	Reduced & online	30 Mar 2020	1 Dec 2021	87 wks
Professional Dev.	All Staff	Reduced & online	30 Mar 2020	1 Dec 2021	87 wks
Academic Dev. Program	Academics	Restricted	30 Mar 2020	30 June 2021	13 wks
		Reduced (one round)	1 July 2021	30 Dec 2021	27 wks
Academic Promotions	Academics	Reduced (one round)	30 Mar 2020	Continuing	-

Early Indications of Differential Risks and Impact

Administered July 2020, a targeted *MyVoice COVID Check-In Survey* sought insight about staff experiences early in the pandemic (86% response rate, Table 2). Responses indicated that WSU was managing the pandemic well, with high positivity across university-level communication, executive decision-making and manager/team supports (Table 3). However, concerns about research continuity were visible and while remote work benefits were broadly apparent for professionals and Indigenous staff (in particular), the rapid transition to online teaching was challenging academics working from home. Responses showed minimal gender differentials during this early pandemic period, but academics and carers showed signs of stress and emerging risks to wellbeing.

Table 2. Respondent Diversity for MyVoice COVID-19 Check-In Survey, 2020

Staff Diversity in <i>MyVoice Check-In</i> Responses, July 2020										
Survey	Number of Responses (n) by Cohort									
	WSU	W	M	Prof	Aca	Parent	Carer	Indigenous	EAL/D	HRC
<i>MyVoice COVID-19 Check-In Survey</i>	2,335	1,320	775	1,374	784	1,109	513	54	1,659	351

Table 3. WSU Staff Positivity for Key MyVoice COVID-19 Check-In Prompts, 2020

Staff Positivity for COVID -Context Prompts, July 2020										
Prompt	Positive Response Rate (%) by Cohort									
	WSU	W	M	Prof	Aca	Parent	Carer	Indigenous	EAL/D	HRC
WSU's communication about COVID-19 has been clear and timely	94%	95%	93%	95%	92%	94%	92%	96%	93%	90%
Executive Management are making effective decisions in response to COVID-19	84%	87%	82%	88%	76%	85%	80%	89%	83%	84%
My manager gives me help and support	84%	84%	87%	88%	76%	85%	78%	85%	83%	81%
I feel engaged and supported by my team	83%	84%	84%	88%	72%	82%	80%	79%	82%	83%
I am coping well with the disruption due to COVID-19	71%	72%	72%	77%	60%	70%	66%	74%	69%	70%
I am able to keep my stress at an acceptable level	69%	66%	67%	71%	53%	64%	58%	61%	63%	64%
I am able to keep my mental health at an acceptable level	65%	70%	71%	74%	61%	69%	62%	63%	67%	70%
I feel I have been supported to ensure research continuity	45%	48%	49%	75%	41%	44%	44%	54%	43%	42%
I have been able to more effectively manage my work/life balance under the remote working arrangements than before	66%	69%	62%	76%	46%	66%	64%	76%	69%	70%
My personal wellbeing has improved since working remotely as compared to previously	49%	53%	46%	58%	35%	51%	51%	56%	59%	56%

Colour Legend			
	5-9% lower than WSU average		5-9% higher than WSU average
	≥10% lower than WSU average		≥10% higher than WSU average

Across 2020, fast-emerging sector research and sample localised WSU surveys brought further insights about arising gendered COVID-19 impacts. Findings from various reports to the Vice-Chancellor’s Gender Equity Committee (VC-GEC) outlined disproportionate impacts for women associated with casual work, online teaching and supervision, increased pastoral care for students and colleagues, intensified personal caregiving responsibility, and disruption to research opportunity (Table 4). Flexible work practice challenges frustrated its potential to provide relief in this highly disrupted context. Correlating risks were identified for women’s career disruption and wellbeing.

Table 4. Arising GEDI COVID-19 Impacts, 2020

Arising GEDI COVID-19 Impacts, VC-GEC Papers 2020		
Arising Barrier	Barrier Detail	VC-GEF Paper
Flexible work opportunities require action to take hold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ COVID-19 circumstances are reshaping work practices, providing new opportunities to mainstream flexible work. However, ongoing challenges around Flexible Work implementation remain, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ lack of clarity around flexible work options; ○ inconsistent local/supervisor management; ○ persistent focus on presenteeism; ○ outdated gender norms impeding men’s access; ○ inconsistent flexible work access for casual and fixed-term staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Supporting Ongoing Engagement in Flexible Work at WSU</i> (8 July 2020)
Elevated wellbeing risks for women academics and caregivers, including work and care overload, isolation, stress and burnout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff report working higher than normal loads to manage rapid change in work environments; ▪ Stay at home conditions and gendered expectations in the crisis context is seeing disproportionately increased care responsibilities for women both at home and within the workplace; ▪ Blurred boundaries between work and home make decompression and relief strategies more difficult; ▪ Gendered patterns in experiences of isolation, with women more likely to live alone or without other adults; ▪ Heightened risk of Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) for women under lockdown conditions, with limited access to governmental and social supports; ▪ Modest increases in staff access to WSU’s Employee Assistance Program, with anxiety, career concerns, loss of confidence, and partner relationships among the primary reasons for seeking support; ▪ Emerging staff wellbeing risks including overwork, stress and burnout are elevated for women. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Domestic and Family Violence During and Post COVID-19</i> (8 July 2020); ▪ <i>Carers and COVID-19 in School of Law</i> (28 July 2020); ▪ <i>Uptake of Staff Supports and Provisions During the COVID Crisis and Recovery Period</i> (20 August 2020); ▪ <i>Issues Paper: COVID-19s Impact on HCA Staff</i> (September 2020)
Enhanced economic, social and progression impacts for women casuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Precarious employment for casual staff (65% women) may induce disproportionate economic impacts for women across the sector; ▪ Many casual staff employed by the University for less than 12 months are ineligible for government supports (e.g., Job Keeper); ▪ Casual staff are at heightened risk of workplace isolation within the remote work environment; ▪ Research opportunity and HDR progression impacts are likely to be enhanced for academic casuals, especially those who are caregivers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Gender Equity and COVID-19: Issues and Actions</i> (April 2020)

Disproportionate research impacts for women academics, with risks for career stagnation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Research activity is severely restricted for all; ▪ High workloads associated with remote teaching and supervision are reducing research opportunity; ▪ Students' gendered expectations are intensifying pastoral care loads for women academics; ▪ Emerging sector-wide and localised indicators suggest disproportionate research disruption for women academics, including gendered patterns in research continuation and journal submissions; ▪ Risk of ongoing detrimental impacts for women academics including depressed publication and grant opportunities, lower rates of promotion, and career stagnation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Gender Equity and COVID-19: Issues and Actions (April 2020)</i>; ▪ <i>Supporting Equitable Research Careers</i> (12 June 2020); ▪ <i>Carers and COVID-19 in School of Law</i> (28 July 2020); ▪ <i>Issues Paper: COVID-19s Impact on HCA Staff</i> (September 2020)
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Administrative disruption saw academic promotions reduced to a single round (from two) in 2020. Women's application rates in the remaining round were disproportionately depressed (Table 5), reinforcing concern for gender inequity in COVID-related career interruption.

Table 5. Academic Promotions Applications by Gender, 2018 - 2020

Overview Promotions Application Rates, 2018 – 2020					
Year	Total Apps	Women Applications		Men Applications	
	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
2018	76	41	54%	35	56%
2019	68	38	56%	30	54%
2020	27	8	30%	19	70%

ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

WSU's coordinated responsiveness to fast-emerging gender equity, diversity and inclusion (GEDI) risks in the COVID-19 environment was instigated by a Senior Executive Committee paper, *Gender Equity and COVID-19: Issues and Actions*, authored by the Office of Equity and Diversity and Western SAGE teams. This paper outlined the potential GEDI-related ramifications of the pandemic, signposting key steps to engage the University's responsibilities. Across the Cygnet Era (2020–2023), targeted activities were designed to foreground GEDI in COVID-19 responsiveness at sector level and across WSU.

Theme 1. Sector Leadership for GEDI in COVID-19 Response

Recognising a shared sector environment of high GEDI risk in a context of rapid and unpredictable change, WSU took steps to share learnings, develop insights and make strategic GEDI commitments with colleague institutions and sector partners. WSU coordinated all related activities from April 2020 to July 2023.

Higher Education Senior Equity Practitioners Advisory Group on Gender and COVID-19

In April 2020, WSU formed an advisory group of 11 senior equity practitioners to assess common GEDI-related COVID-19 impacts and share institutional insights (Table 6). Meeting fortnightly, the Group identified a pressing need to influence and coordinate strategic sector-wide responsiveness, co-authoring the sector compact that became the *Joint Sector Position Statement* (as below).

Table 6. Higher Education Senior Equity Practitioners Advisory Group on Gender and COVID-19, April - October 2020

HE Senior Equity Practitioners Advisory Group on Gender and COVID-19, 2020		
Member	Title	Institution
Michelle Falconer (Chair)	Senior Manager, Office of Equity and Diversity	Western Sydney University
Kieryn McKay (Coordinator)	SAGE Programs Manager	Western Sydney University
Kate Wilson	Director, University Diversity & Inclusion	University of New South Wales
Tracie Conroy	Director, Equity & Diversity Unit	University of Technology Sydney
Zemeel Saba	Director, Culture, Leadership and Capability	La Trobe University
Natasha Weir	SAGE Athena Swan Program Manager	La Trobe University
Marnie King	Senior Lead, Diversity & Inclusion	Griffith University
Jo Hatton	Senior Workplace Diversity & Inclusion Lead	Macquarie University
Sarah Abbott	Senior Manager, Diversity, Leadership and Inclusion	University of Sydney
Penelope Pitcairn	Staff Accessibility Manager	University of Sydney
Simon Walters	Senior Manager, Access, Wellbeing & Equity	Murdoch University

Australian Higher Education Joint Sector Position Statement (JSPS) on Preserving Gender Equity as a Higher Education Priority During and After COVID-19

Joint Sector Position Statement	
As participating institutions, we acknowledge the gendered effects of COVID-19 and commit to:	
1.	Actively seek equal representation of women in COVID-19 response planning and decision-making as per the recommendations of the United Nations.
2.	Formally monitor and report on gender equity impacts of COVID-19 related decision-making (including compounding intersectional factors) within our own institutions and collaborate with other universities and sector partners to address emerging issues.
3.	Continue our participation in the Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) Athena SWAN initiative (as relevant).
4.	Maintain gender equity and diversity programs and Key Performance Indicators for gender equity and diversity where they currently exist.
5.	Preserve the gender equity progress which has been made to date and into which has been invested significant time, effort and resourcing over many years, by maintaining: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - women's representation at senior academic levels D and E - women's representation at senior professional staff levels 10+ - support for the progression of women as students, higher degree researchers, and early-mid career researchers - support for gender equity for those studying and working in 'non-traditional' disciplines such as Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine.

The *Joint Sector Position Statement (JSPS)* outlined the gendered economic and social inequities emerging across the Australian higher education sector and invited institutions to agree to shared actions to maintain GEDI progress. Released June 2020, the *JSPS* outlined five primary actions for commitment (Table 7). The Statement attracted 17 university signatories and 6 endorsing partners (Table 8).

Table 7. Signatory Action Commitments for the Australian Higher Education Joint Sector Position Statement (JSPS) on Preserving Gender Equity as a Higher Education Priority During and After COVID-19, June 2020

JSPS Action Commitments, June 2020	
#	Action Commitment
1	Actively seek equal representation for women in COVID-19 response planning and decision-making as per the recommendations of the United Nations.
2	Formally monitor and report on gender equity impacts of COVID-19 related decision-making (including compounding intersectional factors) within our own institutions and collaborate with other universities and sector partners to address emerging issues.
3	Continue our participation in the SAGE Athena SWAN initiative, as relevant.
4	Maintain gender equity and diversity programs and Key Performance Indicators for gender equity and diversity where they currently exist.
5	Preserve the gender equity progress which has been made to date by maintaining: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ women's representation at senior academic levels D and E; ▪ women's representation at senior professional staff levels 10+; ▪ support for the progress of women as students, higher degree researchers, and early-mid career researchers; ▪ support for gender equity for those studying and working in 'non-traditional' disciplines.

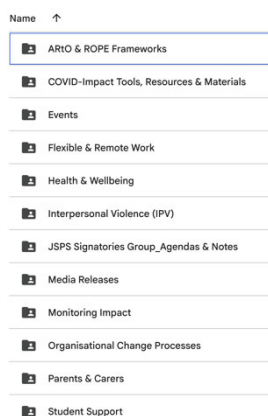
Table 8. JSPS Endorsing Partners and Signatories, 2020

JSPS Endorsing Partners & Signatories, 2020	
Type	Organisation
Endorsing Partner	Australian Academy of Science
Endorsing Partner	Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering
Endorsing Partner	Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia (EPHEA)
Endorsing Partner	Male Champions of Change
Endorsing Partner	National Committee for Women in Engineering
Endorsing Partner	Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE)
Signatory	Charles Sturt University
Signatory	Curtin University
Signatory	Edith Cowan University
Signatory	Griffith University
Signatory	La Trobe University
Signatory	Macquarie University
Signatory	Murdoch University

Signatory	Swinburne University
Signatory	University of Adelaide
Signatory	University of Canberra
Signatory	University of Melbourne
Signatory	University of Newcastle
Signatory	University of New South Wales
Signatory	University of Sydney
Signatory	University of Technology Sydney
Signatory	University of Wollongong
Signatory	Western Sydney University

JSPS Signatories Group

JSPS Show and Share



From December 2020, WSU Chaired a community of practice to advance shared *JSPS* goals. Regular member ‘check-in’ surveys identified arising structural, systemic and cultural GEDI issues and informed meeting themes, with feature presentations by member institutions (Table 9). Outside of meetings, a ‘Show and Share’ site facilitated the sharing of 66 documents and co-produced resources for remediating gendered COVID-19 impacts (Figure 1). Members also regularly sought and circulated advice, regarding: strategic GEDI planning amidst COVID-19 disruption, data monitoring, staff support innovations, hardship funds, navigating organisational change processes, and other topics. WSU presented on JSPS progress at three SAGE National Network meetings.

Figure 1. Home page for the JSPS Show and Share site

Table 9. JSPS Signatories Group Meeting Themes, 2020 - 2023

JSPS Signatory Meetings, 2020 - 2023		
Date	Feature Topic	Presenter Institution
Dec 2020	Advisory group background; JSPS Operating Principles; Institutional Reflections; 2021 Planning	WSU, UNSW
March 2021	Flexible Work; Emerging GEDI Impacts and Concerns	WSU
June 2021	Flexible Work; Assessing COVID impacts; Academic Promotions	WSU
August 2021	Intersectionality; Optimising Strategic Effectiveness in the Face of Change	WSU
October 2021	World Pride; Anti-Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying	WSU
July 2022	Tracking Sector GEDI Data; JSPS Priorities	WSU
September 2022	Academic Promotions; ROPE Frameworks; WGEA Review	WSU, UTS
March 2023	COVID Recovery Stocktake; Embedding Flexible Work	WSU
July 2023	Data Dashboards; JSPS Evaluation	UTS, ECU

Theme 2. Internal Action for GEDI in COVID-19 Response

In alignment with *JSPS* objectives, WSU's internal GEDI focus considered immediate and long-term policy and practice responsiveness. A SAGE COVID-19 Response Audit identified 580+ relevant action items implemented at university-level and within local contexts across the 2020–2023 period. A selection of actions is represented here, with Sub-Themes reflecting strategic efforts across: Activating Structural Enablers to Embed *JSPS* Commitments, Staff Equity in Financial Mitigation, Flexible Work and Wellbeing, and Mitigating Gendered Research and Progression Impacts.

Sub-Theme I. Activating Structural Enablers to Embed *JSPS* Commitments

Activating *JSPS* Commitments at WSU: GEDI Impact Oversight

Following WSU's formal adoption of the *JSPS*, several existing GEDI mechanisms were mobilised as structural enablers to deliver commitments (Table 10). Importantly, Vice-Chancellor's Gender Equity Committee (VC-GEC) meetings were escalated from quarterly to three-weekly to oversee rapid responsiveness to emerging GEDI issues. Relevant GEDI data was mapped, tracked and reported to VC-GEC across the period (Figure 2). Continuation in SAGE Athena Swan was confirmed, with resourcing progressively increased to ensure ongoing capacity.

