

WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY



Western Sydney University Athena Swan Silver Institutional Award

March 2026

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.

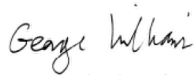


Athena Swan Silver Award
for Higher Education Institutions

Name of Institution	Western Sydney University
Date of Application	31 March 2026
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DECLARATION

I declare that the information presented in this application (including data) is an honest, original, accurate and true representation of Western Sydney University, and that the application complies with the 8,500-word limit.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "George Williams". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'G' and 'W'.

Distinguished Professor George Williams AO

Vice-Chancellor and President, Western Sydney University

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GLOSSARY

Acronym/Abbrev.	Full Title
DDVCIL	Division of the DVC Indigenous Leadership
DEI	Diversity, equity and inclusion
DVC	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
EDWP	Equity and Diversity Working Party
Faculty ECS	Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Science
<i>BED</i>	<i>School of Built Environment and Design (established 1 January 2026)</i>
<i>CDMS</i>	<i>School of Computer, Data and Mathematical Sciences</i>
<i>EDBE (former)</i>	<i>School of Engineering, Design and Built Environment (disestablished)</i>
<i>SEng</i>	<i>School of Engineering (established 1 January 2026)</i>
<i>Science</i>	<i>School of Science</i>
Faculty Health	Faculty of Health
<i>SHS</i>	<i>School of Health Sciences</i>
<i>SoM</i>	<i>School of Medicine</i>
<i>SoNM</i>	<i>School of Nursing and Midwifery</i>
<i>SoP</i>	<i>School of Psychology</i>
Faculty SABEL	Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts, Business, Education and Law
SoA	School of Arts
SoB	School of Business
SoE	School of Education
SoL	School of Law
SSS	School of Social Sciences
GEDI	Gender equity, diversity and inclusion
HASS	Humanities Arts & Social Sciences
HDR	Higher Degree Research
Institutes	Research Institutes
<i>HIE</i>	<i>Hawkesbury Institute for the Environment</i>
<i>ICS</i>	<i>Institute for Culture and Society</i>
<i>MARCS</i>	<i>MARCS Institute for Brain, Behaviour and Development</i>
<i>NICM</i>	<i>National Institute for Complementary Medicine</i>
<i>THRI</i>	<i>Translational Health Research Institute</i>
LGBTIQA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer, Asexual +
SAGE-SAT	SAGE Self-Assessment Team
STEM/M	Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (& Medicine, in prior research)
SWAG	SAGE Working Aggregate Group (SAT Subgroup)
UN SDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
VC-GEF	Vice-Chancellor's Gender Equity Fund
Viva Engage	Western Sydney University enterprise communication system
WSU	Western Sydney University

CONTEXT

A Note on Terminology

Western Sydney University (WSU) is proud to comprise one of the most multicultural, multi-lingual and socioeconomically diverse staff and student constituencies in the Australian higher education sector. Language choices throughout this document reflect the meaning-making and self-expressions of our diverse community. This terminology is drawn from consultative work undertaken by the Diversity Data Working Group, which is Chaired by Western SAGE (see Table 5, p.3). Nevertheless, Western SAGE recognises that language evolves over time and some terminology remains under debate within the WSU community.

Gender

WSU staff, students and community include women, men, non-binary, gender diverse and gender non-conforming people, all of whom are valued by the University. Women are represented in data and figures as W, men as M, and non-binary, gender diverse and gender non-confirming peoples as X. For further information about gender data limitations and ethical considerations, see p.xv.

LGBTIQA+

Western SAGE uses LGBTIQA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer and questioning, asexual and aromantic, and additional sexuality diverse identities) as a collectivised umbrella term to represent a diversity of sexualities, genders and sex characteristics. For further information about LGBTIQA+ data limitations and ethical considerations, see p.xv.

Indigenous / Non-Indigenous

Following protocol, Western SAGE documents use “Indigenous” as a collective term for people who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. As a correlative, we use “non-Indigenous” as a collective term to refer to staff who do not identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

While WSU recognises the increasing prevalence of “culturally and racially marginalised” (CARM) as collectivising terminology to reflect the marginalisation of non-white peoples on the basis of race, religion, and/or cultural background, our community continues to carefully consider the valence of CARM in our context. Following consultation, this document maintains “culturally and linguistically diverse” as the relevant collective identifier and, for concision, representation in tables as CALD. However, Western SAGE acknowledges the continued inadequacies of this terminology, including its reductivist, homogenising and marginalising affects.

Decasualised (‘Decas’) Staff

WSU recently undertook a significant decasualisation process, appointing 160 casual academics to ongoing Level A positions. These positions are subject to distinct conditions of appointment, load allocations, and confirmation processes during the first three years of employment (see p.54). References to “decasualised Level A staff” do not seek to diminish or relegate these colleagues within an academic hierarchy, but rather to recognise the specific conditions that govern their initial employment. Decasualised staff are represented in data and figures as Decas.

Key Barrier / Key Priority Area

Preferring a strength-based approach to its equity work, WSU has adopted “Key Priority Area” rather than “Key Barrier” as its organising terminology for Cygnets. This nomenclature is reflected throughout this document, including for all headings across Section 2.

Equity

“Equity” is an important operative term within Western SAGE practice, research and evaluation. Working at its best, equity as an institutional practice understands and appropriately responds to the differing positionalities, experiences, opportunities and needs of diverse constituencies. However, Western SAGE acknowledges that institutional practices of ‘equity’ are proffered by decision-makers with control over resources and that a long legacy of colonial inequity in the structures and logics of Australian higher education (including academic research and historical DEI practices) may have bearing on how the term ‘equity’ is interpreted by and for Indigenous Australians (and others). Following Smith, Trinidad and Larkin (2017), Western SAGE recognises that ‘synergies’ and ‘tensions’ exist between broad equity policy agendas and more targeted Indigenous agendas. As such, readers of this document are encouraged to receive all findings about Indigenous staff perspectives on WSU’s ‘equity progress’ in the context of WSU’s *Gathering Insights* report (Kennedy, McKay & Talbot-Mundine, 2024), which reflects various Indigenous staff interpretations of ‘equity’ that recognise positionality, bring focus to and for future generations, and centre notions of social justice (cf. *Gathering Insights*, “Defining Equity”, pp.15-17).

Inclusion

Western SAGE recognises that the term “inclusion” and its derivatives (“inclusive”, “inclusivity”) engenders notions of power and positionality. Our documents use this term purposefully, with recognition for the embedded organisational power structures that shape and influence the experiences of staff and students across our university.

Intersectionality

Following Crenshaw (1991), Western SAGE adopts intersectionality as a critical, analytical lens across all research and evaluation as a means for exploring how systems and structures influence the accumulation of capital and power within our organisation. Western SAGE also seeks to co-design inclusive equity practices and initiatives that are responsive to these intersectional insights. Nonetheless, Western SAGE recognises that intersectionality is not the only valid framework for understanding multidimensional and correlational structural inequality.

Data Sources

Western SAGE collects and analyses data from a range of sources and reporting mechanisms. These include annual gender equity audits, longitudinal trend analyses of workforce data, and substantial engaged research (Table 1). A total of 4,287 survey responses and 337 interview, Yarns and focus group sessions contributed to learnings and action planning across this document.

Western SAGE ‘Scoping Projects’ and ‘Cygnet Impact Assessments’ are academically independent and ethics-approved. These projects employ mixed-methodologies and are routinely cohort-targeted and/or practice-themed. Interviews, Yarns and focus groups take a semi-structured approach and typically include co-design components, wherein proposed actions are workshopped and refined. All projects place emphasis on marginalised positionalities within methodological design and take an intersectional and thematic approach to analysis. Indigenous-focused research is Indigenous-led and employs Indigenous research methodologies, guided by our principles-based *SAGE Indigenous Staff Collaboration Framework* (Wilkey & McKay, 2022) and aligned with Indigenous Institutional Theory (Coates, Trudgett & Page, 2022).

Vice-Chancellor’s Gender Equity Fund (VC-GEF) projects also contribute substantial insights that complement and inform Western SAGE analysis. Research findings facilitate evidence-based

decision-making, are leveraged for strategic planning, and inform policy and practice innovations that drive structural, systemic and cultural GEDI change and continuous improvement across WSU.

Table 1. Silver Award Data Sources, 2022 – 2026

Data Sources, WSU Silver Athena Swan Institutional Award, 2026					
SOURCE	DIVERSITY CAPTURE	W	M	X	Total
WESTERN SAGE SILVER SCOPING & CYGNET IMPACT PROJECTS		988	398	13	1,564
		136	38	6	180
Decasualisation (Quah & McKay, 2026)	Stakeholders Deans, EDWPs & DVC-AT. Diversity data not collected.				24
	Decasualised Level A academic staff: 6% Indigenous, 41% CALD.	23	9	0	32
Career Planning (Townley, Huppatz, McKay, Perell & Taylor, 2026)	36% professional, 65% academic; 36% CALD, 15% LGBTIQA+, 16% with disability, 40% First in Family, 28% carer, 32% parents.	49	18	1	69
STEM Women+ (McKay, Micheal & Townley, 2025)	46% early career, 40% mid-career; 5% Indigenous, 26% CALD, 33% caregiver.	15	0	0	15
Indigenous Staff (Kennedy, McKay & Talbot-Mundine, 2024)	75% professional, 25% academic, 5% casual.	29	4	3	36
		9	4	1	14
Caregivers (Taylor, O'Shea, Hayes, Egidi & Townley, 2024)	50% professional, 50% academic; 82% parents, 37% carers, 5% Indigenous, 21% CALD, 5% LGBTIQA+, 6% with disability, 11% neurodiverse, 25% First in Family.	108	21	2	131
		19	4	2	25
Academic Promotions (McKay, Huppatz, Luck, McBride & Taylor, 2023)	37% CALD, 18% with disability. Diversity not captured for 82 Deans/Directors, Committee Members, or Promotions Mentors.	38	25	2	140
		24	8	1	33
Flexible Work (McKay, Antoniou, Hayes & Bajaj, 2023)	67% professional, 33% academics; 3% Indigenous, 32% CALD; 16% with disability, 57% caregivers.	784	330	7	1,210
		26	13	0	39
VICE-CHANCELLOR'S GENDER EQUITY FUND PROJECTS					988
					93
Intersectionality (Robinson, Wolfinger, Nicholas & Sullivan, 2022)	43% participants reported intersectional disadvantage.				239
					19
LGBTIQA+ Staff and Students (Denejkina, Lim, Turner, King, Shatnawi, Singh & Marjadi, 2022)	Delphi Survey methodology. Participants identified with 10 gender descriptors, 11 sexuality identifiers and 34 cultural backgrounds.				60
Understanding Trans and Gender Diversity (Nicholas, Robinson, & Townley, 2021)	61% professional, 39% academic.				346
					7
Casual Academics (Willis & Smith, 2024; Smith, 2022)	2% Indigenous, 38% CALD, 10% LGBTIQA+, 38% with disability.				210
					35
Caregivers (O'Shea, Duffy, Cheng & Bowyer, 2022)	23% professional, 77% academic, 14% casual, 17% supervisor				91
					17
EPIC-C Mentoring Participants (McBride, MacMillan, George, Steiner-Lim, Taylor, Karamacoska, Metri, & Powell, 2024)	100% women academics; 2.4% Indigenous, 31% CALD.				42
					15
OTHER SIGNIFICANT SOURCES		989	470	18	1,735
		42	17	5	64
Staff Engagement Survey (Office for People & Culture, 2025)	58% professional, 34% academic, 13% casual; 3% Indigenous, 33% CALD, 14% with disability, 15% carer, 28% parent.	989	470	18	1,735
Sexuality and Gender Diversity Roundtables (OPC, 2023 & 2024)	3% Indigenous, 28% CALD.	20	11	5	36
Disability Roundtables (OPC, 2024 & 2025)	67% professional, 26% academic, 11% students.	22	6	0	28
WSU Workforce Data	Substantive staff occupancy data; recruitment and attrition data; Academic Promotions applications and outcomes; Academic Development Program (ADP) applications and outcomes; research publications and HERDC income; flexible work and leave uptake; staff uptake/participation in relevant leadership programs, training and development. Data is disaggregated by gender, Indigenous identity, level and work area. From 2024, academic promotions data also includes cultural diversity, linguistic diversity, and (dis)ability.				
Note: Cells marked with grey highlight denote interviews. Yarns, and focus groups: unshaded cells denote survey responses.					

Data Explainer, Limitations and Ethical Considerations

Gender Analysis

Most available data for non-binary and gender non-conforming staff does not meet our minimum reporting threshold of 10 (see also 'Ongoing Data Challenges', below). As such, data capturing gender diverse identities are generally reported at group level and the predominance of disaggregated gender data refers only to staff who identify as woman (W) or man (M). Non-binary gender data is considered within analyses (e.g., cohort proportions) but obscured in reporting so as to protect against (re)identifiability. Short-hand references to "gender data" or "gender gap analysis" should be read as gender referring to women and men only, unless otherwise specified.

LGBTIQA+ Data

Following consultation, Western SAGE research does not typically enquire about staff or student sexuality distinct from participant self-identification with the LGBTIQA+ community. The collectivising of diverse sexualities, genders and sex characteristics under the LGBTIQA+ identifier is purposefully designed to reflect the co-constituency of gender and sexuality and shared histories of stigma, systemic discrimination, and advocacy. This approach also aims to maximise data inclusivity for intersex, non-binary and gender diverse peoples (cf. gender note above) while also protecting staff and student privacy.

Ongoing Data Challenges

In 2024, a total of 8 ongoing/fixed-term and 30 casual staff identified as non-binary or gender diverse in HR systems. However, 18 ongoing/fixed-term staff and 10 casuals self-identified as non-binary or gender diverse in 2025 Staff Engagement Survey responses, wherein response rates were 53% and 10% respectively. The higher incidence of self-reporting in survey data suggests **ongoing structural and/or cultural barriers to identification within HR systems**.

The historical **elision of LGBTIQA+ identifiers from Staff Engagement Surveys** has also limited insight into the differential experiences of WSU's LGBTIQA+ staff community. A separate study (Denejkina et al., 2022) undertaken by Western's LGBTIQA+ staff network, Rainbow Western, and a series of four Sexuality and Gender Diversity Roundtables held by the DEI team shaped a preliminary *Sexuality and Gender Diversity Action Plan (2024–2025)* and continue to inform Western SAGE analyses and action planning.

To secure cultural safety in diversity data collection practices and consistency across data analysis, a standardised **WSU Diversity Demographics Guidance document** was developed by the Diversity Data Working Group (see Table 5, p.3) in April 2024 and implemented across all Western SAGE research thereafter. However, CPO turnover and Western Reset disruption (see Challenges & Learnings, p.6) has delayed standardisation for Staff Engagement Surveys and Vice-Chancellor's Gender Equity Fund projects. As such, LGBTIQA+ staff continue to be elided in much of this data.

Ongoing data challenges continue to impede gendered data mapping across several key data points (e.g., nuances within career progression, research performance), while **low completion rates for WSU's Equal Opportunity Survey (≈25%)** continue to inhibit analyses beyond gender.

WSU undertook a **significant organisational restructure** across 2025 (in effect 1 January 2026). Previous SAGE Cygnets and other documents referenced a Cluster structure for Schools and Institutes that is no longer in place. Western SAGE has rationalised relevant benchmarks and baselines wherever possible, but **data mapping across the restructure is at times confounded**. Notes are provided as relevant throughout this document.

Summary of WSU Bronze to Silver Pathway

Table 2. WSU Bronze Framework Cygnets Overview, 2020 - 2025

Summary of WSU Bronze to Silver Pathway (2020–2025), Cygnet Overview	
CYGNET 1: FLEXIBLE WORK	
Key Barrier: Flexible Work (FW) is an essential tool for increasing engagement, satisfaction and retention among WSU's diverse staff cohort. However, Bronze Award (2015–2018) analysis evidenced: low awareness of FW options; low perception that FW is encouraged; concern that FW is not equally accessible for all genders; low male parent uptake of FW options; lower FW satisfaction for Indigenous staff and insufficient intersectional analysis.	
Action Summary	Summary of Outcomes and Impacts
▪ Built consistent and inclusive FW practice through enhanced supervisor training, raising awareness of FW benefits, greater visibility for men accessing FW options, and improved evaluation instruments; ▪ Leveraged opportunity from COVID-19 circumstances to revise policy and procedure, increase all-staff access to FW arrangements via a Remote Work Pilot, and streamline information and advice; ▪ Embedded inclusive FW priorities, including by formalising objectives in <i>Gender Equity Strategy</i>, delivering a Flexibility Matters toolkit and promotional video, establishing Staff Drop-In Spaces to reduce enforced mobility across campuses, expand FW leave entitlements, and formalising the FW Remote Work pilot in <i>Enterprise Agreements</i>.	▪ Dramatic improvements around: FW information (+37%); FW familiarity for parents (+24%) and male parents (+35%); supervisor support for male parents (+20%); belief that FW is encouraged (+10% overall and +25% for male parents; perceptions of gender-equitability (male parents +35%, academics +26%); male parent FW uptake (+37%); ▪ Indigenous staff satisfaction greatly improved (positivity markers 77%-90%) and baseline data was established for carers, CALD staff and staff with disability; ▪ Staff evidenced an improving FW culture, demonstrated that FW increases retention and progression for caregivers, and that hybrid remote work affords more autonomy, enhances wellbeing, and gives rise to greater productivity for all. ▪ Areas for improvement: blurred work/home boundaries, some ongoing supervisor inconsistency.
CYGNET 2: ACADEMIC PROMOTIONS	
Key Barrier: Ensuring equity in Academic Promotions is key to progressing women into WSU's senior ranks. Nonetheless, organisational analysis across the Bronze Era (2015–2017) evidenced: more men promoted than women; few part-time staff applications; 'sticking points' at B and C for STEMM women and at D and E for HASS women. Additional research identified that: applicants lacked understanding of promotions processes, part-time work and caring obligations were perceived as roadblocks, the gendered labour of care was under-recognised in promotions criteria, APC members and Deans were perceived as susceptible to bias, promotions mentoring was insufficient.	
Action Summary	Summary of Outcomes and Impacts
▪ Consolidated policy, process and guidelines, with key equity innovations introduced (e.g., recognition for contributions to Indigenous priorities and contributions to pastoral care, academic citizenship and collegiality, expanded ARTO framework to foreground part-time work, non-linear career paths and caring obligations), supported by an awareness-raising campaign; ▪ Academic Promotions Committee (APC) Equity Workshops embedded in policy and piloted, additional "Equity Process Features in Academic Promotions" presentations socialised; ▪ Targeted supports expanded, including: uni-wide applicant info sessions, senior manager info sessions, Distinguished Professors Promotions Support program, pilot EPIC-C Peer and Executive Mentoring Program, and mock interviews; ▪ Substantial research undertaken and <i>Unlocking Equity in Academic Promotions</i> Cygnet Impact Assessment published and socialised (McKay et al., 2023); ▪ Diversity data collection processes enhanced, enabling the intersectional tracking of application, success and outcomes.	▪ Women apply for promotion at equal rates and part-time staff applications drastically improved (+10% of all apps); ▪ Consistent improvement for cohort-relative application rates for STEMM and HASS women, with STEMM women success rates higher than STEMM men at C and E, HASS women more successful at E; ▪ 82% applicants and stakeholders view policy-based equity innovations as substantial improvements that acknowledge "the frequently unrecognised work of women academics" and present a "significant step forward" for Indigenous staff; ▪ APC Equity Workshops reinforce ARTO principles, provide safe spaces for complex conversation, and fortifying equity in collective decision-making; ▪ New support initiatives are popular and valuable. ▪ Areas for improvement: lag in self-identifying promotions readiness for STEMM women applying to E, more guidance around new policy inclusions is needed, ensure consistency of support across School/Institute contexts, enhance feedback, ongoing support for unsuccessful applicants.
CYGNET 3: INDIGENOUS STAFF	
Key Barrier: WSU aims to be a national leader in Indigenous employment, education and research and to serve an anchor institution that empowers the Indigenous community of the Western Sydney region. However, Bronze Era (2015–2018) analysis evidenced low Indigenous employment, limited strategic governance, and limited understanding of Indigenous staff workplace experiences and perspectives.	
Action Summary	Summary of Outcomes and Impacts
▪ Strategic framework implemented, including WSU's first <i>Indigenous Strategy (2020–2025)</i> and the sector's first <i>Indigenous Futures Decadal Strategy (2023–2032)</i>; ▪ Senior Indigenous governance elevated, including by establishing a Division of Indigenous Leadership (ODCVIL), appointing new DVC Indigenous Leadership, PVC Indigenous	▪ EA commitment for 77 Indigenous employees met, with Indigenous Level D academics increased from 2 to 9, 100% inaugural Ignite Trainees ongoingly employed by WSU, and the first Indigenous Distinguished Professor recognised; ▪ 88% Indigenous staff see meaningful progress in advancing Indigenous priorities across WSU, while Indigenous staff across WSU evidence transformational culture change,

Education, and 3x Indigenous Director positions and creating an Indigenous Professoriate Group; - Indigenous priorities embedded in policy and procedure (e.g., <i>Academic Promotions Policy</i>, Research Ethics, <i>Procurement Plan</i>, Cultural Providers Database, Deadly Talent Register); - Cultural recognition inscribed via Indigenous place-making (e.g., Indigenous languages incorporated into signage and digital platforms, Kingswood First Peoples Walk opened, First Peoples Garden announced, \$78.5 million funding secured for landmark Indigenous Centre of Excellence); - Substantial action taken to nurture, reward and promote Indigenous excellence (e.g., IGNITE trainee program, Aspire internship program, Indigenous Researcher Development, formal academic recognition for elders, NAIDOC Awards, Indigenous Professoriate Lecture & Research Symposium); - Substantial action taken to build Indigenous community and solidarity (e.g., <i>Yarning Circle</i> newsletter, Indigenous Staff Network and Conference, BLM campaign, Voice to Parliament Referendum advocacy); - Culturally-informed evaluation frameworks devised to assess progress, including <i>SAGE Indigenous Staff Collaboration Framework</i> and ground-breaking <i>Gathering Insights</i> report.	brought about by elevating senior Indigenous people in the governance of the University, underwritten by an ambitious and visionary strategy instrument; - Indigenous staff see senior Indigenous leaders as bringing cultural change via <i>Strategy</i> design and implementation and recognise that Indigenous priorities are aligned and supported by non-Indigenous senior leaders across WSU; - Cultural recognition across place, policy and process is personally impactful and improves cultural safety; - Indigenous staff experience active personal, professional and cultural mentorship and 100% Indigenous staff agree that “Indigenous excellence is more visible at WSU”; - Indigenous staff feel informed (85%), able to contribute (76%), involved in decision-making (64%) and encouraged to provide feedback (76%), and are strengthened by DDVCIL’s all-embracing culture, which engenders an inclusive workplace culture, a feeling of belonging at WSU, and a feeling of ‘family’ among Indigenous staff; Areas for improvement: colonial load, more Indigenous employment and localised governance opportunity, non-Indigenous staff engagement with Indigenous priorities and understandings about Indigenous cultures and ways of being,
CYGNET 4: GENDER EQUITY IN COVID-19 RESPONSE	
Key Barrier: Significant social and organisational disruption arising from COVID-19 circumstances saw 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. 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.	
Action Summary	Summary of Outcomes and Impacts
- Sector leadership for GEDI in COVID-19 response, including through Joint Sector Position Statement (JSPS) initiative; - Structural GEDI enablers mobilised to deliver equity in COVID-19 response and decision-making, to identify and mitigate arising GEDI impacts, raise awareness, and deliver university-wide and targeted supports; - Equity feedback embedded in COVID-related Organisational Change processes, enabling meaningful localised response; - Casual employment protected and sector-leading Academic Decasualisation Program established; - COVID-responsive flexibility and wellbeing initiatives implemented at University-level and across local areas (and targeted at most impacted groups), with inclusive Flexible Work opportunity embedded in policy and infrastructure; - Research continuity supports delivered at University-level and across local areas, with priority access for ECRs, caregivers, and staff with high teaching or governance; - COVID-specific Achievement Relative to Opportunity policy frameworks introduced for ADP and Academic Promotions.	- All JSPS Commitments met at WSU and meaningful benefits reported by signatory institutions who cited greater capacity to prioritise GEDI in COVID-19 response and accountability; - WSU gender profiles sustained and 159 casual staff appointed to Level A ongoing positions; - FW positivity increased beyond Cygnet 1 measures, with signs of culture change (e.g., reduced emphasis on presenteeism, increasing staff trust, reduced reliance on self-advocacy); - Publication outputs sustained and HERDC income increased, with some discipline-specific gender differentiation; 75% women applicant take-up of policy measures for both ADP and academic promotions, with success rates on par with overall applications; - Strong support for COVID-responsive policy innovations and for pastoral care/academic citizenship recognition. Areas for improvement: track decasualised staff experiences, improve persistent gender differentials in research outcomes, fortify career stability (within or beyond WSU) by bolstering career planning, development and mobility opportunity.
CYGNET 5: WSU PARENTS AND CARERS	
Key Barrier: Experiences of WSU staff who are parents and carers vary depending on gender, work type, and individual caring responsibilities. Barriers include poor visibility of caring responsibilities, conflation of parenting and care, low awareness of supports, and inconsistent implementation of relevant policies.	
Action Summary	Summary of Outcomes and Impacts
Visibility: Celebrating Strengths video series, Families Week and Carers Week events, carer-focused Research Week events, and refining of WSU survey instruments to address the conflation of parent and carer roles. Targeted supports: Breastfeeding friendly Workplace accreditation, Young Well Beings project, development of toolkits, and specific supports during COVID-19 including the EKN Home School Program. Policy and Process: Gender neutral parental leave and expanded leave provisions, embedded flexible work provisions, expanded equity considerations for Academic Promotions, and drafted an Inclusive Policy Framework. Continuous Improvement: Research to expand intersectional understandings of caregiving experiences.	- High positivity about supervisor/manager’s understanding and consideration of caring commitments. - High and increasing awareness of resources and supports, including amongst supervisors/managers. When resources were accessed, they are deemed to be helpful by the vast majority of parents and carers; - Significant, sustained increases in staff uptake for various forms of parental and carers leave, including 4-fold increase for men’s paid parental leave uptake; - Establishment of baseline data for carers that allows ‘parent vs. carer’s gap’ to be quantified and explored going forward. Areas for improvement: To close the gap between parents and carers through inclusive policy and practice. Advancing equity for CALD, First in Family, and neurodiverse staff parents and/or carers and preventing discrimination on the basis of caring responsibilities.

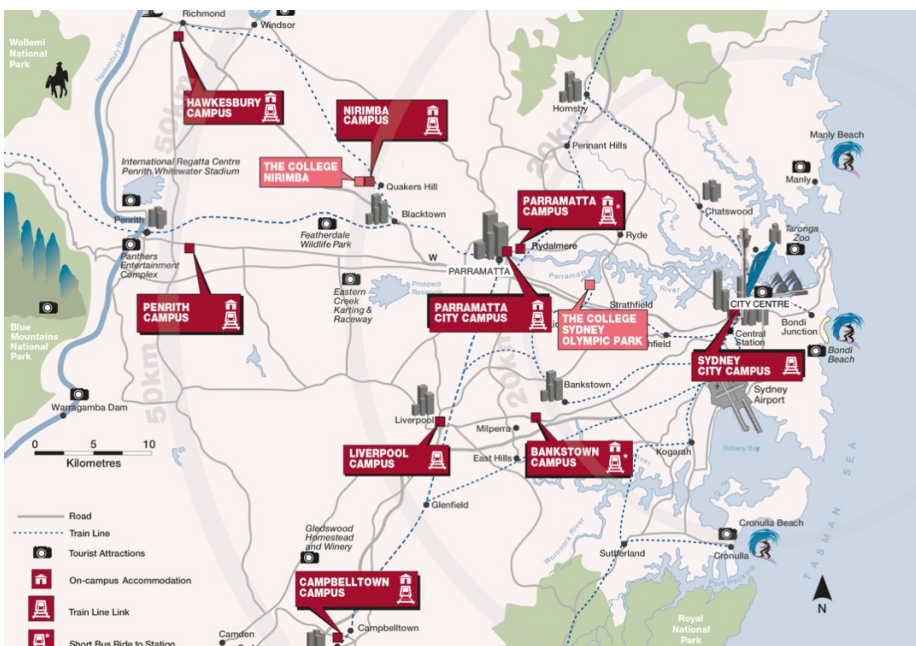


Figure 1. WSU campus features.

From left: IPSQ Parramatta City (Darug Country), Kingswood First People's Walk (Darug Country), Agri Tech Precinct Hawkesbury (Darug Country), The Rotary Observatory Campbelltown (Dharawal Country), Design for WSU's new Indigenous Centre of Excellence (Darug Country), Progressive Stairs Parramatta South (Darug Country), map of WSU campus locations across Western Sydney.

SECTION 1 – LEADERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Mission and Values



Established in 1989, Western Sydney University (WSU) is among Australia's youngest higher education institutions. At foundation, the University was declared a 'university for the people' with responsibility to contribute to the development of the Western Sydney region where its primary campuses are located (Figure 1).

Western Sydney is the most culturally, linguistically, racially and socioeconomically diverse and fastest-growing region of NSW. Three quarters of WSU domestic students hail from the local region. We serve the largest Indigenous community in Australia, have reached 3% Indigenous staff representation, and are proud to educate a growing number of Indigenous students. We enrol the highest number of low-socioeconomic students in Australia and the most domestic students for whom English is an additional language/dialect in NSW. At least one third of staff are of culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and at least 175 countries of birth and 160 languages are represented across our staff and student community.

WSU celebrates its diversity, promotes equity, and strives for pluralist inclusivity. Our longstanding commitment to gender equity, diversity and inclusion (GEDI) is evidenced by 20 consecutive citations as a WGEA Employer of Choice for Gender Equity, 10 years membership in SAGE Athena Swan, and the exceptional achievement of placing first worldwide for four consecutive years (2022–2025) in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings and first worldwide for SDG#5 Gender Equality in 2023 and 2024.

GEDI Strategy and Policy Landscape

WSU's diversity defines its culture and objectives. The University's Strategic Plan, *Western 2030*, sets our institutional agenda, reinforces our values-based approach, and includes an equity-focused People pillar as one of seven strategic priorities (Table 3).

Table 3. People Pillar in *Western 2030*

People Pillar in <i>Western 2030</i>
Objective 2. Putting Our People First
We will empower our people, and provide them with the leadership, support, autonomy, and opportunities to thrive in keeping with Western Sydney University's mission and values.
Our Ambitions
1. Engage and develop current staff and attract and retain excellent staff
2. Target resources to meeting our mission
3. Operate a performance and accountability model that drives excellence and career development
4. Ensure an inclusive, safe, collaborative, and diverse university culture that cares for its people
5. A digitally enabled workforce supported by efficient and agile systems and processes

Specified GEDI priorities and accountability are embedded across our strategy and policy landscape. *Gender Equity Policy* commits to “fostering a high-quality workforce reflective of the gender diversity of the Western Sydney region”, while *Gender Equity Procedures & Guidelines* detail KPIs for managers and institutional targets to facilitate change. Five-year *Gender Equity*

Strategy and Action Plans describe an immediate vision, set targets for improvement, and assign clear accountability for action. *GE-Strategy* objectives and measures for success emphasise an intersectional approach to action (Table 4). This Strategy and all Western SAGE work align with ambitious objectives laid out by WSU's *Indigenous Strategy (2026–2030)*, *STEM Decadal Plan (2022–2031)*, *Sexuality and Gender Diversity Action Plan (2024–2025)*, *Gender Based Violence Prevention and Response Plan (2026–2030)*, *Accessibility Action Plan (2025–2027)* and our *Sustainability and Resilience 2030 Decadal Strategy*.

