

SAGE Cygnet

Award Application

Supporting flexible and
inclusive work practices





S A G E

SCIENCE IN AUSTRALIA
GENDER EQUITY

SAGE Cygnet Award Application

Name of Institution	University of Technology Sydney
Date of Application	February 2026
Contact for Application	Dr Kumudika de Silva
Email	kumudika.desilva@uts.edu.au

University of Technology Sydney: SAGE CYGNET #5

	✓ Current Cygnet	Barrier
[Mandatory] Institution-wide barrier	#3	Supporting gender representation in STEM through improving recruitment practices
[Mandatory] Sub-group barrier	#1	Supporting career pathways to academia for women in Engineering and IT
Sub-group barrier	#2	Attracting girls and women to Engineering and IT studies
Institution-wide	#4	Supporting under-represented groups in STEM achieve academic promotion
Institution-wide	✓	Supporting flexible and inclusive work practices

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

UTS extends our sincere appreciation to our Athena Swan leaders Chairs Prof. Peta Wyeth and Prof. Anne Gardner and Pro Vice Chancellors (SJI) Amy Persson and Verity Firth for their outstanding leadership and guidance.

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

The Flexible Work Cygnet Working Group included:

- Liz Jenkins, Prof. Paul Kennedy, Dr. Cecilia Gravina da Rocha, Assoc. Prof Eva Cheng, - FEIT
- Prof. Ian Menz, Assoc. Prof. Lana McClements, Dr. Georgina Meakin, Prof. Stephen Langford, Dr. Sujeewa de Silva - Science
- Prof. Sally Inglis, Dr Suyin Hor, Dr. Poppy Watson - Health
- Dr. Berice Anning - Office of PVC (Indigenous Leadership & Engagement)
- Abdul Macauley, Grace Johnson - People and Culture
- Mark So - Data Analytics and Insights Unit
- Dr. Kumudika de Silva, Rachel Gray, Ekaterina Frolov, Jo Tilly – Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion

Inclusive workplace culture actions were led by staff with academic expertise and lived experience Ekaterina Frolov, Dr Elaine Laforteza and Dr Spence Messih from the Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion.

Evaluation framework development and data analysis support was provided by John Tran and Dr. Ben Manning from the Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion.

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	3
NOTES.....	5
Dimensions of diversity	5
Factors impacting desired outcomes.....	5
Glossary.....	6
1. KEY BARRIER.....	6
2. EVIDENCE OF BARRIER	8
2.1 Access to flexible work	8
2.2 Parental leave	9
3. PROGRESS (ACTIONS AND OUTPUTS)	10
3.1 Embedding flexible work	11
3.1.1 Raising awareness of available options.....	11
3.1.2 Strengthening supervisor capability	12
3.1.3 Implementing core meeting hours	13
3.2 Supporting parents and carers	14
3.2.1 Gender-neutral parental leave policy.....	14
3.2.2 Raising awareness of updated parental leave provisions	14
3.2.3 Breastfeeding-friendly workplace	17
3.2.4 Mitigating career interruptions.....	18
3.3 Targeting under-represented staff cohorts	18
3.3.1 Recognising cultural needs	18
3.3.2 Increasing LGBTQIA+ inclusion	20
4. OUTCOMES.....	25
4.1 Improved awareness and use of flexible work options.....	25
4.2 Improved support for staff living with disability and carers.....	27
4.3 Improved inclusivity for CARM staff.....	28
Accessing cultural leave	30
4.4 Increased awareness of parental leave provisions and process.....	31
5. IMPACT	33
5.1 Normalised flexible working practices supporting career success.....	33
5.2 Created an inclusive workplace culture.....	34
5.2.1 Improved sense of belonging for CARM staff.....	34
5.2.2 Improved inclusive LGBTQIA+ workplace culture and visibility.....	35
6. FURTHER ACTION	38

NOTES

Dimensions of diversity

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

We use the term Culturally and Racially Marginalised (CARM)¹ to understand the impact of gendered racism. This term which encompasses non-white cultures/ethnicities (specifically Indigenous Australian, African, Asian, Pasifika and Middle Eastern groups) is useful for identifying those who experience impacts of intersectionality the most. Since CARM is a relatively new term, we assessed its recognition by staff. When comparing self-identified global regional groups with self-identified CARM status, we find that 89% of those from Anglo-Celtic, European, American countries identified as non-CARM while only 53% of those from Indigenous Australian, African, Asian, Pasifika or Middle Eastern cultural/ethnic background self-identified as CARM. Therefore, in our analyses we chose to use presumed CARM identity based on self-identified cultural background.

Factors impacting desired outcomes

Implementation of an updated Enterprise Resource Platform has been slower than expected due to financial constraints. This has hampered delivery of regular verified reports on workforce processes including leave uptake and non-mandatory (e.g. some DEI related) training completions. To mitigate these effects, we have relied on data collation through manual processes and targeted STEM surveys for evaluation of perceptions of inclusion.

¹ Diversity Council Australia (V. Mapedzahama, F. Laffernis, A. Barhoum, and J. O’Leary). *Culturally and Racially Marginalised Women in Leadership: A framework for (intersectional) organisational action*, Diversity Council Australia, 2023.

Glossary

Term	Description
BAU	Business as usual
BFW	Breastfeeding-friendly workplace
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CARM	Culturally and Racially Marginalised (see Notes for further information)
CDAR-AP	Cultural Diversity and Anti-Racism Action Pan
CSJI	Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion
ERP	Enterprise Resource Planning
F	Female/Woman
FEIT	Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology
Health	Faculty of Health
Level A, B, C, D and E	Academic employment levels Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor and Professor respectively.
M	Male/Man
MWN	Multicultural Women’s Network
PVC SJI	Pro-Vice Chancellor Social Justice and Inclusion
Q	Quarter, when referring to calendar year periods
REI	Research Equity Initiative
Science	Faculty of Science
STEM	In the context of UTS faculties, this includes FEIT, Health and Science

1. KEY BARRIER

Equitable access to workplace flexibility is a key barrier to retaining and advancing the careers of women and other under-represented groups. An important enabler of access to flexible work is an inclusive workplace where all employees feel valued, respected, and can progress their careers, regardless of who they are. The Inclusion@Work Index indicates little overall progress in Australian workplaces since 2017². Women, carers, staff with disability, and Indigenous staff continue to be the primary users of flexible work arrangements. Despite the accelerated adoption of hybrid and flexible work practices since the COVID-19 pandemic, flexible work practices are still not perceived as standard, and this can negatively affect career progression.

Sub-barrier 1: Clarity and visibility of the range of flexibility options available

Sub-barrier 2: Access to workplace flexibility is not experienced equally across different staff cohorts.

² Diversity Council Australia, (R. D’Almada-Remedios), *Inclusion@Work Index 2023–2024: Mapping the State of Inclusion in the Australian Workforce Synopsis Report*, Diversity Council Australia, 2024.

The opportunity was...

Equitable access to workplace flexibility is a key barrier to retaining and advancing the careers of women and other under-represented groups. Sub-barriers contributing to this include:

1. Clarity and visibility of the range of flexibility options available
 - During the Bronze self-assessment, knowledge of existing provisions was low
2. Access to workplace flexibility is not experienced equally across different staff cohorts
 - In 2016, fewer STEM academic women agreed they could use flexible work options (65%) compared to STEM academic men (72%).

An inclusive workplace is an important enabler of access to flexible work.

We pursued these actions...

1. Embedded use of flexible work
 - Raised awareness of available options
 - Strengthened supervisor capability through the *Inclusive Career Conversations* program
 - Implemented core meeting hours
2. Supported parents and carers
 - Implemented a gender-neutral leave policy
 - Raised awareness of new parental leave provisions
 - Accredited as a breastfeeding-friendly workplace
 - Provided funding to mitigate career interruptions
3. Supported CALD and LGBTQIA+ staff
 - Celebrated cultural events
 - Provided training sessions for all staff

Which had the following outcomes

1. Improved awareness of available flexible work options from 42% in 2022 to 76% in 2025
2. Increased used of flexible work options by women from 39% in 2022 to 51% in 2025
3. Reduced STEM academic staff perception that using flexible work has a negative impact on career
4. Staff living with disability and carers reported improved support for flexibility
5. Reduced inclusivity gap between culturally and racially marginalised staff and their peers between 2022 and 2025

Which inform these future directions...

Impact

- Normalised flexible working practices supporting career success
- Improved sense of belonging for culturally and racially marginalised staff
- Improved inclusive LGBTQIA+ workplace culture and visibility

1. Expand adoption of core meeting hours
2. and 3. Review and remove barriers to accessing parental leave
4. Support for CALD staff through our Cultural Diversity and Anti-Racism Action Plan
5. Increase LGBTQIA+ training completions in STEM faculties
6. Annual reporting of non-mandatory training completions to target local areas for training sessions
7. Include consideration of disability and carers within training modules
8. Socialise and monitor cultural leave implementation
9. Further understanding of needs of staff with some/shared caring responsibilities
10. Improve data on informal and formal flexible work arrangements
11. Develop guidelines for addressing cultural load for CALD staff
- 12 and 13. Identify targeted support needs for LGBTQIA+ staff
14. Improve evaluation of LGBTQIA+ programs
15. Increase proportion of LGBTQIA+ Allies

Through other UTS strategies:

Maintain and improve an inclusive workplace culture through the Cultural Diversity and Anti-Racism Action plan

2. EVIDENCE OF BARRIER

Workplace flexibility is most beneficial to individuals and organisations when it is defined broadly and mainstreamed for all employees as part of an inclusive culture³. Systems and culture of a workplace must all adequately support flexibility for the benefits to become evident⁴.

2.1 Access to flexible work

Our commitment to fostering a flexible and inclusive workplace culture, as outlined in the Bronze Action Plan, was supported by findings from the 2016 staff engagement survey (Table 1) and the 2017 inclusion survey. In 2016, fewer STEM academic women agreed they could use flexible work options (65%) compared to STEM academic men (72%).

Staff consultations for the Bronze Award application revealed variability in the practice of supportive and inclusive workplace culture across STEM areas. Feedback was gathered qualitatively from 80 STEM academic and professional staff (56% women and 75% academic staff) through focus groups and interviews. Feedback included:

- Knowledge about existing supports and entitlements was low
- Staff in male-dominated areas felt supervisors were not consistent in implementing policies on flexible work and care
- Relevant information was difficult to find on the intranet
- The perception that work areas apply flexibility and caring policies unevenly.

Table 1: Agreement to statements on flexible work in 2016 staff engagement survey

	UTS				STEM faculty academics			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
I can apply the flexible work arrangements available to me at UTS	1063	75	1381	75	178	72	147	65
I can change my hours of work if I need to	1063	74	1381	73	178	76	147	67
I have a say about my work conditions	1063	68	1381	68	178	59	147	56

A targeted survey (n=143) and subsequent focus groups (n=24) of Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) staff were commissioned by the UTS Multicultural and Indigenous Women's Network⁵ in 2020. The findings reported, almost half of respondents (48%) said they had either experienced and/or witnessed racism or unfair treatment at UTS based on their race.