Table 10. Structural Enablers for GEDI Responsiveness

WSU Structural Enablers for GEDI Responsiveness				
Mechanism	Est.	Existing Purpose and Scope	COVID Era Mobilisation	JSPS #
<i>Gender Equity Policy</i> and associated <i>Gender Equality Procedures and Guidelines</i>	2017	<i>GE Policy</i> formalises WSU's commitment to and established objectives for improving and promoting gender equity and diversity across the University. <i>GE Procedures and Guidelines</i> detail the actions which University employees, officers and committee members are required to implement to achieve policy objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ commitments to promote a "gender aware and gender-responsive culture" (<i>Policy</i>, Clause 11b) and to "address issues [...] which negatively impact on gender-based workforce participation and progression" (<i>Policy</i>, Clause 4) aligned to University-wide COVID-19 response objectives; ▪ requirement for "gender-inclusive and participatory decision-making" (<i>Policy</i>, Clause 2) mandated via minimum 40% women committee representation (<i>Procedures</i>, Clause 17) extended to all COVID-19 response taskforces, advisory groups and working parties; ▪ gender equity KPIs (<i>Procedures</i>, Clause 50 – 52) upheld; ▪ continued participation in SAGE Athena Swan (<i>Procedures</i>, Clause 32) confirmed. 	1, 3, 4
Vice-Chancellor's Gender Equity Committee (VC-GEC)	2015	VC-GEC provides oversight and guidance for gender equity and diversity strategy and objectives at WSU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ provide oversight of short-term and emerging GEDI issues, with meetings escalated from quarterly to three-weekly to ensure rapid, mitigative response planning and strategic action. 	2, 4, 5
Annual GEDI Data Reporting	2013	Annual gendered data reporting tracks progress against medium and long-term strategic GEDI objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ monthly (minimum) tracking of GEDI data to assess potential indicators of differential GEDI impacts, including for student enrolments, staff attrition, leave 	2

			and pay, academic promotions, DFV reports and wellbeing indicators.	
Western SAGE	2015	WSU subscription to SAGE Athena Swan, coordinated by SAGE Academic Lead (0.1 FTE), SAGE Project Coordinator (1.0FTE, HEW 7, Fixed-Term), and SAGE Self-Assessment Team (27 academic and professional staff members).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of Western SAGE confirmed (April 2020); SAGE Project Coordinator fixed-term three-year contract renewed (Dec 2020), later uplifted to HEW 9 ongoing position (June 2023); Deputy Academic Lead appointed (0.1FTE, May 2021), with Leadership Team later expanded to include Research Lead and Deputy Research Lead (both 0.1FTE, appointed Jan 2023). 	3
Office of Equity & Diversity and Western SAGE Partnership	2015	Coordinated co-governance of several internal initiatives and projects (including EDWP Network) to drive GEDI progress across the University.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> co-lead sector community of practice (as described at Theme 1); facilitate University-wide and localised impact mitigation strategies 	2, 4, 5
Gender UNLIMITED*	2018	Public seminar series to generate new GEDI knowledge and innovation (convened by Western SAGE).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> raise awareness of GEDI impacts and report on ongoing University responsiveness. 	2, 3, 5
Equity and Diversity Working Party (EDWP) Network	2019 – 2020	14 EDWPs embedded across Schools, Institutes and Divisions facilitate local implementation of equity policy and practice and provide a mechanism for local responsiveness to emerging DEI matters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> perform sample School and Institute-based research and information gathering about arising GEDI impacts; implement localised strategies to mitigate GEDI impacts. 	2, 5
Vice-Chancellor's Gender Equity Fund	2017	Seed funding (\$5K) for research and practice-based projects to drive GEDI workplace improvements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> prioritise sustained research into medium and long-term GEDI impacts. 	2, 5
Network for Emerging Women	2019	University-wide network to support EMCR women, led by DVA-A (2019 – 2020) and SDVC-REI (from 2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> deliver targeted COVID supports for ECR women. 	5
Engaged Parents Network	2018	University-wide network to engage and connect working parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> deliver targeted COVID supports for WSU parents and carers. 	5

Proposed principles for VCGEC monitoring gendered impact of COVID-19

- Uses **evidence-based** tracking of any gendered impacts of COVID-19 situation.
- Tracking focuses on known **gender inequity drivers**.
- Uses gender analysis of **existing** data sources wherever possible.
- Includes **quantitative and qualitative** data
- Considers the compounding effects of **intersectional factors**, eg: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with disability, queer women, and gender diverse people.

COVID-19 Gender Equity Data Reporting

Prospective Student Trends	Student Support Data	Student Participation, Success & Completion Rates	Student Experience & Satisfaction Surveys
Staff Pay, Leave and Exit Trends	Staff Wellbeing Data	Academic Promotions Data	Staff Wellbeing and Engagement Pulse Survey
PRESENTED AT EACH ADDITIONAL MEETING		PRESENTED AS DATA IS AVAILABLE	

Important COVID-19 and post COVID-19 data considerations			
WHAT DO WE NEED TO KNOW?	POSSIBLE DATA TO INFORM US? BEST DATA?	DOES THE DATA EXIST?	WHO 'GENERATES' THE DATA?
1. Are there particular impacts on the wellbeing of women students and staff that we could help address or support?	Frequency of access to student support service	Yes	Student Support Services
	WHS data and EAP service reports	TBD	Office of Human Resources
	Upcoming staff survey	Yes	Chief Student Exp. Officer
2. To what extent has women's study and work participation & progression been interrupted? What will be likely ongoing impact?	Student participation & success rates	Yes	Chief Student Exp. Officer
	Student experience & satisfaction surveys	Yes	Chief Student Exp. Officer
	Staff leave rates, exit trends, variation in hours	TBD	Office of Human Resources/ITDS
	Academic promotions % applications + promoted	Yes	Office of Human Resources
	% women researchers leading grant submissions	Yes	DVC, RDI
3. Will the gender pay gap be affected? In what ways?	Pay data comparison pre and post EA changes	No	Office of Human Resources/ITDS
4. What new opportunities to tackle drivers of gender equity? Eg: flexible working practices; men's uptake of family and carer supports; non-traditional fields?	Staff survey questions re flexible working	Yes	Chief Student Exp. Officer
	Workforce knowledge of family/carer supports	Yes	SAGE
	Prospective student likely field of study data	TBD	Office of Marketing & Communications

Figure 2. Vice-Chancellor's COVID-19 gender equity data reporting principles, delivery map and data detail, August 2020

Raising Awareness: Gender Equity and COVID-19 Seminars



Figure 3. Event Flyer, Gender UNLIMITED*: Gender Equity and COVID-19, October 2020

To inform University-wide action, numerous seminars, workshops and presentations raised awareness of GEDI-oriented pandemic disruption. In October 2020, a dedicated session of Gender UNLIMITED* profiled GEDI impacts at WSU and across the Western Sydney region. This session featured a keynote interview by VC Glover with Director Human Rights Research Centre, an “Equity in/and Crisis Response” panel discussion with senior sector equity practitioners, and priority-setting workshops with 80+ participants.

Across 2021, updates on WSU’s GEDI-responsiveness to COVID-19 were semi-regularly incorporated into fortnightly Vice-Chancellor All-Staff Webinars (average 1,200 participants) with additional reporting at International Women’s Day events, Academic Senate, Research Committee, and a follow-up Gender UNLIMITED* “Bold and Inclusive Futures”. More than 300 staff attended relevant presentations.

Embedding JSPS Commitments in WSU Strategy and Priorities

WSU’s *Gender Equity Strategy and Action Plan, 2021 – 2026* was purposefully articulated against the backdrop of COVID-19, organising its timelines across two phases: ‘Recovery’ and ‘Renewal’. JSPS commitments were codified in the Strategy (Objective 1.6, Table 11). Research into COVID-19’s intermediate and long-term GEDI impacts was also prioritised for Vice-Chancellor’s Gender Equity Fund (VC-GEF) projects from 2021.

Table 11. Sample COVID-Responsive Actions, *WSU Gender Equity Strategy and Action Plan, 2021 - 2026*

Sample Actions of WSU’s Gender Equity Strategy and Action Plan, 2021–2026	
Recovery (2021 – 2023)	Renewal (2024 – 2026)
Objective 1: Sustaining leadership, recognition and accountability on gender equity	
Review and assess the gendered impacts of COVID-19 for staff and students, including the representation of women at senior levels, arising barriers to progression for female and gender diverse students, HDRs and EMCRs.	Consult, devise and implement recommendations to mitigate the gendered impacts of COVID-19 where identified.
Continue to drive sector collaboration to advance gender equity in the COVID-19 environment and recovery and renewal periods, including by leading the JSPS Signatories Group.	
Objective 2: Equity in career development and success	
Undertake research on the challenges to progression for HDR candidates with consideration of COVID-19 impacts to identify best practice support options.	Implement recommendations stemming from research findings to improve support and progression outcomes for HDR students.
Monitor and review gender disaggregated data on research engagement and output to identify any COVID-19 lag impact on women and gender diverse individuals. Incorporate findings into future promotion and research support initiatives.	
Objective 4: Culture, community and inclusive practice	
Develop case study examples of male team leaders and managers who access parental or carer leave and who engage in flexible work to erode stereotypical gendered perspectives around these types of leave and entitlements.	Evaluate progress on men’s engagement in flexible work and parental leave entitlements via tracking of uptake numbers.

Sub-Theme II. Staff Equity in COVID-Related Financial Mitigation

Revenue impacts arising from the pandemic saw WSU face a substantial shortfall in 2020. The University took active measures to protect job security, including pay protection for casuals, significant reduction in non-salary expenditure, executive pay cuts, and professional staff redeployment (Table 12). Endorsed by the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) and Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU), two innovative measures were put to staff vote, receiving 91.65% academic and 95.78% professional staff agreement.

Table 12. Financial Mitigation Measures, 2020

Sample Direct Financial Mitigation Measures to Protect Job Security, 2020		
Mechanism	Effective	Detail
Casual pay protection	March 2020	In partnership with NTEU, honoured existing contracts for all casual staff employed in Semester 1, 2020
Casual employment security	March 2020	Commitment to sustaining typical annual casual employment volume across 2020
Senior Executive Pay Cut	April 2020	Senior Executive reduced salary by 20%
Professional Staff Redeployment	April 2020	Under-utilised professional staff roles redeployed to COVID-support functions (Student Services and Learning Futures); 7% professionals redeployed (77% of whom were women)
Recruitment limited	April 2020 – Dec 2021	Vacant positions suspended, recruitment subject to VC approval
Increased Mandated Leave (agreed by staff vote)	June 2020	7 additional days mandated leave implemented via shut-down period during mid-semester break (Semester 2) and 2-days extension of Christmas close-down period.
Banked Additional Leave (BAL) Scheme (agreed by staff vote)	June 2020	Additional leave purchase of 3-8 “special leave” days for eligible ongoing and fixed-term staff, with leave valid for 5 years and associated pay deductions spread across 13 pay periods

While financial mitigations minimised COVID-related staff attrition (well below sector trends),³ ensuing voluntary separation processes reduced academic FTE by 56.6 and professional FTE by 142.8 (Table 13). No forced redundancies were undertaken. Women’s VS proportions were on par (±5%) with staffing profiles.

Table 13. WSU Staff Attrition Due to COVID-19 Impact Mitigation Measures, 2020 - 2021

WSU Staff Attrition by Voluntary Separation, 2020 – 2021								
Separation Process	Academic Staff (FTE)				Professional Staff (FTE)			
	W	W %	M	M %	W	W %	M	M %
Voluntary Retirement	5.0	44%	6.3	56%	15.8	85%	2.8	15%
Voluntary Separation	2.0	50%	2.0	50%	1.0	20%	4.0	80%
Voluntary Redundancy	20.3	49%	21.0	51%	86.6	73%	32.6	27%
WSU Total	27.3	48%	29.3	52%	103.4	72%	39.4	28%

Note: At least 1.0FTE staff identifying as non-binary or gender diverse accessed voluntary separation.

³ Senate Select Committee on Job Security (2021) “Chapter 9: COVID and insecure work in higher education”, *Second Interim Report: Insecurity in Publicly Funded Jobs*. Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra. Norton, Andrew (2022) “Universities had record job losses, but not as many as feared – and the worst may be over”, *The Conversation*, February 11. <https://theconversation.com/universities-had-record-job-losses-but-not-as-many-as-feared-and-the-worst-may-be-over-176883>

Embedding GEDI in COVID-Related Organisational Change

VS measures also necessitated an organisational restructure in 2021. Importantly, all Change Proposals embedded an ‘Equity’ component through which staff could identify unforeseen GEDI impacts. Detailed VC-GEC data analysis and Equity feedback identified only one area of gendered impact to local staffing profiles (see HCA Action Profile #1, below).

Following WSU’s organisational restructure, commissioned VC-GEF research into the experiences of women academics during COVID-19 confirmed heightened stress at the precariousness of employment and deepening disenfranchisement from collegial environments.⁴ Amplified awareness of sector-wide casual academic career insecurity in the COVID-19 context substantively motivated WSU to establish the sector’s largest-ever Academic Decasualisation Program,⁵ negotiated in partnership with NTEU from 2021 and formalised in 2022 (Figure 4). Relevant *Enterprise Agreement* Clauses committed WSU to appointing 150FTE casuals into ongoing Level A academic positions by 2025, with reciprocal reductions to the casual workforce (Table 14). Additional equity components included:

- part-time opportunity;
- reduced qualification requirements (e.g., Master’s Degree minimum) to attract competitive Indigenous applicants, and;
- eligibility allowances for recent parental leave takers.

The Program commenced by advertising 30 decasualised Level A positions in February 2023.

Table 14. Academic Decasualisation Subclause Highlights, 2022

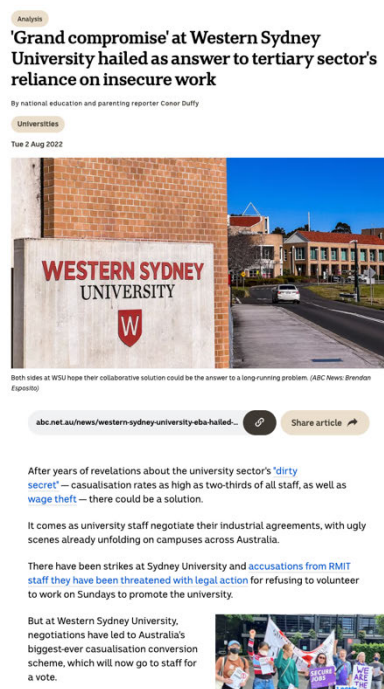


Figure 4. ABC News Coverage of WSU’s Academic Decasualisation Program

Academic Decasualisation Clause Highlights, Academic Staff Enterprise Agreement, 2022	
“During the nominal term of this agreement (2022-2025), the University will create a program to transition the work undertaken by casual employees into ongoing academic positions...” (Clause 16, p.19)	
Detail Theme	Detail
FTE Commitment and Reduction in Casual Reliance	The University will create and fill 150FTE ongoing Level A academic positions between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2025, with reciprocal commitment to reduce casual academic FTE by 25%;
Part-Time Opportunity	Decasualised positions will be offered at both full-time and part-time (minimum 0.4FTE);
Internal Priority	Positions will first be advertised internally to “ensure equitable opportunities for existing [WSU] casual employees”;
Workload Allocations	For the first three years of their appointment, decasualised Level A staff will “primarily perform teaching work that was previously performed by casual employees” but will be provided allocations for “research, scholarship and disciplinary currency”: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Year 1: min 10%; ▪ Year 2: min 10% and up to 20%; ▪ Year 3: min 10% and up to 30%.

⁴ Smith, E. (2022). *Precarity, Pandemic and Gender: How did Casual Academic Women Experience Teaching at the Time of COVID-19?* Vice-Chancellor’s Gender Equity Fund Final Report. <https://researchers.westernsydney.edu.au/en/publications/precariety-pandemic-and-gender-how-did-casual-academic-women-exper/>

⁵ Duffy, C. (2022) “‘Grand compromise’ at Western Sydney University hailed as answer to tertiary sector’s reliance on casual work”, *ABC News*. Online, 2 August. Available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-08-02/western-sydney-university-eba-hailed-as-answer-to-insecure-work/101281250>

HCA Action Profile #1: Equity Response to Organisational Change

Target Cohort: Mid- and Senior-Career Women + Academic Casuals | Timeframe: 2021

Following the release of Organisational Change Proposals in 2021, the School of Humanities and Communication Arts (HCA) EDWP and relevant Discipline Group gave feedback regarding inadvertent GEDI impacts for mid- and senior-career women and academic women casuals, drawing a meaningful commitment to future mitigative action from the Dean (Table 15).