Table 4. Core elements of WSU's *Gender Equity Strategy and Action Plan, 2021 – 2026*

Core Elements of Gender Equity Strategy and Action Plan, 2021–2026	
OBJECTIVES	MEASURES
1. Sustaining leadership, recognition and accountability on gender equity	M1. The University continues to be recognised as a leader in gender equity (Athena Swan Principle 10).
2. Equity in career development and success	M2. Increased representation of women in senior leadership roles, including for those of Indigenous and culturally diverse identities (Athena Swan Principles 5, 7, 8).
3. Equal opportunity in the staff and student lifecycle	M3. Increased recognition, progression and retention of women and gender diverse individuals, including for those of Indigenous and culturally diverse identities and in disciplines where women are traditionally underrepresented (Athena Swan Principles 5, 6, 7, 8).
4. Culture, community and inclusive practice	M4. The principles of gender-inclusive practice are reflected across all facets of the student and staff lifecycle [...] and related intersectional considerations are visibly embedded across our culture, processes and policies (Athena Swan Principles 7, 9).
	M5. Targets are met and there is a reduction in the organisational gender pay gap (Athena Swan Principles 3, 4).
	M6. Increased engagement of men in parent and carer network and higher male uptake of family/care provisions (Athena Swan Principle 6).
	M7. Gender equity research recommendations are implemented as appropriate, leveraged to improve understandings of key barriers to gender equity, and optimised to improve study and work outcomes (Athena Swan Principles 2, 3, 4).
	M8. Student and staff feedback processes are analysed across intersectional equity considerations and reflect improved study and work outcomes for key cohorts (Athena Swan Principles 2, 3, 4, 7).

GEDI Governance

WSU's governing GEDI body is the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee, which oversees all DEI policy, strategy and action. Cascading GEDI governance and leadership structures are strategically integrated across WSU, such that staff, supervisors and Senior Executive within all Divisions are actively engaged in GEDI advocacy and accountable for GEDI outcomes (Figure 2 Athena Swan Principles 1, 10).



Figure 2. WSU GEDI Governance Structure, 2026

Sponsored by the Provost, Western SAGE takes a highly consultative, research-informed and intersectional approach to deliver evidence-informed policy and practice improvements that drive strategic, structural, and cultural GEDI change across the University. Western SAGE embeds a tiered structure of governance:

- The Western SAGE Leadership Team comprises five members with a breadth of GEDI practice specialisations, applied research, and engagement expertise. Together, this team steers our strategic direction through collaborative research leadership, co-design and advocacy.
- Our SAGE Self-Assessment Team (SAGE-SAT) is populated by 25 GEDI stakeholders, School representatives, and academic and professional specialists across equity fields (Figure 3). SAGE-SAT ensures our work is informed by, inclusive of and responsive to WSU's diverse community and well socialised across the organisation.
- Cygnet SWAGs (SAGE-SAT Subgroups) work with Cygnet Executive Sponsors to coordinate Action Plan implementation and monitor progress.

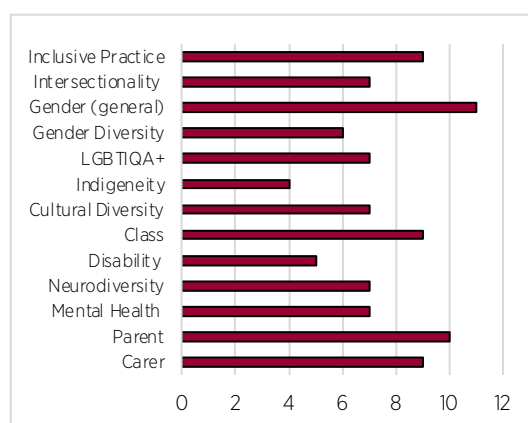


Figure 3. SAGE-SAT Members Specialist GEDI Knowledge and Lived Experience, 2025

Western SAGE positions are workloaded and contributions to GEDI governance are formally recognised within academic promotions criteria (**Athena Swan Principle 1**, see also Table 5).

Western SAGE members are embedded across all DEI Committees, Working Parties, Collectives, and Networks (Table 5). School-based academic SAGE-SAT members are co-representatives of local Equity and Diversity Working Parties, which provide a two-way mechanism for gathering and reporting GEDI feedback, facilitating responsiveness to local equity issues, and translating high-level GEDI policy into localised practice. All groups work in partnership with senior Indigenous leadership and local Indigenous Strategy Committees to co-design structural equity improvements for Indigenous staff, students and community. Western SAGE also engages subject matter experts from relevant Research Collectives and various Staff Networks to co-create foundational, ethical and principle-informed GEDI processes and practices (see GEDI Working Groups, Table 5), while the Office for People and Culture convene roundtable discussions and focus groups to inform the development of targeted DEI Action Plans.

Table 5. WSU GEDI Committees, Working Groups & Networks

WSU GEDI Committees & Working Parties	
Name	Membership, Purpose and Remit
WESTERN SAGE TEAMS	
Western SAGE Leadership Team	Executive Sponsor: Provost Chair: Senior Advisor GEDI Membership: Senior Advisor GEDI (HEW 9, 1.0FTE); SAGE Chair and Academic Lead (Level D, 0.2FTE workload); SAGE Research Lead (Level E, 0.1FTE workload); SAGE Deputy Academic Lead (Level D, 0.1FTE workload); SAGE Deputy Research Lead (Level B, 0.1FTE workload). SAGE Leads/Deputy Leads are appointed by EOI and drawn from across WSU School and Institutes. Reporting: Operational: Provost; Strategic Priorities: DEI Committee; Institutional and Cygnet Awards: Senior Executive Team. Purpose and Scope: drive the strategic direction of Western SAGE work through extensive consultation, collaborative research leadership, and widespread GEDI advocacy (Athena Swan Principle 2). This work informs the selection and prioritisation of Cygnet Key Priority Areas and Action Plan development. Each member takes stewardship of one Cygnet SWAG (below) to deliver Action Plan objectives. Members also have specific duties:

	Senior Advisor GEDI provides substantial strategic guidance, ensures organisational alignment, designs inclusive research and practice innovations, and project manages all SAGE work; SAGE Academic Lead and Deputy Academic Lead coordinate consultation and engagement, spearhead initiatives, and lead advocacy with Executive leaders; SAGE Research Lead and Deputy Research Lead ensure a rigorous, transparent, intersectional and sustainable approach to Western SAGE GEDI research and data collection.
SAGE Self-Assessment Team (SAGE-SAT)	Chair: SAGE Chair and Academic Lead Membership: 25 members, including School representatives, GEDI portfolio stakeholders, and academic and professional specialists across equity fields. Reporting: DEI Committee. Purpose and Scope: provide uni-wide leadership, integration and socialisation of Western SAGE objectives; consult, reflect and embed staff feedback that is inclusive of and responsive to WSU's staff diversity profile. To ensure intersectional representation and appropriate GEDI capability, membership composition considers both subject matter expertise and lived and organisational experience (including employment type, seniority, gender diversity, Indigenous identity, cultural, ethnic and linguistic background, (dis)ability, LGBTIQA+ identity, and caregiver status. Academic members are provided 3% workload allocation and professional service is recognised in work planning.
Cygnnet SWAGs (SAGE-SAT Subgroups)	Executive Sponsors (Silver Cygnets): Decasualisation: Provost; Indigenous Staff: DVC Indigenous Leadership; Career Planning (Professional): Executive Director, Org Development & DEI; Career Planning (Academic): Executive Deans of Faculties (ECS, Health, and SABEL); STEM Women+: Deans of STEM Schools (Science, CDMS, Engineering, and Built Environment) Chairs: Western SAGE Leadership Team (as above) Membership: 3-5 additional SAGE-SAT members per SWAG Reporting: Cygnnet Executive Sponsors. Purpose and Scope: steer Cygnnet Action Plan implementation. Cygnnet Executive Sponsors provide strategic guidance, influence and institutional leverage. Cygnnet SWAGs coordinate Action Plan delivery, host co-design workshops, and undertake comprehensive, academically independent research to evaluate Cygnnet impacts, with findings and recommendations delivered to Cygnnet Executive Sponsors, endorsed by DEI Committee and socialised via Gender UNLIMITED* Seminar Series events.
DEI COMMITTEES, WORKING GROUPS AND NETWORKS	
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee (DEI Committee)	Chair: Vice-Chancellor and President Membership: 26 members, including 4x Senior Executive, 5x Executive, 3x GEDI Research Collective representatives (see below), and 4x student representatives. Western SAGE Co-Membership: ex-officio membership for SAGE Executive Sponsor and SAGE Academic Lead. Purpose and Scope: first established as VC Gender Equity Committee (2015) and expanded to address a broader DEI remit (from 2025), this Committee champions and oversees DEI strategy and objectives, supervises alignment with WSU's mission, values and Strategic Plan, and ensures that DEI is embedded into culture, practices and policies.
Equity & Diversity Working Parties (EDWPs)	Chairs: School Deans or nominee Membership: 13 EDWPs totalling 90+ members, appointed by Dean nomination & EO Reporting: Local Executive Committee (via Standing Item) Western SAGE Co-Membership: total 15 and including at least one ex-officio SAGE-SAT member. Purpose and Scope: provide a two-way mechanism for gathering/reporting staff GEDI feedback, facilitating responsiveness to local equity issues, and translating high-level GEDI policy into localised practice. Administered by the University's central DEI team, with strategic support from Western SAGE Leadership Team. EDWPs each meet a minimum of 4 times per year. EDWP Chairs Network meetings are held 3x per year and Communities of Practice are regularly established to encourage cooperative work on shared challenges.
Indigenous Committees	Chair: DVC Indigenous Leadership Committees and Groups: Elders Advisory Committee, Indigenous Leadership Forum, Indigenous Employment Consultative Committee, local Indigenous Strategy Committees (with local Chairs) Membership: Various, totalling 65+ Western SAGE Co-Membership: total 2, both Co-Leads of the Indigenous Staff Cygnnet SWAG. Purpose and Scope: Indigenous Committees provide cultural leadership, steer the implementation of the <i>Indigenous Strategy (2026-2032)</i> across the University and at local levels, drive strategic objectives, and address employment-specific needs (e.g. colonial load for academic and professional staff).
Research Collectives	Collectives: Indigenous Research Network (Chair: Director Indigenous Research; Membership: 42); Sexualities and Genders Research Group (Director: Associate Professor Gender & Sexuality Studies; Membership: 80); Challenging Racism Project (Chair: Executive Dean Faculty SABEL; Membership: 10) Western SAGE Co-Membership: total 6, including at least one member from each Collective. Purpose and Scope: dedicated to advancing social justice and equity through applied interdisciplinary research collaboration and community engagement.
Working Groups	Groups (current): Diversity Data Working Group (Chair: Senior Advisor GEDI; Membership: 13); Inclusive Policy Working Group (Chair: Senior Advisor GEDI; Membership: 9) Groups (recent): Parents & Carers Working Party (Chairs: Provost and Director DEI); Flexible Work VC Subgroup (Chair: Executive Director HR); Inclusive Language Working Group (Chair: Director DEI) Membership: various, depending on need Western SAGE Co-Membership: various, with groups regularly chaired by SAGE Executive Sponsor or Senior Advisor GEDI and membership including SAGE Academic Lead and SAGE Research Lead. Purpose and Scope: responsive to arising, complex organisational GEDI issues. Recent examples: building capacity for intersectional data reporting, including by developing an ethical framework to guide the collection, use and management of staff/student diversity data; Flexible Work policy review; intersectionality-in-practice research to develop an inclusive policy review guide and assessment tool; developing an Inclusive Language Guide; prioritising recommendations arising from VC Gender Equity Fund projects.
Staff Networks	Networks: Indigenous Staff Network, We-CALD, Ally Network, Rainbow Western Convenors: Various, generally co-founders and/or elected by network membership Executive Sponsors: Rainbow Western: VC Indigenous Leadership and PVC Student Success Membership: Various, totalling 400+ Western SAGE Co-Membership: total 7 and including at least one member from every Network. Purpose and Scope: build connection, raise awareness about staff and student DEI matters, and deliver relevant targeted supports.

Western SAGE Achievements

2026 marks the 10-year anniversary of WSU's membership in SAGE Athena Swan. Over this time, our GEDI governance and practice has matured substantially, such that GEDI priorities are increasingly integrated into core-business across the University.

A 2023 review of Western SAGE governance **uplifted resourcing, embedded succession planning, and diversified leadership opportunity (Athena Swan Principle 1)** through the elevation of SAGE Project Coordinator (HEW 7, fixed-term) to Senior Advisor GEDI (HEW 9, ongoing), the establishment of the Leadership Team (total 1.5FTE), and the appointment of additional SAGE-SAT representatives. The competitive recruitment of new leadership positions (Research Lead, Deputy Academic Lead and Deputy Research Lead) saw one long-serving SAGE-SAT member and two staff not previously engaged in Western SAGE activity appointed. Additional **subject matter experts on gender diversity, sexuality, cultural and racial diversity, and disability** were added to SAGE-SAT (Athena Swan Principles 6, 7, 8), now serving alongside a **membership majority of 5+ years of service** – stability that demonstrates the high value members place on academic citizenship and collegial contribution to their workplace. WSU also benefits from the continuous service (from Bronze to Silver) of its Western SAGE Manager (Senior Advisor GEDI), whose consultative and collaborative approach to GEDI leadership at WSU and across the sector was recognised with the inaugural, national **2025 SAGE Outstanding Collaborator Award**.

Western SAGE work has been championed by our overarching **Executive Sponsor (Provost)** since 2020, and the establishing of additional **Cygnets Executive Sponsors** has provided an effective mechanism for ensuring high-level Cygnets engagement and the embedment of GEDI priorities within core-business frameworks, strategies and policies (**Athena Swan Principle 10**). New Cygnets Sponsors have been appointed to support the Silver Cygnets Framework, with the SAGE-SAT distributed into Silver Cygnets SWAGs, optimised for Action Plan implementation.

Closer partnership with the Division of Indigenous Leadership has been achieved through Cygnets Executive Sponsorship, regular consultation and co-design activity, the establishing of our *SAGE Indigenous Staff Collaboration Framework* (2023) and our landmark *Gathering Insights and Embedding Workplace Improvements for Indigenous Staff* research project (Kennedy, McKay & Talbot-Mundine, 2024), which was a national **2025 SAGE Catalyst for Change Award** nominee and winner of **WSU's Award for Excellence in Indigenous Research (Athena Swan Principles 1, 5)**.

Now our standard evaluation tool, **Cygnets Impact Assessments** produce rigorous, academically independent, ethics-approved and intersectional reporting, drawing substantial staff engagement and delivering important recommendations for advancing GEDI policy and practice improvements across WSU (**Athena Swan Principles 2-8**). Comprehensive research reports are delivered to Cygnets Executive Sponsors, endorsed by DEI Committee, and socialised at Gender UNLIMITED* events, which are also used to workshop and refine action implementation. Also celebrating its 10-year anniversary, the **VC Gender Equity Fund (VC-GEF)** will be expanded to serve a broader DEI remit in 2026 and will continue to generate new GEDI knowledge and practice-based insights that complement and cross-pollinate Western SAGE research and strategic action.

Introduced in 2023, new **Western SAGE Promotional Videos** and **GEDI vignettes** displayed on digital screens across campuses presented innovative methods for raising GEDI awareness. Our flagship public-facing **Gender UNLIMITED*** seminar series also reached new heights with the hugely successful feature *Writing Gender* series, a collaboration with Writing and Society Research Centre

and *Sydney Review of Books*. Across three years (2021–2023), this series drew 14 women and non-binary presenters of Indigenous and diverse cultural backgrounds, 500+ audience members and 60+ HDR masterclass participants, produced 13 published essays and an upcoming anthology collection. This partnership model for *Writing Gender* has revealed new possibilities for collaborative internal and industry-engaged GEDI advocacy.

Challenges and Learnings

In 2025, WSU underwent a **significant organisational restructure**. This ‘Western Reset’ process included the establishment of new academic Faculties and the internal reorganisation of Divisions (in effect 1 January 2026). Reset also resulted in University-wide strategy (re)development, large staff turnover, and significant changes to professional roles (including for the University’s central DEI team). For academic staff, a simultaneous Schools Review saw the reorganisation of teaching and research responsibilities, a reduction in formal governance positions, and a shift to 40/40/20 workloads in Faculties and 60/20/20 in Institutes.

As such, WSU is enduring a significant time of change, heightening the imperative for GEDI governance structures to unify our approach and to facilitate two-way communication about arising GEDI issues. Currently, DEI Committee membership and local support mechanisms require renewal to ensure the continued embedment of GEDI expertise and coherence within the new organisational structure (**Athena Swan Principle 10**). Significant work to consolidate DEI Action Plans, evaluation frameworks, and communications and engagement strategies is ongoing.

Of priority is accessing **casual staff input**, a continuing challenge for Western SAGE that is further compounded by low casual staff response rates (10%) for WSU’s 2025 Staff Engagement Survey, which also saw depressed ongoing/fixed-term staff responsiveness (53%) compared with previous years. Following staff feedback, a Diversity Data Working Group has also recommended the inclusion of **LGBTIQA+ in Engagement Survey demographics**, the absence of which has invisibilised experiences and obstructed evidence-based decision making for valued members of our WSU community. The same Working Group has drafted a **Diversity Data Principles and Practices Framework** to guide the ethical collection, use, management and interpretation of WSU staff and student diversity data, which is awaiting review.

While Western SAGE and key GEDI stakeholders hold intersectionality and inclusive practice expertise and cultivate stakeholder and staff engagement to ensure an intersectional approach, a commissioned VC-GEF study (Robinson *et al.*, 2022) identified a **need to mature understandings of intersectionality** and its practice-based applications for GEDI stakeholders across the University. More broadly, GEDI progress would also be accelerated by the embedding of **explicit inclusive leadership expectations and increased equity literacy among supervisors and managers**.

WSU Enabling Action Plan (2026-2032)

ENABLING ACTION PLAN					
REF.	RATIONALE	ACTIONS & OUTPUTS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY
1.	WSU takes a highly consultative, collaborative and integrated approach to GEDI governance. Following Western Reset, several formal GEDI governance mechanisms require renewal to ensure appropriate embedment and to secure two-way GEDI communication mechanisms within the new organisational structure.	Renew GEDI governance structures to ensure continuing GEDI expertise and coherence within new organisational structure.	2026	Executive Director Organisational Development & DEI	Vice-Chancellor
2.	Substantial research informing Cygnets across this document demonstrate a broad organisational need to increase inclusive leadership capacity and equity literacy across the University, in alignment with new performance frameworks and strategic priorities. In addition, diversity in leadership is limited at WSU, especially for diversity characteristics beyond gender (see Cygnet 1). Only 28% of surveyed staff believe that there is equal access to leadership opportunity at the University level and feedback illustrates strong staff perception of organisational culture barriers to leadership opportunity for WSU's diverse staff community.	Enhance and embed Inclusive Leadership capacity , including by: ▪ implementing a <i>Leadership Capability Framework</i> that clearly defines the inclusive knowledges, skills, and behaviours expected of leaders at various levels; ▪ renewing <i>Gender Equity Policy</i> KPIs in alignment with new inclusive leadership expectations; ▪ implementing a Staff Equity, Culture and Engagement (or similar) standing item across all Executive Committees; ▪ implementing a refreshed Leadership Capability Development Program, informed by diverse leadership perspectives and including a dedicated inclusive leadership stream, with priority participation for staff newly appointed to management/ governance roles post-Reset; ▪ instituting an equity-informed Emerging Leaders Program, with diversity metrics monitored in alignment with staff gender and diversity profiles; ▪ recognising inclusive leadership contributions within a new VC Excellence Award for "Putting our People First" <i>Western 2030</i> Strategy Objective.	2026 – 2027	Office of the Vice-Chancellor, Organisational Development, and Senior Executive	Vice-Chancellor and Executive Director Organisational Development & DEI
3.	Ongoing GEDI data collection challenges continue to impede some evidence-driven decision-making for advancing gender equity, diversity and inclusion across the University. Examples include limited workforce data beyond gender and Indigenous identity, low completion rates for Equal Opportunity Survey (≈25%), declining staff response rates for the University's all-staff Engagement Survey (53%) with especially low casual staff	Improve GEDI data collection practices , including by: ▪ establishing a new Chief Data Officer portfolio, with new supporting appointments, including a dedicated workforce data role; ▪ improving GEDI data dashboards for high-level quantitative data tracking against objectives,	2026 – 2028	Chief Data Officer, Chief People Officer and Executive Director Organisational Development & DEI	Chief Operating Officer

ENABLING ACTION PLAN					
REF.	RATIONALE	ACTIONS & OUTPUTS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY
	engagement (10%), and the elision of LGBTQIA+ staff identifiers from high-level organisational surveys.	for use by GEDI stakeholders including Western SAGE; - implementing diversity demographics standards across relevant collection contexts, including by embedding LGBTQIA+ identifier in Staff Engagement Surveys; - updating WSU's existing Equal Opportunity Survey (in alignment with new diversity data standards) and embedding survey uptake in onboarding processes; - addressing low response rates for Staff Engagement Survey, especially for casual staff; - reviewing and implementing the draft <i>Diversity Data Principles and Practices Framework</i>.			
4.	The Vice-Chancellor's Gender Equity Fund has generated valuable insight into GEDI barriers and opportunities for workplace improvement across WSU. An expanded remit will ensure alignment with emerging DEI Committee objectives. Securing connectivity with Senior Executive will better support research translation into workplace impact. Priority research should be undertaken for staff with disability, who report lowest positivity among staff equity groupings within Engagement Surveys (see Cygnet 1).	Expand existing Vice-Chancellor's Gender Equity Fund to a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Fund, and: - nominate reporting lines to relevant Executive, ensuring critical recommendations are scoped and implemented; - commission a project to establish co-designed research methodology for scoping career barriers and enablers for staff with disability.	2026 - 2027	Organisational Development & DEI and SAGE	Executive Director Organisational Development & DEI
5.	WSU's Silver Award represents a large volume of work, designed to service established objectives in <i>Western 2030</i> and to complement critical ongoing work across various equity domains (see GEDI Policy and Strategy Landscape, p.1).	Cohere a unifying DEI Action Plan that coheres priorities and facilitates collaborative, evidence-informed action in alignment with WSU's increasingly intersectional approach.	2026 – 2027	Office for People & Culture, with input from all Senior Executive	Heads of Divisions
6.	The unified DEI Action Plan (Action 5) should be supported by an integrated evaluation framework that enables the efficient and effective tracking of GEDI progress and outcomes. Well-established Western SAGE research principles should be embedded where appropriate, including methodological emphasis on marginalised positionalities, intersectional thematic analysis, and a commitment to Indigenous-led evaluation for Indigenous-focused research.	Develop a unified DEI Evaluation Framework that: - schedules DEI and Western SAGE surveys to optimise participation rates, reduce fatigue, streamline resourcing, and ensure timely evaluation for new initiatives; - employs the <i>SAGE Indigenous Staff Collaboration Framework</i> to ensure Indigenous-led research for Indigenous-related measures; - uses mixed methodologies to ensure the nuanced reflection of lived experience for WSU's diverse staff cohorts, including via Western SAGE and DEI Fund projects.	2027	Organisational Development & DEI and SAGE	Executive Director Organisational Development & DEI

ENABLING ACTION PLAN					
REF.	RATIONALE	ACTIONS & OUTPUTS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY
7.	Newly unified DEI Action Plan and DEI Evaluation Frameworks should be supported by a DEI Communications and Engagement Strategy that raises widespread equity literacy and ensures equitable and inclusive two-way communication with staff across the University. Particular focus should be given to the embedding of innovative engagement approaches for underrepresented groups of staff whose voices and perspectives are less likely to be disseminated via leadership roles and decision-making committees.	Develop a DEI Communications and Engagement Strategy that: - continues to raise staff and supervisor GEDI literacy, including regarding intersectionality; - streamlines the notifying of staff and supervisors about changes to GEDI-related policy, resources and supports; - includes targeted engagement strategies for casual staff and other marginalised staff cohorts; - utilises an updated Western SAGE webpage as a key site for celebrating GEDI achievements; - incorporates innovative, engaging and multidimensional approaches to ongoing GEDI advocacy; - embeds anonymous feedback mechanisms across DEI and Western SAGE contexts.	2027	Organisational Development & DEI and SAGE	Executive Director Organisational Development & DEI

SECTION 2 – KEY PRIORITY AREAS

Disclaimer: Key Priority Areas 1 & 2 are interrelated and share foundational background information and barriers. As such, they are presented in unison here, with disaggregated analysis as appropriate and individualised Action Plans.

KEY PRIORITY AREAS 1 & 2: CAREER PLANNING FOR ACADEMICS & CAREER PLANNING FOR PROFESSIONALS

Cygnets Rationale

WSU has a robust Academic Promotions process with strong equity principles embedded across policy, guidelines, and procedures (see Table 2, p.xvi). Indigenous priorities are embedded in policy alongside recognition for academic citizenship and pastoral care, and an expanded Achievement Relative to Opportunity framework foregrounds part-time work, non-linear career paths and caring obligations. A wide range of promotions-specific support mechanisms are helping to shape a more supportive and collegial promotions culture for many. Overall, women apply for promotion at equal rates to men and succeed on par or higher across every academic level. However, women in STEMM remain slower to apply for promotion to Level E despite exceptional success rates.

Substantial Western SAGE and VC-GEF research has also drawn focus on career growth and mobility gaps for professional staff, structural ‘progression ceilings’ for Indigenous professionals in particular, and the omission of academic casuals from formal development opportunity.¹

As such, WSU has identified Career Planning as a mechanism for ensuring equitable access to career-enabling supports for staff of all employment types and across all local contexts. This pivot toward Career Planning, underwritten by foundational equity principles, targets three primary objectives:

1. Career maturity and promotion for academics;
2. Career growth and mobility for professionals;
3. Increased diversity in leadership across WSU.

Given differences in the nature of the work, progression pathways, and career success profiles for academic and professional staff, two separate (but interlinked) Cygnets Key Priority Areas will be undertaken in the Silver Era: Career Planning for Academic Staff and Career Planning for Professional Staff.

Evidence of Barrier

1. Current Career Planning Landscape

In 2025, Western SAGE conducted a Career Planning Mapping Exercise, for which eight Schools, three Research Institutes, and Offices within six Divisions provided detail of current localised career

¹ See, for example: Robinson, K., Wolfinger, E., Nicholas, L. & Sullivan, C. (2022). *Addressing intersectionality in gender ‘equity’ at WSU: Experiences, policies and everyday practices*; Kennedy, S., McKay, K. & Talbot-Mundine, G. (2024). *Gathering insights and embedding workplace experiences for Indigenous staff at WSU*; Willis, J. & Smith, E. (2024) *Casual staff inclusion: Improving workplace engagement, wellbeing and the prevention of discrimination and sexual harassment*; Smith (2022) *Precarity, pandemic and gender: How did casual academic women experience teaching at the time of COVID-19?*

planning-related activities. Findings confirmed nascent Career Planning practices, with some developing models, an insufficient institutional-level tools landscape, and inconsistent access and opportunity especially for professionals and casual staff (Table 6).

Table 6. Career Planning Mapping Exercise Findings, 2025

Career Planning Mapping Exercise Findings, 2025	
Finding	Finding Detail
Mixed interpretations of 'Career Planning'	'Career Planning' does not yet have widespread valence as an operable term. Many Mapping Exercise responses focused on performance reviews, training or development supports, and/or academic promotion, regardless of whether these activities are actively linked to Career Planning. Nonetheless, in some contexts these processes <i>can</i> provoke productive Career Planning conversations, especially for academics. In a small number of local areas, Career Planning is already in place as a robust and regular development process.
Mix of tools, some bespoke, and not all useful	Some Schools and Institutes report using an array of different tools for different development purposes. While some units rely on annual Work Planning and Career Development (WPCD) tools, for some WPCD's efficacy is inconsistent or offers little return for the administrative investment, and others have discarded it altogether. A few Schools and Institutes have developed bespoke tools for academic performance reviews and Career Planning purposes, tailored to their context. One Divisional Office (ITDS) is in the process of developing an industry-specific Career Planning and development framework for professional staff in their area.
Some Career Planning supports for academics, mostly tied to promotions	Broadly, Schools and Institutes clearly reflect some responsibility for academic Career Planning. However, most Career Planning-specific practices were not yet embedded, the regularity of Career Planning conversations differed considerably, and conversations were most often triggered by a staff member self-identifying as on track for promotion. By contrast, a few Schools and Institutes (e.g., HIE, School of Education) do have Career Planning mechanisms in place and have developed bespoke tools and practices to support planning conversations. These tools and approaches may provide valuable models for Career Planning embedment across the University.
Minimal Career Planning for professionals	Career Planning for professionals is minimal, even in work areas where some form of Career Planning exists for academics. Only one Division and one School report some form of Career Planning conversation for professionals, while two schools and one Institute include professionals in formal mentoring. Elsewhere, any notion of Career Planning for professionals appears to rely solely on WPCD processes. However, at least one Office (ITDS) is conscious of a need to enhance Career Planning for professionals, citing plans to implement structured Career Planning and development opportunities for staff at all levels in the coming period.
No Casual Staff Career Planning	No Career Planning mechanisms were reported for casuals. Mapping responses relied only on mandatory training and access to MyCareer.
Inconsistent Access and Opportunity	Even in contexts where Career Planning mechanisms may be in place, a sizeable number of staff are at risk of slipping through the cracks, since: ▪ <u>Schools and Institutes reflect some responsibility for Career Planning for academics, but not for professionals.</u> While in 2024, 19% (258.1FTE) of all WSU professionals worked in School and Institute contexts, Schools are far more likely to report Career Planning for academics than for professionals. This remains the case in contexts where professionals are a sizeable proportion of the work area's staff cohort (e.g., School of Medicine, where professionals are 34% of all 4); ▪ <u>Divisions reflect minimal Career Planning for professionals and none for academics,</u> despite a small number (28.1FTE) of academics working in Divisions; ▪ <u>No area of the University offers meaningful Career Planning for casual staff.</u> Casuals are a sizeable proportion of WSU staff (56% by headcount, 20% by FTE) but rarely have access to opportunities for feedback via performance reviews, mentoring, or work planning, let alone Career Planning.

2. Staff Gender Profiles & Career Advancement Mechanisms

Academic Staff Gender Profile & Diversity in Promotions

Disclaimer: To enable trend analysis, academic and professional staff profiles have been retrospectively mapped into WSU's new Faculty structure, in effect 1 January 2026. To optimise data analysis, all staff data was extracted on 31 December for 2025 and for each preceding year.