Experiences of casual racism were the most common. Significantly, culturally diverse and First Nations women stated it was their ethnicity, rather than their gender, that was the barrier to career

³ Diversity Council Australia, *Mythbusting flexibility*

⁴ Workplace Gender Equality Agency *Building a workplace flexibility strategy* (2015)

⁵ Now known as the UTS Multicultural Women's Network (MWN)

progression (67% agreed) and included factors such as lack of access to working from home provisions.

2.2 Parental leave

In response to advocacy by the Academic Women in Science (AWiS) group regarding obstacles academic staff were facing when applying for parental leave, in 2023 we evaluated STEM staff experiences to better understand gaps in support.

We conducted an appreciative inquiry focus group with 12 STEM academic staff (4 from each faculty) who had taken parental leave during the period Jan 2019-Feb 2023. This method implements a strengths-based approach and encourages positive change based on what is already working well⁶. Participant responses coded for emerging themes aligned with systems, enablers, and suggested improvements to current practices. Identified themes were collated as positive (support from supervisors and peers and parental leave provisions at UTS) or negative (lack of clarity on process pre- and post-parental leave) contributors to flexible work (Figure 1).

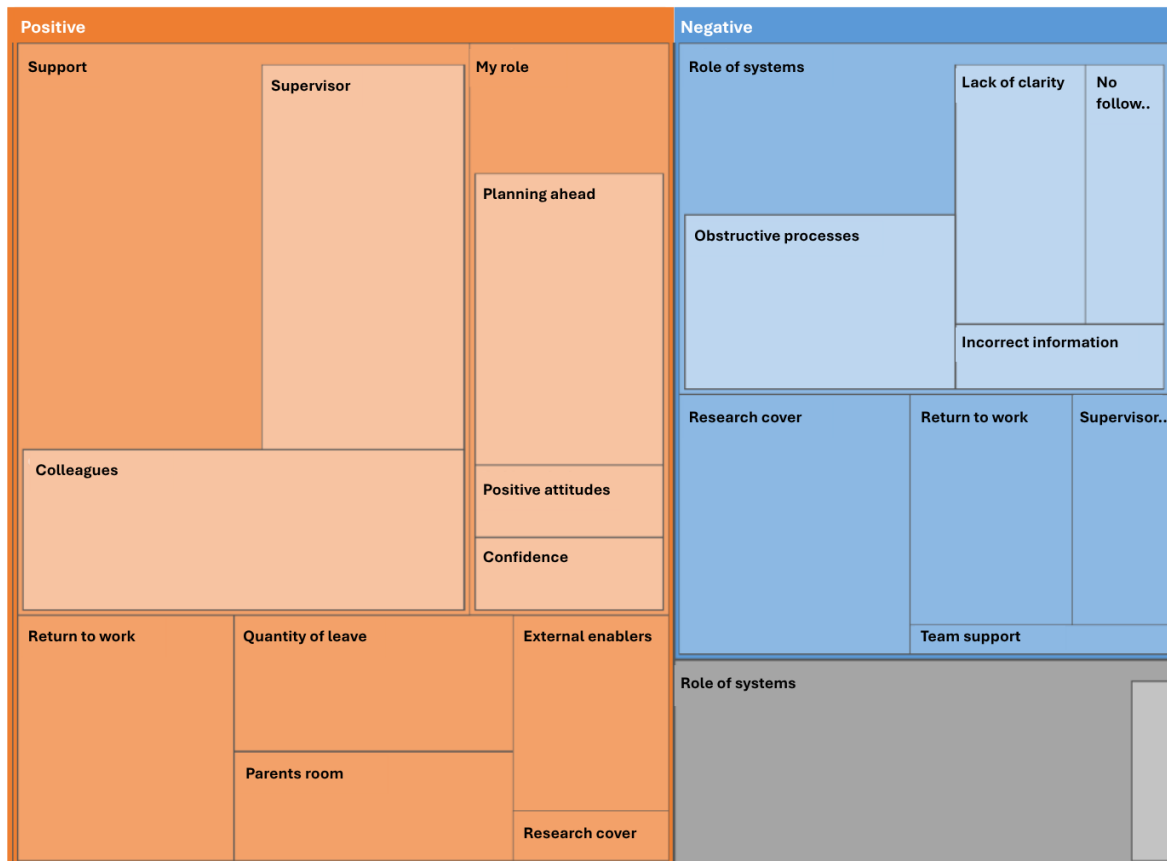


Figure 1: Appreciative inquiry analysis with participant responses coded by theme. The size of the area reflects the number of coding references. Main themes are in darker colours while related subcategories are in a lighter shade.

⁶ Cooperrider, D. L., Whitney, D., & Stavros, J. M. (2008). *Appreciative inquiry handbook: For leaders of change* (2nd ed.). Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

3. PROGRESS (ACTIONS AND OUTPUTS)

Flexible work options at UTS include changing hours of work or pattern of work (e.g. flexible hours, working part-time) or work location (working remotely) and is available for a variety of reasons (Figure 1). Hybrid working arrangements have become common since the COVID-19 pandemic. UTS supports staff using a hybrid approach, alongside the expectation of a strong staff presence on campus to support students and colleagues.

UTS emphasises commitment to a welcoming and supportive campus for a diverse, inclusive, and thriving community through its strategic vision. The Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion (CSJI) (established in 2018) translates this vision through a range of activities including DEI training, events and campaigns, and supporting internal networks such as MWN and Pride.

Actions to address this key barrier focused on improving uniformity of policy implementation through raising awareness of existing flexible work practices and a range of initiatives to develop and strengthen an inclusive institutional culture that assists staff to meet their role responsibilities while maintaining a sense of personal well-being (Table 2).

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

Key Activity Area	Planned at Bronze or post-Bronze	Desired Outcome/Impact	Further Action (see final table for further details)
Raising awareness of flexible work options available (Section 3.1.1)	Bronze	Use of flexible work practices is not a barrier to career progression	Actions 2-3
Strengthening supervisor capability (Section 3.1.2)	Post-Bronze	Improve access to flexible work practices for all staff groups	Actions 5-7 and 9
Implementing Core Meeting Hours (Section 3.1.3)	Bronze	Support participation of all staff, especially parents and carers, in important activities	Action 1
Improving parental leave provisions and awareness (Section 3.2)	Bronze	Remove barriers to accessing parental leave Support a breastfeeding-friendly workplace	Actions 2, 3
Mitigating career interruptions through funding support (Section 3.2.4)	Bronze	Provide funding to re-establish research capacity	BAU

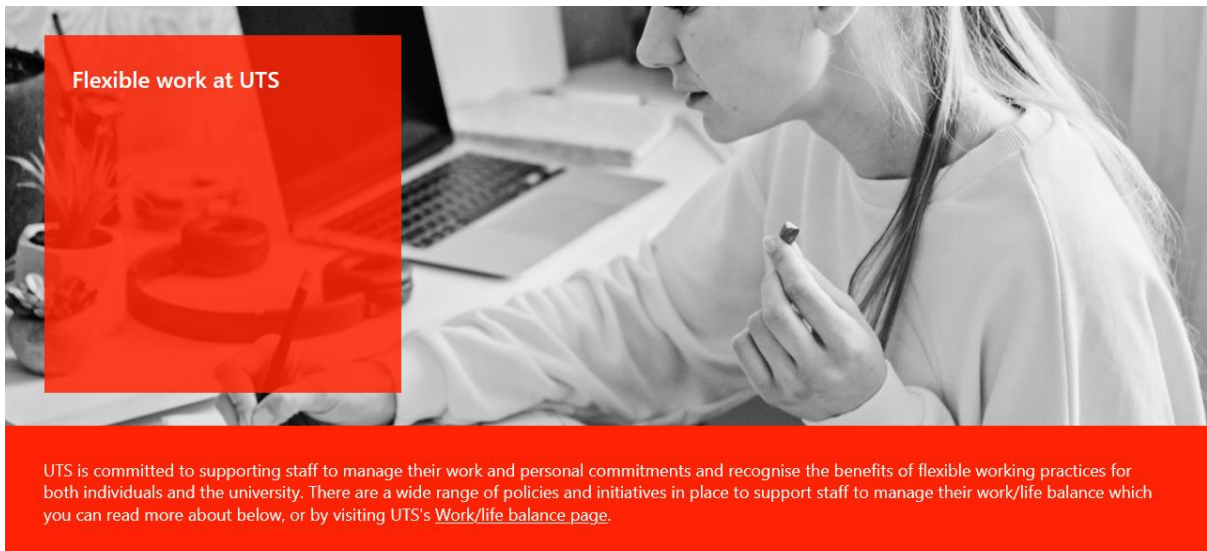
Amplify and celebrate cultural diversity (Section 3.3.1)	Bronze	Improved experience of inclusion and belonging for under-represented staff Support staff taking cultural leave	Actions 4, 8 and 11
Improve LGBTIQ+ visibility and support (Section 3.3.2)	Post-Bronze	Increased awareness of leave entitlements and flexible work arrangements among LGBTIQ+ staff Increased awareness of LGBTIQ+ inclusion opportunities at UTS and increasing STEM manager awareness of strategies	Actions 12-15

3.1 Embedding flexible work

3.1.1 Raising awareness of available options

We used digital platforms to advertise flexible work practices to both current and future staff. Since 2020, external facing web pages (CSJI site) and the intranet (Staff Connect) were used to disseminate this information. In 2024, we further improved awareness through a dedicated SharePoint site (Figure 2). To heighten awareness, website excerpts were displayed on digital screens across the campus featuring a QR code directing staff to the website for further information.

To promote flexible work, we included examples developed through interviews with staff (identified through EOI) who shared how using flexible work arrangements had helped them balance a wide range of work and personal commitments. Our aim was to socialise a range of contexts emphasising that flexible work was for everyone and for any reason. These included an Associate Professor (man) who cares for his school-aged children with limited family support, an international student (woman) working while studying and a Professor (man) who was the first complete quadriplegic to become a professor in an Australian university.



What do flexible work arrangements look like?

We recognise that each situation is unique so flexible work arrangements – temporary or permanent – are negotiated individually between you and your supervisor. These can include options such as:

How to apply for flexible working arrangements

Visit the [Work/life balance](#) page on Staff Connect (opens the UTS intranet – requires a UTS login to access) to find out how to

Embracing flexible work at UTS – Staff profiles

Hear from UTS staff members about their experience balancing work and personal commitments, and how the policies and systems in place at UTS have supported them with this.



Figure 2. Intranet page providing information on case studies of staff using flexible working practices.

3.1.2 Strengthening supervisor capability

NOTE: This information was also included in our Academic Promotion Cygnet report.