Table 15. Equity Feedback for School of Humanities and Communication Arts Change Proposal, 2021

School HCA Organisational Change Proposal Equity Feedback and Response, 2021		
Equity Feedback (EDWP and Discipline Leads)		Summary Dean Response
Change Impact	Impact Detail	
VS-related loss of senior women	Voluntary redundancies have resulted in a loss of three Level D women, compounding the shortage of senior women at School level. Further impacts are seen at discipline-level, where in English and Creative Writing the remaining senior (E/D) women total only 1.2FTE (compared with up to three times that number of Level E/D men), with limited cultural diversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts in academic level by gender will be regularly reviewed on an ongoing basis; Affirmative steps will be taken to address imbalances over time through mentoring, recruitment, and promotional opportunities/support (noting that merit-based principles will also be considered in all processes); The University is also committed to supporting gender equity and continues to do so in support of guidelines set out by WGEA and other independent bodies.
Reduced career pathways for casuals	The reduction of ongoing positions represents a loss of academic pathways for casual staff in the discipline, with correlative gendered impacts (given high proportions of women casuals).	
Prospective impacts for women's career progression	The loss of representation for senior women may be elongated by the (potential) disincentive for Level C women to apply for promotion in a context of widespread sector instability.	

HCA planning to mitigate projected COVID-19 impacts was initiated by a series of three Equity Workshops for 15 HCA Executive in 2022, co-led by Western SAGE and Equity & Diversity teams (Figure 5). Workshops included strategic action planning for GEDI in governance, career progression and workload allocation. Actions undertaken 2021–2023 included marking relief, surged research assistance, targeted mentoring, promotions support, research workload protection and research impact amplification for EMCR women, support for casual staff wellbeing and active participation in WSU's Academic Decasualisation Program. Sample HCA actions are highlighted in action tables and profiled in sub-themes below.

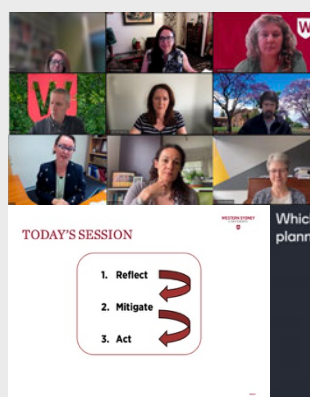


Figure 5. HCA Executive team meets for Equity Workshops to combat Change impacts and unconscious bias, 2022



Sub-Theme III. Flexible Work & Wellbeing

Recognising widespread COVID-19 wellbeing impacts with gender-disproportionate risks for women, WSU took active steps to uplift flexibility and wellbeing support in the workplace.

Targeted Flexible Work & Wellbeing Supports

Immediate supports targeted women ECRs, caregivers, staff with disability, Indigenous staff, and staff at high risk of vulnerability to COVID-19 (Table 16). Work areas held weekly/fortnightly social activities to encourage connectivity and monitor wellbeing, with additional, private wellbeing

check-ins offered via Dean/Director ‘drop-in’ sessions. A VC-GEF project monitored casual academic women experiences of remote teaching (Smith, 2022). During extended lockdowns, EKN Home School helped to alleviate the pressures of homeschooling for working parents (see Spotlight Initiative #1, below).

Table 16. Sample Flexible Work and Wellbeing Supports, 2020 - 2021

Sample Immediate Flexible Work and Wellbeing Supports, 2020 – 2021			
Initiative	Launched	Target Cohort(s)	Detail
SAMPLE IMMEDIATE UNI-WIDE TARGETED SUPPORTS			
COVID Carer’s Leave	March 2020	All staff	10 days leave for staff caring for family or household members affected by COVID-19
Flexible Work Arrangements (informal)	March 2020	All staff, with attention to caregivers and staff with chronic medical conditions and/or disability.	Core business hours relaxed for staff with caring responsibilities, split shifts implemented for professional staff, interstate work approved (case-by-case) for distance carers.
WSU COVID-19 Zoom Protocols	March 2020	All staff, with information about specific/additional needs for neurodiverse staff and students.	University-wide requirement to restrict Zoom meetings to 50 mins and/or embed 10 min breaks each hour to facilitate regular technological disengagement for students and staff
DFV Action Party	April 2020	Staff and students experiencing DFV.	Action Party convened to provide oversight and rapid response for staff and students reporting DFV, with single point of contact and case-tailored supports.
Support Fact Sheets for Staff	April 2020	Staff and students who are parents and carers, with disability and/or mental health conditions, and/or affected by DFV	4x Fact Sheets detailing University support options, tailored for identified groups most at risk of disproportionate COVID-19 impacts.
Support Fact Sheets for Supervisors	April 2020	Supervisors of staff who are parents and carers, with disability and/or mental health conditions, and/or affected by DFV	4x Fact Sheets detailing supervisor responsibilities for supporting identified groups most at risk of disproportionate COVID-19 impacts.
Carer Coaching Sessions	May 2020	Staff and student parents and carers	Co-facilitated by Engaged Parents Network, Office of Equity and Wellbeing, and DVC-REI, this Carer Coaching program (5 sessions for 75 participants) was tailored exclusively for caregivers and delivered in two themes: ‘Managing Work and Parenting During COVID-19 and Beyond’ and ‘Maintaining Personal and Career Momentum After COVID-19’.
NEW Work from Home Seminars	June 2020	Early-career academic and professional women	Titled ‘Managing Work, Home, and Care During COVID-19’, this DVC-A series included online seminar, workshop and YamJam to extend Carer Coaching program learnings for a further 219 participants.
SAMPLE WELLBEING INITIATIVES			
Work from Home Wellbeing Activities	April 2020	All staff, with coordinated by individual work areas	All work areas across the University provided weekly drop-in style initiatives to support staff and student connectivity and wellbeing. Common examples included RUOK cafes, mindfulness and meditation activities, trivia, yoga, virtual choirs, and various cooking and craft events.
Badanami Yarns	April 2020	Indigenous staff and students	Weekly drop-in Yarning sessions hosted by Badanami and ODVCIL to ensure ongoing connectivity for Indigenous staff and students
Kitikana	May 2020	All staff	Led by the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health and Wellbeing team, Kitikana provided an Indigenous personal trainer at-home program 3x per week for 8 weeks, run 3x times over 18 months
Wellbeing and Personal	June 2020	School of Business staff and students	5x forums and 3x workshops with topics including: emotional intelligence in the workplace; stress response

Development Workshops			and mindful meditation; managing mood on re-entry to 'new normal'; sleep hygiene; the 'accidental counsellor', and; inspirational leadership success.
Researcher, Writer, Mother: How to Survive Working from Home	June 2020	School of Humanities and Communication Arts	Featuring 6 academic and HDR presenters with 94 attendees, this seminar was designed to engage researchers juggling care commitments in shared discussions around early pandemic experiences, with practical advice around: time-management, navigating remote work, building an architecture of support, and nurturing self-care and wellbeing.
Academic Division Workshops	July 2021	All staff	Open to all staff and students, the Academic Division hosted multiple workshops across the 2021 lockdown including "Mindfulness and Wellbeing" and "Avoiding Burnout"
ICS Radio: Cultural Tonic	August 2021	All staff, students and community	An innovative wellbeing initiative comprising a weekly radio show featuring staff/community interviews and a supporting Spotify playlist, designed to help staff transition out of their workday during lockdown periods
Wellness Week	Sept 2021	All staff and students	Coordinated by School of Business and Provost Paramatta City, Wellness Week featured daily personal development and wellbeing sessions including 'verbal self-defence', 'self-care to prevent burnout/fatigue', and hands-on in-home multicultural DIY & crafting activities.
EKN Home School	Sept 2021	Parents of school-aged children	<i>See 'Spotlight Initiative #1' below</i>
<i>Prearity Pandemic and Gender</i> (Smith, 2022)	Sept 2022	Casual academic women	VC Gender Equity Fund research into the remote teaching experiences of casual academic women in the COVID-19 environment, with key recommendations for future implementation.
Classroom Safety and Respect	March 2023	HCA students and staff	<i>See 'HCA Profile #2' below.</i>

Spotlight Initiative #1: EKN Home School

Target Cohort: Homeschooling Parents | Timeframe: 2021

Delivered by the Education Knowledge Network (EKN) in WSU's School of Education, EKN Home School alleviated pressure for parents/caregivers who were required by extended lockdowns to facilitate children's learning in the home. EKN Home School provided:

- 12 x Fact Sheets detailing research-informed advice for primary and secondary students across English and Literacy, Mathematics, Physical Education, Creative Arts, Student Wellbeing and HSC support, with selected recommendations for quality resources;
- 5x Webinars and Recordings, with expert guidance across: Adolescent wellbeing, HSC Preparation, English and Literacy for Secondary; Mathematics for Primary, and Supporting K-2 children's home learning;
- 4x Online Drop-In Sessions to share experiences and tailored advice;
- Dedicated email contact for ongoing support and advice.

Seeking to engage the diversity of WSU families, Fact Sheets were translated into Mandarin, Vietnamese and Arabic (Figure 6). Supports were extended to community partners including local schools, councils and chambers of commerce.

EKN provided \$20,422 funding for this initiative. A total of 316 WSU staff attended EKN Webinars and/or engaged with EKN recordings.



Figure 6. EKN Home School resources landing page and a sample Arabic language learning Fact Sheet, 2021

HCA Action Profile #2: Classroom Safety and Respect

Target Cohort: Casual Academics | Timeframe: 2023

Commissioned VC-GEF research (Smith, 2022) found that casual academic women experienced atypical volumes of harassment, intimidation and aggression from students while teaching online during COVID-19 lockdown periods, while a lack of information regarding policies, procedures, and entitlements impeded the reporting of adverse behaviour. Responding to findings in 2023, EDWP HCA devised a suite of *Classroom Safety and Respect* resources, with Statements embedded in Learning Guides and video explainers uploaded to vUWS (Figure 7). The School also established three accessible, escalating reporting lines for casual staff experiencing gender bias, sexism, harassment, or other difficulties in the classroom.

EDWP HCA Chair presented at VC-GEC and EDWP Chairs meetings to model the initiative for other local contexts across the University.



Figure 7. *Precurity, Pandemic and Gender, VC Gender Equity Fund Final Report (Smith, 2022); HCA “Classroom Safety and Respect” Reporting Lines and Student Comms (2023)*

Extending and Embedding Flexible Work

Following feedback about the emerging benefits of increased remote work for women ECRs, Indigenous staff and caregivers,⁶ a VC-GEC Subgroup reviewed ongoing Flexible Work provisions to maximise GEDI benefits. The Subgroup adopted an operational framework, responsive to the COVID-19 environment (Table 17).

Table 17. Vice-Chancellor's Flexible Work Subgroup Framework, 2020

VC-GEC Flexible Work Subgroup: Principles and Objectives, 2020		
Steps	Principles	Objectives
1. Scope Good Practice, Adjust Policy	Use newly acquired FW insights learned from the COVID-19 period and identify structural ways to expand arising benefits	Expand awareness and opportunity for FW practices across the University
2. Build capacity, Raise Awareness	Design mechanisms based on evidence (including staff feedback) and diversity of circumstances	Advance GEDI outcomes through FW practice and shift organisational culture to consider FW the 'norm' for all staff
3. Evaluate, Re-adjust, Embed	Build in fluidity and re-adjustment throughout the implementation phase, as required by shifting COVID circumstances	Harness COVID-context remote work benefits and structurally embed opportunity for expanded FW

⁶ Feedback mechanisms included *MyVoice 2020*, EDWP-sourced vignettes, and Network for Emerging Women seminars. For further detail, see *WSU Cygnet 1, Flexible Work*.

From October 2020, a Remote Work Pilot promoted a new hybrid work model, wherein all staff became entitled to apply to work remotely for up to 2 days per week on an ongoing basis (Table 18). Supporting procedures were established, supervisor toolkits were circulated, and more than 1,000 formal Work from Home Agreements were approved by April 2021.

Table 18. Remote Work Pilot: Key Components

Remote Work Pilot: Key Components		
Component	Purpose	Date
Work from Home Guidelines	Instituted a 'right to apply' for up to 2 days/week remote work for all professional staff	October 2020
Flexibility Matters: Toolkit for Supervisors and Staff	All-encompassing FW handbook, streamlining Flexible Work information and comprising strategic priority content aligned with Cygnet objectives, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 'myth-busting' Flexible Work misconceptions; ▪ Flexible Work benefit profiles for academics; ▪ advice for managing Flexible Work for professional and academic leaders; ▪ checklists for staff and supervisors. 	October 2020
Formal Work from Home Agreements (WfHAs)	Standardised, online application form for remote work arrangements up to 2 days/week	January 2021

Following the success of the Remote Work Pilot, WSU sought to further embed Flexible Work opportunity for staff across the University. In May 2022 "Staff Drop-In Spaces" were launched for staff working flexibly across campuses (Figure 8). In August 2022, WSU became the first Australian university to enshrine a 'right to apply' for proportional remote work in *Enterprise Agreements*.⁷

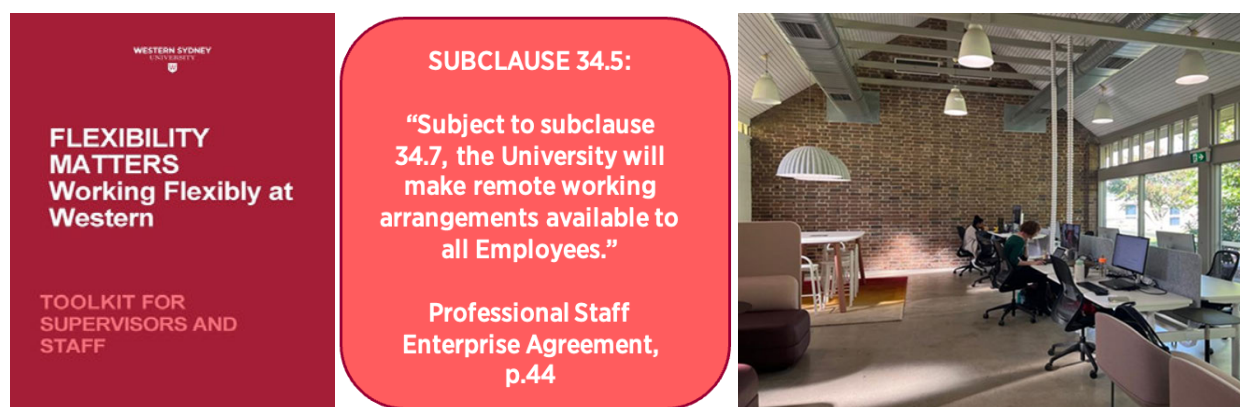


Figure 8. Flexibility Matters: Toolkit for Supervisors and Staff (2020), Introductory subclause for Remote Work 'right to apply' in Enterprise Agreements (2022), Staff Drop-In Spaces launched to promote cross-campus flexibility (2022),

⁷ Julie Hare and David Marin-Guzman (2022) "First Victory in Push to Make WFH an Employment 'Right', *Australian Financial Review*, 13 October. Available at: <https://www.afr.com/work-and-careers/education/first-victory-in-push-to-make-wfh-an-employment-right-20221013-p5bpgu>

Sub-Theme IV. Mitigating Gendered Research and Progression Impacts

From March 2020, WSU provided practical training, workshops and technical support to facilitate the rapid transition to online teaching (including 8-hours paid training for casuals). Nonetheless, the University recognised that heightened teaching and pastoral care demands, disrupted access to clinical labs and fieldwork, lost research income, and escalating personal care responsibilities were likely to curtail academic research opportunity, with differential impacts for women and correlative affects for career progression.

University-Wide Research Supports

University-wide research supports were implemented (Table 19), with many actions designed to mitigate the impacts of intensifying (gendered) care labour at work and home. Across all Schools and Institutes:

- Research Continuity Plans were devised and monitored for all academics and HDRs;
- Research peer-support groups were established to sustain connectivity and collaboration;
- Travel and conference budgets were reallocated to fund open-source publications, research software, and work from home technologies, with priority access for HDRs and ECRs;
- Marking relief was provided to alleviate workload pressures, with priority access for staff homeschooling children;
- Research assistance was distributed to restimulate research momentum, with priority access for staff with high governance loads, caregiving responsibilities, and/or who demonstrated significant impacts from COVID-19 circumstances.

From 2021, Career Interruption Grant eligibility was expanded to include personal and professional COVID-related impacts, while a Gender and Inclusion Conference aimed to stimulate connection, collaboration and career realignment for ECR women (see Spotlight Initiative #3).

Table 19. Sample University-Wide Research Response Actions, 2020 – 2023

Sample University-wide Research Response Actions, 2020 – 2023			
Initiative	Year	School/Institute	Detail
UNI-WIDE SUPPORTS			
Research Continuity Plans	2020 – 2023	All Schools and Institutes	All academic staff and HDRs were required to prepare Research Continuity Plans, outlining COVID-related research disruptions, realignment strategies, new projected milestones, risk measures and necessary supports. Continuity Plans were typically monitored by Associate Deans/Directors Research and Associate Deans/Directors HDR, with technological or work from home provisions provided as needed.
Online Research Seminars, Collaboration and Peer Support	2020 – 2022	All Schools and Institutes	Schools and Institutes coordinated research groups via meetings, seminars, and workshops held on weekly, fortnightly and/or monthly bases. Groups variously included research 'innovation hubs' and 'tech-research' groups (or similar) to skill-build around the translation of research methodologies into online contexts, to identify new opportunities for collaboration and/or industry partnerships, and to facilitate collegial co-participation in research experiments. The establishing of these groups also facilitated a staged return to campus (e.g., via priority lab access). Many Schools/Institutes have maintained COVID-era research groups as permanent collaborative fixtures.