Across the 2021-2025 period, WSU sustained gender parity for overall academic FTE and achieved 40/40/20 gender balance at Level E (Table 7). However, gender profiles vary considerably across local contexts:

- Faculty Health and Faculty SABEL hold high proportions of women academics (67% and 59% respectively), but a 2025 restructure-induced uplift for senior women across both Faculties is yet to be sustained (Table 8 & Table 9);
- Faculty ECS holds only 27% women's representation, and women remain critically underrepresented at Level E (15%, Table 10);
- Research Institutes are at overall gender parity (45% women) but below for Level E (35% women, Table 11).

Table 7. WSU Academic Staff FTE by Gender and Level, 2021 – 2025

WSU Academic Staff FTE, 2021–2025										
Level	2021		2022		2023		2024		2025	
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
A	63.9	55.5	62.3	46.4	65.6	50.7	121.2	87.6	128.7	104.6
B	161.4	112.2	170.8	108.9	158.0	110.8	162.8	101.3	97.7	73.4
C	134.1	134.9	136.0	140.1	134.8	130.9	141.7	122.3	133.5	115.0
D	67.4	77.3	72.0	85.8	74.1	90.3	71.9	97.3	101.1	107.3
E	53.0	93.7	61.9	99.2	69.8	102.4	68.6	110.6	60.5	87.9
Senior	21.0	27.3	20.0	27.2	17.0	26.2	10.0	6.2	25.0	15.0
Total	500.8	500.9	523.0	507.6	519.3	511.3	576.2	525.3	546.5	503.2

Women's Representation						
2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	± Change	
W%	W%	W%	W%	W%		
54%	57%	56%	58%	55%	+2%	
59%	61%	59%	62%	57%	-2%	
50%	49%	51%	54%	54%	+4%	
47%	46%	45%	43%	49%	+2%	
36%	38%	41%	38%	41%	+5%	
43%	42%	39%	62%	63%	+19%	
50%	51%	51%	52%	52%	+2%	

Table 8. Faculty Health Academic Staff FTE by Gender and Level, 2021 – 2025

Faculty Health Academic Staff FTE, 2021–2025										
Level	2021		2022		2023		2024		2025	
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
A	29.4	12.6	27.9	6.0	26.2	5.6	40.7	10.4	43.5	8.4
B	57.8	20.8	56.3	22.3	53.1	27.1	52.7	23.3	37.1	15.7
C	48.8	27.0	45.3	26.2	38.9	24.1	43.8	25.9	44.1	22.4
D	16.8	18.3	20.5	20.2	24.7	19.2	24.1	20.5	38.2	25.5
E	18.5	19.7	19.5	22.3	21.6	24.0	19.1	23.8	15.4	18.2
Total	171.3	98.4	169.5	97.0	164.5	100.0	180.4	103.9	178.3	90.2

Women's Representation						
2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	± Change	
W%	W%	W%	W%	W%		
70%	83%	83%	79%	76%	+6%	
74%	75%	70%	74%	72%	-2%	
64%	60%	60%	65%	69%	+5%	
48%	54%	57%	51%	60%	+12%	
48%	49%	49%	49%	53%	+4%	
64%	64%	63%	65%	67%	+3%	

Table 9. Faculty SABEL Academic Staff FTE by Gender and Level, 2021 – 2025

Faculty SABEL Academic Staff FTE, 2021–2025										
Level	2021		2022		2023		2024		2025	
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
A	13.8	4.4	10.2	3.4	10.8	3.4	37.7	22.1	44.3	38.1
B	78.6	44.9	86.9	33.9	76.6	32.4	74.0	33.3	34.9	22.8
C	53.0	37.7	55.6	43.7	61.7	40.6	65.2	32.6	64.7	33.8
D	36.6	22.3	34.2	23.3	32.6	25.8	29.0	30.0	39.1	35.0
E	17.1	28.3	22.2	27.0	25.5	28.0	28.0	29.6	26.1	18.3
Total	199.1	137.5	209.1	131.2	207.2	130.1	233.9	147.6	209.1	148.0

Women's Representation						
2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	± Change	
W%	W%	W%	W%	W%		
76%	75%	76%	63%	54%	-22%	
64%	72%	70%	69%	60%	-3%	
58%	56%	60%	67%	66%	+7%	
62%	59%	56%	49%	53%	-9%	
38%	45%	48%	49%	59%	+21%	
59%	61%	61%	61%	59%	-1%	

Table 10. Faculty ECS Academic Staff FTE by Gender and Level, 2021 – 2025

Faculty ECS Academic Staff FTE, 2021–2025										
Level	2021		2022		2023		2024		2025	
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
A	5.6	17.1	6.2	14.8	6.0	11.7	30%	21.0	18.0	28.6
B	13.0	36.5	10.0	35.5	10.0	37.0	22%	30.0	9.5	27.0
C	16.9	56.8	17.5	58.8	18.0	56.8	23%	55.8	16.0	47.0
D	10.5	24.0	11.3	31.5	12.0	34.9	26%	35.6	13.0	37.5
E	3.5	26.2	5.5	29.7	4.7	28.0	16%	31.0	4.5	24.6
Total	49.5	160.6	50.5	170.3	50.7	168.4	23%	173.4	61.0	164.7

Women's Representation					
2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	± Change
W%	W%	W%	W%	W%	
25%	30%	34%	41%	39%	+14%
26%	22%	21%	32%	26%	0%
23%	23%	24%	25%	25%	+2%
30%	26%	26%	24%	26%	-5%
12%	16%	14%	15%	15%	+4%
24%	23%	23%	27%	27%	+3%

Table 11. Research Institutes Academic Staff FTE by Gender and Level, 2021 – 2025

Research Institutes Academic Staff FTE, 2021–2025										
Level	2021		2022		2023		2024		2025	
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
A	15.1	21.4	17.0	21.2	21.6	28.2	28.0	33.3	22.9	29.5
B	8.4	8.0	14.1	15.2	16.8	13.3	19.2	13.7	13.2	7.9
C	11.4	12.0	14.6	8.0	13.2	4.0	10.7	4.0	7.7	9.8
D	3.0	10.4	5.0	9.5	4.8	9.2	6.8	9.2	8.8	9.3
E	12.0	19.6	11.3	18.7	14.2	21.3	12.2	23.7	13.5	25.0
Total	49.9	71.4	62.0	72.6	70.6	76.0	76.9	83.9	66.1	81.5

Women's Representation					
2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	± Change
W%	W%	W%	W%	W%	
41%	45%	43%	46%	44%	+2%
51%	48%	56%	58%	63%	+11%
49%	65%	77%	73%	44%	-5%
22%	34%	34%	43%	49%	+26%
38%	38%	40%	34%	35%	-3%
41%	46%	48%	48%	45%	4%

Academic Promotions

WSU's 2024 Academic Promotions Cygnet outlined promotions policy and support improvements across the 2018–2023 period. While outcomes were reported in line with Bronze Era STEMM/HASS discipline groupings (which cannot be directly mapped into WSU's new Faculty structure), meaningful GEDI progress and key learnings are evident:

- WSU: women applied for promotion at cohort-parity and outperformed men in outcomes (+6%), with success rates at parity or higher across every academic level;
- HASS: women in HASS disciplines applied at cohort parity across all academic levels and outperformed their cohort representation overall (+8% promoted), with success rates at Level B requiring improvement;
- STEMM: women in STEMM disciplines were at cohort parity for outcomes (-1%), and achieved success at parity for Levels B and D while overperforming at C and E (+24% and +18% compared with STEMM men, respectively), but application rates remained below cohort parity at all levels excepting D.

Low application rates with high success suggests **gender-disproportionate delays in STEMM women self-identifying promotions-readiness, requiring earlier career-enabling intervention.**

WSU's 2024 Cygnet Impact Assessment also illustrated strong staff approval for GEDI advances in policy and process, diversified, quality guidance and resources, new mentoring programs and other supportive mechanisms, and signalled a general shift away from individualised competition toward a collective culture of encouragement. However, feedback highlighted **significant local support gaps (extending beyond promotions contexts), which may be more effectively bridged by coordinated and strategic University-wide career planning efforts (Table 12).**

Table 12. Cygnet Impact: Differential Local Cultures of Support, 2024

Gaps in Local Cultures of Support, Cygnet Impact Assessment, 2024	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Area for Improvement: Differential School/Institute Cultures	<i>"It is very dependent, I feel, on each School because we have such a School- and Institute-based structure. [...] Our School is too small and thin on the ground to do anything. We keep talking about doing things but it doesn't happen."</i> (Focus Group: APC member)
	<i>"I think, to be honest, the main reason people do or don't go for promotion is based on the culture of their School or Institute. [...] If you feel like you want to celebrate your work and your students, but you're in a situation where there's eye rolling or there are comments made to you, it can be really difficult to find the motivation to go through with that process. So, at the heart of promotions is the culture of the School or Institute that will ultimately determine how people feel."</i> (Interview: Level C Applicant)
	<i>"I [feel supported], but I'm not always sure that this support is fully implemented by everyone, or is uniformly applied across the University. [...] Support and experiences can differ drastically."</i> (Survey: Level D Applicant, Woman, Level D, CALD, First in Family, Parent)
	<i>"My Dean only wanted to read a one-page of dot-points of my application. He then said no. Within a very short time span from the new documents, he delayed giving me an appointment when I asked to further discuss this, knowing that a page of dot points wasn't enough when he didn't know me well. We finally had an appointment the Friday before the whole application was due on the Wednesday. He finally, grudgingly agreed that I could apply, but said in these exact words, "but I think you will fail". This was not said in a kind or friendly manner, and it was from a powerful male to a vulnerable woman. How is that equity and support?"</i> (Survey: Level D Applicant, Woman, First in Family, Carer)
	<i>"I wonder what it would be like to work in an environment where you're actually encouraged and supported. I don't think that's what it's like at Western. [...] What I experience is you're never doing enough like this person who's the super star who is the protégé of the Dean [who] everyone loves and they don't have children. And I can't compete with that."</i> (Interview: Level D Applicant, Parent)
	<i>"My best supporters and advisors were from outside my School. No School-based sessions or mock interviews were available, even when requested."</i> (Survey: Level D Applicant, Woman, First in Family)

Similarly, while staff and stakeholders highly valued WSU's promotions equity progress, many recognised ongoing gaps and pressed for more active attention to cultural and linguistic diversity in particular (Table 13).

Table 13. Academic Promotions Cygnet Impact: Equity Progress and Equity Gaps, 2024

Academic Promotions Equity Gap, Cygnet Impact Assessment, 2024	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Ongoing Equity Gap: Need to Extend Focus	<i>"There have been significant steps forward, but still a lot of work to do."</i> (Survey: Level D Applicant, Woman, First in Family)
	<i>"The university supports equity in relation to gender and gender identity, it does not seem to target or collect data on any other issues of equity."</i> (Survey: Dean/Director)
	<i>"Gender (white women, and Aboriginal and [Torres] Strait Islander)? Yes. Intersectionality? No."</i> (Survey: Distinguished Professor)
	<i>"I understand why [embedding Indigenous priorities] is important generally but why more so than any other equity area? (e.g., disability, poverty reduction, etc). I'd like to see a more general category."</i> (Survey: Level C Applicant)
	<i>"One cannot say that the WSU policy and guidelines completely ignore equity, but at the same time, there are still many neglected (or deliberately excluded) aspects of equity. [...] Clear, specific provisions are put in place for these limited range of equity matters, whereas everything else must resort to generic provisions which provide little equity assurance for individuals with these particular traits."</i> (Survey: EDWP member)
	<i>"There is more to do in terms of bias. I was thinking about accent, cultural background as well. I think it was good to have more of a focus on gender in this iteration, but the issues around cultural diversity are pertinent, especially where we have Interviews."</i> (APC Equity Workshop: APC Member)
	<i>"It is painful to see that the University still focuses on a very narrow inclusion of E&D matters and clearly ignoring intersectionalities."</i> (Survey: EDWP member)
	<i>"Equity is a critically important commitment [...] but the promotion process is not transparent and it appears to be inconsistent in its decisions which creates a perception of inequity and can be deeply distressing to staff, particularly to those from diverse cultural backgrounds."</i> (Survey: Dean/Director)
	<i>"Opportunity and access to promotion is limited [for] persons from CALD backgrounds. [I] have been in touch with some who have not been successful in the applications, the goal posts for them have been different to achieve as compared to those from non-CALD backgrounds. This can only be overcome if there is greater transparency."</i> (Survey: EDWP member)
	<i>"Promotions data should be closely looked at to determine the number of times CALD applicants have applied before they are promoted if they are at all."</i> (Survey: EDWP member)

Since Cygnet submission, diversity data collection was embedded in promotions processes, with 99% of applicants voluntarily providing information. Aggregated 2024–2025 applicant diversity statistics (Figure 4), gap analysis (Figure 5), success rates (Figure 6) and intersectional analyses (Figure 7 – Figure 9) are reassuring for all diversity groupings except academics with disability:

- women continue to apply for promotion above cohort representation (+6%) and succeed at parity (+3%);
- LGBTIQ+ academics outperformed all diversity groupings (84% success, +8% WSU averages);
- parents apply at higher than cohort estimates (+17%) and succeed at slightly higher than average rates (+5%);
- carers apply at higher than cohort estimates (+9%) and succeed at relative parity (-4%);
- academics of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds apply at rates exceeding combined cohort estimates (+10%), with success rates at parity (+3% culturally diverse, +0% linguistically diverse) and no gendered differentials;
- academics with disability apply for promotion at lower than cohort estimates (-11%) and succeed below parity (-14%);
- one of two non-binary applicants and two of three Indigenous applicants were promoted.

While extended diversity data collection (minimum 5 years) will enable more accurate trend analysis (including diversity in promotion by level), **progression barriers for academics with disability are also indicated by Engagement Survey trends** (see Sub-Section 4, p. 21).

Disclaimer: For cohort gap analyses, promotions diversity data was set against verified HR data by gender and Indigenous identity and 2025 Engagement Survey estimates for all other diversity groupings. While promotions data collection asks about cultural and linguistic diversity separately (for specificity), Engagement Survey data asks collectively. Promotions data includes LGBTIQ+ demographics, but Engagement Surveys do not (see Ongoing Data Challenges, p.xv). As such, LGBTIQ+ applicants are excluded from cohort gap analysis. For cohort gap analyses and comparative success rates, margins $\geq 5\%$ are taken as significant, with lesser margins considered ‘at parity’.

PRELIMINARY PROMOTIONS DIVERSITY ANALYSIS, 2024 & 2025

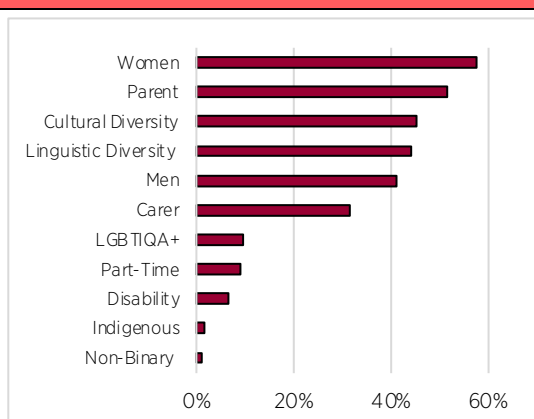


Figure 4. Promotions Applicant Proportions by Diversity Grouping, 2024 & 2025

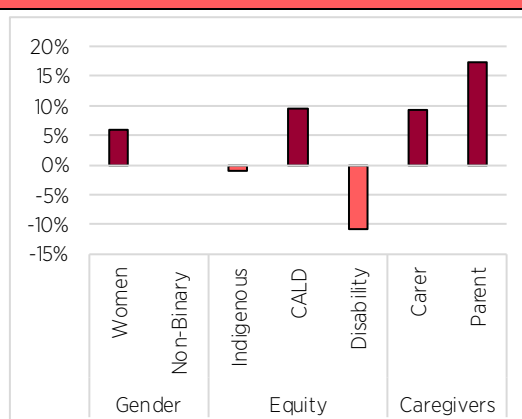
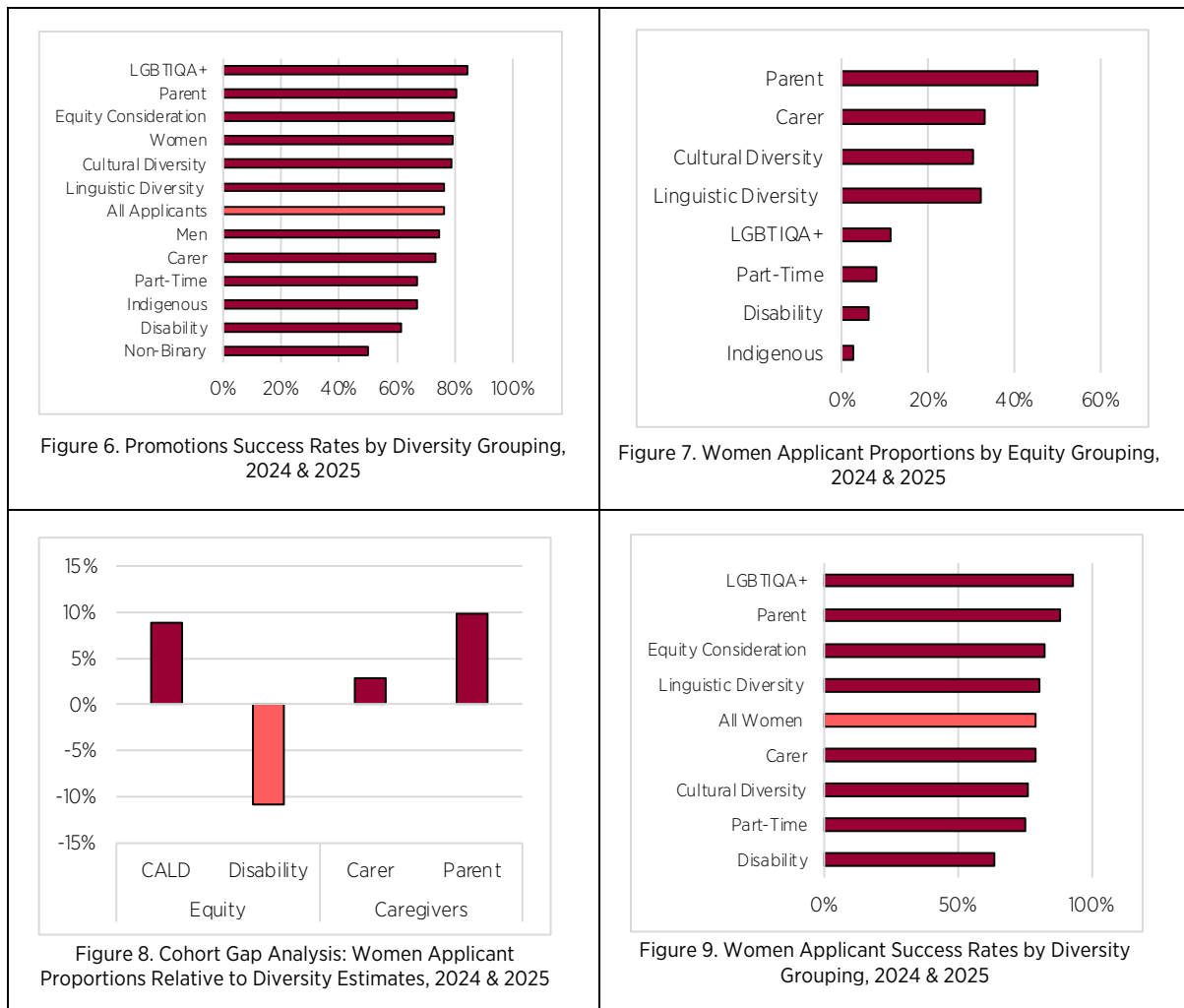


Figure 5. Cohort Gap Analysis: Promotions Applicant Proportions Relative to Diversity Estimates, 2024 & 2025



Professional Staff Gender Profile & Mobility

For professional staff, post-Reset data shows sustained women's proportions (68%) and slight improvements at the highest levels (Table 14). The majority (76%) of professionals are situated in Divisions, with 17% embedded in Faculties and 7% in Research Institutes. All areas are dominated by women professionals, with cohort-relative under-representation at HEW 9 (Table 15 – Table 17).

Table 14. WSU Professional Staff FTE by Gender and Level, 2021 – 2025

WSU Professional Staff FTE, 2021–2025										
Level	2021		2022		2023		2024		2025	
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
HEW 1-3	29.0	9.6	34.3	16.0	26.6	15.4	22.1	16.0	18.8	10.2
HEW 4	54.9	20.6	62.5	19.3	65.0	23.7	61.1	16.6	42.0	9.0
HEW 5	220.8	68.9	203.2	54.7	211.7	55.5	226.8	55.6	171.6	63.1
HEW 6	241.1	90.5	241.6	98.0	245.5	93.7	257.9	101.2	211.7	81.6
HEW 7	192.8	86.9	198.4	89.5	215.1	86.4	213.0	86.1	166.9	75.7
HEW 8	117.5	99.6	124.2	112.8	126.6	113.6	137.9	119.2	120.3	82.2
HEW 9	68.7	61.8	77.0	58.2	76.0	59.4	87.6	59.8	59.8	47.8
Senior	54.8	38.0	58.0	38.1	66.4	37.0	67.6	44.0	55.6	31.0
Total	979.6	475.9	999.2	486.6	1032.9	484.7	1074.0	498.5	846.7	400.6

Women's Representation						
2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	± Change	
W%	W%	W%	W%	W%		
75%	68%	63%	58%	65%	-10%	
73%	76%	73%	79%	82%	+10%	
76%	79%	79%	80%	73%	-3%	
73%	71%	72%	72%	72%	-1%	
69%	69%	71%	71%	69%	0%	
54%	52%	53%	54%	59%	+5%	
53%	57%	56%	59%	56%	+3%	
59%	60%	64%	61%	64%	+5%	
67%	67%	68%	68%	68%	+1%	

Table 15. Divisions Professional Staff FTE by Gender and Level, 2021 – 2025

Divisions Professional Staff FTE, 2021–2025										
Level	2021		2022		2023		2024		2025	
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
HEW 1-3	29.0	9.6	27.8	13.0	22.1	14.4	19.3	16.0	16.8	10.0
HEW 4	38.5	17.8	46.9	17.7	50.3	17.7	48.3	14.0	26.0	8.0
HEW 5	187.5	61.2	170.0	47.0	180.0	45.6	192.5	46.0	139.3	49.4
HEW 6	159.7	76.6	167.9	87.4	168.1	81.6	178.1	85.8	122.1	64.0
HEW 7	149.0	81.2	160.5	81.1	173.1	74.9	172.5	76.6	118.4	65.0
HEW 8	105.6	97.2	108.5	110.8	109.9	109.8	122.8	115.6	94.9	78.6
HEW 9	54.7	56.8	60.0	52.2	60.0	53.8	68.6	54.8	48.8	39.8
Total	777.8	438.4	799.5	447.3	829.8	434.9	868.6	452.8	618.9	343.8

Women's Representation						
2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	± Change	
W%	W%	W%	W%	W%		
75%	68%	61%	55%	63%	-12%	
68%	73%	74%	78%	76%	+8%	
75%	78%	80%	81%	74%	-2%	
68%	66%	67%	67%	66%	-2%	
65%	66%	70%	69%	65%	0%	
52%	49%	50%	52%	55%	+3%	
49%	53%	53%	56%	55%	+6%	
64%	64%	66%	66%	64%	0%	

Table 16. Faculty Professional Staff FTE by Gender and Level, 2021 – 2025

Faculty Professional Staff FTE, 2021–2025										
Level	2021		2022		2023		2024		2025	
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
HEW 1-3	0.0	0.0	4.5	1.0	3.5	1.0	1.8	0.0	2.0	0.2
HEW 4	12.4	2.8	14.8	1.6	13.1	6.0	11.2	2.6	14.4	1.0
HEW 5	27.8	5.9	26.3	6.5	25.5	6.7	28.3	6.4	24.7	7.9
HEW 6	67.3	11.9	66.3	8.8	69.5	9.6	73.5	12.2	63.6	12.0
HEW 7	38.0	5.7	33.1	8.5	35.8	10.5	33.7	8.5	36.5	5.7
HEW 8	5.4	1.4	11.2	1.0	11.4	1.8	9.8	1.6	13.5	1.0
HEW 9	12.0	2.0	13.0	3.0	12.0	3.0	13.0	2.0	6.0	4.0
Total	162.8	29.7	169.2	30.3	170.8	38.6	171.3	33.3	160.7	31.8

Women's Representation						
2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	± Change	
W%	W%	W%	W%	W%		
-	82%	78%	100%	91%	+9%	
82%	91%	69%	81%	94%	+12%	
82%	80%	79%	82%	76%	-7%	
85%	88%	88%	86%	84%	-1%	
87%	80%	77%	80%	87%	0%	
79%	92%	86%	86%	93%	+14%	
86%	81%	80%	87%	60%	-26%	
85%	85%	82%	84%	83%	-1%	

Table 17. Research Institutes Professional Staff FTE by Gender and Level, 2021 – 2025

Research Institutes Professional Staff FTE, 2021–2025										
Level	2021		2022		2023		2024		2025	
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
HEW 1-3	0.0	0.0	1.0	2.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
HEW 4	4.0	0.0	0.8	0.0	1.6	0.0	1.6	0.0	1.6	0.0
HEW 5	5.5	1.8	7.0	1.2	6.2	3.2	6.0	3.2	7.6	5.8
HEW 6	14.1	2.0	7.4	1.8	7.9	2.5	6.3	3.2	26.0	5.6
HEW 7	5.8	0.0	4.8	0.0	6.2	1.0	6.8	1.0	12.0	5.0
HEW 8	6.5	1.0	4.5	1.0	5.3	2.0	5.3	2.0	11.9	2.6
HEW 9	2.0	3.0	4.0	3.0	4.0	2.6	6.0	3.0	5.0	4.0
Total	37.9	7.8	29.5	9.0	32.2	11.3	33.0	12.4	64.1	23.0

Women's Representation						
2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	± Change	
W%	W%	W%	W%	W%		
-	33%	100%	100%	50%	-	
100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	0%	
75%	85%	66%	65%	57%	-19%	
88%	80%	76%	66%	82%	-5%	
100%	100%	86%	87%	71%	-29%	
87%	82%	73%	73%	82%	-5%	
40%	57%	61%	67%	56%	+16%	
83%	77%	74%	73%	74%	-9%	

Professional Mobility

With no formal progression pathway, internal career mobility opportunities for professionals are currently limited to internal recruitment, secondment, higher duties, and (occasional) position reclassification. Aggregated career mobility data across the 2021–2025 period found:

- limited opportunity, especially at senior levels (Figure 10);
- low mobility rates in areas where professionals are most numerous (i.e., Divisions, Figure 11);
- relative to cohort proportions, men accessed greater mobility than women at HEW 5, where opportunities were greatest (Figure 12);
- in Faculty contexts, almost half (47%) of men accessed mobility, compared to one-fifth (20%) of women (Figure 13).

Mobility scarcity impedes long-term career opportunity for all professionals. Differential uptake patterns for women may also indicate sponsorship (and other) bias and/or systemic barriers (e.g., lack of workplace flexibility within available opportunities).

Disclaimer: Diversity data beyond gender was not recorded for professional mobility across the period.

PROFESSIONAL STAFF INTERNAL MOBILITY BY GENDER AND HEW LEVEL, 2021-2025

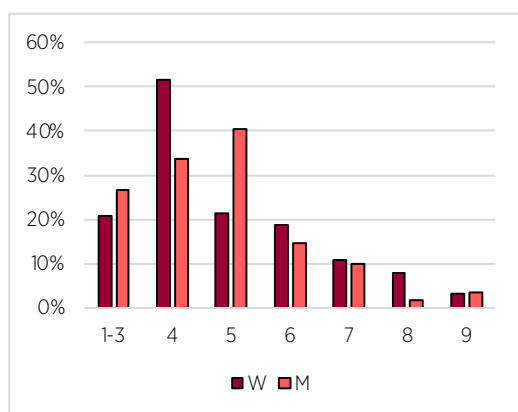


Figure 10. Proportions of Professionals Accessing Mobility by Gender and HEW Level, 2021 – 2025

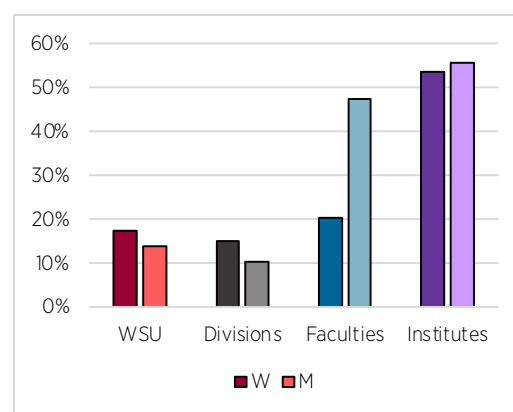


Figure 11. Proportions of Professionals Accessing Mobility by Gender and Division, 2021 – 2025

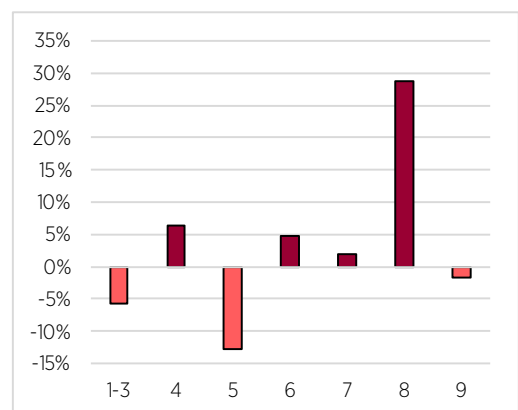


Figure 12. Cohort Gap Analysis: Women's Mobility Proportions Relative to Representation by Level, 2021 – 2025

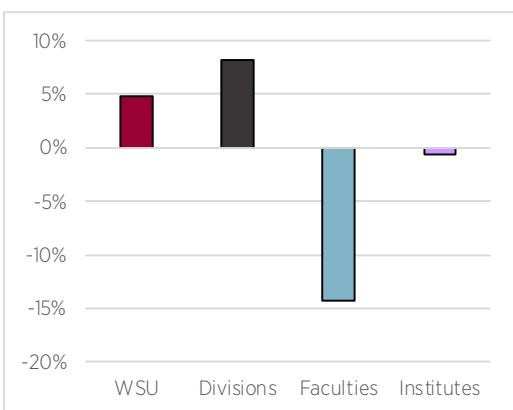


Figure 13. Cohort Gap Analysis: Women's Mobility Proportions Relative to Representation by Work Area, 2021 – 2025

VC-GEF and Western SAGE research illustrates that professional staff are keenly aware of 'progression ceilings', which many find inequitable when compared to academic pathways and which are exacerbated for Indigenous professionals working in identified positions (Table 18).