Our actions here were two-fold: implementing structural changes to business as usual (BAU) activities and strengthening supervisor capability. In consultation with supervisors, all staff prepare an annual work plan which documents activities, expectations, and development. For academics, these plans are often linked to perceptions of promotion readiness. Within this framework, there was no formal mechanism for discussing or documenting flexible work requirements. Completing a Bronze action, Science (2019) piloted documenting impact of life circumstances in annual work planning to assist managers with better implementation of flexible work arrangements. This was intended to alleviate any concerns about initiating a flexible work request and normalise these conversations as part of BAU. We assessed how this relates to Academic Promotion in another Cygnet report. In this application, we consider the impact of normalising equity conversations during work planning. Science and FEIT continued documenting the impact of life circumstances annually during work planning (2022-23). Since 2024, this has become BAU across UTS through a digitised academic work planning tool which includes a

section for other considerations that may impact performance. Due to data privacy restrictions, we are unable to report on how many staff used the work planning tool to discuss flexible work.

Supervisor capability for initiating and supporting inclusive career conversations was developed as described in the UTS Promotion Cygnet report. Briefly, the *Inclusive Career Conversations* program was co-designed in 2023 with senior leaders in Science and FEIT and an external facilitator. The aim was to foster a supportive mindset that recognises staff members' intersecting identities and the resulting barriers they face. It was developed specifically for supervisors responsible for work planning discussions – Heads of Schools/Disciplines. The program was piloted in both schools in Science and two schools in FEIT in 2024. In 2025, FEIT then ran the program across all other schools.

3.1.3 Implementing core meeting hours

In 2017, following a recommendation from their Equity and Diversity Committee, the Faculty of Engineering & IT (FEIT) adopted a Core Meeting Hours Guideline to reinforce the Faculty's commitment to enable full participation in Faculty life, particularly for those with carer or parental responsibilities. The Guideline set precedence for scheduling staff meetings, seminars, workshops, and social gatherings between 10:00 AM and 4:00 PM. The initiative's purpose was to ensure equal opportunities for all staff members in decision-making processes and social activities.

STEM Equity and Diversity Committees subsequently adapted this policy for local use; Science in 2018 and Health in 2019. In 2023, Health amended guidelines to further stipulate core events should be held outside school holiday periods and include hybrid meeting options.

To monitor compliance, three audits were completed within STEM faculties in 2022- 2024 (Table 3).

Table 3: STEM faculty audits of core events

Faculty	Year	Activity	Key audit findings
FEIT	2017	Implemented Core Meeting Hours guide. Time period defined as 10 am – 4 pm.	
FEIT	2022	52 internal meetings including faculty level committees, seminars and workshops were audited.	93% compliance. Non-compliance was mostly due to events which started within but ended beyond core hours.
Health	2018	Implemented Core Meeting Hours	
Health	2023	Core Meeting Hours re-instated and updated to stipulate that core meetings, seminars and workshops should be held outside school holidays and include a hybrid alternative to enable online participation where appropriate	Disrupted during the COVID-19 period and was adapted prior to re-instatement.
Health	2024	481 events including scheduled staff meetings, seminars/workshops and	Overall, 84% of the 400 internally focused faculty and schools'

		morning/afternoon teas were audited.	committees complied with the Guideline. Meetings outside of school holidays, 87% (347 of 400) of the internally focused faculty level and schools' committees complied with the Guideline.
Science	2018	Implemented Core Meeting Hours. Time period defined as 10 am – 3 pm	
Science	2019	58 meetings were audited including faculty, school and institute level meetings.	Overall, 76% of all meetings adhered to CMH. Schools and institutes had a higher rate of adherence averaging 88% or 20 out of 34 meetings. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty, n= 15/24 (76%) • School of Life Science, n= 10/11 (90%) • Mathematics and Physical Science, n=9/10 (90%) • C3 institute, n=11/13 (95%)
Science	2023	53 meetings were audited including at faculty, school, and institute level.	Out of 53 scheduled meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 42 meetings (80%) were held within the core meeting hours • 93% of meetings were held outside school holidays • 7% of meeting were held during school holidays

ACTION 1: Expand adoption of core meeting hours across UTS.

3.2 Supporting parents and carers

3.2.1 Gender-neutral parental leave policy

Parental leave provisions were updated in the 2019 Enterprise Agreement to extend ‘maternity’ leave entitlement to all primary caregivers, regardless of whether they are the birth parent and to include same-sex parents. This provision is now called parental leave and extends to include adoption and surrogacy.

3.2.2 Raising awareness of updated parental leave provisions

In completing proposed Bronze Actions, we created and distributed a printed ‘Parental Pack’ in 2020 (Figure 3). The booklet was a guide for UTS staff who were parents or carers of children. We used gender neutral language and included images to convey a diversity of parental contexts and family types. It included information on parental leave provisions as well as support for parents returning to work through flexible work arrangements, parenting rooms at work and additional research funding support for academic parents. To contextualise policy implementation, we

developed profiles of staff who had navigated the parental leave process. Socialising the new process beyond the UTS intranet was a priority for attracting future staff, and this information was subsequently shared on UTS's external webpages.

Feedback from the appreciative inquiry focus group (Section 2.2) identified several actions to maintain and build upon positive aspects of the process of applying for parental leave and to address negative ones (Table 4). Taking these into consideration, in 2023–2024, we developed an intranet SharePoint site (Figure 4) to make key information easily accessible. It includes important dates leading up to parental leave (e.g. when to submit leave documents) and options for structuring the leave period. We also added content on the government parental leave scheme, guidance for supervisors and academics, and links to external websites that support working parents. For supervisors, we have included a staged conversation guide and a template for supporting workload cover during this period.

ACTION 2: Review awareness of and gaps in implementation of parental leave provisions

Table 4: Summary of actions based on appreciative inquiry focus group analysis

Aim	Recommended actions
Improve central intranet site hosting information supporting parental leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Review current intranet information and remove redundant information and pages b. Fact sheet in plain language on eligibility criteria c. Workflow guide for applicants including for return-to-work phase and flexible work options d. Include relevant external information e.g links to government paid parental leave scheme e. Clarify process to access support for research and teaching cover f. Fact sheet for managers, including staged conversation guide and managing return to work g. Identify People Unit contact for Parental Leave who would <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Deal with complex situations ii. Ensure intranet information is current h. A template which auto calculates important dates to progress application for leave
Seek clarity on process for research and teaching cover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Assess local workflows in STEM Faculties b. Develop concise form for business case/other required documentation for backfilling parental leave positions c. Guidelines for accessing cover provided by major funding bodies (e.g. NHMRC, ARC)
Improve culture around parental leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Determine need and feasibility of developing a parents' network or informal events for sharing information as a working parent b. Increase awareness on availability of breastfeeding/parenting rooms c. Improve awareness of flexible work information d. Include parental leave considerations in training for managers/heads of discipline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >i. Staged conversations with applicant >ii. Assist with arranging teaching and research cover
Removal of primary and secondary carer label,	Engage through Enterprise Agreement Bargaining process

especially when partner is not a UTS employee



Figure 3: Illustration from guide for parents

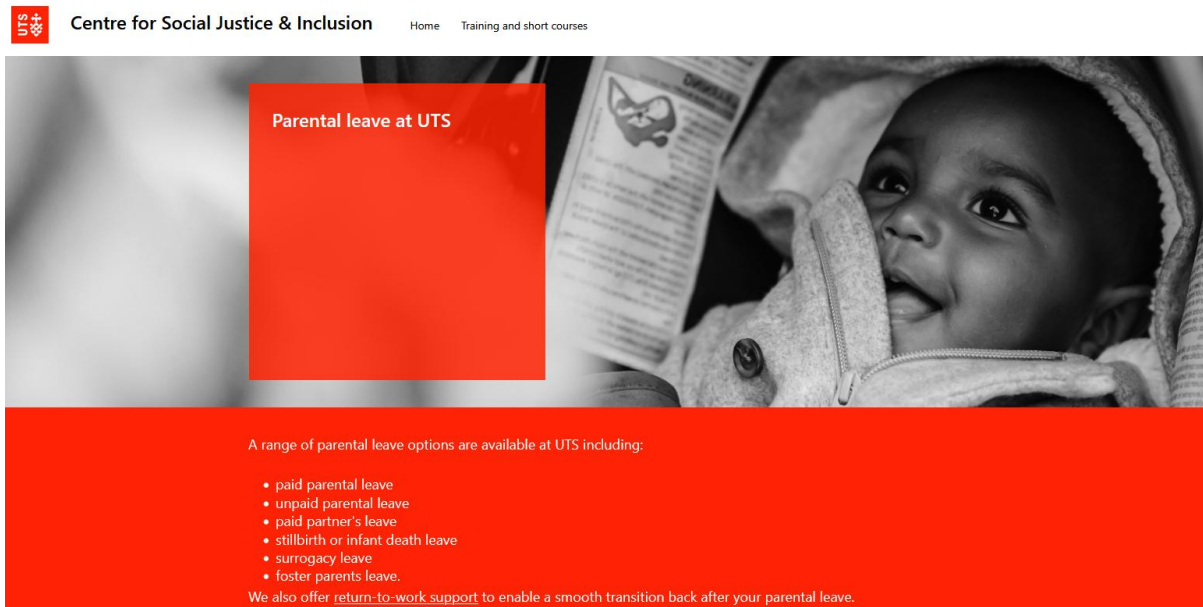


Figure 4: Illustration from parental leave page on staff intranet

3.2.3 Breastfeeding-friendly workplace

In completing further Bronze Actions, facilities across campus were upgraded to provide dedicated high quality parenting facilities on campus. UTS has been an Australian Breastfeeding Association accredited Breastfeeding-Friendly Workplace (BFW) since 2019. UTS has 7 parenting rooms on campus and the intranet site (Section 3.2.2 and Figure 5) features information for staff and students about breastfeeding on campus. Our Breastfeeding Guide ensures all UTS community members have a central source of information regarding their responsibilities to support their colleagues and their role in maintaining UTS as an accredited BFW. To further extend awareness of parenting rooms on campus, in 2024 we created a video featuring a staff member using the dedicated parenting facilities (Figure 5) which is regularly featured on information screens across campus.



Staff, students, and visitors are welcome to breastfeed on the UTS campus. If they prefer a private space for feeding their baby, expressing milk and/or nappy changing, dedicated parent rooms are available. For more information, read our [Breastfeeding at UTS guidelines](#).

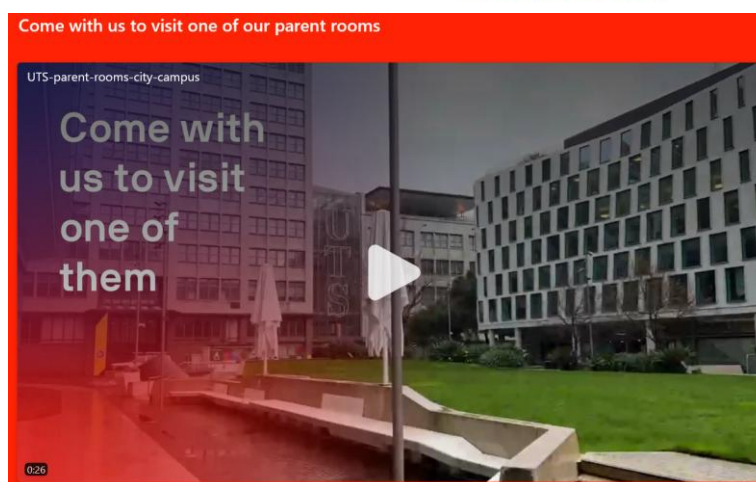


Figure 5: Information on breastfeeding at UTS. Upper panel: intranet and Lower panel: video of parenting rooms on campus displayed on digital screens across campus

3.2.4 Mitigating career interruptions

From 2019-2020, the Research Equity Initiative (REI)⁷ provided support to re-establish academic research portfolios after carer-related career interruptions. It was amended in 2021-2022 to reflect COVID-related impacts such as travel restrictions. Eligibility was expanded further in 2023, and the program was relaunched as the Research Equity and Access Career Help (REACH) Grants Scheme. Researchers can now apply based on a wider range of career disruptions including impacts of disability or long-term health conditions, domestic or family violence and disaster management and/or recovery and has expanded to include late-stage Higher Degree Research students. Researchers can access up to \$2,500 annually to support their professional development and up to \$10,000 for project funding. Applications can be submitted at any time during the year to support ease of access.