WSU Career Interruption Grant	2020 -	All Schools and Institutes	Definition of 'Career Interruption' expanded to include high-impact COVID-19 disruptions, extending eligibility for academics who "spent significant time on health or family responsibilities and/or transition to remote teaching and learning; experienced changes in workloads to focus on teaching or governance roles and/or additional pastoral care in response to COVID-19; or experienced a withdrawal of research funding".
Marking Relief	2021	All Schools	Up to 50 hours per eligible academic staff member to alleviate marking load. Priority access for caregivers homeschooling children.
Research Assistance	2021	All Schools	Up to \$5,000 per staff member to provide for casual research assistance to regather research momentum. Priority access for caregivers, staff with high governance loads, staff with disability and COVID high-risk staff.
Gender and Inclusion Conference	2021 - 2023	All staff (ECA/R-targeted)	See 'Spotlight Initiative #2', below

Spotlight Initiative #2: Gender and Inclusion Conference

Target Cohort: Women EMRs | Timeframe: 2021 - 2023

Convened by WSU's Research Division, the Women's Conference (later renamed the Gender & Inclusion Conference) was designed for early-career academic and professional women (but open to staff of all genders) and aimed to re-engage research activity, career momentum and connectivity in the COVID context (Table 9).

The series took an iterative approach to Conference design, with themes determined by participant feedback. Keynote, panel discussion and workshop topics included intersectional GEDI-informed design for research and career scaffolding, non-traditional career trajectories, and innovative approaches to career growth. Break-out rooms and workshoping focused individualised learnings and provided communities of support.

At least one session each year was devoted to industry-partnered mentoring, with priority placement for women, trans and gender diverse staff. Mentorship themes were tailored to participant priorities, including boundary-setting, navigating career roadblocks, and managing work/life balance under COVID-19 conditions.

By request, the series featured parallel workshop tracks for "Managing Imposter Syndrome" (2022) and "Essences of Research Leadership" (2023), each of which were reserved for women, trans and gender diverse participants only.

Events attracted an average of 240 participants, with workshops and mentoring typically capped at 30-50 per session.

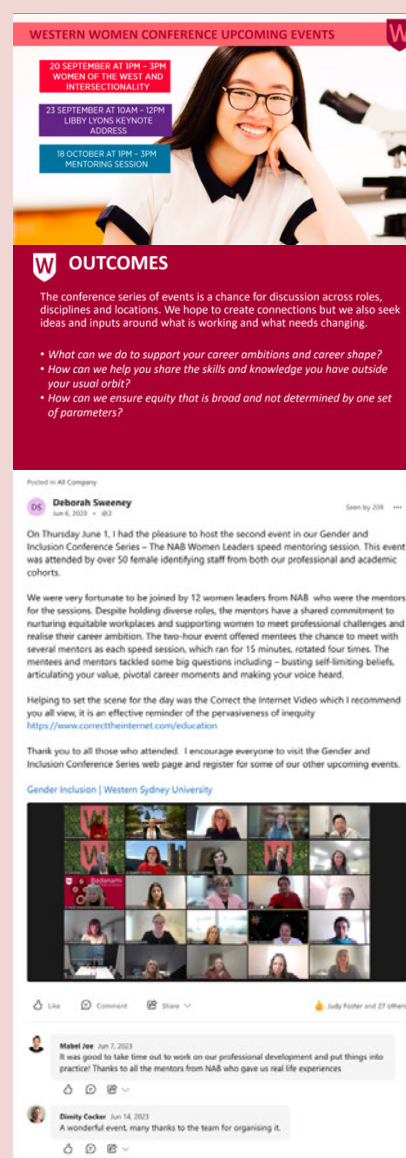


Figure 9. Gender and Inclusion Conference events and aims, 2021 and DVC-REI posts on Viva Engage about NAB-partnered mentoring, 2023

Bespoke Localised Research Supports

Surge funding was provided for Schools and Institutes to implement bespoke research supports tailored to disciplinary contexts and localised needs (Table 20). Strategies included small-scale research grants and research workload protections targeted at ECRs, staff with high governance and teaching loads, and working caregivers (see, for example, Spotlight Initiative #3).

Table 20. Sample Research Support Response Actions, 2020 - 2021

Sample Research Response Actions, 2020 – 2021			
Initiative	Year	School/Institute	Detail
SAMPLE STEM SUPPORTS			
Research Theme Seed Funding	2021 – 2022	School of Science	Designed to re-stimulate research momentum and collaboration in alignment with the School's Research Theme Framework, with emphasis on career benefits for ECRs. Funding provided \$10,000 for ECR-led projects and \$5,000 for other projects. 31 projects funded (39% women), \$310,000 total funds provided (31% women). <i>[Note: School of Science women representation in 2021 = 26%]</i>
Research Momentum Scheme	2021	School of Computing, Data and Mathematical Sciences	Additional project grants for academics with high governance and teaching loads to regather research momentum. The Scheme required ECR and HDR participation, with tiered mentorship embedded (senior staff to junior; ongoing staff to casual RAs/HDRs). 5x projects funded.
HDR Accelerator Research Grant	2021	MARCS Institute for Brain, Behaviour and Development	Mini grants for current and recently completed HDR students to regather momentum for data collection or analysis, with provisions for equipment, software and/or research assistance. \$7,270 provided (100% women HDR uptake).
Multidisciplinary and Collaboration Grants + Research Innovation Hub	2021	School of Health Sciences	Collaborative Multidisciplinary Group Grant (\$10,000) and ECR Start-Up Grant (\$5,000), alongside a Research Innovation Hub to stimulate industry partnerships and cross-disciplinary collaboration.
ECR Publications Mentoring	2021	School of Psychology	Mentoring scheme established to provide peer-support and guidance to uplift publication outcomes, with focus on ECR and HDR scholarship.
SAMPLE HASS SUPPORTS			
Grant Coaching and EMCR Development Workshops	2021	Institute for Culture and Society	Mentoring, coaching and workshops for School-based ICS members to elevate strategic approach to external grants
COVID-19 Carer's Research Interruption Grant	2020 –	School of Social Sciences	<i>See 'Spotlight Initiative #3', below</i>
Carer's Research Point	2021	School of Law	To offset the potential long-term impacts of homeschooling and care responsibilities on research momentum, all caregivers were provided a research workload calculation uplift equivalent to one research output. All eligible caregivers were provided the uplift (74% women).
HCA Research Mitigation Strategy	2022	School of Humanities and Communication Arts	Caregiver marking relief (1,500 hours for 50 HCA staff) and surged research assistance (900 hours for 20 staff), with research allocations for the 2022–2025 triennium carried over at minimum 2021 allocations, protecting workload for staff most impacted by COVID-19 (43 staff uplifted).
Writing Gender Seminar Series & HDR Workshops	2021 – 2023		<i>See 'HCA Action Profile #3', below</i>

Spotlight Initiative #3: School of Social Sciences COVID-19 Carer's Research Interruption Grant

Target Cohort: Caregivers | Timeframe: 2021 – 2023

Implemented by Associate Dean Research in the School of Social Sciences, this targeted, small-scale (\$2,500) grant was designed to support the reviving of research momentum for academics whose care responsibilities significantly escalated throughout the COVID-19 period. For this grant, 'care work' was defined as including both institutional care labour (e.g., pastoral care for students and colleagues) and personal caregiving responsibilities (including transnational care). To minimise administrative burden and maximise access, application processes were purposefully light-touch, requiring only the declaration of COVID-19 impacts, a brief description of grant purpose, and projected funding usage.

A total of 12 grants were dispersed across the 2021 – 2023 period, with 100% women recipients. In 2024, the Grant transitioned into an ongoing (non-COVID-specific) offering.

HCA Action Profile #3: Writing Gender

Target Cohort: HCA Women and Gender Diverse Academics | Timeframe: 2021 – 2023

Specifically targeting research profile amplification for the discipline GEDI-impacted by COVID-related change processes (English and Creative Writing), *Writing Gender* was a three-year collaboration with HCA's Writing and Society Research Centre, Western SAGE and *Sydney Review of Books (SRB)*.

Inaugurated in September 2021, the series drew creative writers, Humanities and Arts researchers, literary arts professionals, and GEDI practitioners into dynamic conversation about the ways in which writing, the literary arts sector, and creative praxis generate new knowledge and understanding around gender and culture. *Writing Gender* featured emerging and established authors across annual events, comprising a public webinar, published *SRB* essays and HDR masterclass (Figure 10).

Discussions traversed critical topics, including: gender-informed research and pedagogy as scholarly activism; structural and social gendered violence against women, trans and gender diverse peoples; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resistance, refusal and 'radical joy'; institutional racism, stultification, and notions of 'intersectionality', and; intersections of gender, power, desire and change. The series engaged 500+ audience members, 60+ HDR masterclass participants and 14 women and non-binary presenters of diverse cultural backgrounds. 13 essays were published and an anthology collection *Writing Gender: Critical and Creative Conversations* is in planning.

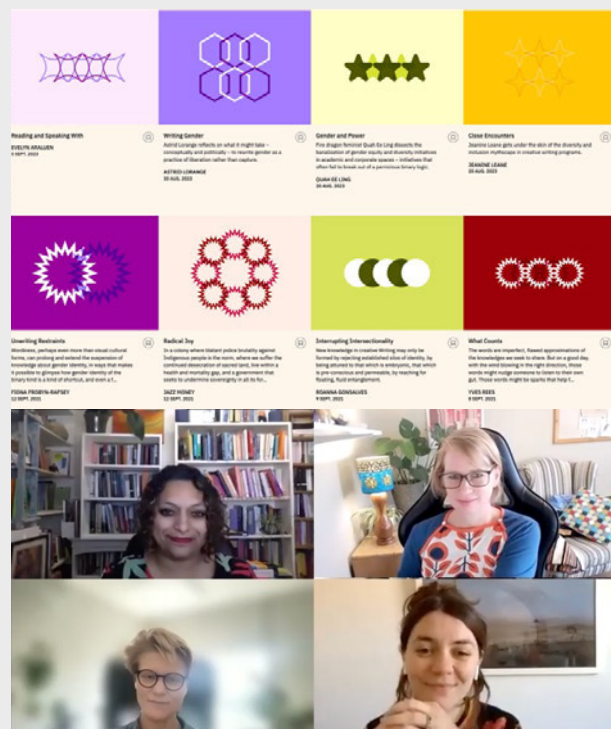


Figure 10. Top: A selection of the essays published by *Sydney Review of Books* for the *Writing Gender* series, 2021-2023. Bottom, from left to right: Roanna Gonsalves, Fiona Probyn-Rapsey, Yves Rees and Jazz Money present at *Writing Gender* #1, 2021

Embedding COVID-Specific Achievement Relative to Opportunity

Across 2020–2021, a temporary framework recognising the differential impacts of COVID-19 was implemented for WSU’s Academic Development Program (ADP, WSU’s research-intensive sabbatical program) and Academic Promotions (Figure 12).

From 2022, revised *Academic Promotions Policy* recognised the gendered labour of care, including within the COVID-19 context, by incorporating “pastoral care for colleagues and students” and “academic citizenship” within promotional criteria.

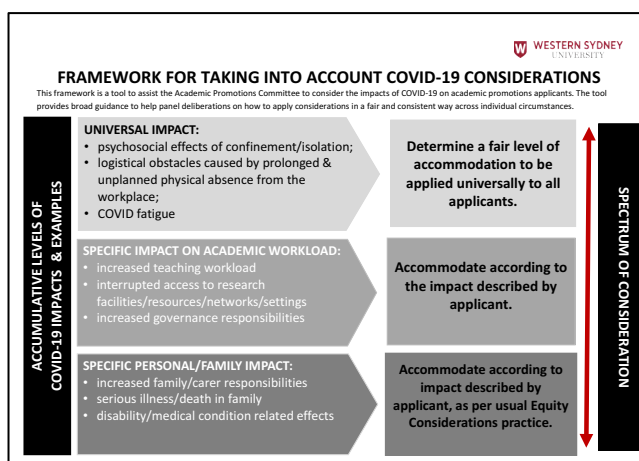


Figure 12. WSU Framework for COVID-19 Considerations in Academic Promotions, 2020 - 2021

From 2022, revised policy and guidelines for both Academic Promotions and ADP formalised an additional equity consideration for “Natural Disasters or Global Events and Pandemic Circumstances” (NDGEP), principles for which were also embedded within WSU’s internal Researcher Development Award scheme. Examples of COVID-19 impacts were articulated across guidelines (Table 21) and addressed within Equity Workshops for Committee members. Purposefully future-proofed in their applicability to any unpredicted and uncontrollable natural and/or global event, NDGEP provisions are now embedded as ongoing policy across WSU.

Table 21. Guidelines Detail for Natural Disasters or Global Events and Pandemic Considerations, 2022 -

Natural Disasters or Global Events and Pandemic Considerations, Guidelines Detail	
Impact Area	Example Impacts
Teaching and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transition to remote teaching and learning; ▪ Increased teaching loads during COVID-19.
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Loss of access to research resources, infrastructure and opportunity; ▪ Travel restrictions impeding research progress and/or collaboration; ▪ Cancellation or postponement of research partner agreements; ▪ Redeployment or redirection of valuable expertise to pandemic or natural disaster specific research.
Engagement, Governance and Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased pastoral care and peer support; ▪ Increased governance loads during COVID-19.
Personal Circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shifts in household labour, childcare and eldercare; ▪ Home schooling and increased carer responsibility for children learning at home; ▪ Exacerbation of medical conditions and/or high risk of ill health requiring extended social distancing; ▪ Impacts of physical confinement; ▪ State and Federal duties such as Army Reserve or State Emergency Services; ▪ Family-related impacts related to natural disasters, political unrest or conflict; ▪ Financial distress and hardship.

Across 2020 – 2024, various engagement mechanisms raised awareness about WSU’s COVID-specific ARtO provisions for approx. 1,000 prospective applicants, senior managers, Academic Promotions and ADP Committee members, and external partners (Table 22).

Table 22. COVID-Specific Achievement Relative to Opportunity Awareness-Raising Mechanisms, 2020 - 2024

Awareness-Raising for COVID-Specific ARtO Provisions, 2020 – 2024			
Year	Target Audience	Engagement Mechanisms	<i>n</i>
2020	VC Gender Equity Committee members	VC Gender Equity Committee Meeting	27
2021	Prospective applicants	Local Spring Forward workshop (SNM)	34
	Prospective applicants	University-wide Promotions Information and Support Q&A Session, Interview Information Session	101
2022	Prospective applicants	Local Spring Forward workshops x4 (SNM, SoB, SoSc, SSS)	97
	Prospective applicants	University-wide Promotions Information and Support Q&A Sessions x2, Interview Information Sessions x 2	266
	WSU staff and external partners	Gender UNLIMITED*: Unlocking Equity in Academic Promotions	63
	Academic Promotions and ADP Committee members	APC Equity Workshops	24
	JSPS members (external)	JSPS Signatories Meeting Presentation	16
2023	Prospective applicants	Spring Forward workshops x7 (SNM, SSS, SoL, SoP, SHCA, SHS, SoE, MARCS)	150+
	Prospective applicants	Promotions Information and Support Q&A Sessions x2	70
2024	Prospective applicants	University-wide Academic Promotions Preparations Program	59
	Senior Managers (Deans, Directors, Supervisors)	Academic Promotions Information Session for Senior Managers	57
	Academic Promotions and ADP Committee members	Equity Guidance and Panel Presentation	19

OUTCOMES

Sustained GEDI-responsiveness in COVID-related decision-making saw WSU fulfil or exceed all JSPS commitments (Table 23). Additional outcomes data provide a more fulsome detail regarding the fulfilment of Commitment 5 at WSU.

Table 23. WSU Joint Sector Position Statement Commitment Outcomes

WSU Action Fulfilment of JSPS Commitments		
#	JSPS Action Commitment	WSU Outcome
1	Actively seek equal representation for women in COVID-19 response planning and decision-making	Met
2	Formally monitor and report on gender equity impacts of COVID-19	Met
3	Continue participation in the SAGE Athena SWAN initiative, as relevant	Exceeded
4	Maintain gender equity and diversity programs and KPIs where they currently exist	Exceeded
5	Preserve the gender equity progress in women's representation and support which has been made to date	Met and/or Mitigated

Detailed Outcomes for Commitment 5: Preserving Women's Representation & Supports

WSU Staff Gender Profile

Despite COVID-era VS processes, overall gender equity progress in WSU's staffing profile was sustained across the period. While professional staff losses have not been fully recouped, women proportions were sustained overall and increased at the most senior levels (Table 24).