Table 18. Professional Staff Feedback on Advancement Limitations, VC-GEF and Western SAGE Projects 2022 & 2024

Professional Advancement Limitations: VC-GEF & Western SAGE Projects, 2022 & 2024	
Theme	Selected Feedback
Lack of Advancement Opportunity for Professional staff	"If I want to advance my HEW level, I have to find a new job."
	"If you have no ability to do more or take on new roles, there is no justification for advancement in levels. I can't publish papers to increase my levels, I need to wait for a position to be available and change role or leave and find employment elsewhere."
	"Professional staff are not really given the opportunity to advance. I am considerably better at my role than when I started and I perform duties much higher than my PD outlines, but there's no way to reflect this in my appointment; others in the sector performing similar roles to me are appointed at least one

(VC-GEF Intersectionality Project, 2022)	<i>HEW level higher than I am, but I have been explicitly told there is no possibility for my position to be upgraded at WSU. If I want to advance to a higher HEW level I'll have to apply for a different job or a different university."</i>
	<i>"I have hit the HEW 7 ceiling, and I have been at this level (or even down one level due to restructuring) for over 20 years. There are almost no HEW 8 - 10 jobs at WSU and you need to be male to get an executive level professional role."</i>
	<i>"Professional staff are a lower caste. Female professionals are lower still."</i>
	<i>"Professional staff do not have the same advancement opportunities as academic staff."</i>
Structural Career Limitations for Indigenous Professionals (Western SAGE Indigenous Staff Project, 2024)	<i>"I've sort of reached my potential in this role. [...] Not at WSU. But I don't think that at least in my own team there are those opportunities to grow, and so I sort of feel like if I want more experience, if I want to make more of an impact, I have to go somewhere else. [...] If I wanted to go elsewhere in my career, like if I didn't explicitly want to be in [the area that I am in] then yes, at Western, I feel like there are lots of opportunities there. [...] But in terms of what I want to do... without sounding sad or dramatic, what I want I cannot get here."</i>
	<i>"For me, I've been nothing but supported and encouraged, and my progression itself has been one that's natural and made sense for me to end up where I've ended up. I'm doing something I love. But it's the second time I've entered a professional position where there's nowhere to move up anymore, if I want an identified position. So, there's only ever a moving across from here. I understand it's going to be limited. It would be nice to know there are options for me to progress into a position that is an identified position."</i>
	<i>"We have started to build our senior professional staff, but I think we could use a lot more across the university. We could be thinking about how we build out to provide, y'know, career pathways for professional staff."</i>

3. Diversity in Leadership

Since 2021, women's representation among senior staff has risen considerably, such that two thirds of academic and professional leaders are now women (see Table 7 & Table 14 in profiles above). In 2026, key Executive positions show gender balance, excepting among the highest-ranking Executive professional roles (Table 19). All high-level governance committee memberships comprise minimum 40% women (Table 20).

. Nine Senior Indigenous positions (7% of all senior staff) are embedded within the Division of Indigenous Leadership and across WSU Faculties (see Key Priority Area 5, p.82).

However, VC-GEF research found low visibility for LGBTIQ+ leaders² and diversity estimates drawn from 2025 Staff Engagement Survey responses suggest the Executive cohort lacks (≥5% differential) the cultural and linguistic, ability, and caregiver diversities of WSU's broader staff cohort (Figure 15). No dedicated programs or progression pathways are currently in place to enhance diversity in leadership at WSU.

Table 19. Key Executive Positions by Gender, 2026

WSU Key Executive Positions by Gender, 2026						
	ACADEMIC			PROFESSIONAL		
	W	M	W%	W	M	W%
Executive 1 (Provost, Head of Division, DVC, Executive Dean)	4	3	43%	0	2	0%
Executive 2 (PVC, Dean, & Chief)	12	11	52%	2	3	40%
Senior 3 (Executive Director and equivalent)	1	1	50%	15	11	58%
Total	17	16	52%	59	43	53%

² Denejkina, A., Lim, D., Turner, G., King, A., Shatnawi, E., Singh, R. & Marjadi, B. (2022). *Voice of Western through data unlinkability: Setting the agenda for better equity and inclusion of Western staff and students with diverse genders, sexualities, and sex characteristics.*

Table 20. WSU High-Level Governance Committees, 2026

WSU High Level Governance Committees, 2026			
	W	M	W%
Board of Trustees	10	7	58%
VC Management Board	2	2	50%
Senior Executive Team	6	9	40%
Academic Senate	23	18	56%
Total	41	36	53%

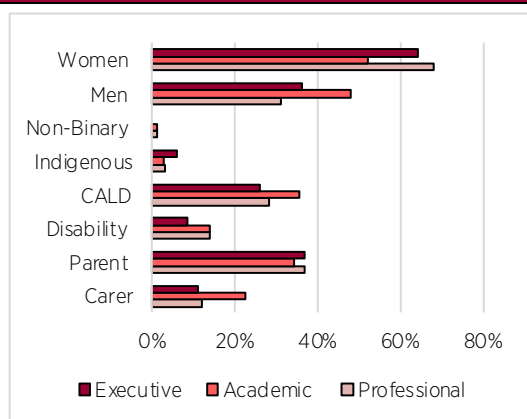


Figure 14. WSU Staff Diversity Estimates by Position Type, 2025

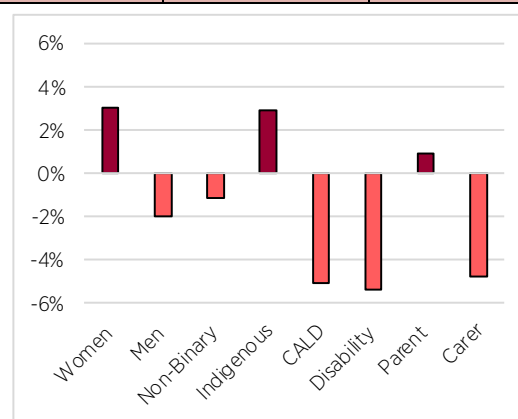


Figure 15. Cohort Gap Analysis: Executive Staff Diversity Relative to Non-Executive Staff Diversity, 2025

Organisational research indicates high staff sensitivity to limited diversity among WSU's senior leadership. A VC-GEF survey³ found that only 28% of respondents believed that there was equal access to leadership opportunity at the institutional level, with 25% believing that access was not equal and 47% unsure. Staff feedback evidenced localised effort to redress leadership imbalances but also illustrated strong staff perception of organisational culture barriers to leadership opportunity for WSU's diverse staff community (Table 21).

Table 21. Staff Feedback on Diversity in Leadership, VC-GEF Intersectionality Project, 2022

Diversity in Leadership: VC-GEF Intersectionality Project, 2022	
Theme	Staff Feedback
Pockets of Potential	"Our School still has disproportionately male senior personnel but is consciously seeking to redress this imbalance so as a woman if I seek opportunities for leadership, I am highly likely to be supported."
	"I have observed that leadership opportunities are given widely and there is an active effort to recruit diversely."
Perceived Limitations to Diversity in Leadership	"The composition of current WSU senior leaders gives the impression that there is very little chance of anybody with multiple disadvantages to climb the ladder that high. There seems to be a glass ceiling, since lower levels of leadership are certainly much more diverse. The impression is: it is nice to let multiply-diverse people to hold low-rank positions but when it's time to make 'real' decisions just leave it to the homogeneous group -- that is the cisgender, white, able-bodied people."
	"I don't feel I would ever be considered for leadership roles in my current area. Particularly majority of leadership roles are filled by males."
	"I do not think a woman of colour will be given equal opportunities for high-level managerial positions. We have never seen that happen in our uni."
	"There does seem to be something of a glass ceiling in place for women, particularly women who do not present as straight."
	"Without our Indigenous DVC, I would say I would not have access to leadership opportunities."
	"In a leadership role I have come to recognise the lack of diversity at executive levels – male, pale and stale is what I see. More work is needed on gender, race, and age on this front."

³ See Robinson *et al.*, 2022.

4. Workplace Cultures: Staff Experiences of Career Opportunity and Development

WSU's 2025 Engagement Survey provides a high-level overview of career drivers for staff across the University. Overall, staff report moderate positivity for the Learning and Development Category (56%) and low confidence that there are "good career opportunities for me" at WSU (43%). A simple visualisation of relevant responses by employment type (Table 22) shows little variation across academic and professional groupings, with the exception of career opportunity where professionals trend lowest. Casual academic response patterns reflect known challenges regarding disenfranchisement⁴, but also signal intention to stay.

Table 22. Staff Positivity for Relevant Engagement Survey Prompts by Employment Type, 2025

Staff Positivity for Relevant Engagement Survey Prompts, 2025					
	Positive Response Rate (%) by Cohort				
	ALL STAFF	ONGOING & FIXED-TERM		CASUAL	
Prompt	WSU	Academic	Professional	Academic	Professional
CATEGORY: LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT	56%	55%	54%	53%	67%
My manager/supervisor (or someone in management) has shown a genuine interest in my career aspirations	63%	63%	63%	57%	77%
I have access to the learning and development I need to do my job well	57%	56%	55%	54%	70%
I am given opportunities to develop skills relevant to my interests	57%	55%	58%	43%	67%
The University is a great place for me to make a contribution to my development	58%	54%	57%	64%	72%
I believe there are good career opportunities for me at the University	43%	48%	38%	46%	52%
CATEGORY: ALIGNMENT & INVOLVEMENT	73%	72%	74%	67%	76%
I know what I need to do to be successful in my role	83%	81%	84%	81%	86%
I know how my work contributes to the goals of the University	81%	81%	80%	70%	80%
CATEGORY: ENGAGEMENT	57%	55%	58%	65%	56%
I see myself still working at the University in two years' time	60%	63%	60%	68%	47%

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

Diversity patterns by employment type (Table 23 & Table 24) show:

- a marginal academic gender gap with men trending higher, especially regarding knowledge for career success;
- comparable positivity by gender for professionals, excepting women's projected retention;
- consistent relative positivity for academics of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- high satisfaction and retention indicators for Indigenous professionals, with contrasting patterns for Indigenous academics;

⁴ See Willis & Smith, 2024.

- significant challenges for academics with disability (in particular), as reflected in 2024–2025 promotions outcomes.

An extended intersectional analysis of responses by contract type, level, gender, and diversity groupings found:

- junior staff and non-binary professionals skewed more positively, but women approaching senior leadership see few opportunities to develop skills relevant to their interests;
- gender gaps for culturally and linguistically diverse staff, especially regarding enablers for career success;
- mixed gender patterns for academic casuals but significant gender gaps for casual professional women.

Elaborated findings (Table 25) detail implications for diversity in retention and career advancement at WSU.

Table 23. Academic Positivity for Relevant Engagement Survey Prompts by Diversity Grouping, 2025

Academic Positivity for Relevant Engagement Survey Prompts, 2025						
Prompt	Positive Response Rate (%) by Cohort					
	ACADEMIC					
Prompt	WSU	W	M	Indigenous	CALD	w Disability
CATEGORY: LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT	55%	57%	59%	53%	60%	40%
My manager/supervisor (or someone in management) has shown a genuine interest in my career aspirations	63%	66%	65%	67%	68%	51%
I have access to the learning and development I need to do my job well	56%	58%	60%	50%	62%	39%
I am given opportunities to develop skills relevant to my interests	55%	56%	60%	42%	60%	42%
The University is a great place for me to make a contribution to my development	54%	57%	57%	58%	61%	40%
I believe there are good career opportunities for me at the University	48%	51%	53%	50%	53%	29%
CATEGORY: ALIGNMENT & INVOLVEMENT	72%	72%	76%	69%	74%	60%
I know what I need to do to be successful in my role	83%	78%	87%	83%	81%	71%
I know how my work contributes to the goals of the University	81%	81%	84%	75%	80%	72%
CATEGORY: ENGAGEMENT	55%	59%	60%	53%	61%	49%
I see myself still working at the University in two years' time	63%	66%	70%	50%	71%	55%

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

Table 24. Professional Positivity for Relevant Engagement Survey Prompts by Diversity Grouping, 2025

Professional Positivity for Relevant Engagement Survey Prompts, 2025						
Prompt	Positive Response Rate (%) by Cohort					
	PROFESSIONAL					
	WSU	W	M	Indigenous	CALD	w Disability
CATEGORY: LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT	54%	57%	56%	75%	57%	49%
My manager/supervisor (or someone in management) has shown a genuine interest in my career aspirations	63%	67%	60%	87%	64%	63%
I have access to the learning and development I need to do my job well	55%	57%	57%	77%	58%	49%
I am given opportunities to develop skills relevant to my interests	58%	60%	62%	74%	60%	53%
The University is a great place for me to make a contribution to my development	57%	61%	60%	74%	60%	51%
I believe there are good career opportunities for me at the University	38%	41%	42%	65%	42%	29%
CATEGORY: ALIGNMENT & INVOLVEMENT	72%	77%	73%	78%	77%	72%
I know what I need to do to be successful in my role	84%	86%	84%	87%	87%	81%
I know how my work contributes to the goals of the University	80%	76%	73%	79%	84%	81%
CATEGORY: ENGAGEMENT	58%	63%	58%	78%	62%	54%
I see myself still working at the University in two years' time	60%	65%	54%	81%	63%	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

Table 25. Relevant Staff Engagement Survey Findings, 2025

Selected Engagement Survey Findings, 2025	
Finding	Finding Detail
High positivity for non-binary professionals	Despite low representation, non-binary professionals (n=10) were most consistently positive of all staff across almost all L&D prompts (80–100% positivity) yet remain unconvinced that “there are good career opportunities” at WSU (40%).
Relative positivity for junior staff, but not sustained for women	Among ongoing and fixed-term staff the most positive L&D responses came from the most junior staff (Level A academics and HEW 1-4 professionals), with few gender differentials. However, women at the next career stage (Level B and HEW 5) were among the least positive across the University and frequently substantially ($\geq 10\%$) less positive than their male counterparts.
Uplift in perceptions for women at mid-career but without retention indicators	Women academics’ comparative positivity uplifted at mid-career, with both Level C and Level D women each rating three L&D prompts significantly ($\geq 10\%$) more positively than same-level men. Nonetheless, both women cohorts were less likely than their male counterparts to see themselves working at the University in two years’ time (Level C women 69% compared with 78% for Level C men; Level D women 59% compared with 67% for Level D men).
Higher level women report fewer opportunities for leadership	Women on the precipice of senior leadership (Level E and HEW 9) are less likely than men to agree that they are given opportunities to develop skills relevant to their interests (Level E academic women 57% compared with 73% for Level E men; Level 9 professional women 61% compared with 70% for Level 9 men).
High satisfaction for Indigenous professionals, but retention risks for Indigenous academics	Indigenous professionals were among the most positive of all staff across L&D prompts (74–87% positivity), most likely to believe that “there are good career opportunities” at WSU (65%) and most likely to see themselves still working at the University in two years’ time (81%). By contrast, Indigenous academics were among the least likely to see themselves still working at the University in two years’ time (50%) and among the least likely to agree that they are given opportunities to develop skills relevant to their interests (42%). Indigenous staff findings are further contextualised in dedicated work at Cygnet 5.

Gender gaps for cultural diversity	Men of culturally diverse backgrounds were typically more positive (5-10%) than culturally diverse women across relevant prompts. Importantly, culturally diverse women were less sure than culturally diverse men that they “know what they need to do to be successful” for both academics (-10% gender gap) and professionals (-9% gender gap). These trends track with results elsewhere across the survey where culturally diverse women were significantly less positive than culturally diverse men about open and honest communication and readily available information.
Significant challenges for staff with disability	Consistent low positivity across this Engagement Survey (and previous Engagement Surveys) indicates staff with disability require additional support across all aspects of employment. For L&D prompts, academics with disability were the least positive of all staff. Here, total category positivity (40%) fell well below the average for academics without disability (59%). Professionals with disability presented a smaller gap to other professionals for the L&D category (-9%), but women professionals with disability were the least likely across all groups to believe that there are good career opportunities at WSU (31%).
Gender gaps for casuals, especially professionals	Among academic casuals, women were less positive for access to L&D for job efficacy (-10%) and capacity to develop skills relevant to interests (-5%) but substantially more likely to signal intent to stay (+15%). For casual professionals, women were unerringly less positive across the L&D Category (-13%), across Alignment and Involvement (-10%) with impact for retention intent (-9%).

Current Experiences of Career Planning

In early 2026, a Western SAGE Career Planning Scoping Survey ($n=60$) sampled staff perceptions of existing (nascent) Career Planning processes. Responses broadly reflected Mapping Exercise findings for regularity, quality, equity embeddedness, and supervisor preparedness:

- Professionals were more likely to report no experience of Career Planning in the past two years (Figure 16). However, one quarter did receive regular Career Planning (minimum every six months). Academics were more likely to report occasional and regular experiences (Figure 17). No casuals reported a Career Planning conversation;
- For those who had recent experience, professionals were substantially less satisfied with Career Planning quality than academics (Figure 18 & Figure 19);
- Less than one third of professionals and approximately one quarter of academics were satisfied with how equity, diversity and inclusion are addressed in Career Planning conversations (Figure 21 & Figure 20);
- Only half of supervisors felt prepared to undertake effective Career Planning conversations (Figure 22), with academic supervisors best prepared (+14%). Notably, two thirds of supervisors felt prepared to address equity, diversity and inclusion in Career Planning conversations (Figure 23), more than twice staff satisfaction with this practice.

While the survey offers only a snapshot of staff experiences, respondent diversity (which matched Engagement Survey proportions) also illustrated trends of interest for overall satisfaction with current Career Planning practices (Table 26):

- One quarter or fewer staff were satisfied across all employment types and diversity groups;
- Staff with disability, LGBTIQA+ staff and men were most dissatisfied;
- Staff of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and staff who are first in family were most ambivalent about overall experiences, but both groups reported high dissatisfaction with how equity, diversity and inclusion are addressed in Career Planning conversations (+17% and +11% respectively, compared with averages).

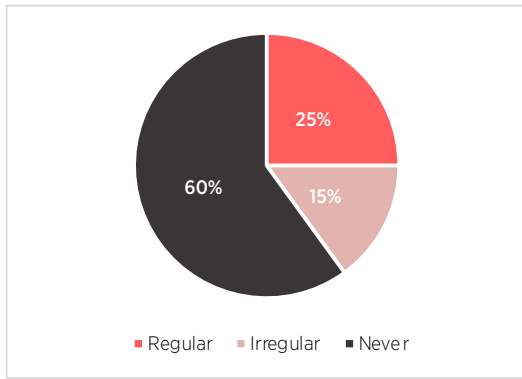


Figure 16. Professional Career Planning Frequency, Western SAGE CP Survey 2026

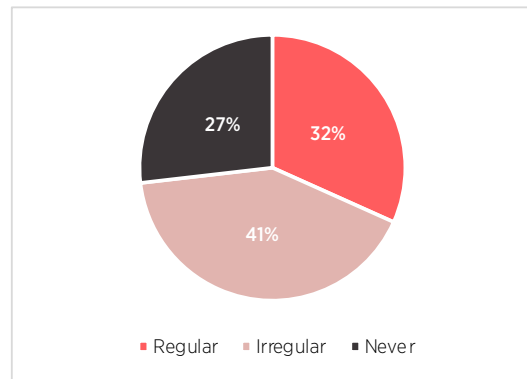


Figure 17. Academic Career Planning Frequency, Western SAGE CP Survey, 2026

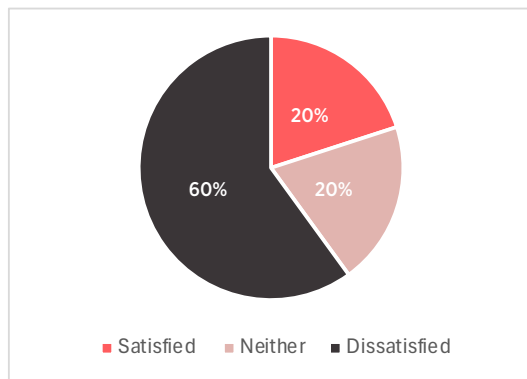


Figure 18. Professional Satisfaction with Career Planning Quality, CP Survey 2026

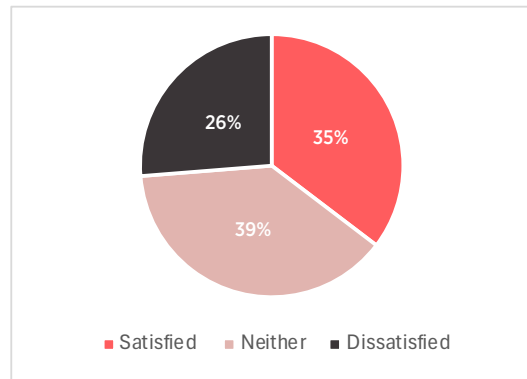


Figure 19. Academic Satisfaction with Career Planning Quality, CP Survey 2026

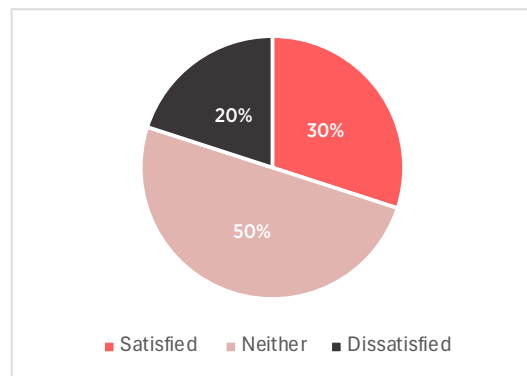


Figure 21. Professional Satisfaction with DEI in Career Planning Conversations, CP Survey 2026

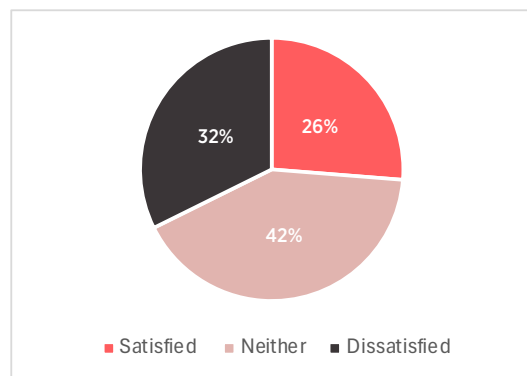


Figure 20. Academic Satisfaction with DEI in Career Planning Conversations, CP Survey 2026

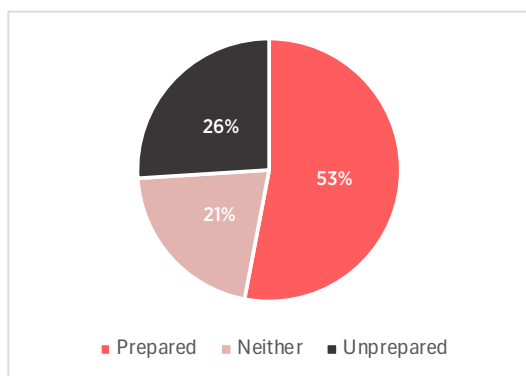


Figure 22. Supervisor Preparedness to Undertake Effective Career Planning, CP Survey 2026

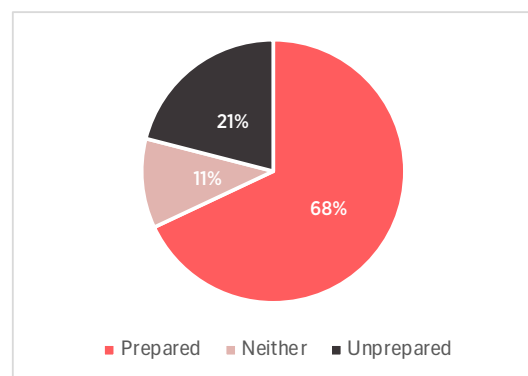


Figure 23. Supervisor Preparedness to Address DEI in Career Planning, CP Survey 2026

Table 26. Overall Satisfaction with Current Career Planning Practices by Diversity Grouping, 2026

Overall Satisfaction with Career Planning, 2026									
Overall, how satisfied are you with your past experiences of Career Planning at WSU?	Response Rate (%) by Cohort								
	WSU	Aca	Prof	W	M	LGBTQA+	CALD	w Disability	FIF
Satisfied	17%	14%	25%	18%	18%	0%	10%	0%	16%
Neither	31%	37%	20%	38%	18%	27%	43%	18%	32%
Dissatisfied	52%	49%	55%	44%	65%	73%	48%	82%	52%

Colour Legend	
	10+% more dissatisfied than average
	10+% less dissatisfied than average

As open-text comments elaborated, a lack of foundation for Career Planning has meant that where career conversations do take place they are mostly experienced as cursory, 'tick-a-box' exercises (Table 27). An equity lens on conversations is rare and insufficient. Academics (but not professionals) frequently fill gaps by offering or engaging in mentorship with peers.

Table 27. Staff Feedback: Cursory and Insufficient Career Planning Experiences

Cursory and Insufficient Career Planning Experiences	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Engaged Career Conversations Are Rare	<i>"In most cases it felt like a tick a box exercise that needed to be submitted to the system as opposed to a career planning conversation." (SP77, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>"My last supervisor was the first who actually discussed my career trajectory and aspirations, particularly in relation to research. It was a welcome change from discussions purely about workloads and undergraduate teaching." (SP58, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>"Never engaged in true conversations at WSU, they are all bureaucratic to tick a box. No planning no real support." (SP67, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>"There has not been much focus on professional development apart from few and far between learning programs. Career Development/progression is not an area of interest to the Uni leadership." (SP75, professional, woman)</i>
	<i>"I have found in the past [...] that we complete the document and have in it what we want to do/learn/achieve in the next 12 months, but it is never followed up by the supervisor, and no time is given to it, so work gets in the way and your career plan goes out the window." (SP6, professional, woman)</i>
	<i>"Mainly through yearly workplan agreement discussions. No real encouragement on in depth talk about career planning, more like this is what I plan to do this year, and generally the level of conversation was just "yep, looks good"." (SP52, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>"Apart from very occasional and highly superficial research advice (rarely very useful) after many pleading emails and usually too late to be effective, I have received no career support or advice." (SP21 academic, woman)</i>
	<i>"I don't feel like the university is interested at all in helping me to advance my career." (SP10, academic, woman)</i>
Equity Focus is Rare and Insufficient	<i>"[Equity] has never been a topic of conversation in any career planning discussions with any of my supervisors at WSU." (SP12, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>"I don't know if this was ever considered at any point." (SP42, professional, woman)</i>
	<i>"Manager says they consider these aspects but show no regard for work/life balance." (SP60, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>"Cultural diversity is often backgrounded and underestimated" (SP15, academic, man)</i>
	<i>"These conversations don't take into account the diversity of diversity, they are unidimensional, diversity only means one thing here." (SP67, academic, man)</i>
	<i>"We all seem to recognise that career pathways differ considerably between individuals and yet our career planning has not really explored those differences and sought to support people to pursue their unique contributions to knowledge, pedagogy or leadership. We ask our people to work really hard and put a lot of energy into their work, so it seems the least we could do is to create a workplace that actively supports our people to flourish in all their idiosyncrasy." (SP12, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>"One of the challenges in career planning is there doesn't really appear to be individualisation – everyone trends a similar path." (SP24, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>"There seems to be an assumption that incoming Level As know about "career planning" or have had conversations and a perspective on it. As a decasualised Level A, switching from 'gaining full time employment' to understand what the academic career scope and progression is, and how to orient and</i>

	<i>plan for it, is not clearly articulated at the start. Particularly with my other [First in Family and] culturally diverse colleagues, Level A was figuring out and managing heavy teaching workload and how to acquit research. Progress was about reporting what we accomplished. Senior colleagues and supervisors may or may not encourage application to various roles and for promotion, but there are no conversations to help reorient a perspective on our position; what career planning looks like, over what time frames we are thinking and should plan for.” (SP5, academic, woman)</i>
For Academics, Career Planning Gaps Often Filled by Informal Mentoring	<i>“The conversations I had were often with mentors who were also friends and sometimes in large groups. Most of the conversations were informal and had no formalised goals or outcomes associated with them.” (SP18, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>“I did not have a career planning manager as such, but received informal collegial planning advice from colleagues and supervisors and learnt to think of these ‘on the job’ [...] Collegial advice based on personal experience is often the most useful, but requires generous sharing of personal experiences and some reflection on how and whether it applies to myself.” (SP5, academic, woman).” (SP5, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>“There is no clear understanding, category or practice of “career planning” from either a manager or managee perspective. As a subject coordinator I have ‘lead’, ‘managed’ and ‘supported’ peers (even academics on higher levels than me) and casuals, but I do that for the subject, not for the staff member. I assume the staff member has other aspects outside the subject that they consider for their career, and they are developing their planning accordingly. If they ask, I will advise and show how I would best manage, and if I see them struggling, I will similarly offer advice and practice where I have capacity.” (SP5, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>“I supervise a team of sessional staff, most are HDR students. Some staff I have very little contact with if I am not teaching with them. Others, there is no time outside of class contact hours dedicated to any planning or career discussions. I have provided reference letters, or been a referee for some staff who were applying for jobs after their PhD/masters.” (SP52, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>“I feel like I have done much of this [career planning work] independently. That works for me but it wouldn’t work for everyone (and it shouldn’t have to).” (SP61, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>“Peers are often the best place to talk about careers, but maybe not always the best place to get advice on what to do next or why or how or where you want your career to take you.” (SP18, academic, woman)</i>
Casuals Typically Omitted	<i>“I feel bad that there is no career planning opportunities for casuals in my area.” (SP3, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>“I supervise casual staff working on research projects, so [the responsibility to engage in career planning] doesn’t really apply. We maybe have informal conversations about where they’d like to be in 3 years and I try to mentor them but this is outside of any formal ‘career planning.’” (SP61, academic, woman)</i>

Staff also detailed structural and cultural barriers to effective Career Planning (Table 28). Academics were fearful about limited (formal) governance roles post-Reset, perceived bias among decision-makers, and felt supervisors were too time poor to offer quality career conversations. Professionals saw a mismatch between Career Planning objectives and funding/progression opportunities and identified supervisor turnover and perceived supervisor disinterest as further obstructions. Both academics and professionals felt supervisors needed more training and clear expectations to deliver effective Career Planning conversations.