From 2021-2024 a total of 18 REI/REACH grants were awarded; most (17/18) were women, and the majority were from non-STEM faculties.

3.3 Targeting under-represented staff cohorts

UTS actively promotes an inclusive workplace not only through our strategies and policies but also by supporting initiatives in partnership with external accreditation schemes (Carer's NSW Carers + Employers program, ABA Breastfeeding-Friendly Workplace) and programs (Hidden Disabilities Sunflower), and internal staff networks (MWN, Pride and Ally networks, Disability at Work Group).

3.3.1 Recognising cultural needs

One of the recommendations from the Indigenous and CALD staff report in 2019 (Section 2.1) was the need to better support the cultural diversity among staff at UTS. In 2022, UTS created a dedicated role for a Cultural Diversity Officer (full-time, continuing appointment) as an enabler to progress report recommendations. To support an inclusive culture for our diverse and multicultural workforce, UTS provides cultural leave for staff to celebrate events and days of significance which are not currently recognised public holidays. In 2021, the Indigenous cultural leave provision was increased from 5 to 10 days. Cultural leave promotes an intersectional approach to flexible work, integrating needs of under-represented staff cohorts.

Since there was no readily available information on which events were of cultural significance to the UTS community, we co-designed the *How I Celebrate* project (Table 5) with MWN. It used the educative and provocative power of storytelling, not simply to showcase cultural diversity but to also acknowledge the diversity of these celebrations. In recognition of the unpaid contributions of staff from under-represented communities for projects like this, each participant received a small gift. Excerpts from the booklets are illustrated in Figure 6. We were unable to find storytellers for all the significant events identified.

ACTION 3: Continue production and circulation of *How I Celebrate* booklets to increase diversity of cultural/religious events

⁷This information was also reported in our Academic Promotion Cygnet report.

Table 5: Actions related to the How I Celebrate project

Action	Output
Connected with UTS staff, students (including clubs and societies) and alumni to gain their involvement in the project.	Identified key events of cultural significance relevant to the UTS community and potential contributors to share stories.
Collected information on how events are celebrated	Online questionnaire using the appreciative inquiry approach to gather information on event celebrations through tapping into people’s strengths and positive memories.
Developing booklets	Visual assets for the project designed by students in the Socially Responsive Design (SRD) program at UTS through a collaboration with MWN Desktop research and interviews to gather information and stories of cultural celebration. 11 digital booklets created
Sharing booklets within community	Booklets shared through the MWN website and MS Teams channels on relevant cultural day of significance. https://www.uts.edu.au/about/uts-vision/initiatives/multicultural-womens-network/how-i-celebrate Article about the booklets and paid cultural leave provision in Staff Notices
Public screens recognising major cultural events (e.g. Eid, Hannukah, Lunar New Year)	Digital screens across campus highlighted events and included a QR code directed to information about cultural leave



Figure 6: Excerpts from How I Celebrate booklets
Upper left: Christmas; Lower left: Eid; Right: Raksha Bandhan

The *How I celebrate* booklets collated 44 stories from staff and students across 14 cultural events (Table 6). To further the reach of the booklets, the Vice Chancellor’s and Staff Notices communications were used to promote cultural leave and the MWN booklets in 2025. In six months, this has garnered 260 views and the booklets 181 views and 86 unique clicks.

Table 6: List of events included in *How I celebrate* booklets

Events of cultural significance
Lunar New Year
Lent and Easter
Holi
Nowruz
Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr
Songkran and Sinhalese and Tamil New Year
Passover
Eid al-Adha
Raksha Bandhan
Diwali
Christmas

3.3.2 Increasing LGBTQIA+ inclusion

UTS promotes an inclusive workplace culture through initiatives that embed LGBTQIA+ visibility and support. Actions include staff and student networks, LGBTQIA+ allyship training (*Breaking the Binary* and *Ally* training), and participation in events like Mardi Gras and Fair Day. By normalising LGBTQIA+ inclusion and awareness on campus, LGBTQIA+ staff face fewer barriers in accessing flexible work arrangements such as gender affirmation leave, ensuring staff can manage life circumstances without compromising career progression or workplace belonging.

Breaking the Binary and *Ally* training are central to LGBTQIA+ inclusion at UTS and has been continuously delivered since 2016. The aim of the training is to increase staff awareness and LGBTQIA+ cultural competence at UTS. In its current form, the training is delivered by a staff member with lived experience in the LGBTQIA+ community and supported by the UTS Training Specialist who deliver evidence-based, trauma informed-training, with an emphasis on ethical bystander principles. After completing 5 hours of training, UTS Allies satisfy the requirements of becoming a member of the culturally safe, visible group of contactable UTS staff (Figure 7). In 2023-24, the STEM faculties organised LGBTQIA+ and cultural awareness training sessions for their staff, especially to complement the Inclusive Conversations program for senior leaders (Heads of Schools/Disciplines) (Section 3.1.2).

Due to gaps in data collection, staff training completions cannot be stratified by professional and academic staff or by gender. Overall, more staff from non-STEM faculties completed both training sessions (72% *Breaking the Binary* and 82% *Ally*). During the period where there was a concerted effort to improve training completions by senior STEM staff, training completions were still less than 10% of STEM faculty staff (Table 7). DEI training sessions are not mandatory and held in-person which can be deterrents. However, we have noted that staff are more likely to attend area-specific sessions rather than when asked to attend sessions open to all staff.

Table 7. Staff completing LGBTIQ+ training as proportion of total staff

		Non-STEM completions				STEM completions				
Total staff Non-STEM		Breaking the Binary		Ally		Total staff STEM	Breaking the Binary		Ally	
2021	701	83	12%	17	2%	1190	6	1%	3	0.3%
2022	670	35	5%	21	3%	1157	6	1%	4	0.3%
2023	646	102	16%	50	8%	1196	41	3%	14	1.2%
2024	644	62	10%	40	6%	1233	69	6%	10	0.8%
2025	672	45	7%	50	7%	1257	8	1%	7	0.6%
Cumulative completions*		49%		26%		10%		3.0%		

*Estimated as total completions during 2021-25/total staff in 2025 noting that staff turnover influences this value

ACTION 4: Increase LGBTIQ+ training completions in STEM faculties

ACTION 5: Annual reporting of non-mandatory training completion

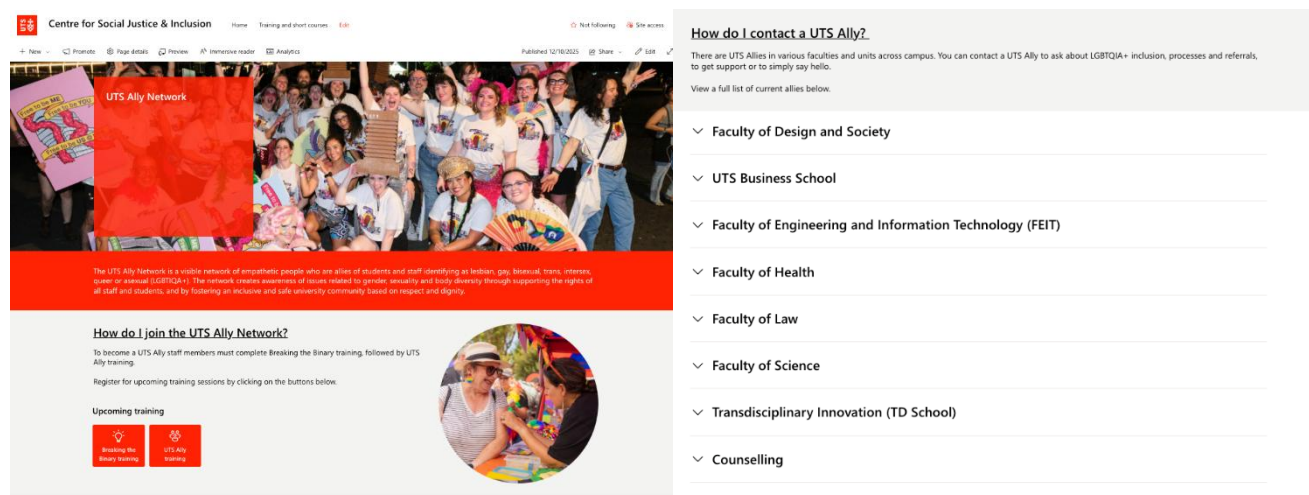


Figure 7. UTS Ally information on the intranet

The UTS Allies contact information on the intranet (accessible to staff and students) has had 389 views during 12 months to December 2025. The Ally program, initiated in 2016, has grown to 208 current Allies (excluding staff no longer employed at UTS) across 32 faculties and units.

In partnership with Twenty10 (a not-for-profit organisation that supports young LGBTIQ+ people), we developed videos socialising the diversity and intersectionality of the LGBTIQ+ community. The videos capture lived experiences of UTS staff and students and Twenty10 young leaders to illustrate the diversity of lived experience across cultural diversity, Indigeneity, debunking misconceptions, sharing barriers, and queer joy.

In 2021, gender affirmation leave was included in the Enterprise Agreement. This leave has been critical to enabling trans, intersex, and gender diverse staff to access gender affirming care through flexible and equitable leave arrangements. Information was socialised through staff networks, the intranet and targeted through the UTS speech pathology clinic to attendees of their free gender affirming voice training. In addition, we developed and ran a broader awareness-raising campaign to support policy translation within the context of social and legal gender affirmation (Figure 8). This was a collaboration with the MWN extending their *Say My Name* campaign (which supports racial dignity) to include normalising using correct pronouns and preferred names.



Figure 8. UTS Say my name. Say my pronouns campaign flyer and poster promoting policy translation

UTS maintains a strong presence at the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, showcasing its commitment to LGBTQIA+ inclusion. A series of events in FEIT during UTS Pride week in 2024 promoted LGBTQIA+ awareness under the theme *Love is Love* (Figure 9). This included drag bingo and drop-in sessions to promote the Ally network and LGBTQIA+ student groups, all held in the foyer of the faculty building making FEIT’s commitment to inclusion highly visible. In 2025 Mardi Gras initiatives took a whole of university approach and included UTS returning to the parade after a five-year hiatus and hosting a stall at Fair Day (Sydney’s largest LGBTQIA+ community festival). These activities involved 117 volunteers from across 24 units. The STEM faculties had a strong presence at both events (17/39 at Fair Day and 30% of staff who marched in the parade).