Table 24. Professional Staff FTE by Gender, 2020 & 2024

Professional Staff FTE by Gender, 2020 & 2024								
HEW Level	2020 Women		2020 Men		2024 Women		2024 Men	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
1-4	98.3	69%	44.2	31%	83.2	72%	32.6	28%
5	262.8	80%	64.7	20%	226.8	80%	55.6	20%
6	277.9	70%	116.9	30%	257.9	72%	101.2	28%
7	215.4	70%	90.3	30%	213.0	71%	86.1	29%
8	133.9	52%	122.6	48%	137.9	54%	119.2	46%
9	77.4	53%	69.2	47%	87.6	59%	59.8	41%
Senior	53.0	52%	48.0	48%	67.6	61%	44.0	39%
Total	1118.8	67%	555.9	33%	1,073.9	68%	498.4	32%

Note: 8 professional staff identified as non-binary or gender diverse in HR systems in 2024.

2024 academic FTE has replenished to higher than pre-COVID levels (Table 25). Academic gender proportions are sustained, with comparative or increased women proportions at all levels excepting Level D (-8%), where impacts are confined to HASS disciplines (Table 26). While the loss of HASS Level D women is matched by an increase in HASS women's proportions at E (+7%) and C (+7%), ongoing effort is needed to regrow the Level D HASS women cohort. Overall STEM

women's representation increased across the period (+3%), with FTE and proportions sustained or improved at every level (Table 27), especially at Level A (+6%) where Academic Decasualisation is having significant positive impact (as below).

Table 25. Academic Staff FTE by Gender, 2020 & 2024

Academic Staff FTE by Gender, 2020 & 2024								
Level	2020 Women		2020 Men		2024 Women		2024 Men	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
A	67.4	52%	61.5	48%	121.2	58%	87.6	42%
B	166.8	57%	124.6	43%	162.8	62%	101.3	38%
C	142.2	49%	148.3	51%	141.7	54%	122.3	46%
D	76.7	51%	73.6	49%	71.9	43%	97.3	57%
E	60.6	37%	103.1	63%	68.6	38%	110.6	62%
Total	513.7	50%	511.1	50%	566.2	52%	519.1	48%

Note: 5 academic staff identified as non-binary or gender diverse in HR systems in 2024.

Table 26. HASS Academic Staff FTE by Gender, 2020 & 2024

HASS Academic Staff FTE by Gender, 2020 & 2024								
Level	2020 Women		2020 Men		2024 Women		2024 Men	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
A	16.3	61%	10.5	39%	39.5	63%	23.4	37%
B	80.0	59%	55.4	41%	76.3	68%	35.7	32%
C	66.3	59%	46.9	41%	67.6	67%	33.6	33%
D	47.0	66%	23.9	34%	31.0	51%	30.0	49%
E	24.6	41%	35.1	59%	30.6	48%	33.4	52%
Total	234.2	58%	171.7	42%	245.0	61%	156.1	39%

Table 27. STEM Academic Staff FTE by Gender, 2020 & 2024

STEM Academic Staff FTE by Gender, 2020 & 2024								
Level	2020 Women		2020 Men		2024 Women		2024 Men	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
A	52.1	50%	51.8	50%	81.7	56%	63.4	44%
B	67.4	57%	50.6	43%	84.0	57%	64.6	43%
C	68.3	40%	102.0	60%	71.1	46%	84.7	54%
D	34.8	39%	53.9	61%	39.9	38%	65.3	62%
E	24.8	29%	60.9	71%	34.2	31%	74.7	69%
Total	247.4	44%	319.2	56%	310.9	47%	352.7	53%

Academic Decasualisation

WSU fell somewhat short of its aim to sustain casual employment volume in the peak-COVID era (-9%, Figure 13 & Figure 14), though gender patterns were sustained. In COVID-Recovery, gender proportions remained stable, professional FTE replenished and academic casual FTE decreased in alignment with Decasualisation appointments (as below), putting WSU on track to satisfy EA commitments to reduce reliance on academic casualisation (target: 25% by 2025).

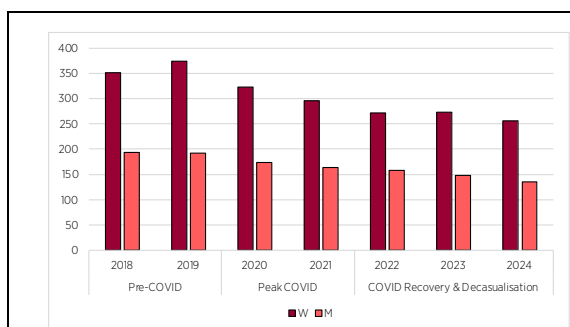


Figure 13. Academic Casual FTE by Gender and Year, 2018 - 2024

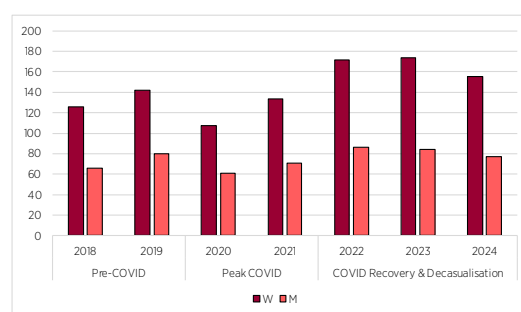


Figure 14. Professional Casual FTE by Gender and Year, 2018 - 2024

In July 2025, WSU fulfilled (and slightly exceeded) its commitment to appoint 150FTE casual staff to ongoing Level A positions via the Academic Decasualisation Program. These appointments include 77% existing WSU casuals, 61% women and 5.6% identified Indigenous positions. By FTE, appointments were spread roughly evenly between HASS and STEM Schools (Table 28). By December 2025, 18 decasualised staff (11%) had already been promoted to Level B. Two Western SAGE and VC-GEF research project are currently underway (2025/2026) to assess the experiences and career support needs of recently appointed decasualised staff, with a Decasualisation Cygnet planned under WSU's upcoming Silver Award Framework.

Table 28. Academic Decasualisation Appointments, 2023 - 2025

Academic Decasualisation Appointments, 2023 - 2025			
	Headcount	FTE	Identified
STEMM Schools			
Computer, Data & Mathematical Sciences	12	12	0
Engineering, Design & Built Environment	17	17	0
Health Sciences	12	12	0
Medicine	5	3	0
Nursing & Midwifery	18	18	2
Psychology	8	8	0
Science	5	5	0
STEMM Schools Total	77	75	2
HASS Schools			
Business	18	17.6	1
Education	12	11.5	1
Humanities & Communication Arts	18	18	2
Law	6	6	0
Social Sciences	28	23	1
HASS Schools Total	82	76.1	5
WSU Total	159	151.1	7

Flexible Work

Detailed Flexible Work outcomes previously reported in 2023 (see *WSU's Cygnet #1, Flexible Work*) recorded:

- increased familiarity with Flexible Work options;
- sustained satisfaction that Flexible Work is meeting staff needs;
- higher belief that flexibility is supported;
- bolstered men's satisfaction and improved perceptions of gender (in)equity in access and implementation;
- significant satisfaction improvements for Indigenous staff, alongside new baseline data for carers, staff of culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and staff with disability.

Three years from our last assessment, comparative Staff Engagement Survey data (Table 29 & Table 30) provides further insights about the ongoing impacts of WSU's COVID-era Flexible Work innovations.

Table 29. Respondent Diversity for Staff Engagement Survey, 2025

Staff Diversity in Engagement Survey Responses, 2025											
	Number of Responses (n) by Cohort										
Survey	WSU	W	M	X	Prof	Aca	Parent	Carer	Indigenous	CEALD	Disability
CultureAmp Engagement Survey	1,735	989	470	18	1,011	596	595	265	47	564	242

Strong staff positivity is sustained or increased across every Flexible Work prompt, reflecting the ongoing embedment of workplace flexibility (Table 30). When viewed by gender and employment type, clear improvements are seen in Flexible Work familiarity, function and gender-equitable access for men and academics in particular.

Table 30. Flexible Work Prompt Comparatives by Gender and Employment Type, 2022 & 2025

Staff Positivity for Flexible Work Prompts by Gender & Employment Type, 2022 & 2025												
	Positive Response Rate (%) by Cohort											
	WSU		W		M		X		Prof		Aca	
Prompt	2022	2025	2022	2025	2022	2025	2022	2025	2022	2025	2022	2025
Familiarity with Flexible Work options	76%	82%	79%	84%	71%	81%	n/a	83%	84%	86%	61%	72%
Flexible Work is meeting individual needs	70%	83%	76%	85%	74%	84%	n/a	83%	82%	84%	71%	80%
Belief that Flexible Work is supported	78%	78%	80%	80%	76%	79%	n/a	78%	82%	80%	71%	73%
Equitable access to Flexible Work regardless of gender	68%	76%	70%	80%	64%	74%	n/a	89%	72%	78%	56%	71%

Colour Legend			
	5-9% lower than 2022 result		5-9% higher than 2022 result
	10+% lower than 2022 result		10+% higher than 2022 result

The mainstreaming of Flexible Work practices has clear benefits for diverse staff cohorts (Table 31), with carers and staff with disability substantially increasing Flexible Work satisfaction and efficacy since 2022, while parents, Indigenous staff and culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse staff sustaining already high positivity. One outlier finding is reduced agreement for Indigenous staff’s gender-inclusive Flexible Work accessibility. Further investigation found no gender differentials but significant responses for Indigenous staff with disability, who recorded only 45% positivity against the prompt, suggesting potential intersectional barriers.

Table 31. Flexible Work Prompt Comparatives by Diversity Characteristic, 2022 & 2025

Staff Positivity for Flexible Work Prompts by Diversity Characteristic, 2022 & 2025										
Prompt	Positive Response Rate (%) by Cohort									
	Parent		Carer		Indigenous		CEALD		w Disability	
	2022	2025	2022	2025	2022	2025	2022	2025	2022	2025
Familiarity with Flexible Work options	78%	86%	72%	82%	81%	89%	74%	77%	69%	79%
Flexible Work is meeting individual needs	74%	85%	64%	82%	87%	85%	76%	82%	69%	79%
Belief that Flexible Work is supported	80%	82%	57%	78%	90%	87%	64%	78%	56%	72%
Equitable access to Flexible Work regardless of gender	69%	79%	60%	74%	81%	70%	71%	77%	58%	69%

Colour Legend			
	5-9% lower than 2022 result		5-9% higher than 2022 result
	10+% lower than 2022 result		10+% higher than 2022 result

Gendered Research Data: Pre-COVID, Peak-COVID and COVID Recovery Trends

While metrics are not the only measure of research achievement at WSU, publication and income trends do offer some insight into the efficacy of research continuity efforts in the peak COVID-19 era and immediate recovery period.⁸

For publication outputs, these efforts appear to have neutralised the prospective disproportionate effects of COVID-19 forewarned for women researchers: publication rates held steady across the period, regardless of gender or disciplinary grouping (Figure 15 & Figure 17). While women in STEM and HASS disciplines entered the pandemic publishing at lower than cohort proportions (Figure 19), neither group lost ground and STEM women saw slight a slight closing of their publications ‘cohort gap’ (+2% relative rate).

HERDC income significantly increased at WSU between 2019 and 2024 (up approx. \$20K per FTE regardless of gender, Figure 16), with annual averages increasing across all disciplinary groupings (Figure 18). However, cohort gap analyses show that larger grant increases for STEM men saw a temporary widening of STEM women’s income gap during peak-COVID times (-4%), though trends reverted during recovery (Figure 20). For HASS women – who entered COVID with a positively geared cohort gap (+9%) – mild income fluctuations coupled with consistent grant increases for HASS men saw a steady decline in relative income rates (-4% across the period).

⁸ Given publication latency and lead-times for grant submissions, these eras are defined in the data as: Pre-COVID, 2019–2020; Peak COVID, 2021 – 2022, and; COVID Recovery, 2023 – 2024.

PUBLICATIONS TRENDS

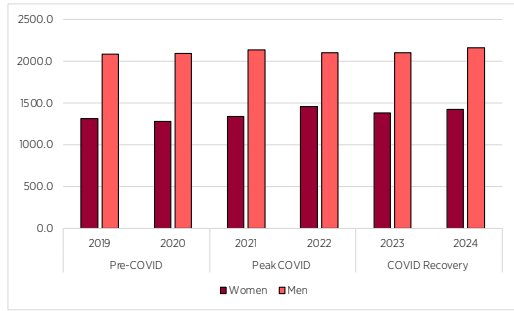


Figure 15. Weighted Apportioned Publications by Gender, 2018 - 2023

INCOME TRENDS

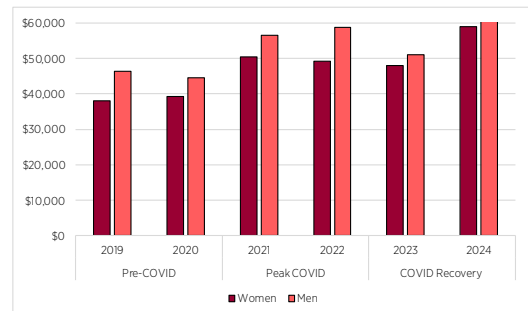


Figure 16. Apportioned HERDC Income per FTE by Gender and Year, 2018 - 2023

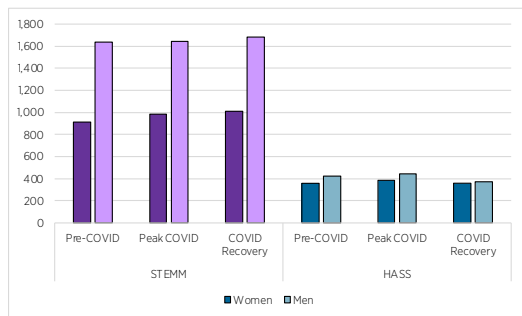


Figure 17. Average Annual Publications by Gender, Discipline Group and COVID Era

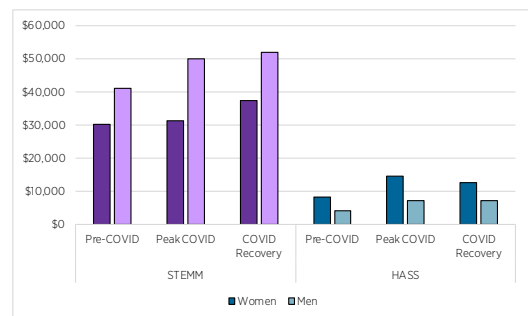


Figure 18. Average Annual Income by Gender and Discipline Group, pre-COVID & COVID

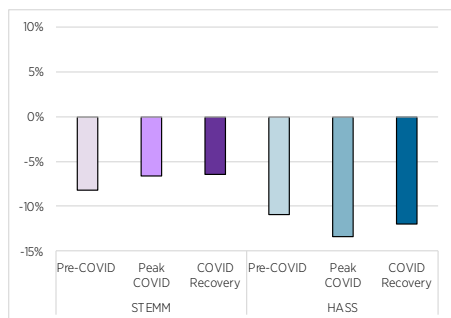


Figure 19. Cohort Gap Analysis: Women's Publications Proportions Relative to Discipline Representation by COVID Era