Table 28. Staff Feedback: Structural and Cultural Barriers to Career Planning

Structural and Cultural Barriers to Career Planning	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Academic Barriers: Perceived Bias, Limited Formal Governance Roles, Persistent Culture of Competition, and Supervisor Workloads	<i>“I have often applied for governance roles and been passed over for them, making it hard to develop consistent track record. I have found leadership opportunities in other forms [...] and have done a lot of [Career Planning] for management skill development, but none of this is really as good as [...] building a track record of successful management experience. There is just not much opportunity to develop this at WSU.” (SP12, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>“Many senior roles seem to be filled through hand-picked appointment from among staff the current managers already know well. They seem to be more often given to men and to academics from STEM disciplines.” (SP12, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>“The Reset process has severely limited governance roles available to those at Level C. This is likely to make it much harder to develop a rounded promotion application for Level D. If the governance structure of doesn’t enable one to progress, it makes career planning difficult.” (SP58, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>“It is a dog-eat-dog environment with unfair and preferential nepotism thriving at the expense of others.” (SP21, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>“In the last 12 months I think people were just so worried about keeping their job [...] growth and development wasn’t really considered.” (SP37, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>“Supervisors, previously DAPs now HODs as well as Deans, do not have the time needed to help staff with career planning. It’s all just up to the individual.” (SP60, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>“Workload of manager was very high and focused on obtaining soft money for the running of the Institute, so opportunities to plan and talk about career futures was limited.” (SP77, academic, woman)</i>

Professional Barriers: No Clear Trajectory, Limited Funding Support, Perceived Supervisor Disinterest and Lack of Supervisor Training	<i>"Supervisors have been doing their best but have not been given any training or had expectations set for them about career-planning conversations with the staff they supervise." (SP12, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>"The job description I was given was generic, did not fit with my responsibilities and I have never had clear objectives." (SP70, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>"Although career planning conversations are lacking, I can see both the workload of supervisors (not enough time for them) and also their actual interest/experience/skill in career planning or advising for me and others are factors to consider. I would like more career planning conversations, but not if it is another check-box exercise that everyone has to do and with their supervisors who either have no skill or interest in holding these conversations." (SP52, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>"Management being upskilled to support their staff, not being so stretched that they tell me "I only have X time allocated for this conversation". It doesn't make you feel like a valued members of staff or that they care about others." (SP1, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>"There is no career progression really for Professional Staff." (SP43, professional, woman)</i>
	<i>"He [my manager] was actually very supportive about my career but I felt he was also limited in what could be offered as funding for opportunities wasn't a lot." (SP55, professional, woman)</i>
	<i>"In my previous role, I was promised opportunities to progress and to review my grade, but this never happened, leaving me very unsatisfied, as I was working above my grade for over 18 months. I love working for WSU and am always looking for ways to be more involved and take on more responsibilities, but this experience has left me feeling jaded." (SP16, professional, woman)</i>
	<i>"There is this annual performance review we need to write and asked us about our career goals, however, since my manager changes every 6-12 months, there is no actual real progress on career planning or real conversations." (SP20, professional, woman)</i>
	<i>"I have managed staff at WSU in the past [...] and took a genuine interest in supporting their career goals as best I could. I have seen first hand that it makes a difference to the motivation of staff if they feel supported in this way. The problem is some managers just don't take it seriously, or can't be bothered." (SP32, professional, man)</i>
	<i>"I think [career planning managers are] expected to just be given a direct report, do an online module and go. I had to learn on the fly how to seek opportunities for my direct reports if they were beyond my skillset." (SP13, professional, woman)</i>
	<i>"I know how to have the conversations [with my staff around career planning], but don't always know what to do to help them." (SP13, professional, woman)</i>

5. Scoping Future Action: Career Planning Opportunities

Promotions and mobility patterns alongside Engagement and Career Planning Survey findings evidence clear opportunities to enhance equity in career opportunity by establishing a robust Career Planning landscape, activated by systems and practices that support frequent, flexible, and equity-informed career conversations tailored to staff interests and development needs.

To guide action planning, the Career Planning Survey scoped staff priorities for enhancing current practices. Reporting which aspects of Career Planning are of most importance, staff response patterns by employment type⁵ and gender broadly illustrated:

- planning for development and for advancement were of high importance to all groups;
- planning for development was especially important to women (92%), and less important to men (72%);
- about half of all groups sought planning for internal mobility, with women rating mobility slightly higher than men (+9%);
- planning for external mobility was of least importance across groups, but almost twice as important for women (31%) than for men (17%);
- of all groups, professionals were most interested in planning for future leadership or management opportunities.

⁵ Responses for casual staff were below Western SAGE reporting threshold of 10 (see Challenges and Learnings, p.6). However, prior VC-GEF research clearly establishes casual staff interest in planning for development and for increased job security (see Willis & Smith, 2024; Smith, 2022).

Table 29. Staff Priorities for Career Planning, 2026

Staff Priorities for Career Planning, 2026					
Which aspects of Career Planning are important to you?	Response Rate (%) by Cohort				
	WSU	Aca	Prof	W	M
Planning for <u>development</u> (e.g., skills, research, or other professional development)	86%	84%	88%	92%	72%
Planning for <u>internal career mobility</u> at WSU	51%	51%	52%	53%	44%
Planning for <u>external career mobility</u> (within or beyond higher education)	28%	29%	28%	31%	17%
Planning for <u>advancement</u> to a higher level	78%	76%	84%	84%	67%
Planning for future <u>leadership</u> and/or management opportunities	65%	56%	84%	67%	61%

Colour Legend	
	≤25% important
	≥75% important

Staff were invited to detail suggestions for improvement. Academics sought equitable access to sustained career conversations, leadership and skills development targeted to their interests, achievable expectations, engaged supervision, consistency but flexibility in processes, equity-informed approaches, and understanding of the diversity of career trajectories (Table 30).

Table 30. Academic Staff Recommendations for Improving Career Planning

Academic Recommendations for Improving Career Planning	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Academics: What We Need	<i>"Some sort of specific leadership program for academics who wish to pursue senior leadership pathways could be very valuable for me and others like me who want to be part of leading higher education institutions." (SP12, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>"I'd love to have an ongoing mentor. Someone with the time and interest to support me and help me work out what I'm good at and how to turn that into a viable and robust career." (SP10, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>"I would really like to see ALL employees, not just those who are loud in meetings or work on campus a lot to be valued and supported and developed." (SP37, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>"I would prefer more structured collegial support around career planning." (SP12, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>"[We need] the existence of good managers who see it as their jobs to assist the careers of the staff who work extremely hard to provide a decent service to students while desperately attempting to pursue research. These people rarely have the skills or attitudes to undertake this." (SP21, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>"Career discussions need to be flexible and consider the complexity of people's life stories and trajectories. I think we benefit from the diversity of different career styles and progress, that should be celebrated over a cookie cutter model." (SP18, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>"There needs to be more tailored [support] for different equity groups that bring attention to strategies for navigating careers, especially for those less familiar with academia." (SP77, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>"Broader executive understanding that not all career pathways are the same, and that it's actually important to support employee strengths, rather than forcing everyone into the same pipeline." (SP10, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>"Conversations for fixed term staff need to be different than for ongoing staff - job insecurity can severely limit opportunities which in turn impacts on ability for promotion." (SP22, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>"A focus on alternative academic careers. [...] Training in leadership and conversations about what good leadership looks like in a career." (SP18, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>"Better culturally informed, better-quality advice, better mentoring and clearer pathways with transparency." (SP15, academic, man)</i>
	<i>"Better transparency in standards across the university whilst also expressly respecting discipline-specific characteristics." (SP8, academic, man)</i>
	<i>"We are constantly told that industry engagement is important, but we are not given any support to create leads or new relationships, it is expected that we know how to do it. What does an industry partnership even look like, how does one go about negotiating it?" (SP25, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>"Maybe a checklist for supervisors to run through with to check. Progress reports only in non-teaching sessions before semester. Collegial peers at the same level sharing experiences and point of views to discuss where we are at, what we find are best practice strategies to manage from practice, and how to plan short and longer term from there." (SP5, academic, woman)</i>

Professionals sought clear progression pathways with supportive frameworks, more access to quality training and workshops, and attentive, sustained support that demonstrates value and interest in their careers (Table 31).

Table 31. Professional Staff Recommendations for Improving Career Planning

Professional Recommendations for Improving Career Planning	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Professionals: What We Need	<i>"For professional staff, I think clearer career pathways and progression frameworks would make a big difference. It would help to understand what skills, experience, and development are needed to move into the next level or into different portfolios across the University." (SP31, professional, man)</i>
	<i>"Having onsite training and not cheapening out and relying on LinkedIn videos that are irrelevant." (SP29, professional, man)</i>
	<i>"Focus and commitment by leadership to my career progression." (SP75, professional, woman)</i>
	<i>"I think more education is required for new staff, particularly younger ones transitioning from student/casual roles so they know more about it." (SP13, professional, woman)</i>
	<i>"Actively manage their staff's careers, experience and training to ensure better outcomes for all." (SP9, professional, man)</i>
	<i>"Tools, workshops, and training sessions available to you so you don't have to go through your direct manager." (SP7, professional, woman)</i>
	<i>"Supervisor training in how to help their staff with career planning and then perhaps a meeting with each team member to ascertain what they want and how to go about it. Set up a 12-month plan. Then monthly meetings to check if everything is on track and if anything needs changing." (SP6, professional, woman)</i>
	<i>"The University used to have really great training programs to support career planning and professional development. The ability to send my staff to a training day to learn new skills that align with their goals would be great." (SP39, professional, woman)</i>

Supervisors requested greater training, opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, better tools and systems to support career planning processes, and more time to conduct quality career conversations (Table 32).

Table 32. Supervisor Recommendations for Improving Career Planning

Supervisor Recommendations for Improving Career Planning	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Supervisors: What We Need	<i>"If significant staff development is to happen, supervisor workload, staff workload and training resources need to be allocated to it." (SP44, academic, man)</i>
	<i>"Supervisor training in a room together (not just online self-paced) is needed for socialisation of the specific culture change we need at WSU." (SP12, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>"[More time for planning - which is officially recognised in workplans for everyone and having career planning as an explicitly stated in role of responsibilities for supervisors (with adequate time and training for them too).]" (SP52, academic, woman)</i>
	<i>"Better frameworks, tools, opportunities, support for colleagues engaging in their planning management." (SP17, academic supervisor, man)</i>
	<i>"Better leadership training opportunities." (SP22, academic supervisor, woman)</i>
	<i>"All people managers at the University need to have a KPI for measuring how well they support their staff in this way. Additionally, all departments need realistic funding for tailored, individualised staff development." (SP32, professional ex-supervisor, man)</i>
	<i>"I am very cognisant of the ways gender, carer status, disability, Indigenous and CALD backgrounds may influence staff equity and opportunity. But I would welcome clearer expectations for all here too." (SP12, academic supervisor, woman)</i>
	<i>"A system that is easy to use for planning, checking-in and revising, and affirming performance. Ensuring staff do not fear or resist engagement." (SP8, academic supervisor, man)</i>
	<i>"Perhaps consider mandating a half-day staff PD sessions once a term. [...] And offer in-person orientation." (SP55, professional supervisor, woman)</i>
	<i>"More skills in coaching and career planning." (SP13, professional supervisor, woman)</i>
	<i>"Anything. Currently nothing is not enough." (SP29, professional supervisor, man)</i>

Career Planning for Academic Staff Action Plan (2026–2032)

Executive Sponsors: Executive Dean ECS, Executive Dean Health, Executive Dean SABEL & Research Institute Nominee

KEY PRIORITY AREA 1: CAREER PLANNING FOR ACADEMIC STAFF						
REF.	RATIONALE	ACTIONS & OUTPUTS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	SUCCESS INDICATORS
1.	Western SAGE's Career Planning Mapping Exercise identified a nascent and insufficient career planning landscape, with a mixture of tools in place, many of which are not considered useful across local contexts. WSU requires a strategic and equity-informed Career Planning landscape that provides foundation for a forward-focused cultural shift toward Career Planning across the University.	Develop and structure a foundational Career Planning landscape of coalescing equity-informed frameworks and tools that: - shift the University's performance culture toward forward planning, goal-setting, continuous development and career opportunity; - include a new <i>Academic Staff Capability Framework</i> that clearly defines professional skills, capabilities and trajectories across diverse roles and academic levels, including Indigenous cultural Knowledges and capabilities; - embed inclusive leadership values and support diverse progression and leadership pathways for professional staff across the University.	2026 - 2027	Heads of Divisions (as relevant) and Organisational Development	Heads of Divisions and Executive Director Organisational Development & DEI	A robust Career Planning landscape provides a strong foundation for flexible, equitable and ongoing career conversations for academics at WSU.
2.	All-purpose frameworks provide important clarity about expectations and capabilities across academic levels, but require equity-informed implementation to ensure: disciplinary specificity and application; ongoing responsiveness to relative opportunity for caregivers and underrepresented cohorts, and; embedded understanding of non-linear career trajectories. The implementation of academic frameworks should also consider the following findings: Academics register particular anxiety about the transition into informal governance responsibility, seeking clearer understanding about how contributions to these responsibilities will be distributed, recognised, and rewarded; Indigenous academics report lower positivity about career opportunity and signal retention risks; STEMM	Implement the newly-established Career Planning landscape with careful consideration for equitable access, Achievement Relative to Opportunity, and diverse progression pathways/ aspirations. Staged delivery to include: - pilot workshops with key Cygnet cohorts (e.g., STEM Women+, Decasualised Level A academics); - scaffolding supervisor support, including guidance for how to consider equity in Framework implementation; - evaluation of Framework utility, adaptability, and inclusiveness for Career Planning purposes;	Pilot: 2026 Refine: 2027 Embed: 2028	Executive Deans, Organisational Development and Western SAGE	Faculty Executive Deans	Frameworks implemented and perceived as accessible, inclusive and equitable, with ongoing refinements responsive to equity advice.

KEY PRIORITY AREA 1: CAREER PLANNING FOR ACADEMIC STAFF						
REF.	RATIONALE	ACTIONS & OUTPUTS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	SUCCESS INDICATORS
	women promotions trends indicate gender-disproportionate delays in self-identifying promotions readiness.	embedding frameworks as strategic tools for Career Planning and Career Coaching purposes, with relevant equity refinements for ongoing implementation.				
3.	Academics seek more career support overall and equitable support across local contexts. Findings across Cygnets 1 and 2 evidence a need for frequent, flexible, and equity-informed career conversations tailored to staff interests and development needs, with robust and ongoing supervisor training and support to raise overall preparedness and DEI capacity.	Embed Career Planning Conversations, with emphasis on: - empowering staff of all genders, backgrounds, caregiving circumstances and career trajectories to develop in alignment with self-defined goals; - building inclusive leadership capacity for current and future leaders. Scaffold implementation to ensure: - process alignment with equity-informed Frameworks across the newly-established Career Planning landscape; - support for supervisors to develop preparedness and capacity for effective, flexible, and equity-responsive Career Planning; - minimum expectation for twice-annual conversations, with equitable access for casual staff.	Pilot: 2026 Refine: 2027 Embed: 2028	Faculty Executive Deans and Heads of Divisions, with support from Organisational Development and Western SAGE	Provost and Chief of Operations	Academic supervisors report high levels of preparedness to implement effective and equity-informed Career Planning conversations; Academics report minimum twice-annual Career Planning conversations; Academics report high satisfaction with quality, regularity, and equity aptitude of career conversations.
4.	New frameworks (e.g., Academic Capability Framework) make frequent reference to academic coaching, a practice that as-yet does not have broad purchase at WSU. Mentoring is a more frequent practice but Deans across the University report a limited pool of quality mentors to service staff needs (see also Cygnets 3 and 4). As coaching is introduced and mentoring matures, WSU should ensure equitable access and inclusive implementation.	Develop equity-informed and supportive Career Coaching and Mentoring Models, with supportive resources for implementation across WSU that: - identify good-practice coaching and mentoring models at WSU and across the sector; - tailor key elements to WSU's context, with adaptability across disciplinary contexts; - underwrite models with foundational equity principles; - develop supporting resources for use by coaches, mentors and mentees.	Develop & Pilot: 2027 Refine & Embed: 2028	Faculty Executive Deans, with support from Organisational Development and Western SAGE	Faculty Executive Deans	Coaching and Mentoring models adopted across WSU; Coaches and Mentors report high levels of preparedness to deliver effective and equitable coaching/mentoring; Equitable participation for ECRs, culturally diverse women, staff with disability, and academics in Divisions; Coaching and mentoring recipients report effective and equitable coaching/mentoring.

KEY PRIORITY AREA 1: CAREER PLANNING FOR ACADEMIC STAFF						
REF.	RATIONALE	ACTIONS & OUTPUTS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	SUCCESS INDICATORS
5.	Diversity in senior academic leadership positions is limited, especially for diversity beyond gender. Only 28% of surveyed staff believe that there is equal access to leadership opportunity at the University level and feedback illustrates strong staff perception of organisational culture barriers to diversity in leadership opportunity. Western Reset also saw the reduction of formal academic governance roles within Faculties and Schools. As such, the importance of fostering of inclusive leadership pipelines is pronounced in a post-Reset environment.	Develop and implement Faculty-based leadership shadowing programs for formal governance roles that: - provide experiential leadership opportunity; - foster inclusive leadership pipelines, with particular focus on: priority for Indigenous academics and culturally diverse women; equitable access for part-time staff and for staff with disability.	Develop & Pilot: 2027 Refine & Embed: 2028	Faculty Executive Deans, with support from Organisational Development and Western SAGE	Faculty Executive Deans	Programs launched, with (minimum) cohort-proportional participation for culturally diverse staff, part-time staff and staff with disability.
6.	Western SAGE's Career Planning Mapping Exercise identified minimal career planning for casual staff across the University. VC-GEF research indicates that casuals seek greater enfranchisement in the workplace, targeted development, and increased career guidance at WSU (see Willis & Smith, 2024; Smith, 2022). Aspirational and disciplinary differences require a diversified suite of Career Planning offerings for casual staff, while communication barriers challenge Career Planning implementation for this cohort. WSU continues to scope casual staff career priorities and practical approaches to action implementation. <i>Note: this is a shared action item with Career Planning for Professionals</i>	Enhance career development, engagement and opportunity for Casual Academics by: - appointing a Casual Staff Consultation Group to codesign and prioritise a variety of targeted supports; - establishing a Casual Staff Network to build connection, establish a clear engagement mechanism, and facilitate the delivery of targeted supports; - establishing a Casual Staff Skills and Specialisations Register to facilitate the appointing of academic casuals to teaching opportunities aligned with their experience and interests (with mutual benefit for Subject Coordinators); - scope feasibility for introducing small-scale casual staff-specific professional development scholarships (immediate goal) and a more substantial, dedicated Casual Staff Researcher Development Award (long-term goal).	From 2027	All other items: Office for People & Culture, with support from Western SAGE	Heads of Divisions and Chief People Officer	Casual staff report increasing enfranchisement within the workplace, increased career guidance and greater development opportunity.
7.	New academic promotions data (2-year trend only) indicates disproportionately low promotions application and success rates for staff with disability. Academics with disability also report significantly lower positivity across Engagement	Undertake co-designed research into career barriers and enablers for academics with disability , including by: consulting with academic staff with disability within upcoming Academic	From 2026	Western SAGE	SAGE Research Lead	Disability-inclusive refinements to Academic Promotions policy and processes incorporated within review recommendations;

KEY PRIORITY AREA 1: CAREER PLANNING FOR ACADEMIC STAFF						
REF.	RATIONALE	ACTIONS & OUTPUTS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	SUCCESS INDICATORS
	survey results, with specific trends around development and career opportunity.	Promotions policy and practice review; ▪ establishing a consultative group of academics with disability to co-design research principles and methodologies (DEI-Fund project); ▪ applying for National Disability Research Partnership funding to support dedicated research into career barriers and enablers at WSU and across the sector; ▪ promoting HDR and casual staff engagement with the national Disability Research Leadership Program.				Disability-specific research methodologies established; Dedicated research project delivered, with learnings incorporated into Actions 1–7.
8.	The implementation of Career Planning systems and processes will require careful monitoring to ensure inclusive co-design and equitable implementation is having the desired effect, with refinements embedded as systems take hold.	Monitor Career Planning participation, outcomes and impacts , tailoring processes as relevant to enhance outcomes and impacts for underrepresented groups.	Check-In: 2027 Mid-Point Eval: 2029	Western SAGE	SAGE Academic Lead	Evaluation findings disseminated to key stakeholders and staff; Ongoing equity challenges identified and remediated.

Career Planning for Professional Staff Action Plan (2026–2032)

Executive Sponsors: Chief People Officer & Executive Director Organisational Development and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

KEY PRIORITY AREA 2: CAREER PLANNING FOR PROFESSIONAL STAFF						
REF.	RATIONALE	ACTIONS & OUTPUTS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	SUCCESS INDICATORS
1.	Western SAGE's Career Planning Mapping Exercise identified a nascent and insufficient career planning landscape, with a mixture of tools in place, many of which are not considered useful across local contexts. WSU requires a strategic and equity-informed Career Planning landscape that provides foundation for a forward-focused cultural shift toward Career Planning across the University.	Develop and structure a foundational Career Planning landscape of coalescing equity-informed frameworks and tools that: ▪ shift the University's performance culture toward forward planning, goal-setting, continuous development and career opportunity; ▪ include a new <i>Professional Staff Capability Framework</i> that clearly defines professional skills, capabilities and trajectories across diverse roles and HEW levels, including Indigenous cultural Knowledges and capabilities; ▪ embed inclusive leadership values and support diverse progression and leadership pathways for professional staff across the University.	2026 - 2027	Organisational Development	Executive Director Organisational Development & DEI	A robust Career Planning landscape provides a strong foundation for flexible, equitable and ongoing career conversations for professional staff at WSU.
2.	All-purpose frameworks provide important clarity about expectations and capabilities across professional levels, but require equity-informed implementation to ensure: local specificity adapted to professional specialisations; ongoing responsiveness to relative opportunity for caregivers and underrepresented cohorts, and; embedded understanding of non-linear career trajectories. The implementation of professional frameworks should also consider the following findings: potential sponsorship (and other) bias preventing equitable uptake of opportunity for women in School/Institute contexts; Engagement Survey results indicate gender gaps for casuals, especially professionals; pilot programs require clear reciprocal benefit for Indigenous staff.	Implement the newly-established Career Planning landscape with careful consideration for equitable access, Achievement Relative to Opportunity, and diverse progression pathways/ aspirations. Staged delivery to include: ▪ pilot workshops with key Cygnet cohorts (e.g., Indigenous professionals, staff with disability, professional STEM women); ▪ scaffolding supervisor support, including guidance for how to consider equity in Framework implementation; ▪ evaluation of Framework utility, adaptability, and inclusiveness for Career Planning purposes for professional staff across local contexts, including alignment with ARtO	2026 - 2027	Organisational Development & Western SAGE	Executive Director Organisational Development & DEI	Frameworks implemented and perceived as accessible, inclusive and equitable, with ongoing refinements responsive to equity advice.

KEY PRIORITY AREA 2: CAREER PLANNING FOR PROFESSIONAL STAFF						
REF.	RATIONALE	ACTIONS & OUTPUTS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	SUCCESS INDICATORS
		principles and flexibility for non-linear career trajectories; embedding Frameworks as strategic tools for Career Planning and Career Coaching purposes, with relevant equity refinements for ongoing implementation.				
3.	Western SAGE's Career Planning Mapping Exercise confirmed limited opportunities for Career Planning for professional across the University. Engagement and Career Planning Survey responses reinforced prior research findings regarding professional staff about the lack of investment in their careers. A clear organisational need has been established for WSU to embed inclusive career conversations that empower professional staff of all genders, backgrounds, caring circumstances, and career trajectories to develop in alignment with self-defined career goals. New Career Planning process must be supported by robust and ongoing supervisor training and support to raise overall preparedness and DEI capacity.	Embed Career Planning Conversations , with emphasis on: - empowering staff of all genders, backgrounds caregiving circumstances and career trajectories to develop in alignment with self-defined goals; - building inclusive leadership capacity for current and future leaders. Scaffold implementation to ensure: - process alignment with equity-informed Frameworks across the newly-established Career Planning landscape; - support for supervisors to develop preparedness and capacity for effective, flexible, and equity-responsive Career Planning; - minimum expectation for twice-annual conversations, with equitable access for casual staff.	Pilot: 2026 Refine: 2027 Embed: 2028	Heads of Divisions and Faculty Executive Deans	Chief of Operations	Professional supervisors report high levels of preparedness to implement effective and equity-informed Career Planning conversations; Professionals report minimum twice-annual Career Planning conversations; Professionals report high satisfaction with quality, regularity, and equity aptitude of career conversations.
4.	Current professional staff development funds are drawn from a central pool. The redistribution of development funds to per-head allocation will ensure more equitable access for professional staff and alignment with self-determined career goals.	Increase professional staff development investment to 80 hrs & \$1,000 per staff member (1.0FTE) per year	2026	Chief People Officer	Chief of Operations	Target for professional staff investment achieved; Increased professional staff satisfaction with development opportunity
5.	Professional staff desire clearer progression pathways and immediate opportunity for enhanced mobility across the organisation.	Develop a task-based and equity-informed professional staff job architecture that: - draws on substantial data gathering for task intelligence mapping across roles; - is mapped to existing and emerging professional skills and capabilities,	2027	Organisational Development	Executive Director Organisational Development & DEI	Job architecture incorporates Indigenous cultural capability and is implemented for workforce planning.

KEY PRIORITY AREA 2: CAREER PLANNING FOR PROFESSIONAL STAFF						
REF.	RATIONALE	ACTIONS & OUTPUTS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	SUCCESS INDICATORS
		including Indigenous cultural Knowledges and capabilities; ▪ supports immediate short-term project work and task-based skills development for professional staff; ▪ supports the future mobilisation of professional staff skills across the University.				
6.	Organisational data indicates limited mobility for professional staff. Mobility scarcity impedes long-term career opportunity for all professionals. Differential uptake patterns for women may also indicate sponsorship (or other) bias and/or systemic barriers within available opportunities (e.g., lack of flexibility). Indigenous professionals also lament 'progression ceilings' within identified roles and seek additional opportunity for growth and diversified experience within those roles.	Develop and activate a structured and inclusive internal Professional Staff Mobility Program , aligned with job architecture and career planning processes and with focus on: ▪ building a culture of opportunity and continuous development; ▪ equitable access for Indigenous staff, staff with disability, culturally diverse staff, LGBTIQA+ staff and caregivers. Program design should ensure: ▪ continuation of flexible work arrangements and Reasonable Adjustment Plans; ▪ culturally-informed and culturally safe mobility opportunity for Indigenous staff; ▪ digital and physical accessibility for staff with disability. Opportunities should include: ▪ short-term project work and task-based skills development; ▪ secondment and internal transfer; ▪ leadership and executive job-sharing; ▪ leadership shadowing; ▪ equity-informed succession planning for HEW 8 roles and above.	2030	Executive Director Organisational Development & DEI	Chief People Officer	Internal Mobility Program is established and perceived as accessible, culturally safe, and equitable; Equitable uptake of mobility opportunities for women, Indigenous staff, caregivers and staff with disability; Improved professional satisfaction with career opportunity, including for key equity cohorts.
7.	Western SAGE's Career Planning Mapping Exercise identified minimal career planning for casual staff across the University. VC-GEF research indicates that casuals seek greater	Enhance career development, engagement and opportunity for Casual Professionals by:	From 2027	Career Conversations: All supervisors of	Heads of Divisions and Chief People Officer	Casual staff report increasing enfranchisement within the workplace, increased career guidance

KEY PRIORITY AREA 2: CAREER PLANNING FOR PROFESSIONAL STAFF						
REF.	RATIONALE	ACTIONS & OUTPUTS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	SUCCESS INDICATORS
	enfranchisement in the workplace, targeted development, and increased career guidance at WSU (see Willis & Smith, 2024; Smith, 2022). Aspirational and disciplinary differences require a diversified suite of Career Planning offerings for casual staff, while communication barriers challenge Career Planning implementation for this cohort. WSU continues to scope casual staff career priorities and practical approaches to action implementation. <i>Note: this is a shared action item with Career Planning for Academics.</i>	▪ appointing a Casual Staff Consultation Group to codesign and prioritise a variety of targeted supports; ▪ establishing a Casual Staff Network to build connection, establish a clear engagement mechanism, and facilitate the delivery of targeted supports; ▪ introducing Career Planning Conversations for casual research assistants (in the first instance), with expectations for internal and (where funding allows) external development opportunity aligned to their interests; ▪ establishing a Casual Staff Skills and Specialisations Register to facilitate the appointing of casual professionals to research project work aligned with their experience and interests (with mutual benefit for Chief Investigators); ▪ scope feasibility for introducing small-scale casual staff-specific professional development scholarships (immediate goal) and a more substantial, dedicated Casual Staff Researcher Development Award (long-term goal).		Casual Research Assistants All other items: Office for People & Culture, with support from Western SAGE		and greater development opportunity.
8.	The implementation of new Career Planning systems and processes will require careful monitoring to ensure inclusive co-design and equitable implementation is having the desired effect, with refinements embedded as systems take hold.	Monitor Career Planning participation, outcomes and impacts , tailoring processes as relevant to enhance outcomes and impacts for underrepresented groups.	Check-In: 2027 Mid-Point Eval: 2029	SAGE	SAGE-AL	Evaluation findings disseminated to key stakeholders and staff; Ongoing equity challenges identified and remediated.

KEY PRIORITY AREA 3: STEM WOMEN+

Cygnets Rationale

Under-representation for women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) is a sector-wide challenge. This Cygnets aims to drive meaningful GEDI progress in WSU's STEM disciplines by focusing its work across four Schools embedded within the Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Science (ECS):

- School of Computer, Data and Mathematical Sciences (CDMS);
- School of Science;
- School of Engineering;
- School of Built Environment and Design.

The framing of this Cygnets as 'STEM Women+' aims to be inclusive of trans and gender diverse staff and signals intersections beyond gender of importance to the work, including contract type, cultural diversity and Indigenous identity.

As Key Barrier data illustrates, to grow academic representation for STEM Women+ at the highest levels, more needs to be done to recruit MCR women and to nurture talent through the pipeline. While STEM Schools present differing gender profiles and discipline-specific GEDI challenges, key performance data also indicates differing strengths across STEM School contexts. The collaborative design for this Cygnets therefore presents an opportunity for cooperation, the sharing of learning and resources, and reciprocal leadership support to drive gender-responsive workplace culture change across local STEM contexts.

Evidence of Barrier

1. STEM School Gender Profiles

Disclaimer: WSU's recent organisational restructure saw STEM Schools collectivised under a new Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Science and the disaggregation of the School of Engineering, Design and the Built Environment (EDBE) into two Schools. For the purposes of future benchmarking and trend analyses, staff gender profiles have been retroactively mapped to the new Faculty structure for Cygnets 1. However, all workforce data for this Cygnets pertains to the period prior to the restructure (2020–2024), for which new School of Engineering and School of Built Environment and Design data cannot be extracted from EDBE totals. WSU also employs significant numbers of Research-focused staff in STEM disciplines across Research Institutes, who are excluded from analysis.

In 2024, 64.7FTE and 27% of ongoing/fixed-term academics in School-based STEM disciplines at WSU were women (Table 33 – Table 36), on par with national averages.⁶ School of Science held the highest representation (33%), followed by the School of Computing, Data and Mathematical Sciences (CDMS, 29%). School of Engineering, Design and Built Environment (EDBE) held the lowest overall representation (21%) but was the only STEM School to achieve cohort-parity for women Professors (also 21%).

⁶ WSU STEM School women's representation relative to sector averages: CDMS, +3%; EDBE, +3%; Science, -2%; STEM Schools overall, -1%. Comparative data excludes Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies disciplines which are not taught by STEM Schools at WSU. See DISR. (2022). *Teaching and research workforce in STEM and other fields*. <https://www.industry.gov.au/publications/stem-equity-monitor/workforce-data/teaching-and-research-workforce-stem-and-other-fields>

Since 2020, higher growth for STEM women (+14.7FTE) compared with STEM men (+2.8FTE) has seen a 4% uplift in women's overall representation. When viewed by level, collective trend data (Table 33) shows:

- women have increased their share of Level A (+19%), B (+5%) and C (+5%) positions;
- at Level D, substantial growth for men (+13.1FTE) but stagnation for women (+0.5%), has corresponded to a significant drop in cohort proportion for D women (-8%), and;
- despite modest improvement (+2%) women's Level E representation remains critically low.