Figure 9. Image of former FEIT Associate Dean Teaching and Learning opening the Love is Love hub, majority STEM Academic and professional staff, along with students in the audience.

In 2025 one of the LGBTQIA+ priorities was to develop a university-wide communications strategy to increase pan-university engagement and awareness about LGBTQIA+ inclusive policy, capability building, events, and access to culturally safe support (Table 8). 25 formal pan-university communications featured LGBTQIA+ content, totalling 3892 cumulative clicks on LGBTQIA+ content (Table 8).

Table 8. Summary of 25 UTS LGBTQIA+ 2025 pan-university communications, content and engagement (clicks and likes where possible)

Communication channel	Date	Title	Staff Engagement (total clicks)
UTS Staff news (11)	04/02/2025	<i>Breaking the Binary training and Ally training announcement</i>	52
	18/02/2025	<i>Inviting In: mental health resource event promotion – supporting academic research outputs in partnership with CSII</i>	46
	25/02/2025	<i>Special Mardi Gras Staff News featuring “Free to Be” logo and headline article about significance of Mardi Gras to LGBTQIA+ academic staff</i>	302
	11/03/2025	<i>Marching with pride: Thank you to our volunteers</i>	86
	01/04/2025	<i>Trans Day of Visibility Anchor article</i>	104
	22/04/2025	<i>Expanding our Allyship toolkit - Pride Framer launched</i>	205
	20/05/2025	<i>LGBTQASB+ Mob & Work Publication launch promotion + Neurodiversity summit</i>	31
	10/06/2025	<i>Speech Pathology Practice with a Purpose</i>	57

	01/06/2025	Queering Governance and International Law UTS academic's book launch event	56
	12/08/2025	Envisioning trans futures: Andrew Jakubowicz lecture, wear it purple day 2025 event featured	56
	26/08/2025	Wear it purple day article " Bold voices, bright futures: Why UTS wears it purple "	30
CSJI Newsletter (4)	06/08/2025	Envisaging trans futures event invitation email	729 Sold out event (210 tickets sold)
	19/09/2025	Envisaging trans futures Impact studio podcast release announcement	11
	16/06/2025	UTS Gender Affirming Speech Pathology article promotion	56
	19/09/2025	Empowering queer Muslim voices: Building bridges for inclusion and support feature article	72
Chief Operating Officer (COO) Newsletter (1)	06/03/2025	Mardi Gras 2025 featured in COO update	8
UTS Anchor articles, News bulletins and case studies (7)	25/02/2025	Proud and free to be us this Mardi Gras - academic staff feature	428
	05/03/2025	Free to be us at UTS this Mardi Gras : Thank you to our volunteers	220
	27/03/2025	Supporting Trans and Gender Diverse Communities at UTS	298
	05/06/2025	UTS Gender Affirming Speech Pathology article	157
	10/06/2025	LGBTQASB+ Mob & Work report promotion in news bulletin. Featuring extract from Prof. Nareen Young's speech.	282
	26/08/2025	Wear it purple day article " Bold voices, bright futures: Why UTS wears it purple "	332
	30/07/2025	Empowering Queer Muslim Voices – featured in CSJI newsletter on 19/09/2025 by Siobhan Irving (Academic)	14
UTS Impact Studios (2)	19/09/2025	Envisaging trans futures Impact studio podcast	60 (downloads)
	19/09/2025	Impact Studios social LinkedIn PDF carousel	200 (8 reposts, click-through rate 31%)
	TOTAL	25	3892

4. OUTCOMES

4.1 Improved awareness and use of flexible work options

Academic staff in FEIT, Science and Health were surveyed in 2022 and 2025 (Table 9). The 2025 survey was released during a time staff were anticipating the release of a major organisational change proposal and as such we expected the lower response rate within this context. Table 9 was also included in our Promotion Cygnet report where we used this data to evaluate experiences of STEM academics in relation to career progression.

Table 9: Comparison of respondents to STEM academic survey in 2022 and 2025

	Response rate in 2022	Response rate in 2025
Overall survey	40%	23%
Women	43%	49%
Men	54%	40%
Gender diverse	2%	1%
Prefer not to share gender	2%	10%
With disability	16%	14%
CARM	33%	36%
Non-CARM	72%	55%
LGBTQIA+	9%	9%
Carer	57%	65%

Here, we describe outcomes for perceptions of inclusivity and access to flexible work in STEM faculties where we have concentrated our efforts to support a flexible and inclusive workplace culture. One important aspect of our survey design was to centre experiences of inclusion at a local level (School). Our strategies and policies are inclusive but the way they are implemented may not always impart feelings of belonging. Our actions to support an inclusive workplace culture (Section 3) were both broadly across UTS but also at a Faculty level. Through our surveys, we aimed to capture perceptions of inclusion at an individual level.

NOTE: Most survey questions were not compulsory. Therefore, the total number of respondents to a particular question were used to determine proportional responses for demographic groups. For intersectional analysis, this required responses to both demographic groups. E.g. CARM men who said they use flexible work options. We have included both raw numbers and proportion to adjust for variability in responses to questions and between survey years.

Our actions to improve use of flexible work options at UTS (Section 3.1.1) were successful. Awareness of flexible work options increased between 2022 (44% women, 41% men) and 2025 (77% women, 75% men) (Table 10A). In 2016, fewer STEM academic women agreed they could use flexible work options (65%) compared to STEM academic men (72%). For surveys in the post-Bronze phase, we framed the question differently. We asked if staff *use* flexible work options, rather than if they *could* use these provisions. While we cannot compare directly to 2016, we found that more women use flexible work options now (2025) compared to 2022 (Table 10A). However, there appears to be a reduction in culturally and racially marginalised (CARM) staff, both men and women, using flexible work options (Table 10B).

Table 10: Comparison of STEM academics awareness and use of flexible work options in 2022 and 2025 by gender (A) and by cultural background (B)

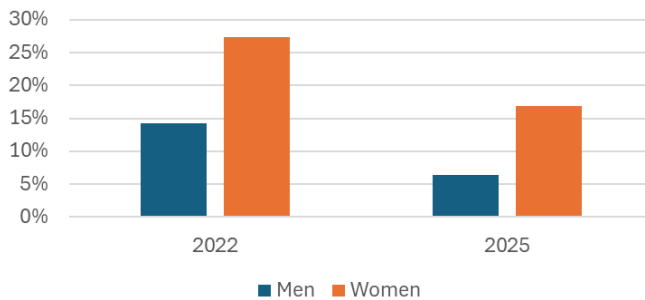
A.

Survey respondents			Aware of flexible work provisions		Use flexible work options	
			Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
2022	Men	147	61	41%	56	38%
	Women	117	52	44%	46	39%
2025	Men	94	71	76%	37	39%
	Women	111	85	77%	57	51%

B.

Survey respondents using flexible work options			CARM		Non-CARM	
2022	Men	52	28	54%	24	46%
	Women	45	20	44%	25	56%
2025	Men	37	16	43%	21	57%
	Women	56	18	32%	38	68%

During this time, we also reduced STEM academic staff perception that using flexible work has a negative impact on career (Figure 10).



STEM academics		Total respondents	Agreement with negative impact
2022	Men	147	21
	Women	117	32
2025	Men	94	6
	Women	113	19

Figure 10: Proportion of STEM academic men and women agreeing that using flexible work options has a negative impact on career was lower in 2025 compared to 2022. Head counts are shown in the table.

For more complex intersectional evaluation, we applied factor analysis to group related survey questions and created Index scores for each factor. Index scores were then used as dependent variables in linear regression models with demographic variables as predictors. We identified significant predictors based on both statistical significance and the practical magnitude of their effect on the outcome. For significant effects, we traced this back to the individual survey item to interpret the underlying questions as the drivers of these differences. These form part of the sense making and narrative points in our final analysis.

Improved supervisor understanding and support

The *Supervisor Understanding of Flexibility Index* grouped questions related to staff perception of their supervisor's support and flexibility in supporting them manage their work with life circumstances. This included comfort in discussing personal impacts and flexible work options, as well as the supervisor's willingness to adjust workloads as needed. In 2025, the overall score was high (>70%) across all our demographic groups (Figure 11). There was a nonsignificant improvement in the Index score for women in 2025 (4.02) compared to 2022 (3.84) but there were no gendered differences (4.08 in 2022 and 4.04 in 2025 for men) during this period. We note that in 2022 women were less likely to agree with the statement, *My supervisor supports workload adjustment to accommodate the impact of life circumstances*, (68% compared to 87% for men) and 21% less likely to agree with *I am comfortable to discuss life impact event with my supervisor* compared to men. Whereas the 2025 survey showed no significant difference between men and women for these items. This is likely due to our multimodal approach to normalising flexible work (Section 3.1.2) through supporting a culture that prioritises inclusivity (e.g. adherence to core meeting hours), changes to BAU (e.g. consideration of life circumstances during annual work planning) and supporting supervisors to recognise, initiate and advance conversations on impact of life circumstances in relation to career priorities (e.g. Inclusive Career Conversations program).

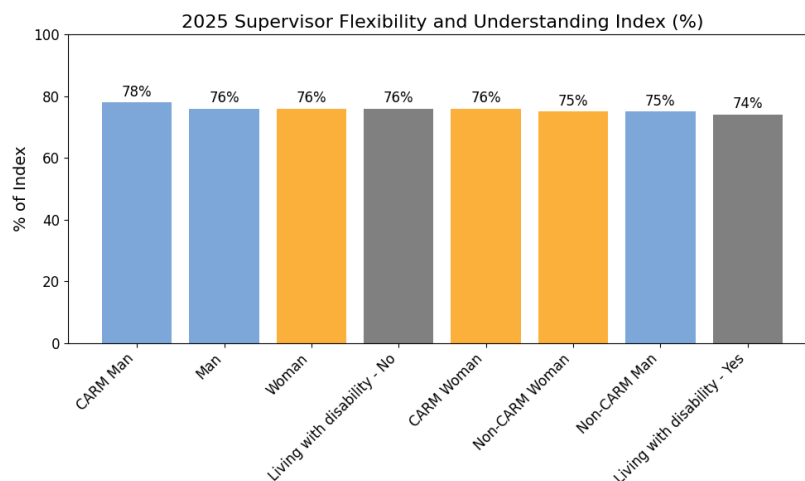


Figure 11: Supervisor Understanding of Flexibility Index in 2025 by demographic group

4.2 Improved support for staff living with disability and carers

Unpaid care and support work impacts the gender pay gap, with one-third of the pay gap attributed to the time spent caring for family and interruptions in full-time employment.⁸ Women are more likely to be primary carers and a third also have disability themselves. Two-thirds of Indigenous women care for someone outside their own household and two-thirds of them also live with dependent children.