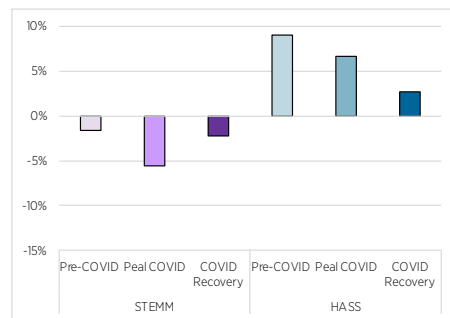


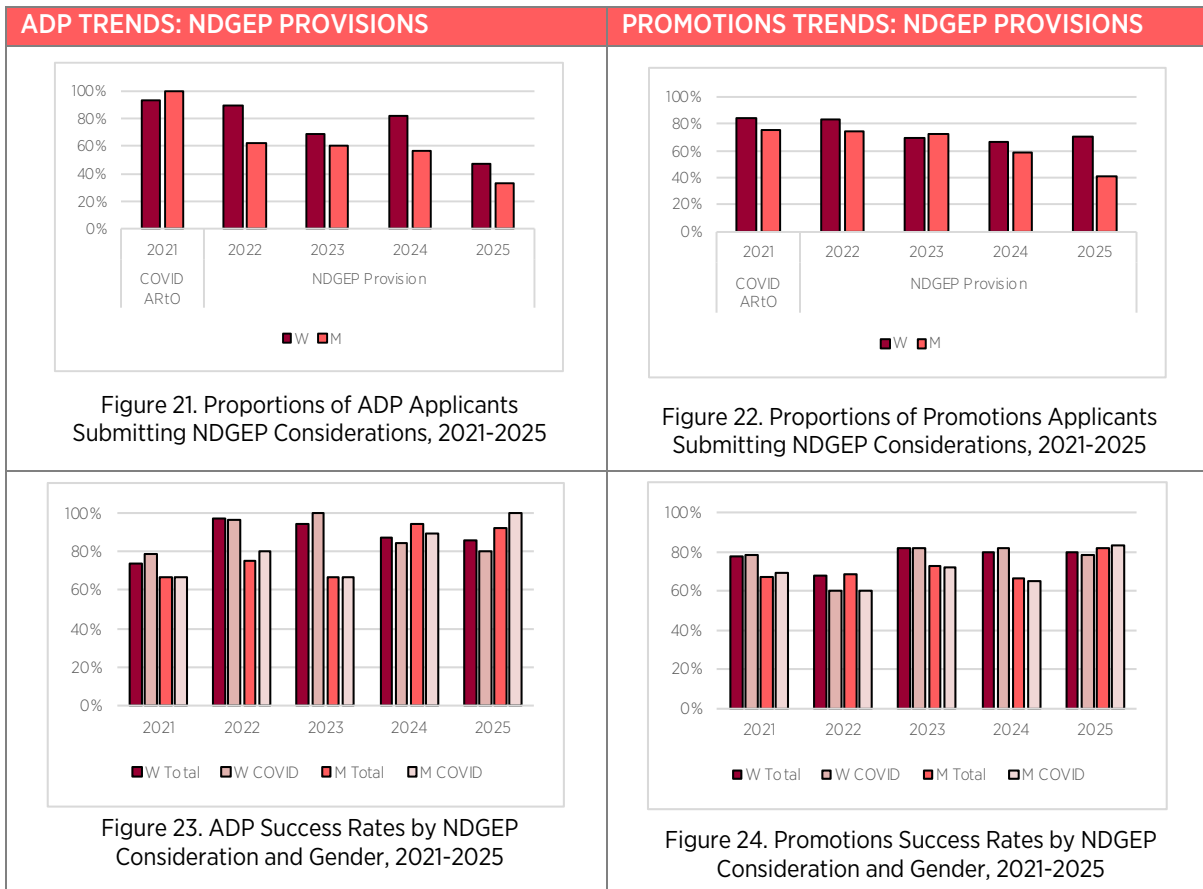
Figure 20. Cohort Gap Analysis: Women's Income Proportions Relative to Discipline Representation by COVID Era

COVID-Specific Achievement Relative to Opportunity (ADP and Academic Promotions)

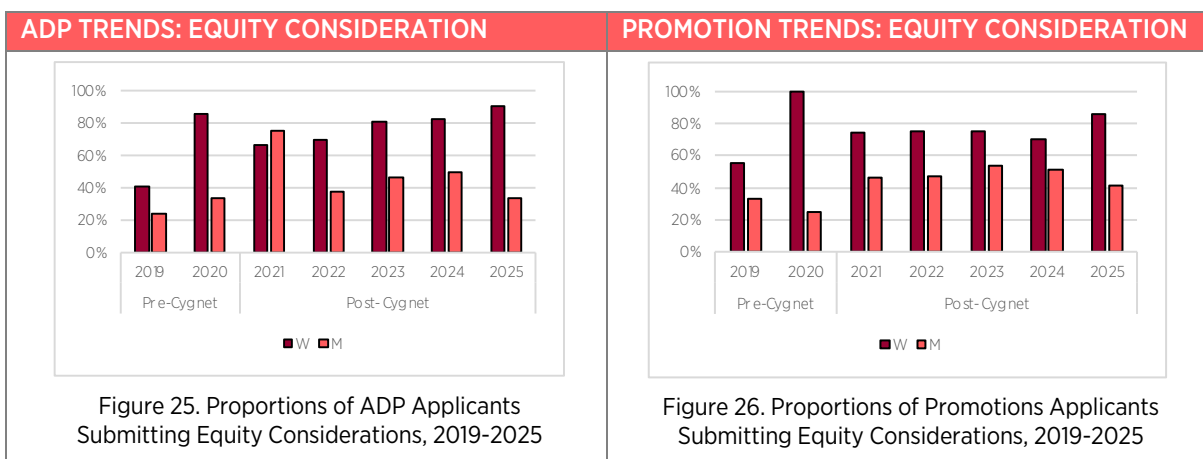
The importance of WSU's policy and process responsiveness to COVID-19 impacts for academic women is illustrated by uptake and outcomes data for the temporary COVID-specific Achievement Relative to Opportunity framework (COVID-ARtO, 2021) and policy-formalised Natural Disasters, Global Events and Pandemic provisions (NDGEP, from 2022) within ADP and Academic Promotions processes.

On average, approximately three quarters of women applicants (and two thirds of men) have utilised relevant provisions across both ADP (Figure 21) and academic promotions (Figure 22). Five years from COVID-19's onset, 48% of women ADP applicants and 70% of women promotions applicants continue to require consideration for pandemic-related impacts. The efficacy of these policy provisions is also demonstrated by outcome trends, where success rates for applications

including COVID-ARtO and NDGEP considerations were on par with broader outcomes in both contexts (Figure 23 & Figure 24).



Increased visibility for relative opportunity frameworks across the COVID-19 period has also raised the proportion of ADP and promotions applicants submitting broader Equity Considerations. Improvements are notable across both policy contexts and for all genders, with Equity submissions rising to three quarters of women applicants (up from 34% for ADP and 55% for promotions). The efficacy of the Equity Considerations mechanism is also demonstrated by outcomes trends, with success rates consistently on par with overall outcomes (Figure 27Figure 26 & Figure 28).



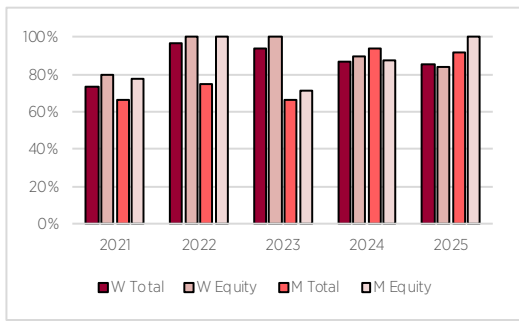


Figure 27. ADP Success Rates by Equity Consideration and Gender, 2021-2025

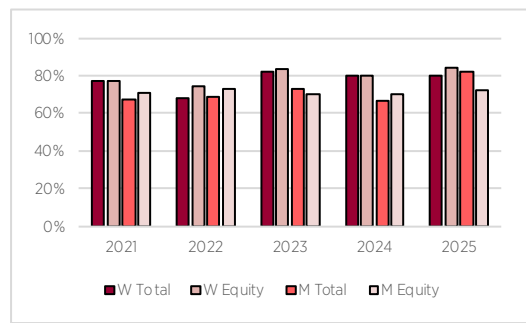


Figure 28. Promotions Success Rates by Equity Consideration and Gender, 2021-2025

IMPACT

Impact data was gathered from various sources across the peak-COVID and immediate recovery periods (Table 32). Regular JSPS ‘Update’ Surveys (completed by one member from each Signatory institution) tracked progress against commitments, mapped ongoing/arising challenges and profiled GEDI initiatives gaining traction. Internal WSU impact data was collected through dedicated SAGE discussion groups and targeted questions embedded across project-based surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

Table 32. Cygnet Impact Assessment Participation, 2020 - 2024

Participation in Cygnet Impact Surveys & Engagements, 2020 – 2024		
Instrument Type	Instrument Title	<i>n</i>
JSPS Surveys	JSPS Signatories Update Q4 2020	15
	JSPS Signatories Update Q1 2021	13
	JSPS Signatories Update Q2 2021	12
	JSPS Signatories Update Q3 2021	7
	JSPS Member Evaluation 2023	9
	JSPS Fulfilment of Commitments 2023	8
Total JSPS Survey Responses		64
Western SAGE Surveys	<i>SAGE COVID-19 Impact Discussions</i> Preliminary Survey	55
	<i>Unlocking Equity in Academic Promotions</i> Surveys x 6	140
	<i>WSU Parents & Carers</i> Survey	139
Total WSU Survey Responses		306
Western SAGE Interviews & Focus Groups	<i>SAGE COVID-19 Impact Discussions</i> Interviews & Groups x 8	37
	<i>Gender UNLIMITED* Bold and Inclusive</i> Participant Workshops	84
	<i>Unlocking Equity in Academic Promotions</i> Interviews & Focus Groups x14	22
Total WSU Interviews & Focus Group Responses		161

Theme 1. Leadership for Collective Response | Joint Sector Position Statement

WSU’s leadership of the JSPS initiative saw substantial benefits across member institutions. In December 2020, 70% of Signatories agreed that commitment to the JSPS had already been “useful or beneficial for responding to gender equity challenges at [their] institution.” At the close of the JSPS initiative in July 2023, 86% of members rated the JSPS as having “significant” or “moderate” impact at their institution (with one respondent unsure). Asked to indicate specific impacts from the Statement (Table 33) and the facilitated Group (Table 34), members indicated that the initiative met its purpose to advocate for preserving GEDI progress, influence change, hold institutions accountable, and provide a valuable space of solidarity and shared learning.

Table 33. Impact: Joint Sector Position Statement, 2020 – 2023

JSPS Statement Impacts	
Prompt	Agreement
Raised awareness of the gendered impacts of COVID-19 at my institution	100%
Helped to preserve gender equity as a priority at my institution during COVID-19	78%
Leveraged sector visibility to motivate institutional response to the gendered impacts of COVID-19	67%

Improved monitoring of data collection, review and/or responsiveness regarding the gendered impacts of COVID-19	45%
Increased or helped to ensure strategic and/or systemic institutional response to the gendered impacts of COVID-19	56%
Helped to stimulate targeted initiatives to address the gendered impacts of COVID-19 at my institution	56%
Improved my institution's overall response to the gendered impacts of COVID-19	56%

Table 34. Impact: JSPS Signatories Group, 2020 – 2023

JSPS Signatories Group Impacts	
Prompt	Agreement
Raised awareness of the gendered impacts of COVID-19	100%
Working collaboratively to improve the sector's gender-equity focused response to COVID-19	88%
Leveraging sector visibility to motivate institutional responses to the gendered impacts of COVID-19	88%
Improving my institution's gender equity focused response to COVID-19	75%
Collaborating with sector partners to tackle broader sector-wide GEDI challenges	88%
Lobbying for sector change	88%
Collaborating with sector partners to tackle GEDI challenges at my institution	100%
Feedback and/or advice on my institution's GEDI initiatives	63%
Learning from others' GEDI challenges and successes	88%
Sharing GEDI resources (e.g., tools, frameworks, strategies, and other documentation)	88%
Professional development and/or skill building	50%
Collegiality and network building with colleagues across the sector	100%

In open text comments, members reported detail on where and how the JSPS initiative had made impact at their institutions. Practitioners credited the JSPS for enhancing capacity to raise awareness of GEDI impacts early in the pandemic, to motivate action, and to bolster leadership accountability for GEDI-responsiveness within their institution (Table 35).

Table 35. Impact: JSPS Raised Awareness and Leveraged Sector Commitments

JSPS Initiative: Raising Awareness and Leveraging Sector Commitments	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Awareness Raising About Gendered COVID Impacts	[Redacted]
	[Redacted]
	[Redacted]
	[Redacted]
	[Redacted]
	[Redacted]
	[Redacted]
Leveraging JSPS Commitment to Motivate GEDI-Centred COVID Response	[Redacted]
	[Redacted]

Theme 2. Preserving GEDI Progress at WSU

Across impact research, WSU staff reflected diversified and nuanced COVID-19 experiences, variously shaped by gender, employment type, role focus, and personal circumstances. For women caregivers, staff with interstate and international families, single parent families, staff with disability, governance role-holders, teaching staff, and student support staff, the disruption to personal and professional lives was especially acute. Staff recognised that pandemic circumstances presented “a big social conundrum”, where “you couldn’t just put one policy in place” to address arising challenges, and appreciated WSU’s manifold efforts to preserve gender equity progress in the COVID-19 context but also reflected upon ongoing areas for improvement and lessons for the future.

Flexible Work & Wellbeing

Staff clearly identified flexibility and collegial support as having had the most impact on their wellbeing and (therefore) continued productivity during the peak of the crisis (Table 37). Across discussions, staff spoke frequently of how Flexible Work practices and proactive support by colleagues, supervisors and Executive leaders had sustained them in the workplace. For some, the visibility of caring responsibilities and culture of mutual support built during peak COVID-19 periods had reshaped collegial relationships, enhancing empathy and understanding.

Table 37. Impact: Flexibility and Wellbeing in the Peak of Crisis

Impact: Flexibility and Wellbeing in the Peak of Crisis	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Workplace Flexibility Critical in Peak Pandemic Periods	“Throughout COVID, the flexibility in my workday, no commute, and the ability to process work at any time of day/night made COVID survivable.” (COVID Impact Discussion Pre-Survey: Man, professional, parent)
	“My most important survival tactic was flexibility (as much as possible around teaching and meetings. That and an understanding line manager.” (COVID Impact Discussion Pre-Survey: Woman, academic, carer)
	“Most important COVID supports: Working from home. COVID Carers Leave. Deadline flexibility.” (Woman, academic fixed-term, parent)
	“My reduced workload during the pandemic helped to alleviate some of the pressures of balancing work with parental responsibilities, allowing me to manage my time more effectively. However, the workload reduction could have been reduced further [and for longer].” (P&C Survey: Academic, woman, CEALD, parent)
	“Working from home [has been especially beneficial] to help with my disability and fatigue” (P&C Survey: Non-Binary, academic, carer, LGBTIQ+, with disability)
	“Flexible work hours, personal leave, and an understanding manager were essential for me.” (COVID Impact Discussion Pre-Survey: Woman, professional, parent)
	“Things like the COVID Carers Leave that the University instituted, on a whole I have found great.” (COVID Impact Discussion: Woman, academic, parent)
	“Technological support to work from home was really helpful, along with flexibility of the nature of work I do, in negotiation with my supervisor.” (COVID Impact Discussion Pre-Survey: Man, professional fixed-term, parent)
	“Regular social meetings over zoom and general flexibility were lifesavers.” (COVID Impact Discussion: Man, academic, carer)
Critical Supervisor, Executive, and Collegial Support	“I thought the University was really supportive throughout COVID. My team, my manager, took care for my circumstances. I found them really supportive. Really flexible, really adaptive.” (COVID Impact Discussion: Woman, academic, parent)
	“I am very appreciative of the vaccination leave and the Banked Accrued Leave (BAL) scheme. I thought that BAL scheme was a really good initiative from the VC to save money and hopefully minimise the impact to staff. So, I think overall, strategically, we’ve done a really good job.” (COVID Impact Discussion: Man, academic, parent)
	“I have to say that our Dean, she has always been really supportive and really supportive of me and trying to kind of help out.” (COVID Impact Discussion: Woman, academic, parent)