For individual STEM Schools, low numbers of women academics and (in some cases) significant movement for academic men resulted in large proportional fluctuations by level between 2020 and 2024. Nonetheless, trend data clearly shows that while all STEM Schools saw increases for women's representation across the period (with strongest growth in Science, +7%), most growth came for women ECRs, with representation for women in senior ranks a persistent challenge:

- CDMS: overall proportional growth for women (+5%) was largely driven by improvements at Level A (+5FTE). While women's share of Level C positions increased (+10%), this was due to a drop in C men (-7.4FTE). Conversely, at Level D a small increase for women (+1.5FTE) was exceeded by larger growth for men (+6FTE), reducing women's representation (-4%). Women remain drastically underrepresented at E (6%).
- EDBE: growth in women's representation was bookended at the most junior and most senior levels (A, +24%; E, +7%), with no corresponding growth at B-D.
- Science: greatest improvements were at Level B (+28%), with progress also visible at A (+12%) and C (+6%). However, at Level D high growth for men (+6.6FTE) and relative stagnation for women (+1.0FTE) decreased women's representative share (-18%). The 2023 internal transfer of one woman Professor reduced women's proportions at E (-5%).

Table 33. STEM Schools Academic FTE & Women's Representation, 2020 – 2024

STEM Schools Academic Staff FTE, 2020–2024										
Level	2020		2021		2022		2023		2024	
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
A	3.4	11.9	5.6	17.1	6.2	14.8	6.0	11.7	14.8	21.0
B	16.0	43.0	13.0	36.5	10.0	35.5	10.0	37.0	14.4	30.0
C	16.3	63.2	16.9	56.8	17.5	58.8	18.0	56.8	19.0	55.8
D	10.5	22.5	10.5	24.0	11.3	31.5	12.0	34.9	11.0	35.6
E	4.5	30.0	3.5	26.2	5.5	29.7	4.7	28.0	5.5	31.0
Total	50.7	170.6	49.5	160.6	50.5	170.3	50.7	168.4	64.7	173.4

Women's Representation						
2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	±	
W%	W%	W%	W%	W%	Change	
22%	25%	30%	34%	41%	+19%	
27%	26%	22%	21%	32%	+5%	
21%	23%	23%	24%	25%	+5%	
32%	30%	26%	26%	24%	-8%	
13%	12%	16%	14%	15%	+2%	
23%	24%	23%	23%	27%	+4%	

Table 34. School of Computing, Data and Mathematical Sciences (CDMS) Academic FTE & Women's Representation, 2020 – 2024

School of CDMS Academic Staff FTE, 2020–2024										
Level	2020		2021		2022		2023		2024	
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
A	2.0	2.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	7.0	6.0
B	3.0	6.0	3.0	6.0	2.0	7.0	2.0	9.0	2.0	8.0
C	4.0	17.0	4.0	14.6	4.0	12.6	4.0	10.6	4.0	9.6
D	2.5	6.0	2.5	8.0	3.5	10.0	4.0	12.3	4.0	12.0
E	0.5	7.0	0.5	7.0	0.5	7.0	0.5	7.0	0.5	8.0
Total	12.0	38.0	12.0	38.6	13.0	39.6	13.5	41.9	17.5	43.6

Women's Representation						
2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	±	
W%	W%	W%	W%	W%	Change	
50%	40%	50%	50%	54%	+4%	
33%	33%	22%	18%	20%	-13%	
19%	22%	24%	27%	29%	+10%	
29%	24%	26%	25%	25%	-4%	
7%	7%	7%	7%	6%	-1%	
24%	24%	25%	24%	29%	+5%	

Table 35. School of Engineering, Design and Built Environment (EDBE) Academic FTE & Women's Representation, 2020 – 2024

School of EDBE Academic Staff FTE, 2020–2024										
Level	2020		2021		2022		2023		2024	
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
A	0.6	7.9	1.4	10.5	1.0	10.2	1.0	7.7	5.0	11.0
B	6.0	23.0	3.0	18.0	3.0	17.5	3.0	18.0	3.0	16.0
C	4.4	16.2	4.6	17.2	4.0	17.2	4.0	18.2	5.0	19.2
D	4.0	12.5	4.0	13.0	3.0	15.0	3.0	15.0	2.0	13.0
E	2.0	11.4	1.0	10.6	3.0	12.6	4.0	12.0	4.0	14.0
Total	17.0	71.0	14.0	69.3	14.0	72.5	15.0	70.9	19.0	73.2

Women's Representation						
2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	± Change	
W%	W%	W%	W%	W%		
6%	12%	9%	11%	31%	+25%	
21%	14%	15%	14%	16%	-5%	
21%	21%	19%	18%	21%	-1%	
24%	24%	17%	17%	13%	-11%	
15%	9%	19%	25%	22%	+7%	
19%	17%	16%	17%	21%	+2%	

Table 36. School of Science Academic FTE & Women's Representation, 2020 – 2024

School of Science Academic Staff FTE, 2020–2024										
Level	2020		2021		2022		2023		2024	
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
A	0.8	2.0	2.2	3.6	2.2	1.6	2.0	1.0	2.8	4.0
B	7.0	14.0	7.0	12.5	5.0	11.0	5.0	10.0	9.4	6.0
C	7.9	30.0	8.3	25.0	9.5	29.0	10.0	28.0	10.0	27.0
D	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	4.8	6.5	5.0	7.6	5.0	10.6
E	2.0	11.6	2.0	8.6	2.0	10.1	0.2	9.0	1.0	9.0
Total	21.7	61.6	23.5	52.7	23.5	58.2	22.2	55.6	28.2	56.6

Women's Representation						
2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	± Change	
W%	W%	W%	W%	W%		
29%	38%	58%	67%	41%	+13%	
33%	36%	31%	33%	61%	+28%	
21%	25%	25%	26%	27%	+6%	
50%	57%	42%	40%	32%	-18%	
15%	19%	17%	2%	10%	-5%	
26%	31%	29%	29%	33%	+7%	

STEM Schools Diversity

In 2025, 7 STEM casuals and 20 STEM students but no ongoing/fixed-term staff identify as non-binary or gender diverse in HR systems.

Biannual Engagement Surveys consistently indicate that STEM Schools hold the highest proportion of culturally and linguistically diverse staff at WSU (44% in 2025, Figure 24). By contrast, Faculty ECS is the only academic unit with no ongoing/fixed-term academics identifying as Indigenous.

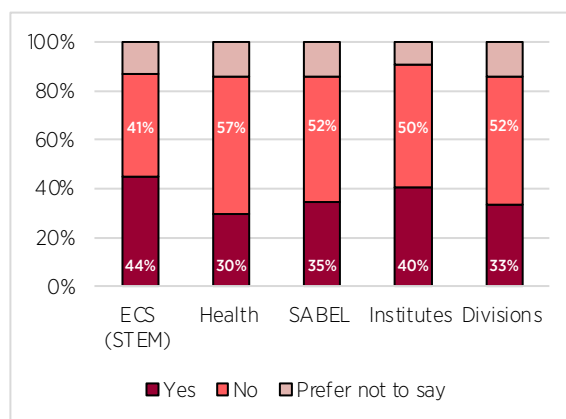


Figure 24. WSU Staff Cultural and Linguistic Diversity by Work Area, Engagement Survey 2025

2. STEM Women+ Attraction, Retention and Progression, 2020–2024

Using 2020 figures as baselines for women's cohort proportions by School and by level, key data trends and gap analyses provide further insight into GEDI successes and challenges across the 2020–2024 period.

STEM Women Recruitment

WSU's commitment to redress academic casualisation (see Cygnet 4) shaped STEM recruitment trends across the period: only 112 positions were appointed in five years, of which 46% were allocated to Decasualised Level A roles (Table 37).

Recruitment trends demonstrate broad GEDI success, with greater proportions of women applying for and appointed to vacant STEM positions relative to 2020 cohort representations. As

gap analysis by level (Figure 25) demonstrates, much success is attributable to Decasualisation, with women outpacing existing Level A cohort proportions in both applications (+10%) and appointments (+17%). Level B positions also saw cohort-equivalent applicant proportions (-1%) and strong appointment trends (+10%). Challenges persist from mid-career: while Level C women applicants were attracted at high rates (+14%), fewer were appointed (-7%); Level D women's rates were low for both applications (-13%) and appointments (-11%), and; of the two Level E positions recruited, neither went to women (despite promising application rates).

Cohort gap analyses by School (Figure 26) showed small cohort-relative gains for CDMS and EDBE and significant successes for Science (+14% applications; +24% appointments).

Table 37. STEM Academic Recruitment by Level and by School, 2020 – 2024

STEM Academic Recruitment by Level						
	APPLICATIONS			APPOINTMENTS		
	W	M	W%	W	M	W%
A	302	650	32%	20	31	39%
B	204	589	26%	7	12	37%
C	151	302	33%	3	18	14%
D	8	33	27%	4	21	16%
E	7	13	35%	0	2	0%
Total	694	1680	29%	34	78	30%

STEM Academic Recruitment by School						
	APPLICATIONS			APPOINTMENTS		
	W	M	W%	W	M	W%
CDMS	133	444	23%	4	11	27%
EDBE	210	725	23%	16	53	23%
Science	353	533	40%	16	16	50%
Total	694	1680	29%	34	78	30%

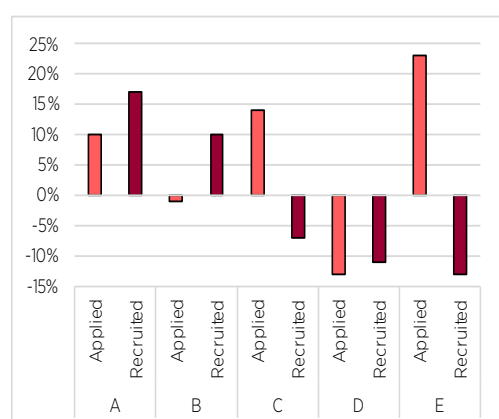


Figure 25. Cohort Gap Analysis: STEM Women's Recruitment Proportions Relative to Representation by Level, 2020 – 2024

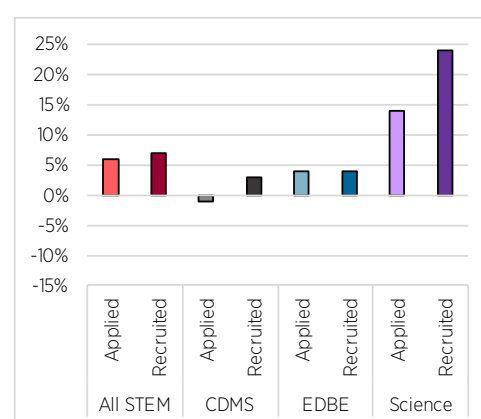


Figure 26. Cohort Gap Analysis: STEM Women's Recruitment Proportions Relative to Cohort Representation by School, 2020 – 2024

STEM Women Attrition

STEM women's attrition was minimal, preventing meaningful gap analysis by level. However, School trends saw CDMS record no academic women losses, but EDBE women were somewhat and Science women were significantly more likely to leave by resignation.

Table 38. STEM Academic Attrition by School, 2020 – 2024

STEM Academic Attrition by School						
	RESIGNATION			TOTAL ATTRITION		
	W	M	W%	W	M	W%
CDMS	0	1	0%	0	7	0%
EDBE	5	15	25%	7	38	16%
Science	5	2	71%	11	23	32%
Total	10	18	36%	18	68	21%

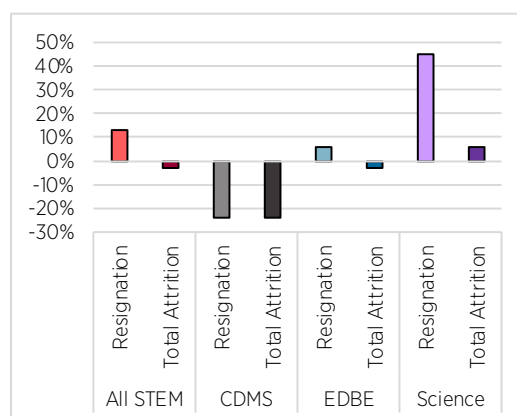


Figure 27. Cohort Gap Analysis: STEM Women's Attrition Proportions Relative to Cohort Representation by School, 2020 – 2024

STEM Women Promotions

Broadly, academic promotions trends aligned with gender cohort proportions (Table 39), however gap analyses (Figure 28 & Figure 29) reveal significant differentiations by level and School.

Cohort-relative results were excellent for women applicants to Level E and strong for C, but depressed for B and D, where women's underrepresentation in applications was compounded by lower success rates (B: 67% women, 83% men; D: 50% women, 64% men).

In CDMS, very low success rates (40%) suggest particular challenges for women, offsetting small cohort-relative gains for EDBE. Women's promotions in Science were at parity for applications (+1%) and slightly above for outcomes (+4%), helped by impeccable success rates (100%).

Table 39. STEM Academic Promotions by Level and by School, 2020 – 2024

STEM Academic Promotions by Level						
	APPLICATIONS			APPOINTMENTS		
	W	M	W%	W	M	W%
B	3	12	20%	2	10	17%
C	9	31	23%	8	20	29%
D	8	33	27%	4	21	16%
E	4	10	29%	3	5	38%
Total	24	86	22%	17	56	23%

STEM Academic Promotions by School						
	APPLICATIONS			APPOINTMENTS		
	W	M	W%	W	M	W%
CDMS	5	18	22%	2	11	15%
EDBE	12	42	22%	8	29	22%
Science	7	26	27%	7	16	30%
Total	24	86	22%	17	56	23%

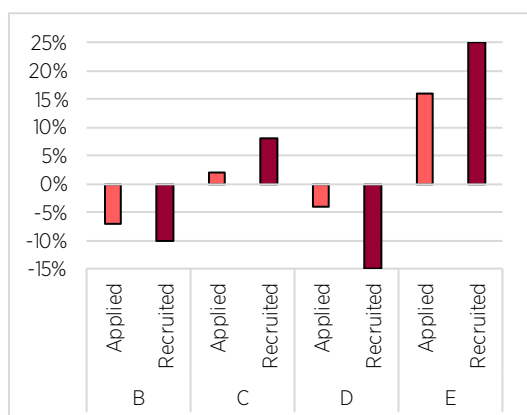


Figure 28. Cohort Gap Analysis: STEM Women's Promotion Proportions Relative to Representation by Level, 2020 – 2024

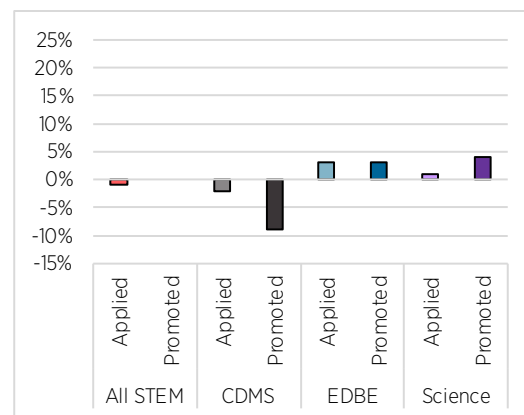


Figure 29. Cohort Gap Analysis: STEM Women's Promotion Proportions Relative to Cohort Representation by School, 2020 – 2024

3. Workplace Cultures: STEM Women+ Experiences

Engagement Survey results provide a high-level overview of culture drivers for STEM women. Responses (n=139) were reviewed by gender, gender x caregiving, and gender x cultural and linguistic diversity, then combined with thematic analysis of STEM Women+ Consultations.

Across the Engagement Survey, STEM women were significantly ($\geq 10\%$) more positive than STEM men for one category, but significantly less positive across five categories (Figure 30). For STEM women, positive gender differentials trended around prompts regarding supervisor relationships, teamwork and flexibility, while the largest negative gender differentials encompass leadership, communication, consultation, and career enablers.

Within the STEM women cohort, additional differentials were seen by cultural and linguistic diversity. Culturally diverse STEM women were significantly ($\geq 10\%$) more positive than non-culturally diverse STEM women across six categories, and significantly less positive for two (Figure 31). For culturally diverse STEM women, positive differentials trended around prompts regarding learning and development, career opportunity, reward and recognition, and comparative motivation, while the largest negative differentials encompassed team-specific belonging, feelings of authenticity at work, enablers for job efficacy/success, and honest communication.

Important specificities also arose within this intersectional analysis. Culturally diverse STEM women were the most likely by some margin to agree that WSU “is a great place for me to make a contribution to my development” (85% positivity, Figure 32). But despite optimism about development, culturally diverse STEM women were the least positive, again by some margin, to agree that, “I know what I need to do to be successful in my role” (55%, Figure 33). These trends pose **potential implications for culturally diverse STEM women’s career success**, placing high importance on equity-informed individualised Career Planning (see Cygnet 1) and inclusive leadership development within STEM Schools.

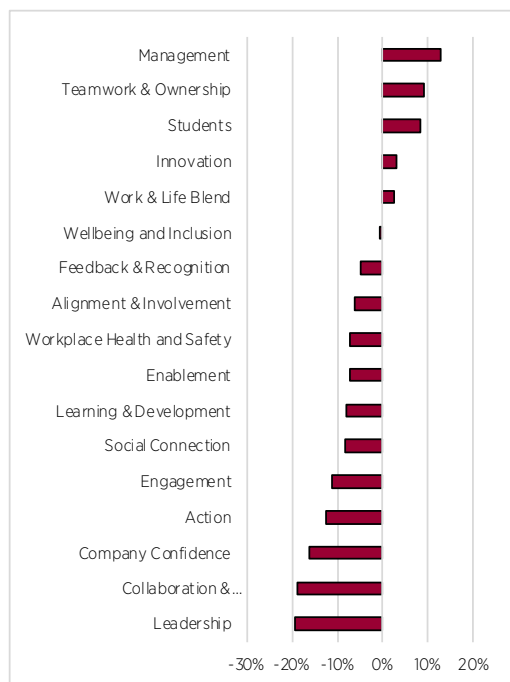


Figure 30. Gender Gap: STEM Staff Category Positivity, Engagement Survey, 2025

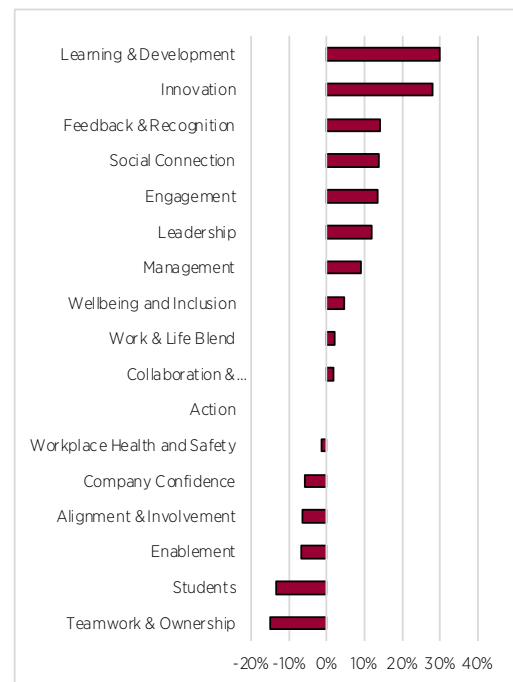


Figure 31. Cultural Diversity Gap: STEM Women Category Positivity, Engagement Survey, 2025

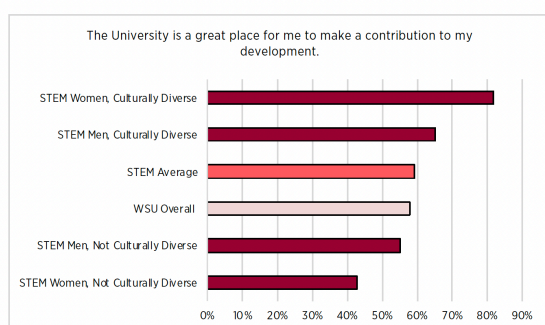


Figure 32. Cultural Diversity Gap (Positive): Development Opportunity Prompt

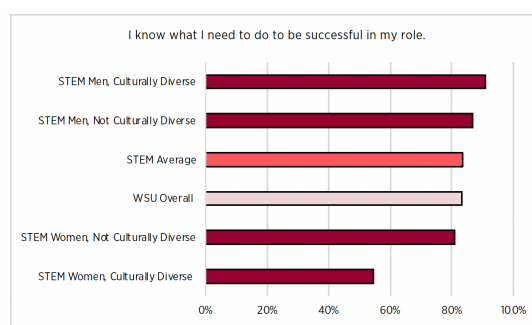


Figure 33. Cultural Diversity Gap (Negative): Knowledge for Success Prompt

Integrated Analysis

STEM Women+ Consultations described generally collegial School environments, with shared cultures of commitment and mutual support in close working teams. However, participants frequently observed that Schools were fractured and ‘siloed’, with little interaction outside of discipline groupings or across campuses. Siloed School cultures may have heightened impact for culturally diverse women, who are much less likely to report feeling part of a team (Figure 34) but *most* likely to feel that they belong at WSU (Figure 35). STEM women placed particular value in women leaders/mentors who offer mindful encouragement and model pathways for achievement. As such, they sought greater networking and team-building within and across School contexts, especially with leaders, with other STEM School women, and with STEM women across WSU’s Research Institutes.

Table 40. STEM Women+ Experiences: Siloed School Cultures with Women Supporting Women

STEM Women+ Experiences: Siloed School Cultures with Women Supporting Women	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Positive Workplace Cultures, but Siloed	<i>“It’s been really lovely that I can just pop my head down the hallway and be like, ‘Oh, hey, I have this problem, can anyone help me here?’” (STEM Woman, ECR, Decas, CALD)</i>
	<i>“I’ve only been here for a year and a half, but so far I feel positive in everything.” (STEM Woman, ECR, Fixed-Term, CALD)</i>
	<i>“Overall, it’s perfect. The culture is perfect.” (STEM Woman, Senior Career, CALD)</i>
	<i>“I had a bit of a bad experience at the very beginning, but overall everyone is supportive, and I love how people are accepted not for their colour, gender, or background, but for the person who they are. [...] So, with the limited experience I’ve had here, I feel very comfortable.” (STEM Woman, ECR, CALD, Recent Migrant)</i>
	<i>“We are quite siloed when it comes to trying to do a group project together, or something that would benefit the whole school. A lot of people are asking their immediate group, rather than looking outside, because we just don’t have networking events here. There’s not a lot of across campus or cross-discipline planning sessions, or networking sessions. [...] Having silos means they don’t know who their people are, so you can’t recognise talent or opportunities.” (STEM Woman, MCR, Parent A)</i>
Women Supporting Women	<i>“I think it’s important to have a woman just doing their thing and making it work and it’s awesome. It’s really awesome.” (STEM Woman, ECR, Decas, CALD)</i>
	<i>“Women are less likely to ask for help, but more likely to give help.” (STEM Woman, MCR, Parent A)</i>
	<i>“For me, the thing I’ve been most impressed by is the mentorship. [...] I’ve been reaching out to a lot of people for career mentorship and advice about CVs and that type of thing, and I’ve been super impressed by particularly the female mentorships within the department – both my line manager and then lots of the other more senior female academics who I feel have really taken me under their wing.” (STEM Woman, ECR, Fixed-term, Migrant)</i>
	<i>“One of the reasons why I chose my particular postdoc is my PI, who has children and manages to be a brilliant academic [...] and have that work-life balance. So, for me that was part of the reason for</i>

	<i>choosing the postdoc, in that I wanted to be mentored by a woman who was navigating that.” (STEM Woman, ECR, Fixed-term, Migrant)</i>
	<i>“I guess I never really saw myself as even getting to [a higher level role], but when we had [our previous Dean they] approached me and said, ‘Why didn’t you apply?’ So that was actually a positive during her reign as Dean, that she would kind of seek me out and say, ‘I’m going to support you for this’.” (STEM Woman, MCR, Parent, First in Family)</i>
	<i>“This School is really good at having women in executive positions. But the women who are in executive positions do make, I think, a better attempt to communicate and to know people that what the males do.” (STEM Woman, MCR, Parent A)</i>

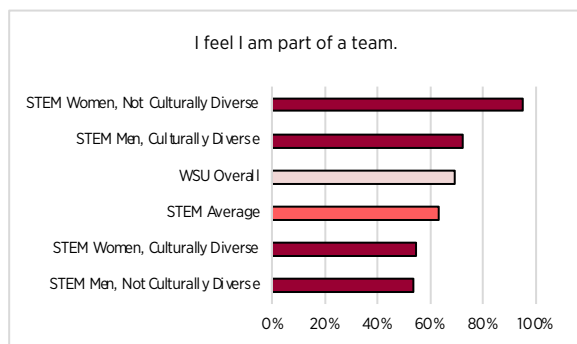


Figure 34. STEM Staff Positivity for "I feel I am part of a team" by Gender x Cultural Diversity, Engagement Survey 2025

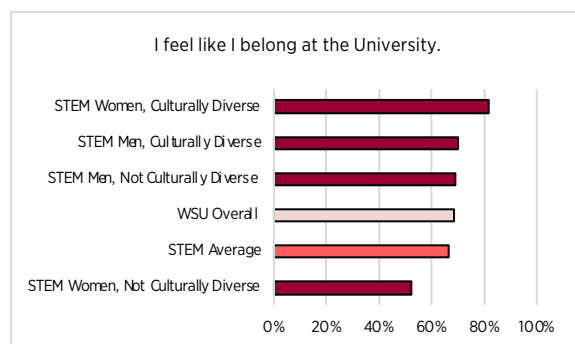


Figure 35. STEM Staff Positivity for "I feel like I belong at WSU" by Gender x Cultural Diversity, Engagement Survey 2025

Engagement Survey results indicate lower STEM women positivity regarding tolerance toward sexual harassment (-16%) and gender-based harassment (-16%) compared with STEM men. Culturally diverse women also report additional load when managing conscious and unconscious bias in the workplace, and a few Consultation participants described past experiences of adverse behaviour by senior staff, with lasting effect (Table 41). Ongoing impacts included stress and negative wellbeing, self-doubt and low ambition, disenfranchisement from School environments, and hesitancy around new leaders.

Table 41. STEM Women+ Experiences: Managing Bias and Legacy Effects of Past Adverse Behaviour

STEM Women+ Experiences: Managing Bias and Legacy Effects of Adverse Behaviour	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Culturally Diverse Women Managing (Un)Conscious Bias	<i>"I often get asked, 'oh, can I talk to the supervisor, the manager, the lecturer, the unit coordinator?' And it's like, 'you're speaking with her'. I've gotten that my entire adult life. I don't know if that's because I look young, I don't know if it's because I'm small stature, I don't know if it's because I'm [CALD background], I have no idea. [...] But I notice that [in lectures] I'm controlling for more behavioural management than my counterparts. [...] I notice that I have to be a bit more intimidating. [...] I just notice when [the respect] isn't there and I navigate accordingly." (STEM Woman, ECR, Decas, CALD)</i>
	<i>"When I go to the mixers at the University, the number of people who meet you and automatically assume you're a student... I'm like, man, I'm five years out of my PhD, you know what I mean? You would not assume this of somebody else. [...] It's a wider academia thing, which is a really funny contrast [with] how many brilliant women there are." (STEM Woman, ECR, CALD)</i>
	<i>"When I did apply for a promotion [...] I didn't attend any of the [promotion support sessions] because I'd already spoken to someone [in my School] about it, and they just said, 'there's no way you'd get it'. Then I spoke to someone over at [another School...] and they said, 'yeah, you definitely should do it, you've got everything you need'. I did. I got it straight away. It's tough. And then you hear people saying, 'oh, she only got it because she's a woman'. So, you can't win either way." (STEM Woman, MCR, CALD, Parent)</i>
	<i>"As I started my PhD, I was facing quite a bit of discrimination. Not from everyone, but there were one or two individuals who... put ethnicity forward. And the rest of their behaviours or acts followed that. [...] I think the [main] person who I dealt with is no longer here now, so maybe that's a good thing. Maybe sometimes, I believe people tend to judge 'oh, she's from a different country, okay... she's non-white'. [...] Not everyone, very much a minority. [...] Sometimes I feel like there's a gender disparity as well. And more [regarding] male perspectives in general. [...] Gender balance in representation within a team, having gender balanced input, would be nice to see and would be a different experience." (STEM Woman, ECR, CALD)</i>
	<i>"Our School has had a lot of change in leadership over previous years, and previous leaders have been biased to women. I think that has affected how a lot of women in the School interact with people and think of themselves in terms of their career progression. [...] It still leaves a legacy and a scar on how people deal</i>

Legacy Effects of Adverse Behaviour	<i>with their careers. [...] So, there's multiple women in [my School] who don't trust that they're going to be listened to or supported when they have an idea, or if they want to go for promotion." (STEM Woman, MCR, Parent A)</i>
	<i>"I think that the toxicity and the bullying that doesn't get addressed is a huge issue, because, for example, if you apply for a promotion, you need to have your line supervisor's approval. You need to have your line supervisor commenting on your yearly goals and so forth. So, I think that it's a huge roadblock." (STEM Woman, MCR, CALD, Disability, Parent)</i>
	<i>"We used to have a complaints unit but it's just a tick box exercise. [We need] accountability of leadership." (STEM Woman, Senior Career, CALD)</i>
	<i>"I'm always worried that when I go for a short-term contract that I might get discriminated [against]. I don't know if it's sex, but [I do feel that] a male wouldn't have the same risks." (STEM Woman, ECR, Fixed-Term, Migrant)</i>

At the School level, all STEM disciplines have seen new Deans appointed over the past three years. Across Consultations, new Deans were valued for their visible care for staff wellbeing, commitment to driving a positive workplace culture, and appetite for innovation (Table 42). However, STEM women viewed their broader School Executive teams less favourably, identifying poor communication, feedback and follow-through and low transparency in decision-making as critical factors. Engagement Survey trends support these findings, with STEM women reporting low confidence in senior leadership (29% positivity) and low positivity around consultation (29%). STEM women identified some resistance to GEDI reform among staff of all genders, with resistance presenting in leadership dynamics and in gendered forms: survivor bias for senior women and men's resentment toward women-targeted supports.