Our actions also improved the experience for staff with disability, an intersection that was not considered in our Bronze application. In 2022, the *Supervisor Understanding of Flexibility Index* for staff with disability (3.6) was significantly lower than peers without disability (4.06) (*Wilcoxon test $W = 5766$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0105$). In 2025, the Index was unchanged for staff without disability (4.05) and

⁸ Working for Women (Australian government strategy for gender equality) 2024

was improved for staff with disability (3.95) with no significant difference between the groups. Agreement scores for all individual statements in the Index increased between 2022 and 2025 (Table 11). The greatest increase was to the statement *My supervisor is understanding of this impact* i.e. the impact of their life circumstances.

However, further support is needed to create an equitable workplace for staff with disability as there is persistently lower agreement with statements in this Index compared to peers with no disability. For example, staff with disability do not feel that their supervisor supports adjusting their workload to accommodate life circumstances (46% agreement in 2025) compared to staff without disability (70% agreement).

Table 11: Comparison of responses to individual statements in the Supervisor Understanding of Flexibility Index for staff with disability

Index	Statement	2022	2025
Supervisor understanding of flexibility for staff with disability	My supervisor supports me to adjust my workload to accommodate life circumstances	41% ¹	46% ¹
	My supervisor is understanding of this impact	48% ¹	68%
	I feel comfortable discussing life impact with my supervisor	55%	59%
	I feel comfortable discussing flexible work options with my supervisor	55%	63%

¹significantly lower compared to staff without disability

In 2025, For carers, there were significant (X-squared = 11.458, df = 5, p-value = 0.04301) gendered differences to the statement *My supervisor is understanding of the impact of life circumstances*. Main carers who were men didn't feel their needs for flexible work were met (50%) compared to women (82%). This was similar for women who had some caring responsibilities (52%) compared to men (81%).

ACTION 6: Include consideration of disability and carers within DEI training modules

4.3 Improved inclusivity for CARM staff

As noted in Sub-barrier 2, access to workplace flexibility is not experienced equally across different staff cohorts. In a pre-COVID context, culturally diverse and First Nations women noted the ability to work flexibly (e.g. lack of access to working from home) as a barrier to career progression (Section 2.1).

The *Perceived Inclusivity Index* included statements about staff perceptions of School culture, tolerance of racism and tolerance of sexism (Figure 12). The factor score was high in both 2022 and 2025 (4.11-4.55 of a maximum score of 5) and there was no statistical difference between genders.

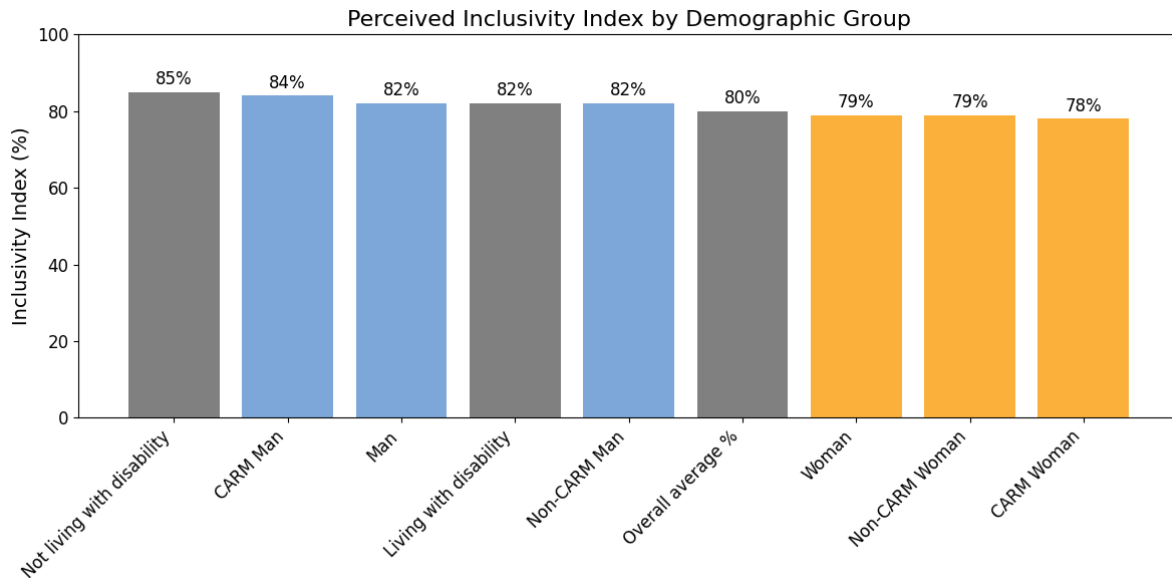


Figure 12: Perceived Inclusivity Index in 2025 by demographic group

In 2022, there was a significant difference in *Perceived Inclusivity Index* between CARM and non-CARM staff. Agreement with the statement *My school does not tolerate racism* was significantly different by CARM status and gender (Table 12) but there was no significant difference in 2025. The most notable shift was among non-CARM men, whose agreement dropped from 92% in 2022 to 82% in 2025 suggesting better awareness of barriers for their culturally diverse peers. This could be attributed to the efforts we have made to acknowledge and support cultural diversity in the workplace (Section 3.3). In addition, the Inclusive Career Conversations program (Section 3.1.2) exposed senior supervisors to the impact of intersecting identities and related barriers to career progression.

Table 12: Agreement to statement *My School does not tolerate racism* in STEM academic staff surveys

Group	Proportion agreeing in 2022*	Proportion agreeing in 2025
CARM Men	83%	84%
Non-CARM Men	92%	82%
CARM Women	83%	83%
Non-CARM Women	78%	72%

* X-squared = 8.8181, df = 3, p-value = 0.03181 (two-way ANOVA with gender as main effect)

The UTS Cultural Diversity and Anti-Racism Action Plan (CDAR-AP) developed as a result of recommendations from surveying CALD staff in 2020 (Section 2.1) was launched in December 2025. It aims to guide our work in cultural diversity and anti-racism, including responding to racism and supporting cultural safety and racial dignity. This strategy which enables inclusive work practices is co-led by the PVC (Indigenous Leadership and Engagement) and the PVC (Social Justice and Inclusion).

Accessing cultural leave

During 2020-2022, women were the majority of cultural leave takers across UTS (60%, 74/123) and this increased in 2023-2025 (64%, 120/187). In the STEM faculties cultural leave uptake is less than 5% of all staff and remains relatively unchanged during 2020-2025 (Figure 13).

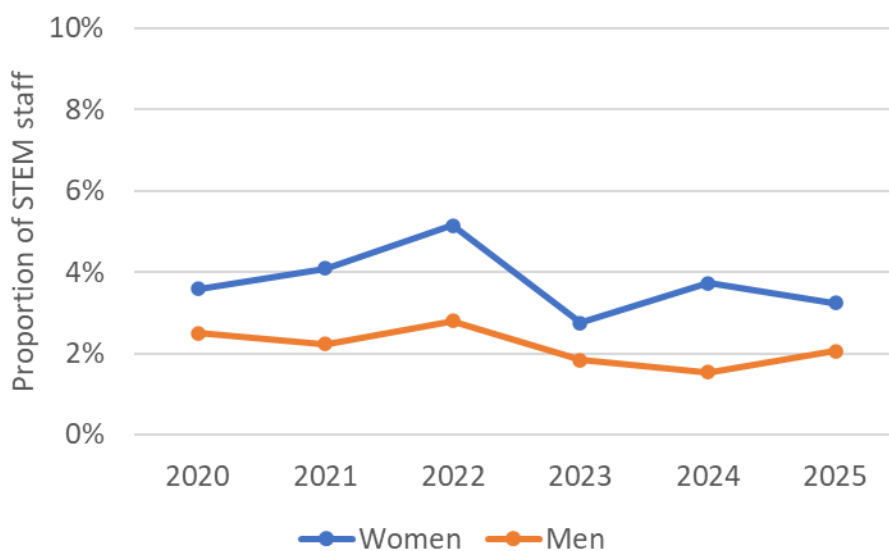


Figure 13: Proportion of STEM staff taking cultural leave

The aim of our actions to create an inclusive culture was not to increase the proportion of staff taking cultural leave *per se* but to support flexible and inclusive workplace practices for all staff groups.

Results from the STEM academic survey in 2022, found that while most respondents (43%, 116/272; 43% women and 56% men) were aware of UTS's cultural leave provision, most (44%, 119/272) considered that it was not applicable to them (Figure 14). Few (<5%) felt they didn't have supervisor support for taking cultural leave. We could not redo this in 2025. This question was transferred from the 2025 survey to an anticipated all-staff DEI survey in 2025 which was eventually not released due to the operational change process.

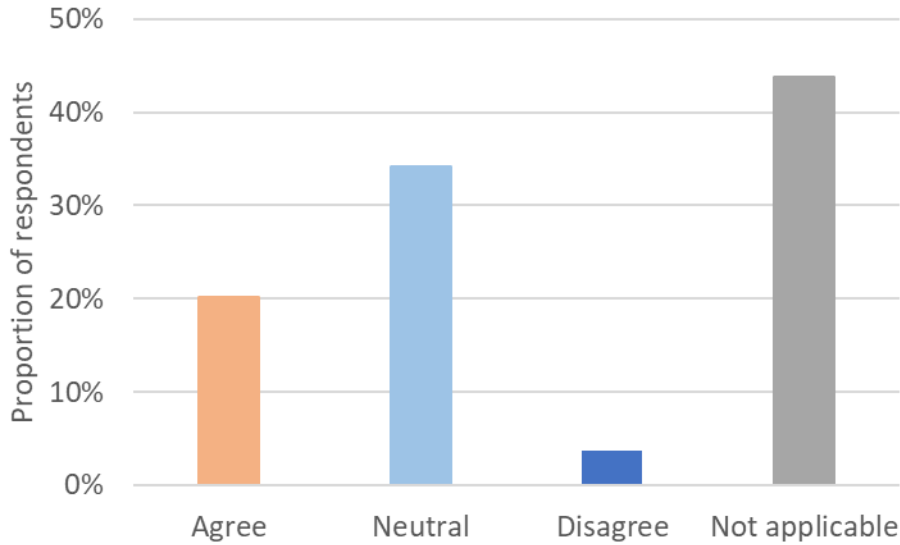


Figure 14: Agreement with the statement My supervisor supports me to take cultural leave amongst STEM academics in 2022

ACTION 7: Socialise and monitor cultural leave implementation by gender and other employment conditions

4.4 Increased awareness of parental leave provisions and process

Based on recommendations for improving parental leave experiences (Table 4) we reviewed intranet pages, removed redundant information and directed all parental leave traffic on the intranet to the new SharePoint site (Figure 5). The number of page views continue to increase and, in 2024, 10 months after publication, we note the parental leave page has the highest number of views (Table 13).