	<p>"I've got a great supervisor, and we're managed by really good managers and directors, so they were all super supportive. We went through a change plan as well and, again, it was like a very respectful process where they kept everybody in the loop as much as they could." (COVID Impact Discussion: Woman, professional, parent)</p>
	<p>"[My Dean's] approach foster the collegial tone. He is friendly and invested in the discourse around staff wellbeing. He is genuinely committed across advocating, especially for female staff that were impacted by our change proposal." (COVID Impact Discussion: Woman, academic, supervisor, parent)</p>
	<p>"The culture of collegiality created a force and strength in numbers, their pooled knowledge and resources and their willingness to work together allowed them to find avenues to cope with change and uncertainty." (COVID Impact Discussion: Woman, academic, parent)</p>
	<p>"Because I started in lockdown, I came in having to teaching online and know the process of the vUWS site and everything else. But the support was there. If it wasn't, I would have flopped. It was so crucial at that point. And there was a lot of support coming even from the Dean saying, 'just send me a message'. That support was there from the beginning." (COVID Impact Discussion: Man, academic, parent)</p>
	<p>"I had no prior relationship with [my supervisor] before working from home, so I felt like I really had to build up my own profile and show her how hard I was working while not actually being in her presence. But I found her to be incredibly supportive. She didn't know my work ethic, she didn't know me as a person, but I found her to be incredibly supportive the whole time. She's fantastic." (COVID Impact Discussion: Woman, professional, parent)</p>
	<p>"Managing COVID was challenging enough with a supportive supervisor. I cannot imagine doing it with a supervisor you didn't have the support of." (COVID Impact Discussion: Woman, professional, parent)</p>
	<p>"I feel like, despite the circumstances, I've been valued as a person and a professional and have been given space to grow personally and professionally." (COVID Impact Discussion: Man, academic, parent)</p>
	<p>"We were doing regular trivia nights, social media, there was definitely lots of things across y Institute that really helped that. I felt, generally, really well supported." (COVID Impact Discussion: Woman, professional, parent)</p>
	<p>"Typically, there is a divide between professional versus research staff in the way that senior management think. Historically, we've had to prove ourselves, to be more visible than a researcher might need to be. So, I think, having that [supervisor support via flexible work] is all the more important, especially during the pandemic, because that was the first time professional staff, you know, were sort of allowed to work from home." (COVID Impact Discussion: Woman, professional, parent)</p>
	<p>"I feel very fortunate. My supervisor's always been so supportive of working mums. You know, if you've got a sick child or, you know, just as a person like if you've got a migraine or whatever you need to take sick leave, [she] will always encourage that. So, I've never felt that I couldn't be completely frank with her about what my situation is and how I'm feeling about something. She's so supportive and during the pandemic that was really visible." (Impact Discussion: Woman, professional, parent)</p>
<p>COVID-Era Visibility of Caring Responsibilities and Wellbeing Precarity Has Enhanced Collegial Empathy</p>	<p>"I think people realised how much work went into home-schooling while working full-time. As a result, there's more empathy [for working parents]." (COVID Impact Discussion: Woman, academic, parent)</p>
	<p>"A lot more men have realised... oh my god, you have a full-time job, and you do the dishes and you do all the domestics, and you do all the other mental load and emotional load and all these other things that I don't do. So, at least that's started." (COVID Impact Discussion: Woman, professional, parent)</p>
	<p>"COVID lockdowns presented a moment where previously unseen or 'invisible' aspects of peoples' lives (especially children and childcare) and they ways in which they intersect and impact their work became more pronounced and visible." (COVID Impact Discussion: Man, academic, supervisor)</p>
	<p>"I've become more aware of the mental health of researchers. I've realised I should really check in on them. Whereas normally, I'd be checking that they're meeting their deadlines or progressing their applications, instead I feel that I really should give them a call, do a mental health check-in, and talk things through with empathy. There's a lot of pressure on academics. I've kept that in mind since COVID. I've realised that I should be the one to check on them." (COVID Impact Discussion: Woman, professional, parent)</p>
	<p>"I think we've been able to put ourselves in each other's shoes more. Sometimes if people don't see what they're not experiencing themselves, they don't understand that other people are. And that's just natural. [...] But I think now we can have a little more empathy for other people's home lives because we've seen so much of it." (COVID Impact Discussion: Woman, professional, parent)</p>

WSU's embedding of Flexible Work arrangements has had pronounced benefits for its diverse academic and professional staff cohorts (Table 38). Reinforcing consistently positive survey feedback (see *Outcomes*, p.38), staff of diverse genders, abilities, neurodiversity, and caring circumstances described the lasting impacts that embedded Flexible Work entitlements are having on their wellbeing, adaptability and productivity. Signs of culture change around Flexible Work include reduced emphasis on presenteeism, trust in employee diligence toward their performance, reduced expectations of multi-campus travel, and – importantly – reduced reliance on employee self-advocacy to access flexibility in equity-related circumstances.

Table 38. Impact: Flexible Work and Wellbeing

Impact: Flexible Work and Wellbeing	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Embedded Flexible Work: Managing Stress, Mental Health, and Disability, While Bolstering Productivity	"Academics have typically had more flexibility than professionals, so allowing work from home for all staff through the ongoing model is really important." (COVID Impact Discussion Pre-Survey: Man, professional, parent)
	"[The continuation of] remote work has been most helpful. Face to face is not good for many neuro-divergent staff members who can perform very well in remote work contexts." (P&C Survey: Academic, woman, CEALD, neurodiverse)
	"I have struggled to access disability support and understanding within the university for years. Now that there is greater understanding of instability and unpredictability, I am allowed to work from home/teach online – at last." (COVID Impact Discussion Pre-Survey: Woman, casual academic, carer, with disability)
	"The ability to work from home [is most impactful] as I can be very productive with my research and teaching preparations and use campus time for networking and brainstorming projects." (P&C Survey: Academic, woman, parent, first in family)
	"I like coming home and working two or three days a week from home. It relieves stress. It's just a nice feeling." (COVID Impact Discussion: Man, academic, parent)
	"Flexible work arrangements – but now with consistency (e.g., regular rostered working from home, not just 'ad-hoc') allows for routines to be formed and work-life balance to adjust." (COVID Impact Discussion Pre-Survey: Woman, professional, parent)
	"Championing flexibility means shared gender roles, supporting the most vulnerable." (COVID Impact Discussion Pre-Survey: Man, professional fixed-term, parent)
	"Best thing is the continuation of flexible working. The University should push for people to use flexible working and their work from home time to give back to their mental and physical health. Investing time in our academics' mental and physical health allows us to have long thriving careers and will enable innovation as we are working with fresh and resilient minds." (Parents & Carers Survey: Academic, Woman, CALD, First in Family)
	"I do two days from home, three days in the office. It's such a nice balance. It lets <u>us</u> structure the week." (COVID Impact Discussion: Woman, professional, parent)
Embedded Flexible Work: Professional and Personal Benefits for Parents & Carers	"Flexible work mechanisms instituted during COVID have made our team more connected. For example, we have carried forward the fortnightly team meetings that worked during the pandemic – even though we're back in the office. It's been really good." (COVID Impact Discussion: Woman, professional, parent)
	"COVID-19 forced myself and my husband to work from home and hence forced to spend more time with our very young children. It made us create specific time in our days to disconnect and step outside or take a walk. These have continued through to today. We use our working from home days to manage the kids at home, juggle work and give back to our mental health by working flexible work hours. It's been life changing." (P&C Survey: Woman, academic, parent, carer, CEALD)
	"In certain respects, working from home during COVID made managing my carer responsibilities easier. I would just go and do it. [...] When I'm in the office, sometimes it feels like people are wondering 'where is she going again?'. And I'm allowed to leave; I have an arrangement. But being less visible, now that I can work from home more often, that's a little bit easier." (COVID Impact Discussion: Woman, professional, parent)
	"I've had quite a positive experience, being a dad of a one-year-old during the pandemic. I'm grateful for the opportunity to have worked from home – and now to still be working from home. I've had more opportunity to see my little girl grow up and my professional and private life have joined in a way that has never happened before. [...] It's become the norm. My two core values have kind of moulded into one and then I'm more productive as a professional as more and more space is given to my personal life." (COVID Impact Discussion: Man, academic, parent)

	<p>"I have an hour and half commute [...] In those three hours [I save from commuting], I can take the kids to school, or I can knock off at four o'clock and do the homework with them. I think it's established a new way for us." (COVID Impact Discussion: Woman, academic, parent)</p> <p>"Since we've been able to work from home, I have really appreciated the time I get seeing [my son] grow up, which is two years now. What's interesting for me is just the lack of commute time, being able to flex my day.... It's become very, very flexible. It's a good life [working hybrid]. You can see your colleagues, family members, brothers, sisters, cats, and animals and build a culture that never really existed. I hope I'm never expected to come back full time on campus." (COVID Impact Discussion: Man, professional, parent)</p> <p>"Avoiding the commute means as a family we can have an early meal, go for an evening walk... it gives us balance that you don't have when you're commuting." (COVID Impact Discussion: Woman, professional, parent)</p>
Emergent Culture Change Around Flexible Work	<p>"We have proved that we can be trusted [to work from home]. The notion of presenteeism has dissolved. We can make things work." (COVID Impact Discussion: Woman, academic, parent)</p> <p>"Our team could be held up as a really great example of a collaborative workplace. And trust in the workplace. You know, we all trust one another to do work and understand that actually every person has a lot of things pulling at them, whether that's being a care or a parent or juggling a lot of different things." (COVID Impact Discussion: Woman, professional, parent)</p> <p>"It's super flexible. And [my supervisor] always says, 'look, I trust you. [...] And that's been driven during COVID.'" (COVID Impact Discussion: Woman, professional, parent)</p> <p>"Lessons learned from COVID-19 include the fact that productivity didn't suffer when employees work for home. More flexible options are a win-win for both parents/carers and the University." (P&C Survey: Woman, academic, parent, first-in-family)</p> <p>"One thing that's changed... it's far more acceptable in a zoom meeting if a child wanders into the frame." (COVID Impact Discussion: Woman, professional, parent)</p> <p>"If there's one thing that's come out of the pandemic, it's the realisation that we don't have to commute between campuses anymore, do we? Having drop-in spaces on multiple campuses, you can plug in wherever you are, finish your work and head home. So helpful. It gives people the opportunity that if they do have to come into an office they can come to one closer to their house. That can make a big difference for a lot of people." (COVID Impact Discussion: Woman, professional, parent)</p> <p>"Flexibility should be about the nature of the work. Obviously, there is synchronous stuff you have to do. But if the work is getting done and flexibility allows for new optimisation, let's prioritise what's important." (COVID Impact Discussion: Man, academic, supervisor, parent)</p> <p>"Being a self-advocate is quite challenging. So, to see Flexible Work championed by the University is really, really nice. As the University continues to really champion examples of flexible working, it's great, really valuable. It will lessen people's fear to say 'actually, this is doable.'" (COVID Impact Discussion: Man, professional, supervisor, parent)</p>

Mitigating Gendered Research and Career Progression Impacts

For many academics, university-wide and localised research measures provided much-needed support in a context of high demand and rapid change (Table 39). Caregivers were especially appreciative of marking relief, research assistance, and carer grants provided in peak-COVID times.

Table 39. Impact: Targeted COVID-Era Research Supports

Impact: Targeted COVID-Era Research Supports	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Valuable Research Support in Peak COVID Contexts	"The research assistance initiative enabled me to keep up with a level of research that I couldn't have managed on my own with looking after the kids on top of teaching duties." (COVID Impact Discussion Pre-Survey: Woman, academic, parent)
	"Some of the initiatives around supporting academic research via funding schemes such as research assistance have been a lifeline for helping keep some momentum on research." (COVID Impact Discussion Pre-Survey: Woman, academic, parent)
	"Our School offered Carer's bursaries. The forms were very short, very easy, and the grant really helped. The School did everything they could." (COVID Impact Discussion: Woman, academic, parent)

	“Assistance with marking relief was the most helpful support for me during the pandemic.” (P&C Survey: Woman, academic, parent, carer, CEALD, neurodiverse)
	“I was successful with my ADP application, which allowed me to refocus my research and publication output that were not possible in the pandemic with work and family commitments.” (P&C Survey: Woman, academic, parent)
	“The COVID grant for teaching relief helped me to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic.” (P&C Survey: Woman, academic, parent, CEALD)

Promotions and ADP applicants felt the University had appropriately recognised COVID-19 impacts through NDGEP provisions, reflecting gratitude and “goodwill” that policy responses accommodated pandemic realities (Table 40). EDWP members expressed strong support for NDGEP provisions, reminding policymakers that relative opportunity frameworks should routinely be revised to ensure they “remain inclusive for new challenges we all face”.

Table 40. Impact: NDGEP Provisions

Impact: NDGEP Considerations	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Natural Disaster, Global Events and Pandemic (NDGEP) Considerations is an Invaluable Policy Inclusion	“The addition of Natural Disasters or Global Events and COVID-19 is an essential aspect of promotion application given the impact of these on an academic’s research and scholarship.” (Promotions Survey: Level D applicant, man, CEALD, first in family)
	“[This demonstrates that] the University understands that research outputs may be affected for several years, and staff should not be penalised in terms of advancement, internal grants, ADP, etc.” (COVID Impact Discussion Pre-Survey: Woman, academic, carer)
	“I think our university’s really good at doing supportive and responsive things on the promotion guidelines and the promotion applications. For example, it was in this space and ADP [that you could frame] how COVID has impacted you over the last year. I think that’s really good and I actually think that there’s a lot of goodwill around that.” (Impact Discussion: Woman, academic, parent)
	“This [COVID ARTO] Framework helps to ensure that the overall quality and impact of achievements is given more weight than the quantity of particular achievements, relative to the applicant’s personal, professional and other circumstances.” (Promotions Survey: Level E applicant, woman, CEALD, first in family)
	“I think the Equity statement is very, very helpful. I think, having it in the application is great. I think the addition of the COVID one – natural disasters, and such – I think, is very good.” (Promotions Interview: Level D applicant, first in family)
	“This is definitely helpful considering the changed environment due to COVID-19 pandemic.” (Promotions Survey: Level C applicant, man, CEALD, first in family, parent)
	“[The COVID Considerations section] gave me the opportunity to articulate the impact of COVID on my academic journey. (Promotions Survey: Level D applicant, woman, first in family, CEALD, parent)
	“I addressed the impacts of the pandemic in my promotion application in 2021. This was helpful and my application was successful.” (P&C Survey: Academic, woman, LGBTIQ+, neurodiverse)
	“I made use of the COVID effects statement for promotion and was successful.” (P&C Survey: Academic, man, parent)
“I was grateful for the specific Equity Considerations given to pandemic impacts when applying for promotion in 2023” (P&C Survey: Woman, academic, parent)	

Policy changes to incorporate pastoral care and academic citizenship within promotions criteria were also popular, drawing 83% support from promotions stakeholders (applicants, Deans/ Directors, Committee members, and mentors). Stakeholders see pastoral care/academic citizenship as “unsung area[s] of academia” that are “essential to building and maintaining the community of scholars and academic collegiality”, including during COVID-19 circumstances. Stakeholders felt this policy-inclusion was especially important “for the frequently unrecognised work of women academics” (Table 41). Applicants believe it “vital” and “crucial” that such

contributions to academic life be captured as promotional attributes but also sought more guidance on how best to articulate and evidence pastoral care ‘impacts’ in their submissions.

Table 41. Impact: Formalising Pastoral Care and Academic Citizenship in Academic Promotions Policy

Impact: Formalising Pastoral Care / Academic Citizenship	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Pastoral Care / Academic Citizenship: A Vital, Unsung Area of Academia	“Very important to include, particularly for the frequently unrecognised work of women academics.” (Promotions Survey: Dean/Director)
	“Useful to have service foregrounded in this way.” (Promotions Survey: Dean/Director)
	“This is a welcome addition, and applicants should be rewarded for good work in this space.” (Promotions Survey: APC Member)
	“This is an unsung area of academia and a very important area for student development and success that is not captured or recognised in more traditional metrics. We see a high proportion of female and LBGTQIA+ academics in this space, in spite of there being fewer of us overall in the academic population. It is very good to see this work recognised and celebrated, not just research grants and papers.” (Promotions Survey: Mentor)
	I agree with recognising this critical but very much under-recognised work - it is essential to building and maintaining the community of scholars and academic collegiality.” (Promotions Survey: Mentor)
	“This is an important inclusion and captures a lot of “informal” leadership undertaken by our colleagues, including during COVID-19.” (Promotions Survey: Mentor)
	“Important for those for whom it is relevant to their work. Again, it is about recognising the time that this takes and its impact on traditional metrics.” (Promotions Survey: Distinguished Professor)
	“This was great. It really enabled me to articulate and include so much of the work I do in the governance space that often goes unrecognised, or that doesn’t fit into the usual institutional channels, especially around informal mentoring and support of colleagues and students. That work takes a huge amount of time and can have huge collective gains across a School or discipline, so it’s good to have that recognised in promotion applications now.” (Promotions Survey: Level D applicant, woman, CEALD, first in family, parent)
Area for Improvement: More Guidance and Awareness-Raising Around Pastoral Care / Academic Citizenship Inclusions	“[Pastoral Care / Academic Citizenship is] good to include within this section but didn’t seem to be seen by mentors/readers as offering much value to the application as more traditional aspects of Engagement, Governance & Service. (Promotions Survey: Level C applicant, woman, first in family)
	“The concept [of including Pastoral Care / Academic Citizenship] is nice, but given the focus on impact and outcomes, this is very difficult to evidence.” (Promotions Survey: Level D applicant, woman, first in family)
	“[Pastoral Care / Academic Citizenship] is an area that remains unclear - colleagues who are significantly engaged in governance roles are still looking for support on how those roles can be promoted as impactful. The guidelines could be enhanced by addressing substantive School-based roles more specifically. (Promotions Survey: Level E applicant, woman, first in family, carer)
	“I am not certain how carefully all staff read the [ARTO] guidelines. I think some staff struggle with understanding these contexts.” (Promotions Survey: Level D applicant, woman, CEALD, first in family, parent)

Areas for Improvement: Future Readiness, Limiting Change, Acknowledging Ongoing Impacts

While staff noted that local work areas had been effective at emergency measures and appreciated University-wide revisions to Flexible Work, ADP and Academic Promotions policies, they also warned that the “double whammy” of pandemic disruption and organisational restructure was continuing to stress their capacities (Table 42). Many staff spoke of lasting “fatigue”, “exhaustion”, and “pressure” in the aftermath of the pandemic, and some felt that their COVID-era resilience and continued productivity meant risks to their wellbeing were slipping “under the radar”. Academics lamented that the University was “steaming ahead” to introduce more innovation and process-related change, exacerbating already-extensive research delays for which they were still “playing catch-up” – a particular challenge for staff with ongoing care commitments. Professionals

questioned opportunities for career development in a context of ongoing budget constraints and reduced leadership pathways.