Table 42. STEM Women+ Experiences: Refreshed School Leadership, Broader Management Challenges

STEM Women+ Experiences: Refreshed School Leadership but Broader Management Challenges	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Refreshed School Leadership	<i>"[The new Dean] has been great when it comes to really trying to get the school out of this siloed mentality, because [they've] been holding networking events, [they] send emails regularly." (STEM Woman, MCR, Parent A)</i>
	<i>"The Dean, they want to do the right thing. Always." (STEM Woman, Senior Career, CALD)</i>
	<i>"I feel like I'm just singing my boss' praises, but [they're] great. [...] Having somebody older and more advanced looking out for you [is] really nice." (STEM Woman, ECR, CALD)</i>
	<i>"I think probably [the new Dean] has been the best Dean that we've had so far, just because I've been able to say to [them], look I have this role now, I've done it for three years, I need a break and [they] said, 'Okay, I understand that'. And [they've] listened." (STEM Woman, MCR, Parent)</i>
Broader Management Challenges	<i>"It's the next tier that makes it very difficult for [the Deans]. I feel sorry for all the Heads of Departments on the backs of [the next tier of governance]. Because they couldn't actually do what they believed in or what they wanted to do." (STEM Woman, Senior Career, CALD)</i>
	<i>"I feel like some of the males in the Associate Dean positions don't even care about doing the job that they're doing. They don't want to know the people that they should be leaders for. They don't care about communicating big changes that are happening, or events that are happening in that space." (STEM Woman, MCR, Parent A)</i>
	<i>"Within [my School], we don't have many Associate Professors or Professors to have these leadership positions, so I think that people who are at that level are put into these positions because the School is desperate, and so these people are not really good leaders." (STEM Woman, MCR, CALD, Disability)</i>
	<i>"They're telling us that we need to improve, and we haven't reached the bar, but they're not giving us what it is that we need to do. It's hard to learn from your mistakes or to improve when you don't know what it is that you need to improve on. That's at the highest level down to our immediate supervisors or internal applications. There's no feedback mechanism." (STEM Woman, MCR, Parent B)</i>
	<i>"If people get into the School, and then are put under that particular line manager, that line manager just poisons them, and talks about everyone. It just perpetuates the toxicity, so new people get indoctrinated and then they're the same." (STEM Woman, MCR, Disability, Parent)</i>
	<i>"People don't know the policies for a start [and] management don't apply them equitably. There's no training of people that are responsible for applying policy." (STEM Woman, MCR, Parent B)</i>
Resistance to Change	<i>"Those are the people who are often in these leadership roles, because they're a bit egotistical and they think, oh, well, I don't need to change." (STEM Woman, MCR, Parent, First in Family)</i>
	<i>"I would like diversity to come into the leadership and promote people properly, rather than some people blocking other people to get promoted. These things are making sure that the leadership is not diverse, because a certain group of people are trying to keep that leadership and blocking anybody who is a challenge to them and who actually have the leadership skills." (Woman, Senior Career, CALD)</i>

	<i>"Sometimes those women at the top, they have put in long hours, they're very work efficient [...] they got there and they're a Professor. And then they expect you to be sort of at that same... y'know, push, push, push. Instead of them taking that role and mentoring in a way [that supports] good work-life balance". (STEM Woman, MCR, First in Family)</i>
	<i>"The sad thing is [...] it wasn't women leading women, but women pushing down other women. [...] It's nearly like they forgot where they came from and made it harder. They had an expectation from back in their day [...] and they expected us to do it the way they did. [...] It was sad that there wasn't that capacity building from female executives. I'm not saying we should get special treatment, it just seemed like they were making our pathway harder than someone standing next to us that wasn't female." (STEM Woman, MCR, Parent B)</i>
	<i>"[Regarding WSU's Women's Fellowship] some of my male colleagues, they're like 'oh it's not fair, I don't get access to that'. And I'm like, 'well,,, yeah'." (STEM Woman, MCR, CALD)</i>

Across Engagement Survey results and within Consultations, women caregivers, and culturally diverse women (in particular) cited workplace flexibility as a critical enabler for career success. However, Consultations revealed an academic culture of 'overwork to get ahead', such that women felt they were asked to choose between career progression and family commitments. Caregivers also reported systemic obstacles to funding supports and a culture of self-advocacy that exacerbates barriers to access, causing overwhelm and (for some) disillusionment regarding their development. These accounts bring insight for Engagement Survey trends where STEM women were significantly less positive than STEM men about the reasonableness of workloads (35% compared with 54%), career opportunities (35% compared with 58%), and agreement that WSU "motivates me to go beyond what I would in a similar role elsewhere" (32% compared with 53%).

Table 43. STEM Women+ Experiences: Cultures of Overwork and Overreliance on Self-Advocacy

STEM Women+ Experiences: Cultures of Overwork and Overreliance on Self-Advocacy	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Personalised Flexibility, but Cultures of Overwork Presents Challenges for Caregivers	<i>"They just keep piling on to the things that you are doing well, or you have been doing consistently over the last few years, so there's no opportunity to do that in our workload time. We all have to do it outside of our time, and so from a promotion perspective, it makes it particularly hard for women at Level B and C to go higher, unless we make some significant sacrifices from a non-work perspective." (STEM Woman, MCR, Parent B)</i>
	<i>"Sometimes the woman who's at the top is there because she works like a man. I don't know how else to explain it., Works long hours, spends all weekend working. And then they say, 'Well, y'know, you should do that too'. I was like, 'Why? I've got kids at home'." (STEM Woman, MCR, Parent, First in Family)</i>
	<i>"We're being told if you don't work weekends and don't work nights, you're never going to get ahead. But what is it? Is it promoting work-life balance, or is it you're not going to make it here unless you give up your family?" (STEM Woman, MCR, Parent B)</i>
	<i>"We're already very high achievers, and it's like they take advantage of that. Y'know, we'll do it because we're told, and so then it's push, push, push. (STEM Woman, MCR, Parent, First in Family)</i>
Overreliance on Self-Advocacy for Support	<i>"We have to put ourselves forward, and it takes a lot of guts and confidence to be able to [do that], knowing that you're probably going to get knocked down." (STEM Woman, MCR, Parent B)</i>
	<i>"Sometimes the resources aren't available [...] we have to ask multiple people, talk to different people, and sometimes it goes on and on, and some people just pass it on to another one and I've faced that, and it really frustrates me sometimes, and it's a waste of time. In the middle of the process most often, people just give up." (STEM Woman, Casual, ECR, Migrant, CALD)</i>
	<i>"If you're a young academic, you might not know that you can [be upfront]. You might just be drowning in it and waving, but no one's helping you because you don't know how to ask or who to ask. [...] And maybe it's sort of a bit... there must be something wrong with me if I have to ask. Do you know what I mean? When you're young, you sort of think, 'Oh how can everyone else do it and I can't? [...] The younger me would never have asked." (STEM Woman, MCR, First in Family)</i>
	<i>"I came in at Level A and some of the more senior people mentioned that they were surprised that I hadn't negotiated up." (STEM Woman, ECR, Fixed-term, Migrant)</i>

STEM Women+ Action Plan (2026–2032)

Executive Sponsors: Dean of Science, Dean of Computing, Data and Mathematical Sciences, Dean of Engineering & Dean of Built Environment

KEY PRIORITY AREA 3: STEM WOMEN+						
REF.	RATIONALE	ACTIONS & OUTPUTS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	SUCCESS INDICATORS
1.	This Cygnet is designed as a cross-School collaboration to enable shared learning, shared resources, reciprocal leadership support and a coordinated effort toward GEDI goals.	Establish a STEM Women+ Cygnet Steering Group to: - oversee Cygnet Action Plan implementation; - socialise and advocate for Cygnet objectives across STEM Schools and Institutes; - foster collaboration between STEM Schools and Institutes; - track progress against objectives; - annually report progress to DEI Committee and STEM School staff.	Q3 2026	STEM School Deans & SAGE	Faculty Executive Dean ECS	Cygnet Action Plan implemented successfully; STEM staff report high familiarity with, support for, and engagement with STEM Women+ Cygnet objectives.
2.	Women's, trans and gender diverse under-representation in STEM disciplines is a persistent challenge at WSU. In 2024, total STEM women's representation is 27.2% and Level E representation is 15%. In 2025, no ongoing/fixed-term staff identify as non-binary or gender diverse in HR systems and no Faculty ECS academics are registered as Indigenous. A focus on women's recruitment in general and targeted focus at Level D and E would make significant impact.	Launch a targeted recruitment drive for STEM Women+ , including by: - designing a STEM Women+ recruitment landing page, with a refreshed and targeted Employee Value Proposition; - embedding Achievement Relative to Opportunity principles in STEM recruitment processes, with guidance for prospective applicants; - ensuring women's representation on shortlists aligns (at minimum) with applicant proportions; - establishing an always-open EOI process for prospective women, gender diverse and Indigenous applicants, with follow-up engagement by STEM Deans; - targeting women-specific appointments at D and E and within disciplines of especially low representation (EDBE only and pending appropriate exemption from the Anti-Discrimination Board);	From 2026	Organisational Development & STEM School Deans	Chief People Officer and STEM School Deans	35% STEM women+ representation by 2032. 7 Indigenous academics appointed by 2030.

KEY PRIORITY AREA 3: STEM WOMEN+						
REF.	RATIONALE	ACTIONS & OUTPUTS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	SUCCESS INDICATORS
		targeting Indigenous employment, including by appointing at least 1.0FTE Faculty ECS Indigenous IGNITE trainee each year and appointing a Faculty ECS Associate Dean Indigenous (see also Cygnet 5, Actions 2 & 5).				
3.	WSU STEM women report low confidence (29%) in senior leadership and low positivity (29%) around consultation. While STEM women value School Deans for their care and commitment, they view broader School Executive teams less favourably, citing low transparency in decision-making and poor communication, feedback and follow-through as critical factors. For some STEM women, legacy effects of past adverse behaviour (including gender and racial bias) were evident. STEM women also identified some resistance to gender equity reform among STEM staff of all genders, requiring intervention and advocacy by STEM leadership.	Build inclusive leadership capacity and accountability among STEM leadership teams, including by: - regularly reviewing gender patterns (and cultural diversity, where possible) for recruitment, ADP, Academic Promotions, internal grants, internal awards, and leadership/governance opportunity, with remediating action as necessary; - embedding a “Staff Equity, Culture and Engagement” standing item at School/Faculty Executive Committee, with annual reporting on <i>Gender Equity Policy</i> Key Performance Indicators and <i>Leadership Capability Framework</i> measures. - prioritising newly-appointed ECS Faculty Associate Deans, STEM School Heads of Disciplines, and prospective STEM women leaders (e.g., current Program Leads) for participation in newly-established Leadership Capability Development Program, with expectation to participate for all future appointees; - embedding periodic reverse-mentoring with ECR STEM women, guided by the University’s newly-developed Leadership Capability Framework (see Cygnet 1 & 2); - strengthening STEM School feedback cultures by instituting biannual peer-based and/or two-way evaluations.	2026 - 2027	STEM School Deans and Organisational Development	Faculty Executive Dean ECS and Chief People Officer	STEM Women+ report increasing confidence in leadership; STEM Women+ report decision-making transparency, the regular sharing of information, and equitable access to career-enabling opportunities, including: recruitment, ADP, Academic Promotions, internal grants, University Awards, and leadership/governance opportunity.

KEY PRIORITY AREA 3: STEM WOMEN+						
REF.	RATIONALE	ACTIONS & OUTPUTS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	SUCCESS INDICATORS
4.	STEM women report generally collegial environments across STEM Schools but experience disciplinary and campus-based 'siloes'. STEM women seek greater networking, connectivity and team building within and across School contexts, and especially with leaders and STEM women in other parts of the University (e.g., Research Institutes).	Establish a STEM Women+ Network that: - is open to all women and gender diverse academics and professionals and HDRs working across WSU's STEM disciplines at all levels and contract types (i.e., including ongoing, fixed-term, casual and adjunct appointees); - is self-governed by a leadership team representing a range of levels and reflecting the cultural diversity of STEM disciplines; - engages alumni and industry partners in key networking activities (e.g., Women Transforming the Built Environment annual industry networking breakfast); - contributes profiling STEM women's excellence (see Action 8); - partners with the Faculty Associate Dean HDR to coordinate the STEM Women+ HDR Mentoring Program (see Action 9); - hosts an annual STEM Women+ forum to deliver additional supports (as identified by the group) and to facilitate the tracking of Cygnet feedback.	Establish Q3 2026 Launch Q1 2027	STEM Cygnet Steering Group and Western SAGE	STEM Deans	STEM Women+ Network established with minimum 40% cultural diversity among Network leaders; STEM Women+ Network demonstrates strong staff engagement, activity and impact; STEM women+ report increasing collegiality across teams, Schools and campuses; STEM women, trans and gender diverse staff of all backgrounds report equity in network participation and see their values reflected in network priorities and objectives.
5.	STEM women report low positivity around career opportunity (35%) and comparative motivation (32%), much lower than for STEM men (58% and 53% respectively). STEM women also reflect lesser knowledge to be successful in their roles (71% compared with 89% for STEM men). Progression risks are also visible for culturally diverse STEM women, who were most likely (85%) to report development positivity but least likely (55%) to report role confidence and knowledge for success. STEM women also place particular value in women role models and leaders, especially through close mentorship where women are seen to offer	Design and launch a STEM Academic Coaching Program, that: - utilises adjunct and honorary appointees as coaching leaders; - draws upon the EPIC-C interdisciplinary 'peer-alliance' model (see McBride <i>et al.</i>, 2023); - is informed by a newly-established, equity-informed WSU coaching model (see Cygnet 1, Action 4); - incorporates interview formats as a development tool;	2027	STEM Deans	Faculty Executive Dean ECS	STEM women+ report increased positivity about career opportunity (+23% for gender parity); STEM women+ report increased positivity about possessing knowledge to succeed (+17% for gender parity); Gender balance in formal governance roles (e.g., Heads

KEY PRIORITY AREA 3: STEM WOMEN+						
REF.	RATIONALE	ACTIONS & OUTPUTS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	SUCCESS INDICATORS
	mindful encouragement and to model pathways for achievement in male-dominated disciplines.	- incorporates specific coaching streams for emerging STEM Women+ leaders; - includes external grant information and grant-writing advice; - connects with other Schools, Institutes and/or disciplines (e.g., medical science, MARCS, HIE).				of Discipline and Associate Deans) Gender balance in STEM promotions applications and success (see Action 6).
6.	Recent growth in STEM women's Level A representation and cohort-parity representation at B-D offers renewed opportunities to strengthen development across the STEM pipeline and, ultimately, to improve gender balance in the STEM Professoriate. WSU has implemented strong GEDI-informed improvements across academic promotions policy and supports, with significant outcomes improvements for women at all levels. However, gender-disproportionate delays in STEMM women application rates suggest a lag in self-identifying promotions readiness, requiring earlier intervention and support.	Refine and champion existing promotions supports targeted by career stage and tailored (where possible) for STEM Women+, including: <i>Spring Forward</i> myth-busting workshops; - mock interviews for applicants to D and E; - University-wide Academic Promotions Mentoring; - Distinguished Professors Mentoring Program; - University-wide Academic Promotions Preparation (Shut Up & Write) Program.	2027	Western SAGE	Senior Advisor GEDI	STEM women+ apply for academic promotions at cohort parity across all academic levels; STEM women+ success rates for promotion applications to B and D are at parity with STEM men; Promotions outcomes at cohort-parity across all academic levels.
7.	While STEM women, caregivers and culturally diverse women (in particular) cite personalised flexibility as a critical enabler for career success, Western SAGE STEM Women+ Consultations revealed that caregivers perceived cultures of overwork as impediments to career success. Caregivers seek a small 'leg up' to stimulate research opportunity and drive career momentum.	Establish a pilot Faculty-based Caregiver Research Support Grant aimed at providing a small 'leg up' for academics with significant care commitments. The grant should: - hold gender neutral eligibility requirements; - offer small scale funding (\$6-\$10K) for marking relief and/or research assistance for staff experiencing elevated care responsibilities; - be non-competitive and involve a simplified application process.	From 2027	Faculty Executive Dean ECS	Faculty Executive Dean ECS	STEM caregivers report greater positivity around career opportunity and stress indicators.
8.	STEM women make exceptional contributions to teaching, research and engagement across WSU. Actively profiling narratives of STEM Women+ excellence can diminish deep-seated gender	Profile STEM Women+ excellence, including by: utilising in-house media and journalism partnerships;	From 2026	STEM Deans and Western SAGE		Equitable participation for STEM Women+ in VC's Emerging Leaders Program.

KEY PRIORITY AREA 3: STEM WOMEN+						
REF.	RATIONALE	ACTIONS & OUTPUTS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	SUCCESS INDICATORS
	stereotypes about STEM talent and capability, combat the 'Matilda Effect', amplify women's achievements, and foster a positive culture of support and recognition at WSU.	▪ partnering with Western SAGE to produce STEM gender equity videos; ▪ reviewing reward and recognition frameworks across STEM Schools; ▪ monitoring gender x cultural diversity trends for recognition awards, with proactive encouragement as relevant; ▪ amplifying STEM Women+ network activity and achievements.				
9.	WSU has a strong and growing cohort of women HDR students across the STEM disciplines. However, HDR women in STEM fields face gender-disproportionate risks to completion and future retention within academia and STEM industries. An existing Women of Wisdom program (School of Engineering) takes a relational approach to HDR mentoring, where student experiences both inform and are supported by more senior academic STEM women. Extending this model across STEM Schools aims to reduce attrition and create an intergenerational culture of mutual support by building networking and career opportunity, intersectional role-modelling and skills development and embedment, bolstering career confidence for all HDR STEM Women+ at WSU.	Establish a STEM Women+ HDR Mentoring Program that: ▪ supports HDR women from education to employment; ▪ adopts the relational Women of Wisdom model; ▪ includes engagement with and by alumni and industry partners of all genders; ▪ is coordinated by Faculty Associate Dean HDR and supported by the STEM Women+ Network.	2028	Faculty ECS Associate Dean HDR and STEM Women+ Network	Faculty Executive Dean ECS	Increases STEM Women+ talent pipeline with high matriculation into academic roles.

KEY PRIORITY AREA 3: DECASUALISATION

Cygnets Rationale

Academic casualisation in Australian higher education disproportionately affects women and interacts with existing GEDI inequities in academic careers, producing intersectional gendered outcomes in job security, career progression, workload distribution and leadership representation.⁷ At WSU in 2021, approximately 65% of casual academics were women. Commissioned VC-GEF research regarding their experiences in the COVID-19 context confirmed heightened stress regarding precarious employment and deepening disenfranchisement from collegial environments.⁸ Seeking redress, WSU closely consulted with NTEU partners across 2021, and in August 2022 announced the largest decasualisation program in sector history.⁹ This program, which supports conversion into ongoing teaching/research positions, continues to be sector-leading even as (primarily fixed-term and/or education-focused) decasualisation initiatives now proliferate following Fair Work Australia's *Closing the Loopholes Act (no.1, 2023; no.2, 2024)*.

WSU has appointed 151FTE staff (61% women, 5.9% Indigenous) under its Academic Decasualisation Program, with meaningful impacts on staff gender profiles in male-dominated disciplines (see Cygnets 3, Table 33, p.40). Supporting and sustaining this decasualised cohort is essential for ensuring continued gendered improvements in key areas and Indigenous academic advancements overall. However, unevenness in the application of policy, process and best-practice has brought implementation gaps, high demand work conditions, and insufficient transition support for many, posing GEDI concerns around workplace wellbeing, retention, and career progression for this critical cohort.

Evidence of Barrier

WSU's Academic Decasualisation Program is enshrined in our *Academic Enterprise Agreement (2022)*. Relevant Clauses committed to appointing 150FTE casuals into ongoing Level A academic positions by 2025, with reciprocal reductions to the casual workforce. Program design ensured part-time opportunities, recruitment priority for WSU casuals, eligibility allowances for recent parental-leave takers, and negotiated qualification minimums for Indigenous applicants.

Table 44. Academic Enterprise Agreement, Academic Decasualisation Highlights, 2022

Academic Decasualisation Clause Highlights, Academic Staff Enterprise Agreement, 2022	
Clause 16. Academic Decasualisation	
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.	
Theme	Clause Detail
FTE Commitment and Reduction in Casual Reliance	The University will create and fill 150FTE <u>ongoing</u> 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).

⁷ Woelert, P., & Croucher, G. (2024). Polarisation and casualisation: The changing academic workforce at Australian universities. In G. Strachan (Ed.), *Research Handbook on Academic Labour Markets* (pp. 280–289). Edward Elgar Publishing.

⁸ Smith, 2022.

⁹ Duffy, C. (2022, August 2) "'Grand compromise' at Western Sydney University hailed as answer to tertiary sector's reliance on casual work", *ABC News*. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-08-02/western-sydney-university-eba-hailed-as-answer-to-insecure-work/101281250>

Internal Priority	Positions will first be advertised internally to “ensure equitable opportunities for existing [WSU] casual employees”.
Workload Allocations	For the <u>first three years</u> 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”: ▪ Year 1: min 10%; ▪ Year 2: min 10% and up to 20%; ▪ Year 3: min 10% and up to 30%. Work planning for positions will be allocated “thereafter in accordance with Clause 23, <i>Academic Workloads</i>”.

1. Decasualised Level A Staff Profiles

WSU recruited decasualised roles in three phases, commencing with 30 advertised positions in February 2023. In July 2025, WSU fulfilled (and slightly exceeded) its commitment to appoint 150FTE decasualised staff. All Faculties matched or surpassed women’s 2022 representation baselines (Table 45), with Faculty ECS recruits outpacing existing proportions by 17%. Appointments also included 77% existing WSU casuals and 5.6% identified Indigenous positions, with high proportions of staff of diverse cultural backgrounds, with disability, and caregivers.

Appointed staff came to these positions with differing levels of teaching experience, research track-records, industry standing, length of service in higher education and length of prior service at WSU. By December 2025, 18 decasualised staff (11%) had been promoted to Level B and 7 (4%) had left the University.

Table 45. Academic Decasualisation Appointments, 2023 – 2025

WSU Academic Decasualisation Appointments, 2023-2025				
	HEADCOUNT	FTE	IDENTIFIED	W%
Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Science (ECS) Schools				
Computer, Data & Mathematical Sciences	12	12.0	0	27%
Engineering, Design & Built Environment	17	17.0	0	53%
Science	5	5.0	0	40%
Faculty ECS Total	34	34.0	0	42%
Faculty of Health Schools				
Health Sciences	12	12.0	0	83%
Medicine	5	3.0	0	40%
Nursing & Midwifery	18	18.0	2	94%
Psychology	8	8.0	0	43%
Faculty Health Total	43	41.0	2	76%
Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts, Business, Education and Law (SABEL) Schools				
Arts	18	18	2	42%
Business	18	17.6	1	44%
Education	12	11.5	1	78%
Law	6	6	0	60%
Social Sciences	28	23	1	65%
Faculty SABEL Total	82	76.1	5	56%
WSU Total	159	151.1	7	61%

2. Workplace Cultures: Dean Consultations

Across August and September 2025, Western SAGE undertook consultations with the Executive lead for the Decasualisation Program (DVC Academic Transformation), Deans of 11 Schools, and EDWP Chairs for all 12 Schools across WSU. Conversations scoped supports provided, challenges encountered, and stakeholder perceptions of the program overall.

Dean Consultations

Overall, Deans expressed clear and strong support for the intentions of WSU's Academic Decasualisation Program to reduce casualisation, provide greater job security, and offer career entry pathways for long-serving and high-quality casual academics. Deans also offered consistent and often effusive praise for their appointed decasualised staff, who they felt were performing at an exceptional level. However, Deans expressed concern about the core structures of the Decasualisation Program and reciprocal impacts for the wellbeing and future career development/opportunity of decasualised staff (Table 46).

Table 46. Decasualisation Project: Summary of Dean Consultations, 2025

Summary of Deans Consultations, Aug–Sept 2025		
Theme	Structural Supports Provided	Challenges Identified
Work Allocation	- Some Schools implemented strict caps on number of subjects taught, multi-campus travel, and marking load; - Some Schools actively coordinated 'block' teaching timetables to maximise non-teaching days per week; - A few Schools ensured subject rationalisation to minimise preparation demands; - A few Schools actively assigned alternative teaching duties to lessen face-to-face demands; - One School reported actively engaging decasualised staff in their individual work planning design.	- Most Schools relied on informal norms or local discretion for work planning; - Load allocations for FULT and RAP participation were at School discretion (and therefore inconsistent); - Most Deans felt that <i>Enterprise Agreement</i> prescriptions for research load allocation were too low and, by implication, teaching loads were unreasonably high and unsustainable.
Teaching	- Many Schools employed various measured approaches to subject coordination (e.g., partnered and/or succession planned coordination or restrictions on coordination until Year 2/3); - Some Schools offered subject coordination as a mechanism to reduce overall load; - Some Schools employed team teaching for all subjects.	- Frequent high volume of new subjects and total subjects taught, multi-campus teaching, marking volume and extended session spread; - Several Deans expressed difficulty planning for high teaching workloads, with concern for WHS risks.
Research	- Some (but not all) Schools administered Start Up Funds; - Some Schools offered additional ECR grants and/or grant opportunities requiring decasualised staff participation; - Some Schools took a highly proactive approach to research networking, engaging decasualised staff in research clusters and groups within and beyond School contexts;	- Some Deans expressed workload concern for decasualised staff undertaking Honours and PhD study and/or who were also required to maintain industry relevance; - Most Deans expressed concern about research opportunity for decasualised staff, especially for those entering roles with less research experience;

	- Some Schools proactively engaged decasualised staff to deliver research seminars within and beyond School contexts; - Most Schools encouraged research collaboration; - One School coordinated research engagement with Institutes; - One School offered grant writing supports.	- Some Deans were concerned that limited research opportunity would have negative long-term impacts given the importance of ECR years; Most Deans expressed concern that high teaching loads undermine research allocations, even when research is allocated to allowable maximums.
Service and Governance	- Most Schools minimised governance expectations in early years; - Most Schools coordinated Honours and HDR co-supervision; - A few Schools appointed decasualised staff to Teaching & Learning Committees and/or curriculum development; - Some Schools provided opportunities for involvement in Open Days and high school outreach engagements.	- When allocated, formal governance opportunities were often provided by Deans as a deliberate strategy to reduce unsustainable teaching loads. In these circumstances, Deans were concerned that there were insufficient governance roles available for decasualised staff; - Other Deans were concerned about decasualised staff capacity to take up governance roles, given high teaching demands.
Mentoring	- Most Schools relied on informal mentoring; - A few Schools offered formal mentoring and/or 'buddy' transition supports.	Mentoring capacity constraints, lack of quality mentors, and (therefore) high variability in mentoring quality.
Equity & WHS	One School proactively resolved visa issues for a recent migrant decasualised staff member (including by providing administrative and financial support).	- Deans expressed WHS concerns for decasualised staff at risk of overwork and burnout; - Some Deans expressed concern that caregivers and women (especially women of CALD and/or migrant backgrounds) are disproportionately affected by teaching overload, colonial load is under-recognised for Indigenous staff, and disability-related adjustments require proactive, consistent handling to safeguard wellbeing.

3. Workplace Cultures: Decasualised Level A Staff Experiences

Informal Decasualisation Survey

In June 2025, an informal survey of 48 decasualised Level A staff (coordinated and administered by EDWP School of Arts) found:

- high variability in teaching arrangements;
- strong positivity for supervisory arrangements (73%, with 23% unsure);
- strong appreciation for collegial and peer support;
- probation check-ins were valuable, but too frequent;
- some decasualised staff demonstrated impressive research engagement, but many more expressed limited time to engage with available opportunities;
- some decasualised staff were overwhelmed by teaching workloads, with concerns of burnout and ill health;
- myths and misconceptions around promotions were prevalent, including: quotas, comparative assessment, research expectations equivalent to Level B with balanced

workload, no promotion without PhD (regardless of discipline), no exemption to apply for promotion before 2 years ('not even by a day').

Western SAGE Decasualisation Interviews

From December 2025 to January 2026, SAGE Deputy Academic Lead undertook semi-structured interviews with 32 decasualised staff. The interview group included staff from 8 of 12 Schools (covering all three Faculties) and comprised 72% women, 6% Indigenous staff, and 41% staff of diverse cultural backgrounds. Interview findings corroborated and expanded upon concerns raised within Deans Consultations and the preliminary, informal survey.

Inconsistency in Workload Allocation and Teaching Conditions

Decasualised staff reported policy slippage at implementation, with frequent and sometimes substantial differences in how *E4*-specified workload allocation guidelines are interpreted and actioned by Schools (Table 47). Load calculators were also utilised inconsistently both across and, in some instances, *within* individual Schools. Additionally, while some Schools took active steps to monitor and assuage work conditions required by individual teaching timetables, other Schools appeared unwary of the compounding effects of high teaching loads and high demand work conditions. As a result, decasualised staff report high variation in teaching load and work conditions, with many reporting unmanageable and unsustainable arrangements:

- some decasualised staff taught 2-hour tutorials with a maximum of 12 face-to-face teaching hours per week, while others taught 12 tutorials at 2 hours each with a total of 24 face-to-face hours per week, sometimes for multiple new subjects, while also commuting across three or four campuses for teaching delivery;
- some reported teaching 6-8 face-to-face hours back-to-back per day, on consecutive days and for consecutive semesters;
- others were allocated 3-4 new subjects to design and coordinate per year on consecutive years, while others were not allowed to take up coordination responsibilities;
- several reported School marking caps (ranging from 120-150 students), while others reported that their School did not implement a cap or provide marking relief when student totals exceeded 150;
- others felt they were tasked to carry out teaching and leadership responsibilities they deemed above their academic level (e.g., designing multiple new undergraduate and postgraduate courses and/or subjects that required substantive research and preparatory curriculum work);
- at the individual level, some also reported significant differences in how work plans and workload policies were implemented across semesters and years.

Table 47. Decasualised Staff Experiences: Work Allocations

Decasualised Staff Experiences: Work Allocations	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Varied Interpretations and/or Applications of Workload Policy	<i>"[My School] decided that if you read the wording of the decasualisation policy, it will essentially frame it as 90% teaching, then 80% teaching, then 70% teaching. It doesn't factor in service and governance but we're still expected to do service and [...] so we're already exceeding 100%." (P8)</i>
	<i>"[The subject coordinator negotiated with] the previous Dean [...] that if we went to two-hour tutorials, it would be counted as two [hours] so we would get a double allocation for it. On my workload calculator it looks like I'm doing ten tutorials a week [at one hour each] rather than the five tutorials at two hours. [...] Everybody who was teaching into that subject, including casual staff members, got that deal. When</i>

	<i>we secured the deal with [the new management], we explicitly raised equity concerns [because we knew] we were being given a special arrangement that other staff weren't. And we explicitly raised the case of all the Level A staff who were working across multiple subjects. I think it hasn't gone anywhere. and I think next year we'll revert to the same system as everyone [else]."</i> (P10) <i>"People were getting different reductions [for a compulsory development program] depending on how their School were interpreting it. We even wrote to [university management] at the time, asking them what it meant, and they weren't sure. They told us to deal with it at our School level."</i> (P8) <i>"I was astonished to find out my teaching loads [...] were quite different to at least one or two of my other Level A colleagues. [...] I was told as decasualised staff, even if I pumped out five articles in the first, second and third years, my teaching load doesn't go down one minute."</i> (P12) <i>"There is not much clarification on the workload. I never knew that you could claim workload for teaching [across] multiple campuses. So, I have never asked for workload [compensation, as allowed for by policy]. For example, if you teach in three campuses, you can ask for 3% workload, which is a lot for me. But I had no idea, so I never claimed it."</i> (P3) <i>"That 20% [research allocation] I had to really beg for, to be honest with you, they didn't want to give it to me. It was a back-and-forth process to get more than 10%".</i> (P18)
Load Inequities Compounded by Calculation	<i>"The inequity is inherent to the workload calculator, if I was just given twelve hours [of face-to-face teaching] and I just went off and did those, it would be fine. But I see other people doing five hours and other people doing less than that. [...] I was teaching two-hour classes, [but] the calculator didn't acknowledge that. [...] The workload calculator sees a one or two-hour class as the same. [...] Therefore] if I play with the workload calculator so that it acknowledges my two-hour tutorials, I was at 94% teaching and 127% workload."</i> (P9) <i>"Some of [the classes I teach] are two-hour lectorials which is a lot more work than a one-hour tutorial with 25 students because the lectorials also carry 40 students. Different tutorials in different subjects carry different student numbers in EFTSL, but also different hours. That impacts the way my 70% or 80% teaching workload gets calculated."</i> (P22)
No Guardrails for Work Conditions	<i>"In my first semester (2024), I taught two subjects and I taught around 20 to 24 hours a week. Each tutorial was two-hours and I did about ten. I had eight hours of classes back-to-back with no breaks and finished at 8pm. Then the next day, I had another three classes starting at 8am [six more hours]... I don't think it's fair."</i> (P13) <i>"I had to go to campus in the morning for my classes in Liverpool, the next day in Kingswood, and the next in Parramatta. But then I had to come home immediately because I had a 6pm tutorial online in another subject, so I didn't have any time off. I was starting from morning until 8pm and was teaching or travelling back-to-back. [The second semester] I was doing nine tutorials in total across four campuses because I was going to Parramatta City as well. [...] Everyone would say 'yes, it's bad, but what are we supposed to do with your workload? Your workload is so big we cannot fill it'."</i> (P28) <i>"I was teaching at one campus during the day and then online at night [...] Shouldn't happen, but it happened. [...] I had four tutorials that would run from 6pm until 8pm every night online... I was teaching across four campuses because I was going to Parramatta South, Kingswood, Liverpool and Parramatta Square... I was teaching six semesters in a row back-to-back with no break."</i> (P28)

Many staff reported no service load allocation attached to their work plan but several cited clear expectations for service work (Table 48). One Indigenous staff member described regular and unrecognised colonial load, while others reported 'free work' and 'voluntary service' in the form of PhD and Honours supervision, thesis marking, and attendance at open days and graduations.