Table 13: Number page views for new SharePoint pages 10 months after publication

SharePoint pages published in December 2024	Number of page views sampled in October 2025 (views)
Leave entitlements at UTS	225
Parental leave at UTS	638
Flexible work at UTS	510
Returning-to-work at UTS – Includes EAPTELUS health parents toolkit	124
Breastfeeding at UTS	125

Carers

We also sought to understand perceptions of inclusivity amongst staff who had caring responsibilities. Most respondents across the 2022 and 2025 surveys were also carers (Table 8). In 2022, similar proportions of men (30%) and women (27%) noted that they had caring responsibilities (Table 14). In 2025 we included a question on extent of caring responsibilities and found more women were main carers (24%) compared to men (6%). Those with some caring responsibilities, especially STEM academic men,

scored lowest in the Perceived Inclusivity index (Table 15), however, these differences were not statistically significant.

The lack of statistical difference between groups does not invalidate the experiences of staff in cohorts with low respondent numbers. We also assessed response patterns to statements. Here, it was noteworthy that agreement with the statement *My School does not tolerate sexism* was lowest for men (71% compared to 89% of men with no caring responsibilities) and women (60% compared to 87% of women with no caring responsibilities). Taken together, this suggests that workplace culture neglects to consider life circumstances of those who are not primary carers irrespective of gender. Allowing employees to align their individual work arrangements with their unique circumstances improves wellbeing and increases staff retention.⁹

ACTION 8: Further understanding of needs of staff with some/shared caring responsibilities

Table 14: Proportion of STEM academics with and without caring responsibilities* in 2022 and 2025 by gender

	Men		Women	
	2022	2025	2022	2025
With caring* responsibilities	30%	28%	27%	36%
No caring responsibilities	26%	17%	18%	18%

*This included caring for children or dependent adults

Table 15: Comparison of Perceived Inclusivity index between STEM academic carers and non-carers by gender in 2025

Carer status	Men		Women	
	Score ¹	% of index ²	Score ¹	% of index ²
Not a carer	4.53	87%	4.22	81%
Main carer	4.49	86%	4.1	79%
Some caring responsibilities	3.98	77%	4.03	77%

¹Maximum score = 5

²Agreement with statements for index

⁹ Dhaenens, A et al *Mind the Gap* (2025) <https://doi.org/10.1061/JCEMD4.COENG-16727>

5. IMPACT

5.1 Normalised flexible working practices supporting career success

There is a strong link between overall inclusion and attitudes towards taking, and acceptance of, flexible work options. For example, supervisors who engage in open dialogue about circumstances which impact a person's work enable them to adapt their commitments to promote better work-life balance. Through staff profiles on the intranet (Section 3.1.1) we were able to create awareness of how flexible work options were being used in reality. In total, there were 292 views of the profiles in ten months since the website was launched.

Those interviewed for the profiles were from a pool of respondents from the 2022 STEM staff survey (Section 4.1) who were willing to share experiences of flexible work practices at UTS. This showcased impact of policy implementation at a personal level, highlighting the broad support of supervisors for flexible work practices and a positive impact on career advancement.

A Professor who has worked at UTS for 32 years and is a quadriplegic noted the long-standing **continued policy improvement**:

Flexible working practices have come a long way in the past few years, especially since the pandemic, my experience at UTS has always been very positive in this space. When I first got the job, there weren't any formal policies or practices in place like there are today.

In addition, he noted the importance of REACH grants (Section 3.2.4) on his career.

From a career perspective, flexible work has allowed me to progress on par with other academics of my standing and maturity in career. That accelerated even further when those provisions that allowed me to travel and be engaged more came in.

An Associate Professor, a migrant father with limited family support for caring for his school-aged children, credits **supervisor support** and being able to work flexibly for his successful promotion.

I think flexible working has allowed me to achieve my career ambitions to date. I was promoted to Associate Professor in January 2023 which was amazing. Without the flexibility I don't think I would have been able to get to where I am now, especially with a young family and as immigrants working full on like we do.

I can work from anywhere at any time and do so via the technology provided to me by UTS. This includes a mobile broadband dongle which allows me to connect to campus infrastructure (over VPN) pretty much wherever I am. [There were] no questions asked and full support, including provision of necessary infrastructure and technology to allow me to do so.

In addition, he noted the impact of the Core Meeting Hours policy (Section 3.1.3) in FEIT.

Meetings are generally not scheduled outside of 10am-4pm to allow for late arrival/early finish if children need to be dropped off or picked up. I can make it to some school events (swimming carnival, athletics, etc.).

In addition, our data also shows that there is no difference in promotion success for staff who use flexible work practices compared to those who don't (Figure 15). We now capture applicant demographic information, including use of flexible work arrangements, through a survey sent to promotion applicants which is decoupled from the application review process (75% response rate in 2025). A similar proportion of women (29/66, 44%) and men (26/60, 43%) applying for

promotion to Level C-E said they used flexible work arrangements. Informal flexible work arrangements are not captured through HR systems. To monitor implementation of inclusive and flexible work practices this should be captured in all-staff surveys.

ACTION 9: Further understanding of staff access to flexible work arrangements

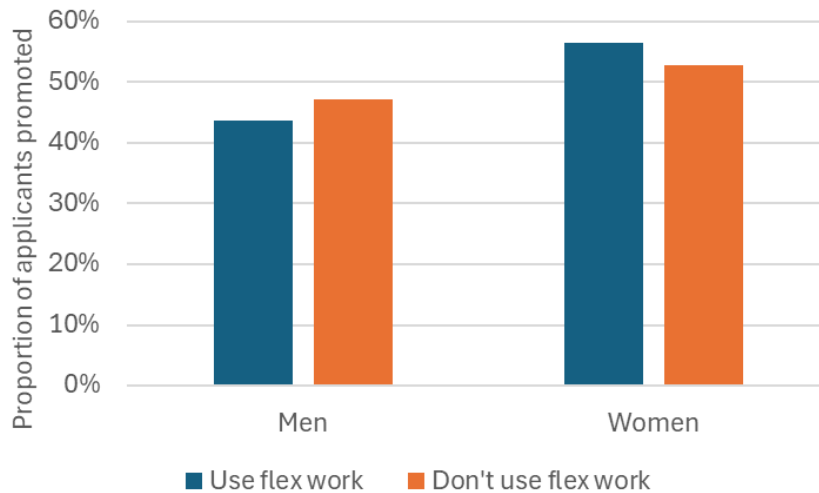


Figure 15: There is no gendered difference in Academic Promotion success for those who use flexible work practices (Levels C, D and E in 2025).

5.2 Created an inclusive workplace culture

5.2.1 Improved sense of belonging for CARM staff

UTS is committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace culture. The initiatives outlined in Section 3.3 were focused on socialising and translating policy into practice. Our person-centred approach emphasises empathy and understanding of individual circumstances and are deliberately designed to consider intersectionality. The ability to access flexible work options provided by UTS to support and retain a diverse workforce is intimately intertwined with cultural safety.

The events covered by the series of *How I celebrate* booklets are centuries old – showing the longevity and tenacity of people’s desire to hold space for tradition belonging to a particular group, values and norms. Doing this in recognition, appreciation and support of one another is key in ensuring that this cultural diversity is about coming together *through* difference and diversity not *despite* them.

In particular, the impact on our community of staff and students is highlighted from voluntary feedback. Contributors were grateful for the opportunity to speak to aspects of their identity not often considered in the workplace. A professional staff woman said:

I loved putting my memories together for this booklet – it was very special to me

One reader, an academic man said:

I believe any cultural celebration is important to bring people together, not to divide them from one another, especially to acknowledge the diversity that characterises people across the globe.

The booklets also gave staff opportunity to be responsive to cultural diversity in the workplace, as another academic man said:

I've read over the page of e-booklets and it's great! I learned a lot from the Nowruz one, many of my students had celebrated earlier this year and I didn't know much beyond the Wikipedia page.

It is important to acknowledge the additional workload placed on under-represented groups when engaging with their lived experiences. While the gift to contributors was modest, they valued the gesture:

That is a really sweet gesture thank you so much! ~ Academic man
That's so sweet of you. Thank you for this! ~ Professional staff woman

[ACTION 10: Develop guidelines/policy for recognising contributions of staff lived experience](#)

[5.2.2 Improved inclusive LGBTQIA+ workplace culture and visibility](#)

UTS's involvement in Mardi Gras increased awareness and visibility of UTS's LGBTQIA+ staff and students and supports the community building that is needed for inclusive workplaces to thrive. An anonymous survey (demographic information was not collected) following the event in 2025 found that of all respondents agreed/strongly agreed that it increased their sense of belonging (Agreed – 23%, Strongly Agreed - 77%). When asked why they had selected that answer one participant responded:

It was so obvious whenever we'd encounter or march by groups with a connection to UTS, as they'd always start cheering and getting excited. It means a lot to me, and I think it meant to a lot to those staff, students and alumni watching, to know that UTS embraces our community, especially in a time when forces are assembling against us and looking to divide.

Responding to the same question, another participant reflected on how their involvement in the Mardi gras float was so meaningful due to the multiple touch points of the experience.

I had the opportunity to meet other UTS staff and students from the community not only at the parade but also at dance rehearsals and while painting tower hats. I also felt a sense of belonging and pride with UTS when I had the opportunity to march and represent UTS and the UTS Pride Community.

(Note: Faculty level data was only collected in the post-march survey which was completed by just over half of parade participants, of which 32% came from STEM faculties)

Despite a thriving staff Pride network, and increased belonging in a small sample of UTS staff, few staff share their LGBTQIA+ identity in staff surveys. Therefore, we are unable to evaluate census levels of perceptions of inclusion and belonging for this community.

[ACTION 11: Identify means through which LGBTQIA+ staff experience can be measured in a culturally safe way](#)

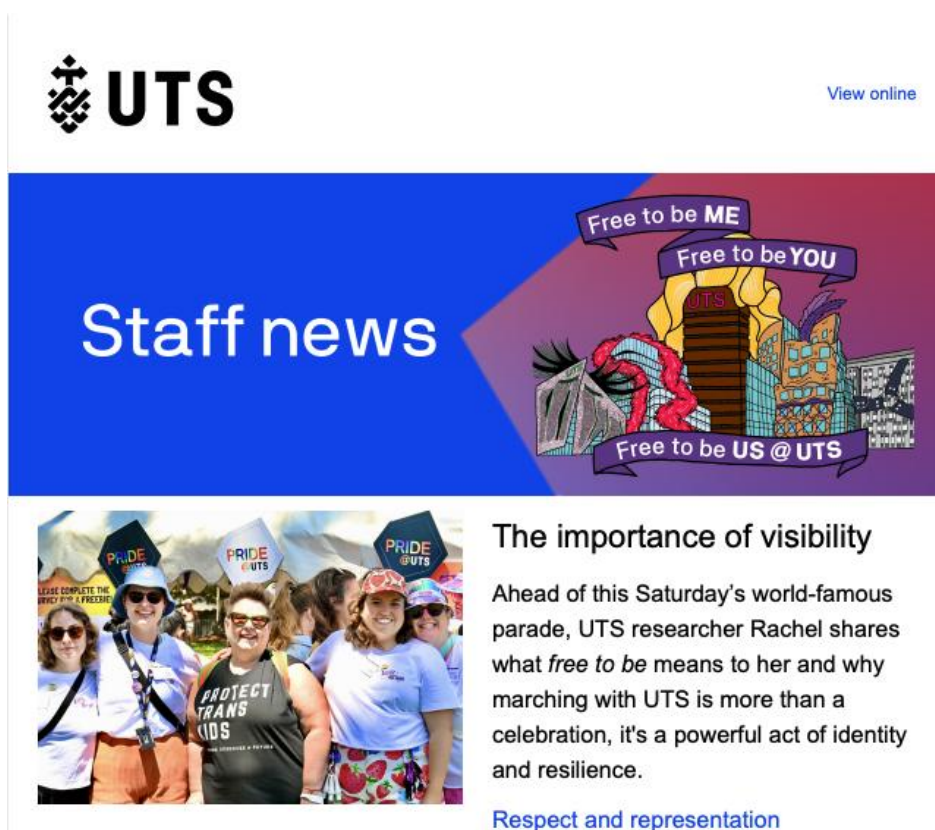
Participants also shared how they valued the visibility and commitment from senior leadership in being a part of the experience.