Table 42. Area for Improvement: Ongoing Wellbeing and Development Impacts

Areas for Improvement: Ongoing Wellbeing and Development Impacts	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Area for Improvement: Ongoing Wellbeing Impacts, No Chance to Recover	“After the first wave of lockdowns in 2020, it felt like we were re-emerging into a ‘business as usual’ space with no time to even recognise how exhausted we all were and how few reserves most of us had left. Especially for Schools that were hit hard by change proposals on the back of the pandemic.” (COVID Impact Discussion Pre-Survey: Woman, academic, parent)
	“There is a lot of fatigue that was experienced during the COVID years that staff have just not been given the opportunity to unwind from. Many changes made during the COVID years, for example, back-to-back Zoom meetings) will continue but staff now move between campuses etc which causes more stress and fatigue.” (P&C Survey: Woman, academic, parent, carer, CEALD)
	“Came back exhausted from that period and it has not stopped. Worked harder than ever and I think there’s still a slight hangover from that period. Plus, COVID hasn’t gone away – it’s still impacting home and family life, student life, staffing, etc.” (P&C Staff: Woman, academic, CEALD, parent, carer)
	“Sometimes I think you fall under the radar because you produce the goods at the end of the day. You make it happen. But I don’t have any support in my role, and if anything I’m just getting more and more work.” (COVID Impact Discussion: Woman, professional, carer)
	“Due to impact of the pandemic on family (and associated loss), developed massive levels of anxiety after 2020 related to being in large groups. Now I find it difficult to continue work in the same way prior to 2020.” (P&C Survey: Woman, academic, carer)
Area for Improvement: Too Much Change, No Time to Catch Up	“Staff cuts / freezes have had a big impact on workload. Staff have to do the same (and, realistically, more) work with less people. This means taking flexible work such as part-time has a big impact on your team, making it a difficult choice to make. [...] So, maintaining adequate staffing levels has a huge impact on recovery.” (P&C Survey: Woman, professional, parent)
	“The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the progress of research, particularly for projects involving overseas components. This time lost during the pandemic has created substantial setbacks, yet there has been limited opportunity for affected researchers to regain this lost time to fully resume their work. Additionally, many researchers now face new responsibilities and challenges, which further limits their capacity to make up for the disruption caused by the pandemic. This has placed added pressure on maintaining research momentum while adapting to evolving roles and responsibilities.” (P&C Survey: Woman, academic, carer, CEALD, first in family)
	“I look forward to getting my research back on track (laboratory and written). However, now we have to play catch up. The problem is as parents we need to take leave to look after kids during school holidays. After school holidays we have to prepare materials for teaching. So, how can we catch up on research?” (COVID Impact Discussion: Woman, academic, parent)
	“I had grand plans, y’know, like writing all these review articles and analysing online data sets and things. But none of that really ended up happening. I am an academic course advisor, so over the past few years I’ve been dealing not only with COVID (and mental health for students not coping so well during lockdowns) but also with our department restructuring a lot of the degrees and majors.... So, that’s taken probably 70% or 80% of my time. Which is fine, it’s my job. But my research is still suffering.” (COVID Impact Discussion: Man, academic, parent)
	“Within my own School [...] at the peer level it’s been really supportive and my supervisor has been really supportive. But at the higher level... it’s putting so much pressure on everyone.” (COVID Impact Discussion: Man, academic, parent)
	“It does sometimes feel as if some quarters of the University are steaming ahead with ever-new models of teaching practice (flipped, hybrid, hyflex, etc) and bringing in new policies that will mean huge amounts of work and amendments in curriculum design and practice.” (COVID Impact Discussion Pre-Survey: Woman, academic, parent)
	“Changes to staffing, centralisation, and loss of experienced staff due to redundancies has not recovered. The loss of experienced professional and technical staff from within Schools has been very disruptive to myself as a neurodiverse individual with a disability, and I am struggling to navigate policies and process, have made administrative errors, and feel

	embarrassed and burdened at a time when I don't know where to go, who to ask." (P&C Survey: Non-binary academic, carer, LGBTIQA+, neurodiverse, with disability)
Area for Improvement: Limited Career Development and Opportunity for Professional Staff	"Obviously there's been a lot of budget concerns about additional training, which is very valid. But I've had to eliminate a lot of the development I was interested in. During the pandemic, I didn't have capacity to take on additional training when I was struggling to get through homeschooling and, y'know, my actual job, But therefore it's been a while now. [...] But recognition-wise, I don't feel that I've gone backwards. If anything, I feel more affirmed by my supervisor." (COVID Impact Discussions: Woman, professional, parent)
	"In my area, it's allowed our management to really focus on particular training days and specific development. But in terms of my own trajectory, I dunno... that's an interesting one." (COVID Impact Discussions: Woman, professional, parent)
	"Professionally, there are less roles than there were before the pandemic. So, in terms of career development, I don't know if there's as much there as there once was. And there's still budget concerns and all those sorts of things..." (COVID Impact Discussions: Woman, professional, parent)
	"This has also meant less development opportunities as roles are often not backfilled to save money - so [Higher Duties] opportunities are rare." (P&C Survey: Woman, professional, parent)

Staff sought louder acknowledgement of ongoing wellbeing and development impacts, alongside more time and structural support to readjust, cohere, and consolidate their working lives (Table 43). Looking to the future, staff also suggested that standardised leadership training for supervisors, a slower and more measured approach to multi-layered organisational change, and, ideally, the development of a GEDI-informed crisis management framework could fortify WSU against future large-scale and unpredictable events.

Table 43. Lessons for the Future: Crisis Framework, Limiting Change, Ongoing Support

Lessons for the Future: Crisis Framework, Limiting Change, Ongoing Support	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Lessons for the Future: Prepare in Advance, Provide More Ongoing Support, Slow Down, Acknowledge Impact	"Acknowledge the huge changes occurred, which has affected the emotional wellbeing of staff." (P&C Survey: Woman, academic, parent, carer, CEALD)
	"It would be great to see some pressing the pause button momentarily as most staff don't have the energy for these changes." (COVID Impact Discussion Pre-Survey: Woman, academic, parent)
	"Implementing specific support programs or resources to help manage the new responsibilities and increased workloads many have taken on post-pandemic would be invaluable." (P&C Survey: Woman, academic, carer, CEALD)
	"Some training and support [for supervisors and senior leaders] would be really good. People are reactive under stress." (COVID Impact Discussion: Woman, professional, parent)
	"Perhaps the university can look at how they can provide us with adequate time for catching up on research that was missed. For example, a mini-ADP where we can set aside a block of time where we are not impacted by teaching and admin would be helpful." (COVID Impact Discussion Pre-Survey: Woman, academic, parent)
	"It would be beneficial to offer extra research load/time for research projects that were impacted, particularly those involving international collaboration. Providing researchers with additional time to compensate for the delays caused by the pandemic would allow them to reestablish momentum and continue their work effectively. [...] This would demonstrate an understanding the long-term impacts COVID-19 has had on research activities and help to create a more sustainable path for recovery and productivity." (P&C Survey: Woman, academic, carer, CEALD)
	"When these potentially catastrophic things happen to an academic while they're teaching... it can be catastrophic for not just for the individual but for the unit and for the university as well. [...] So, we need some sort of system with primary and secondary coordinators for units, so that if something happens to the primary, the secondary can pick it up." (COVID Impact Discussion: Man, academic, supervisor, parent)
	"We need a framework, don't we? You're not going to get complete equity or equality, but we can achieve some level of that across the board. I don't know what that looks like, I think those who are paid at a much higher level are going to have to tackle that question." (COVID Impact Discussion: Man, academic, parent)



FURTHER ACTION: GENDER EQUITY IN COVID-19 RESPONSE (2026 – 2032)

REF.	RATIONALE	ACTIONS & OUTPUTS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	SUCCESS INDICATORS
1.	WSU should draw upon successes and learnings from COVID-19 and the related organisational restructure to bolster its GEDI readiness for future crisis and change contexts. Across the pandemic, the mobilisation of GEDI governance structures helped to monitor impacts and deliver targeted supports. Proactive, GEDI-responsive flexibility and wellbeing measures were critical to sustaining wellbeing and safety in the crisis context. Research mitigation strategies sustained publications output and increased grant income, and relative opportunity policy innovations effectively mitigated projected gendered impacts for career progression. However, unequal impacts were visible in cohort-relative income rates for women, suggesting more ongoing GEDI-responsive research support may have been needed. While Equity feedback mechanisms within Change Proposals enabled localised GEDI-responsive action to address unintended impacts, staff indicate compounded change takes a toll on wellbeing and research productivity, with potentially inequitable and ongoing outcomes.	<p>Develop an <i>Equity in Crisis Response and/or Organisational Change Framework</i>, with guidance for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ inclusive leadership in crisis response and change environments; ▪ GEDI research and data gathering requirements in crisis and change contexts; ▪ ensuring GEDI responsiveness and transparency in rapid organisational decision-making; ▪ GEDI-informed wellbeing and relative opportunity supports in crisis and change contexts; ▪ embedding GEDI principles in organisational change processes; ▪ Executive, manager and supervisor capabilities for supporting GEDI during change processes and within post-change environments. 	2027	DEI & SAGE	SAGE-AL	Framework is established, is instituted in crisis/change contexts and informs ongoing GEDI practice and innovation.
2.	The volume, range and apparent efficacy of GEDI-responsive COVID-19 actions delivered across WSU and within local contexts reflects GEDI-literate and capable leadership at WSU. However, lack of clarity and development around inclusive leadership expectations means reliance on the variable and changeable strengths of individual Executive, managers and supervisors across the University. Building leadership capability that is reflective of WSU's diverse community, with appropriate training and skills development for existing and future leaders, would more effectively prepare WSU to deliver GEDI-informed staff support within complex and pressured environments.	<p>Embed Inclusive Leadership capacity at WSU, including by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ devising a <i>Leadership Capability Framework</i> that clearly defines the inclusive knowledges, skills, and behaviours expected of leaders at various levels; ▪ implementing a Leadership Capability Development Program, with an inclusive leadership learning stream, with priority participation for staff newly appointed to management/governance roles in post-change environments. 	2026 – 2027	Org Development	Executive Director Org Development & DEI	<p><i>Leadership Capability Framework</i> implemented and perceived as accessible, inclusive and equitable;</p> <p>Leadership Capability Development Program established, with participation metrics reflective of WSU's diverse staff profile.</p>



REF.	RATIONALE	ACTIONS & OUTPUTS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	SUCCESS INDICATORS
3.	Professional staff (62% women) experiences were highly disrupted across the COVID-19 period, with atypically high redeployment, Voluntary Separations impacts, and diminished career development opportunity all unpredicted before the onset of the pandemic. This sudden and unanticipated impact on professional staff career trajectories draws focus on a need to uplift career autonomy, opportunity, and mobility for professional staff, with reciprocal benefits for the University by fostering a confident, agile, adaptable, and well supported professional staff workforce for the future.	<p>Build a culture of opportunity, continuous development, and career mobility for professional staff, including by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ devising a <i>Professional Staff Capability Framework</i> that clearly defines professional skills, capabilities and trajectories across diverse roles and HEW levels; ▪ embedding GEDI-informed Career Planning Conversations within existing performance activities, with emphasis on self-determined career goals; ▪ developing a task-based professional staff job architecture that supports the mobilisation and development of professional staff skills across WSU. 	<p>Capability Framework: 2026</p> <p>Career Planning Conversations: 2026 – 2027</p> <p>Job Architecture: 2027</p>	Org Development	Executive Director Org Development & DEI	<p><i>Capability Framework</i> implemented and perceived as accessible, inclusive and equitable;</p> <p>Career Planning conversations conducted at least twice per year;</p> <p>Career Planning Managers report high levels of preparedness to deliver effective and equitable career planning;</p> <p>Professionals report effective and equitable career planning and mobility opportunity, with uptake and satisfaction trends monitored by HEW level, gender, caregiving status, (dis)ability, Indigenous identity and cultural background and positivity gaps (±5%) identified and mitigated.</p>
4.	COVID-era learnings about the importance of robust academic continuity planning (for teaching, service delivery, and research opportunity), new opportunities to preserve and progress gendered improvements in Level A STEM profiles, and the need to replenish HASS women's representation at Level D correlate with existing Western SAGE commitments to implement GEDI-responsive career planning tools, conversations and coaching models for academics across WSU (see also <i>WSU Cygnet #2, Academic Promotions</i>).	<p>Build a culture of opportunity, continuous development and maturity for academic staff, including by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ implementing a revised <i>Academic Staff Capability Framework</i> that clearly defines academic skills, capabilities, inclusive leadership values, and development trajectories across academic levels; ▪ embedding GEDI-informed Career Planning Conversations within existing performance activities, with emphasis on self-determined career goals; ▪ developing GEDI-informed Academic Career Coaching and Mentoring Models, with supporting resources for implementation across diverse disciplinary contexts. 	<p>Capability Framework: 2026</p> <p>Career Planning Conversations: 2026 – 2027</p> <p>Career Coaching Model: 2027</p>			<p><i>Capability Framework</i> implemented and perceived as accessible, inclusive and equitable.</p> <p>Career Planning conversations conducted at least twice per year;</p> <p>Career Planning Managers, Career Coaches and Mentors report high levels of preparedness to deliver effective and equitable planning, coaching and mentoring;</p> <p>Academics report effective and equitable career planning, coaching and mentoring, with uptake and satisfaction trends monitored by level, decasualisation status, gender, caregiving status, (dis)ability, and cultural background and positivity gaps (±5%) identified and mitigated.</p>



REF.	RATIONALE	ACTIONS & OUTPUTS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	SUCCESS INDICATORS
5.	While publications outputs were sustained and HERDC income increased for all genders and discipline groupings across the peak COVID and recovery periods, persistent gender inequities in research outcomes are illustrated by an ongoing 'cohort gap' in publication rates for both STEM and HASS women and an ongoing STEM women cohort income gap, which temporarily deepened during the peak COVID period. For HASS women, a cohort surplus in income rates also declined across COVID eras. While relative opportunity policy innovations effectively mitigated gendered COVID-19 impacts for academics career progression, staff continue to seek additional and ongoing research support in the post-COVID context. Commissioned in 2025, a VC-GEF project is underway to identify key systemic barriers that drive intersectional gender-based inequities in research outcomes at WSU, with aim to advance opportunities for policy response and the uplifting of supports for women and gender diverse researchers.	Deliver findings and implement policy and practice recommendations arising from the EMPOWER-ID project to drive research engagement outcomes for women and gender diverse academics at WSU.	2027 – 2028	PVC Research	PVC Research	Publications cohort gap reduction for STEM and HASS women; Income cohort gap reduction for STEM women.
6.	Across the COVID recovery period (from 2023), WSU undertook the largest ever academic decasualisation effort in sector history. 151.1FTE decasualised Level A staff (61% women, 5.8% Indigenous) have now been appointed into ongoing positions, with significant positive impact on STEM gender profiles (+6% Level A women). Ensuring equity in Program implementation and nurturing development for appointed Level A staff is critical to retaining and progressing this cohort through the academic pipeline. Two research projects (Western SAGE and VC-GEF) are underway in 2025/26 to assess decasualised staff experiences and immediate and long-term career support needs.	Deliver findings and implement policy and practice recommendations arising from the Western SAGE and VC-GEF Academic Decasualisation research projects to drive wellbeing, transition support, and career progression for decasualised Level A staff across all School contexts.	2026 – 2028	Faculty Executive Deans & School Deans	Provost	Decasualisation Program work planning guidelines, funding supports, and entitlements are standardised within and across School/disciplinary contexts. Decasualised Level A staff report sustained and/or improved wellbeing, effective and equitable transition support, and increasing research capability across the first three years of appointment. Decasualised Level A staff retention at year 4 of employment aligns with WSU averages; Decasualised Level A staff promotions are equitable across School/discipline contexts and by gender, caregiver status, Indigenous identity and cultural background.