Knowing that higher ups fund a float in the parade provides a sense of safety and peace being on campus at UTS.

It was meaningful too to have our senior exec participate, and I think they should be commended for showing their support.

Based on a small sample of staff surveyed prior to participating in *Breaking the Binary* training (2024-25), 85% agreed (119/140) with the statement *I have noticed events, networks, communications and material throughout the year that raise LGBTQIA+ visibility on campus*. Notably, 10 all-staff newsletters featured LGBTQIA+ content; during the Mardi Gras period the newsletter featured the UTS float logo and a feature article (Figure 16). Through strong partnership with UTS Marketing Communications Unit (MCU) and their commitment to LGBTQIA+ awareness raising, seven feature articles and/or announcements were developed about LGBTQIA+ initiatives for the UTS Anchor publication. An article featuring a Faculty of Health academic who marched for the first time in 2025 had the highest engagement in 2025 (Table 8).

ACTION 12: Develop strategic goals and objectives to support LGBTQIA+ staff in partnership with relevant pan-university stakeholders.



The image shows a screenshot of a UTS staff newsletter. At the top left is the UTS logo. To the right is a 'View online' link. The main header is 'Staff news' in white text on a blue background. Below the header is a colorful illustration of a cityscape with a rainbow ribbon and three banners that read 'Free to be ME', 'Free to be YOU', and 'Free to be US @ UTS'. Below the illustration is a photograph of five people at a parade wearing 'PRIDE @ UTS' hats and a 'PROTECT TRANS KIDS' t-shirt. To the right of the photo is the article title 'The importance of visibility' and a short paragraph. Below the paragraph is a blue link 'Respect and representation'.

UTS [View online](#)

Staff news

Free to be ME
Free to be YOU
Free to be US @ UTS

The importance of visibility

Ahead of this Saturday's world-famous parade, UTS researcher Rachel shares what *free to be* means to her and why marching with UTS is more than a celebration, it's a powerful act of identity and resilience.

[Respect and representation](#)

Figure 16. Mardi Gras 2025 staff news featuring an article on Mardi Gras' significance to UTS Faculty of Health LGBTQIA+ staff member.
UTS-wide impact of *Breaking the Binary* training

Participants were from a wide range of faculties and units and 69% (137/198 during Feb 2024-Nov 2025) did not identify as LGBTQIA+. This indicates pan-university investment in inclusive practices, an openness to learn, and allyship among non-LGBTQIA+ staff; ultimately supporting broader institutional culture change over time. Reasons for attending this non-mandatory training included wanting to keep up to date with Policy and guidelines.

The majority (82%) also agreed/strongly agreed that the training exceeded their expectations. When asked *What actions will you take to improve the experience of LGBTQIA+ staff and/or students at UTS?* the most common responses focused on creating psychologically safe spaces for students and staff to share their pronouns. The post-training surveys did not collect demographic information.

In the post-training survey participants self-described the following LGBTQIA+ inclusive actions:

More proactively making an effort to use pronouns in everyday introductions to make others feel comfortable. And asking people who do come out, who they're comfortable being out around.

Be forward with my own pronouns to help create a safe space for people to choose to engage at that level and represent themselves as they choose.

Active inclusion, add my pronouns in teams, email.... Be more comfortable with respectful use of pronouns

Conceptual understanding of barriers faced by LGBTQIA+ staff and students was strongly consolidated, moving from predominantly moderate confidence pre-training (67% scoring 3–4 out of 5) to very high confidence post-training (80% scoring 5 of 5), suggesting training effectively strengthened foundational understanding. This increase in understanding of equity-focused actions supports the rationale for flexible work options like gender affirmation leave, and inclusive practices such as understanding of being correctly gendered in social and administrative contexts.

There is strong evidence of participants' behaviour change, indicating intentions to embed inclusive practices into communication and team cultures. The majority (92%) of STEM faculty participants who completed the *Breaking the Binary* post-training survey in 2024–2025 (n=52) agreed/strongly agreed they felt more confident asking pronouns, working respectfully with LGBTQIA+ staff and students and had a greater understanding of the barriers LGBTQIA+ staff and students may face. Based on training evaluation and feedback several training participants specifically mentioned the UTS-Twenty10 video content (Section 3.3.2) as *something they liked most about the training* or named it as their *aha* moment. However, long-term measurement of sustained behavioral change and evidence of ongoing learning is yet to be evaluated.

[ACTION 13: Continued evaluation of LGBTQIA+ programs and training](#)

[UTS Allies](#)

As of December 2025, 18% (n=37) of all Allies are from STEM faculties. The proportion of STEM faculty training completions rose substantially, from 6.7% in 2021 to 52.7% in 2024. Similarly, the proportion of STEM faculty staff completing *Ally* training rose from 15% to 20% in the same period. This increase was due to intentional DEI training organised for FEIT and Science in alignment with the Inclusive Career Conversations program.

[ACTION 14: Maintain and work to increase the proportion of UTS allies among STEM and Non-STEM staff.](#)

6. FURTHER ACTION

We identified a lack of visibility in UTS's flexible work provisions and gaps in implementation where access was not experienced equally amongst different staff cohorts. We aimed to improve access to flexible work through embedding systemic changes (e.g. improving awareness and supporting supervisor capabilities for inclusive career conversations) and a range of enablers (e.g. supporting parents and carers) and improving inclusivity for CARM and LGBTQIA+ staff groups. Through our work, we have improved support for staff with disability and carers and improved inclusivity for CARM and LGBTQIA+ staff. Collecting demographic information is complicated but we continue to work towards improve systems and build trust to embed this as BAU. Monitoring use of flexible work practices is also challenging as they are often individual informal arrangements. In our on-going actions we seek to manage the gap of actual and preferred work practices aligned with work priorities.

Reference	Rationale/ Evidence	Actions & Outputs	Timeframe (start & end)	Person/Group responsible for implementing action	Senior Leader accountabl e for action delivery	Desired Outcomes/ Targets/ Success Indicators
ACTION 1	Support staff using flexible work practices	Expand adoption of core meeting hours across UTS.	2027-2030	Vice Chancellors Social Justice and Inclusion Committee	PVC SJI	Staff report flexible work practices are sufficient for their needs.
ACTION 2	Remove barriers to accessing parental leave	Review awareness of and gaps in implementation of parental leave provisions	2027-2029	Gender Equity Programs Manager. CSJI	Director EDI, CSJI	Staff report parental leave provisions meet their needs.
ACTION 3	Support inclusive culture for CALD staff	Continue production and circulation of <i>How I Celebrate</i> booklets to increase diversity of cultural/religious events Increased acknowledgement of multicultural events	2027-2029	MWN executive committee Cultural Diversity Officer, CSJI Advocacy and Engagement team, CSJI	Director EDI, CSJI	Number of downloads of the 'How I Celebrate' booklets. Number of UTS faculties/clubs/societies/schools/centres involved in contributing to the booklets Staff report UTS recognition of multicultural events of importance to them

ACTION 4	Low training completions by STEM staff	Increase LGBTQIA+ training completions in STEM faculties	2027-2029	LGBTQIA+ Project Officer, CSJI Training specialist, CSJI	Director EDI, CSJI	Increase LGBTQIA+ training completions in STEM faculties to be comparable to non-STEM faculties
ACTION 5	Enables strategies to target training sessions for specific units	Annual reporting of non-mandatory training completion	Aligned with ERP program implementation timeline	Head, Learning and Development, People Unit	Executive Director, People and Culture	Staff from different demographic cohorts report similar scores for wellbeing and belonging by 2030
ACTION 6	Persistent low score in Supervisor Understanding of Flexibility Index for staff with disability compared to peers	Include consideration of disability and carers within DEI training modules and supervisor training	2026-ongoing	Training specialist, CSJI Head, Learning and Development, People Unit	Director EDI, CSJI Executive Director, People and Culture	Reduced gap in experience of support for flexible work practices between staff with disability and their peers by 2030
ACTION 7	Where taking cultural leave is relevant, majority of staff have a neutral sentiment to their supervisor	Socialise and monitor cultural leave implementation by gender and other employment conditions	2027-2030	Cultural Diversity Project Officer, CSJI	PVC SJI	Most staff agree that their supervisor supports them to take cultural leave when relevant

	being supporting of taking cultural leave					
ACTION 8	Current workplace culture neglects needs of non-primary carers	Further understanding of needs of staff with some/shared caring responsibilities	2026-2030	Gender Equity Programs Manager, CSJI	Director EDI, CSJI	Reduced gap in experience of support for flexible work practices between staff with some/shared caring responsibilities and peers
ACTION 9	Lack of information on staff use of flexible work arrangements	Further understanding of staff access to flexible work arrangements	2027-2030	Gender Equity Programs Manager	Director EDI, CSJI	Staff have access to flexible work arrangements to support their needs
ACTION 10	Lack of recognition for lived experience expertise	Develop guidelines/policy for recognising contributions of staff lived experience	2028-2030	Gender Equity Programs Manager	Director EDI, CSJI	Guide for recognising contributions of staff lived experience developed and socialised
ACTION 11	Enables targeted support for LGBTQIA+ staff	Identify means through which LGBTQIA+ staff experience can be safely measured.	Aligned with ERP Program implementation timeline	LGBTQIA+ project officer, CSJI and Head of People Operations, People Unit	Director EDI, CSJI and Executive Director, People and Culture	Workforce profile includes information on LGBTQIA+ staff

ACTION 12		Develop strategic goals and objectives to support LGBTQIA+ staff.	2027-2030	LGBTQIA+ project officer, CSJI	Director EDI, CSJI	Discussions on development of LGBTQIA+ strategy initiated
ACTION 13	Support culture that is inclusive for LGBTQIA+ staff	Improved evaluation of LGBTQIA+ programs and training	2026-2030	LGBTQIA+ project officer, CSJI	Director EDI, CSJI	Improved sense of wellbeing and belonging reported by LGBTQIA+ staff
ACTION 14		Maintain and work to increase the proportion of UTS allies among STEM and Non-STEM staff.	2026-2030	LGBTQIA+ project officer, CSJI	Director EDI, CSJI	