Table 48. Decasualised Staff Experiences: No Service Allocation, but Service Expectations

Decasualised Staff Experiences: Service Expectations	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Colonial Load and Other 'Voluntary' Service	<i>"I've been asked quite a lot to do an Acknowledgement of Country for meetings that I'm not even attending, and one that I was asked to go to by some staff higher up. And I thought, 'it's an hour and a half drive for me to do a five-to-ten-minute Welcome to Country, and then what? [...] It's a lot. If I am expected or they are asking me to do a lot of Welcomes to Country, then I would like that reflected in my workload. Yes, it's ten minutes but if that's ten minutes every week, twice a week, does that add up? Does that get put in a workplan?'"</i> (P2) <i>"There's lots of free work, I would say. [...] I also supervised 16 Honours students... there were three assessments we had to mark for them: the literature review, the research proposal, the methodology section and then the whole thing. Then they did their viva's as well. This is in addition to PhD students, I had two PhD students as well and I was co-supervisor."</i> (P15) <i>"We have to do what they call 'volunteering' which is on you. [...] They need some people to volunteer to attend open days, to chat with potential students, to attend the graduation ceremony... They don't say how much you have to volunteer and there's no points [system]. [...] But there is a sense that you do need to volunteer a reasonable amount to keep management happy."</i> (P12)

While the Decasualisation Program is designed to gradually increase researcher capacity (with reciprocal increase for research loads), for many decasualised staff high teaching loads were prohibitive to research productivity (Table 49). Even for those commencing with strong research track records for whom maximum research allocations were granted, the excessive demands of teaching conditions impeded capacity to deliver planned research outputs. Those operating below maximum research provisions felt trapped in a 'vicious cycle', wherein elevated outputs are required to increase future load. Staff undertaking PhD or Honours research and/or external work to maintain industry or clinical relevance received no allocation to cover activities, despite clear value for teaching quality and future career advancement.

Table 49. Decasualised Staff Experiences: Research Allocations

Decasualised Staff Experiences: Research Allocations	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Lack of Time and Energy to Produce Research Output	<i>"I think as great as decasualisation is to get you in the door, it sometimes was unrealistic with research allocation. [...] I just found it really hard and even though I was allocated 20% for research, I didn't get 20% for research because marking and cross-marking ended up taking over and things that weren't included in your workplan." (P18)</i>
	<i>"I have goals that I haven't met for myself. So, this feels a little bit embarrassing in the sense that there's questions about what I've done now. In terms of actual research outputs. I don't have any research outputs other than a special issue I did before I joined in the decasualisation program." (P8)</i>
	<i>"When I first started my job, I had a book contract. But I've had zero time to progress any of my research for my book contract. So, that idea of getting the research percentage done is just [impossible] and this is collectively agreed upon with the other people I've been talking to." (P22)</i>
	<i>"At the beginning of last year, I was completely depressed just thinking about [how] I couldn't do any publications. I'm so ashamed to even say that within this last two and a half years I had just one publication and one article submitted for publication. I'm literally ashamed to say that and this is all because of the high teaching workload." (P3)</i>
Increasing Research Load Presents a 'Catch 22'	<i>"It's a vicious cycle [because] you need to do publications. You need to have research publications to get high research workload. But at the moment, because you don't have high research workload, you have to do lots of teaching. But if you do lots of teaching, when do you get the time to do research publications?" (P3)</i>
	<i>"Because the wording of the policy says first year 10% research, second year up to 20%, third year up to 30%, they said it's not automatic and it's a range so you're not going to get the rate, you're not going to get the maximum research time unless you can prove that you produced outputs during the previous year. [This meant, in reality] the progression was 90% teaching, 85% teaching, then 80% teaching. If you wanted to get 70% in third year, which I'm currently in, you must have research outputs." (P8)</i>
	<i>"It can't be allocated until you're published, which I understand, but when do you do the research? So [for] decasualisation, they're expecting you to do your PhD in the 20%. Okay... but they're also expecting you to be on additional projects. Your allocation can't be increased until you've published, so it's kind of counter intuitive. [...] When are you supposed to do it all?" (P2)</i>
No Allocation for PhD or Honours Pursuits	<i>"How do I put this? I don't think I can get it all done. There is no possible way I can do all of this. [...] I've started my PhD, which isn't in my work plan. I was also advised to do a research certificate to help with my PhD through a different university. [...] That's not included on my work plan." (P2)</i>
	<i>"In terms of considering the allocation of teaching and the amount of pressure and load that puts on an individual, especially those that are doing a PhD at the same time.... It really doesn't take that into consideration. It's very much that you need the PhD to do the job in an ongoing capacity, but you're not really given time to do that as such. It's very much that you teach, and then do the PhD on the weekend. So, I think those that are doing the role and are still doing a PhD should be given a little bit of time to also do that." (P17)</i>
	<i>"My contract says I can have up to 20% [research allocation] and I'm already involved in three different research projects and we're producing material. But then, I have to start my Honours. If I cannot reach 20% then something will have to give. But if I don't pursue my Honours or a PhD, then my career in academia will be very slow. [...] I have 24 hours in a day. [...] I have to be realistic in my expectations about what I can actually do. To be productive, I have to have time." (P20)</i>
	<i>"The university does expect you to maintain your registration but it's up to you how you want to maintain it. You need to be [industry] current, especially if you're teaching [practical] subjects. But if you're not working [in the industry], they won't allocate you [practical] subjects. They will allocate you theory subjects. I can choose to pick up only theory subjects, but [...] I like to stay [industry] current. If I'm teaching, I should be able to teach them what's happening [in the industry] as well." (P27)</i>
	<i>"If it would be useful to the university, then the university should give me the time off to go and do the work, not the other way around. [...] Before [I took this position] I was still working in [the industry], which made me a more valuable member of staff. Now that I'm no longer working in [the industry], I know it hasn't been long, but what's going to happen five years down the track? [My field] moves so fast that if you don't keep on top of it..." (P19)</i>

Work planning typically involved negotiation with more senior colleagues and supervisors. While some described receiving support and good-will in workload negotiations, for others uneven power dynamics came into play (Table 50). In some instances, work was assigned without input or discussion; in other circumstances, unreasonable loads were accepted by decasualised staff who felt structurally disempowered with ‘no right to complain’. As a result, many worked unrelenting out-of-office hours to keep up with their loads, a circumstance made harder for caregivers, and harder still for migrant caregivers without local family support.

Table 50. Decasualised Staff Experiences: Power Dynamics

Decasualised Staff Experiences: Power Dynamics	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Power Dynamics: No Input into Work Plan Design	<i>"[My supervisor emailed me to say] this person and that person are happy with your workload, and I'm signing off on your probation, do not question this. That was literally the email I got. So, I was scared of questioning it." (P28)</i>
	<i>"The situation is unsupported. I was asked, as everyone was, what subjects they'd like to teach for next semester, so I put in my preferences, and I didn't get any of those. I haven't worked [in this practical area] for years and while some of that [practice] I know how to do, I know I don't know the latest practice, so I had to do a lot of learning. [...] I said I didn't want to teach that again, and I've been given it again." (P16)</i>
	<i>"I wasn't even told. Only when you ask do you get an answer. But then again, if you want to argue, what would you say? That is an issue because now I really don't want to teach another [new] subject." (P4)</i>
	<i>"[Currently] it's very much, 'here's your workplan, you've got this many hours that you've got to fill over the course of the year'. Then you do it yourself. That's it." (P17)</i>
Power Dynamics: Structural Disempowerment	<i>"It's an awkward position because I'm desperate for this job and if people ask you to do things you don't want to say no and so I agree to it. [...] There's a power imbalance that I think means it's not easy to say no when you're desperate for a position and that's something I just wish didn't happen." (P13)</i>
	<i>"The reality is that it's so hard to get an academic job and then finally being here and being able to do really good research with really good people, it's so rewarding that you try and get through the teaching in order to stay here because if I don't take up this opportunity, what other chance am I going to get? There's a fear that if I don't meet the workload this might all go away." (P22)</i>
	<i>"There's a sense of having no right to complain [...] we've got this ongoing security for me and my family and in my personal circumstances, this will be the first time that we've ever had income in January. So that's not lost on me. [...] My grandmother passed away earlier in the year, and I was able to fly up to her funeral [...] because I had bereavement leave which is just unheard of. There's a real sense that we shouldn't be complaining because we've got an ongoing role now. [...] Whenever I say anything remotely sort of negative, they say that I've got the role, 'so what's your problem?' ... But in a way, I feel like it's been out of the frying pan and into the fire." (P6)</i>
Working Around the Clock to Keep Up (Harder for Caregivers)	<i>"I have worked every single weekend since I started." (P9)</i>
	<i>"I have kids, so I have to stop working at 4pm to pick up my kids, feed them, bathe them and make them safe. That means once they go to bed at 9pm, that's when I get the rest of my work done and sometimes I'm working until 1 or 2am in the morning and then waking up at 5am. As the semester goes on, I know in advance that when marking comes around at about week nine in each semester that I don't really survive very well." (P22)</i>
	<i>"I've got another decasualised colleague in the office next to me and he and I are always here until 7pm or 8pm at night doing stuff when we can be but [on two days] I can't because I've got to go... and pick up my kids...[on those two days] I work from 10 until 2...and then I'll pick up my kids and do the afternoon thing [with them], and then at 10pm, I'll start working again and work until 2am. That's probably been the most difficult thing...[also] trying to do a PhD on the side at the same time as having three kids has been a lot." (P14)</i>
	<i>"The challenge was that I needed to show a substantial amount of publications and that's where I had to put lots of my personal time because most of my time was taken up with teaching and [I needed] to show the amount of publications to get the funding. I had to sacrifice lots of my weekends, so I've felt these last two years, quite a lot of burnout while managing my family as well as a child with a disability. It was really, really a lot. I felt it was very much overwhelming." (P15)</i>
	<i>"I did request to teach at a different campus which is closer to me but that was not possible, my request was not granted. My plan is to wait until next year and see if there is anyone that needs teaching there and I can teach a little bit closer to home because that would be helpful or at least not five days a week. That was very challenging... With family and kids and with a different job, my first semester was very intense because I was teaching five days. So, the travelling, the traffic, the toll, it was all intense... I have to rush back and pick up my kids. Coming from another country, we have no family here, so I am the main person who has to drop them off and all those things." (P20)</i>

Transition Support and Supervision

Moving out of casual employment and into the ongoing academic workforce for the first time, decasualised staff are conscious of their need for transition support around new systems and processes, heightened academic responsibility, and policy frameworks that govern their employment (Table 51). However, many found onboarding and induction insufficient, and several experienced ongoing challenges with absent or ineffective supervision. Many recognised an ‘information gap’ both for themselves and for the supervisors they relied on for support.

Table 51. Decasualised Staff Experiences: Transition and Supervision Gaps

Decasualised Staff Experiences: Transition and Supervision Gaps	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Insufficient Onboarding and Orientation	<i>"We were essentially just told 'welcome to the School, figure it out'." (P29)</i>
	<i>"When they employed us, they plopped us into the Schools and went, 'go teach'. But they didn't establish who was looking after you. That's the main structural problem with the program. Who is supposed to help you?" (P11)</i>
	<i>"The biggest thing is, I didn't know how to set up for the first class. [...] There was no orientation or even direction to help us navigate to where buildings were. [...] My first day of classes I went early, and I got my office buddy to show me how to use the projector and how to set up. Even how to set up the computer. I didn't have a keyboard or a mouse, so I had to request one through IT. [...] My biggest feedback would be the lack of orientation and support." (P2)</i>
	<i>"As a reasonably new staff member at the university, there are so many things that I don't know how to navigate." (P3)</i>
More Transition Support Required	<i>"I just think there needs to be more support, because we need to remember that these people are coming from casual roles and becoming full-time academics and it's a steep learning curve. Even though I was a student and I knew a lot of the systems, it's a lot to learn. It's a lot of training." (P18)</i>
	<i>"[The support] has happened retrospectively in terms of... if something happens or it gets to a point where you think, 'oh my goodness, I can't do all of this' or 'I need to make a change here', and you reach out [to find] we <u>can</u> do it like this... as opposed to being more proactive and realising that you're brand new to teaching in this space at a full-time [capacity]." (P17)</i>
	<i>"I've been given a subject that I'm subject coordinator for and the Tuesday before the shutdown I found out there's [an overseas] component to that and I had to have all the documents updated except for the subject outline by the Friday. Who's going to show me how to do this? How am I going to know what I need to do? Everyone that is involved with the [overseas] subject is on leave until the end of January so I'm floundering a little." (P16)</i>
	<i>"The Dean is my direct supervisor for the first year, but they're the Dean. They're very approachable and she welcomed any questions, but you don't want to be asking them how you enter your marks or something like that." (P11)</i>
	<i>"I don't ask because I don't know what to ask in the first place. I don't know what I don't know and what I should know. Even if I know, I don't know who I should ask and if I should ask." (P26)</i>
Information Gap for Staff and Supervisors	<i>"I have a very supportive supervisor but, unfortunately, they don't know much about this decasualisation process. They were not aware of some of the challenges." (P5)</i>
	<i>"There is a communication gap. [...] The supervisor should help me navigate the workload, navigate teaching, but unfortunately that's not the case." (P3)</i>
	<i>"What do you mean? No.... I've never heard of [a compulsory teaching development program]. I don't know what it is. I don't think anyone in [my School] knows or has heard of it. None of us have done it, that's for sure." (P32)</i>
	<i>"Later I realised everybody who had applied out of the Level A's got funds and massive marking buyout. [...] I didn't know you could get teaching and marking buyout through funds. I wasn't mentored, I wasn't trained." (P28)</i>
Absent or Unsupportive Supervisors	<i>"My supervisor is much younger than me and has never [been in the industry]. I found it a bit concerning to deal with them and their leadership style lacks leadership. At the start of the year, they say things like 'ask me any question' and then within six months, we'd get this whole group email telling us they're very busy and they don't have time to answer all our emails and here's a list of all the policies we can go and check before we bother them. I found that in my first year to be not very respectful or professional. [...] You're made to feel afraid to ask questions because they're silly or something." (P11)</i>
	<i>"They are quite rude and very mean. [...] Anytime you're spoken to, I'm being spoken down to [...] It's not a very supportive environment. I met my supervisor the week I started and then did not see or hear from her again for six months despite reaching out with emails and even when I just had general questions. For example, I didn't know how to take the annual leave for the mandatory shutdown period so I had to reach out to someone else who had done it prior but there was no accessibility." (P2)</i>
	<i>"With the reset everything has been shuffled around. [...] My second supervisor I have not met once [in six months]. So, I haven't done any of the [quarterly probation evaluations]. It's something we need to be aware of because it's my career, so I need to be on track. [...] There's no mentorship and I thought the supervisor would take that role." (P20)</i>

While some referenced strong collegiality from other more senior staff in their Schools, many more relied on peer support to fill the information and advocacy gaps left by inadequate orientation and supervision (Table 52).

Table 52. Decasualised Staff Experiences: Peer Support Filling the Gaps

Decasualised Staff Experiences: Peer Support Filling the Gaps	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Some Active Collegiality within Schools	<i>"I'm grateful to have a permanent academic job. I enjoy my work and I'd say my School culture is great. It's very collegial. People are always willing to offer informal or formal mentorship, it's very collaborative. We'll often work together on research projects, and I do feel part of a community in my School. There's good leadership where our leaders [...] really do look out for ECRs." (P7)</i>
	<i>"There were more senior academics who said there are things we can do here, and you have to let us do them, they brought it to the Dean. [It was] amazing, they saw me as a person rather than just a EFTSL workload number and gave me real support. It's through the support of colleagues and these conversations that I can get the reasonable adjustment plan." (P22)</i>
Peer Support Filling the Gaps	<i>"I was doing so much work with my colleague that was hired with me in the first round in trying to make it better for [those coming in after us] and we shared advice with them. We fought to change our workload allocation. [...] We tried to do all of this and make sure that there would be a community that would support each other within the School and across other decasualisation staff outside of [the School]. But it's asking people who are already time poor to do the labour, and I think that needs to somehow be recognised as we move out [of the scheme] or have more of those supports without us always having to ask and fight for them." (P8)</i>
	<i>"The people in the decasualisation program have a group chat and that's been a great source of support because we lean on each other a lot because of the lack of support from other places." (P2)</i>
	<i>"I founded and chair [an ECR friends] group and it's all the decasualisation people in my School and we come together every month, and we look at a work by one of our colleagues. We provide feedback and we support each other in that way. We also make time during those meetings to talk about things like grants and share tips and advice and experiences but also offload. We've done a lot of offloading our challenges as ECR's. It's quite a cathartic experience as well to be with them in that group and be supportive of each other, both emotionally but also practically in terms of sharing tips and advice." (P7)</i>
	<i>"Institutionally, there's very little support...it was thanks to those supportive colleagues who caught me because I wouldn't have felt comfortable with saying I can't do all this, I'm not meeting my work expectations because that would mark me as if I'm failing and I want to keep this job. It was because I was at my limit and I was breaking down in tears that people noticed things and spoke to me and provided more informal, collegial conversations. [Another Level A colleague] brought together decasualised colleagues and [through that we] recognised that we were all working until really, really late. That is why I'm here and that was the only support." (P22)</i>
	<i>"We've shared knowledge all the time and I started a document called the manual. The senior lecturers would laugh and say, 'it's in the manual' and laugh like it was funny that we didn't know what we were doing and of course, there is no manual. There are policies but they're not always clear in how you apply them to particular student situations." (P11)</i>

Development and Progression

Several decasualised staff spoke to strong pedagogical and researcher development in their first years of ongoing employment (Table 53). For these staff, structural supports and mentorship provided at University and School-levels have provided critical opportunities to bolster their academic growth and trajectory, including via engagement within communities of practice, research collaboration, valuable access to 'Start Up' funds, and career guidance. However, some experienced systemic or inequitable obstructions to key supports (including lack of access to Start Up funds or inconsistencies with funding guidance), some who accessed funding found themselves unable to acquit within timelines, and many others side-lined development due to time scarcity and energy depletion brought about by teaching overwhelm.

Table 53. Decasualised Staff Experiences: Development Opportunity

Decasualised Staff Experiences: Development Opportunity	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Meaningful Pedagogical and Researcher Development	<i>"There's been a lot of support given at the university level in terms of the Research Accelerator Program and other sorts of training sessions. [...] That's been really useful to be able to tap into that additional training. We have different sorts of communities of practice around teaching and pedagogy that can be useful in terms of developing your teaching practices." (P7)</i>
	<i>"I was also given four days of writing retreat when I completed my second paper and luckily my supervisors were there as well. We would really like to continue that because for us, as novice researchers and academics, it's helpful for us when you go and attend these workshops and presentations and you are offered grants to present your paper or attend a conference where you can collaborate with other people. (P27)</i>
	<i>"I had an amazing team of mentors guiding me, supporting me and giving me opportunities to do research. We completed a very big external grant which was a funded project last year." (P15)</i>
	<i>"I'm working with a mentor [...] she's been very supportive. It's been about two months, and she asked me to send her my application last year for promotion. She introduced me to so many other colleagues in the UK. She told me there's a grant or a residency.... Surprisingly, I had a colleague who I worked with at that university, and I contacted them and we had a meeting and I filled out the application [for the grant]. They are now reading it and will get back to me soon... That's the kind of [support I wanted] and I was looking for an opportunity like that." (P5)</i>
	<i>"[This senior colleague] invited me onto one of his big grant research projects because we were chatting about a particular tool that he was doing some research on and I was using it for another purpose. He [...] asked whether I wanted to join his research team. So, there's a lot of support and positivity and I'm sure I'm going to learn so much more about how to be a researcher from instances like that." (P14)</i>
	<i>"I got one of the grants from the Career Interruption Support Scheme, I think it was about \$10,000 and that allowed me to buy out a lot of my Spring teaching and I used a small amount for an RA." (P7)</i>
Inequitable or Inconsistent Access for Development Opportunities	<i>"We've seen this with a few Level A's who get support from professors. They include them in their research grants. They include them in their research publications and then their citations are very high because they are included with other people. So, it's not equal for everyone. It's only for these few people. I want to work in research, but if no one wants to work with me then it's hard." (P4)</i>
	<i>"I was always a bit frustrated that when the School had ECR grants going up, you weren't eligible if you didn't have your PhD. And to be honest, most Level As in my School don't have their PhD. So, who can access that funding?" (P18)</i>
	<i>"[Using the New Start Up funds for marking and teaching buy-out] is something I'm a little unclear on. Because again, I have colleagues in other Schools who have really benefited from using their funding for teaching and marking buyout, but I was told that in our School, that's not something that would be approved. I don't know if you can call it inequity, but there's inconsistency between Schools about what's allowed and what's not. [One colleague, in another School] has been very successful research-wise and got early promotion. They were in the first decasualisation cohort and are already Level B. And part of that has been how they've been able to leverage their marking and teaching buyout. [So] it doesn't seem to be a level playing field between Schools." (P9)</i>
No Time or Capacity to Access Funding Opportunity	<i>"I see so many grant calls and I'm interested to apply, but because of the workload this has been something I'm struggling [with] since the start of my journey here at WSU. [...] Even one day working from home that I'm supposed to have for research, I'm so exhausted from teaching three or four days a week, I can hardly work on that day." (P3)</i>
	<i>"That was my first year and I lost so many funding opportunities because I was just too busy surviving. I remember I missed out on the first round of Researcher Development Awards because I was just surviving my marking and teaching. I was also mentally dealing with bullying, so I didn't apply, I couldn't apply." (P28)</i>
Research Funds Accessed and Lost	<i>"It would be about \$3,000 or something left. I couldn't use it [...] I was supposed to use the rest of the money for conferences but because of my family issues, I couldn't go. [The deadline to use it] already passed. I thought maybe the money I had left could be used for teaching buyout, but we cannot use it for that. I was dealing with one thing after another. I was sick, then my sister became sick, then my dad became sick. So, it has been a lot for me to navigate. Somehow, I could just finish teaching, but I couldn't do anything else. We were strictly told that [the funding] needs to be accessed by [two years]." (P3)</i>
	<i>"There was a cut off and they gave me an extension until the end of this year [to use the New Staff Start Up Fund]. But I thought 'how am I supposed to have to use this money?' [...] There wasn't an opportunity to think about how to use that money meaningfully. I really wanted to do a pilot study, but I just didn't have the time." (P8)</i>
	<i>"I applied for internal funding for career interruption. It's not a lot but for me it makes a difference. [...] But because I didn't teach in Spring, I couldn't use [the funds] for buyout. [...] They said the money needs to be spent by the end of November, so I also couldn't use them for Summer [teaching buyout]. I reached out to the finance people, but [...] no one is replying. [...] So [in the end] it means that I had to lose the money that was hard earned. There was an application process [to get this career interruption funding], so it was very, very disappointing. [...] It doesn't make sense because the system should be a little bit flexible. I really needed it for marking buyout for the Summer. Even if it is a small amount, it would have made a difference [...] I was pregnant and had severe iron deficiency. [...] Ironically, I got [the grant] for career interruption, and I lost it due to career interruption." (P4)</i>

Many feel a sense of urgency to prepare for promotion, and a few have received meaningful promotions support and guidance (Table 54). However, an information gap around promotions policy and process is evident, and some received conflicting advice, resulting in myths and misconceptions about promotions guidelines, and (potentially) inequitable access to possible supports.

Table 54. Decasualised Staff Experiences: Career Progression and Academic Promotions

Decasualised Staff Experiences: Career Progression and Academic Promotions	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Feeling the Pressure to Get Ahead	<i>"There's a real sense amongst the Level A's that you need to hurry up and get to Level B. So, let's get everything. What could you do to get some governance? How do we make that happen? How can we get a publication happening? Because you need to be promoted. [...] There is an immediate sense of no matter how much you're doing, you need to do more, which I know is a thing in academia." (P6)</i>
	<i>"You get the feeling from [compulsory development] sessions that you have to work very hard and not just in the traditional domains – academia, teaching, research or publications – but in terms of community, industry and media engagement. [...] There's just so many hats that we are expected to wear. I think that can feel stressful. [...] You do get this sense because the standards are just so high that you feel like you must keep up with your colleagues [...] You just get this career pressure." (P7)</i>
	<i>"I do have some concerns about being able to progress in my career and get out of the Level A decasualisation if I can't get some more research and governance happening." (P9)</i>
Active Promotions Support	<i>"I also have a promotions mentor. We're strongly encouraged to [engage with a promotions mentor]. They are usually someone who has been successful in the last round. [...] I've worked with my promotions mentor a lot and I know her to be a very competent person." (P7)</i>
	<i>"Through the promotion application, I was heavily mentored by my academic discipline mentor and my supervisor. My supervisor just read my application, but my mentor went through the application with me, they helped me with the narrative, and the institutional things that I wasn't really aware of that highlighted my capabilities. This is the language I didn't know; I didn't know how to self-promote so I was heavily mentored for that." (P28)</i>
Promotions Information Gap	<i>"I would like to [apply for promotion]. I don't know how to. I need to figure that out. I don't know. I don't have some free time to look into it." (P32)</i>
	<i>"In terms of support, I have these incidental conversations with my supervisors but I really don't know what it is I have to do to go from Level A to B and I think that would be useful being able to think ahead in terms of what that trajectory might look like because I don't want to get to that point where I'm feeling ready to go for Level B and then realise I haven't actually done this or that." (P17)</i>
	<i>"I feel there's less governance opportunities now in the new restructure, particularly because I didn't get into Senate. What my options are there... [I want to know] how we can make ourselves look Level B, or whatever it is, if we're going for promotion. I feel there could be more transparency [...] what are the opportunities for us now if some of those [governance] opportunities that formerly existed aren't going to be there for us?" (P9)</i>
	<i>"When I met with the Dean she told me there is still a promotion process and you have to show that you have funding, you have covered all the components, you have strong publication records. [...] Although some colleagues would appreciate that you did all this work under these conditions [...] For those of us who are Level A, we didn't get assurances that it will be an easy process. We were told that this is a promotion process at the end of the day, and you need to show strong [output] and I feel the expectations are above what's required from A to B." [Misconception: high research output required regardless of load allocations] (P4)</i>
	<i>"I talked to my supervisor about applying for early promotion and they were very supportive. [...] I spent a lot of time writing that page for the exemption. [...] Then the Dean's email to me said] it's not fair for others if I apply for early promotion. I was a bit surprised because it should be based on merit, but they said it's not fair to other decasualised staff." [Conflicting advice; Inequitable access to exemption application; Misconception: exemptions not based on merit] (P5)</i>
	<i>"When I asked [my supervisor] about applying for promotion earlier this year, he said that I needed to make it easy on him to write a letter of support and that I need to not just be doing Level B but exceeding, so that I can make it. He said he wanted to wait until I got that article accepted before he'd support which I guess I understand. That's the sort of confusing advice [I've received]." [Misconception: higher standards than Level B required] (P8)</i>
	<i>"Around the first year, I discussed with my line manager and the School about promotion to Level B. Early promotion can be possible with good justification. In that scenario, I planned to apply after one and a half years [in this role] for the promotion. Initial discussions went well. [...] everybody is happy about supporting my early promotion and my application was prepared. Until at the last minute, it was highly discouraged from the top level. [They said] do not go for early promotion during this decasualisation probation period." [Conflicting advice (at minimum)] (P25)</i>

Retention and WHS Risks

Most interview participants expressed gratitude for securing a continuing academic position in a higher education sector where permanent jobs are limited. But the combination of teaching overload and under-recognition led several to describe their experience as just another form of academic hierarchisation: “it makes you feel like a second-class citizen”. And while for many job security has made a significant difference in their lives, for some the same priorities that motivated their gratitude also left them susceptible to unsustainable work conditions they felt unable to protest. For these staff, the realities of an intensive teaching load, unmanageable workplan arrangements, and inadequate support were taking a toll on health and wellbeing (Table 55).

Table 55. Decasualised Staff Experiences: Under-recognition and WHS Risks

Decasualised Staff Experiences: Under-recognition and WHS Risks	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Job Security, but a Compromise	<i>“It has brought flow on stability to other parts of my life because I know that I have dependability now, rather than getting to the end of year and not knowing where I’m going to be next year.” (P1)</i>
	<i>“The workload has been crazy. [...] Again, I love my work. I’m happy to be in this role but I have suffered from moderate burnout. [...] At times I feel trapped. I feel trapped because I have to work full time to support my family. The job does at times feel like it’s harming me, the intensity of it.” (P7)</i>
	<i>“I appreciate [that] I have a job that has lifted a massive anxiety out of my life. [...] But that doesn’t mean you are not working like a casual. I have felt like I was working like a casual under a fixed term contract and being paid even less because I am doing more. I am doing a lot more.” (P28)</i>
	<i>“[Previously] I was working as a lecturer in [my home country], so I was a probationary lecturer and that was equivalent to Level A. I worked there for six years and then came over here. None of that previous experience really counts. [...] It’s pretty much like starting from scratch and that’s disheartening.” (P30)</i>
Under-recognition for Quality Work	<i>“It makes us feel as if there is some classism going on. That decasualised staff are the working class who will just have to work and work, while equality which is applied to everyone will not be applied to decasualised staff”. (P3)</i>
	<i>“We bring with us so many experiences, years of teaching, of research, of collaboration and the university should pay attention to these as well.” (P5)</i>
	<i>“I’m resigning so my last day is tomorrow. I took a job as a Level B at a different university, mostly because the workload allocation was more balanced. Being an ECR, I just really wanted to focus and strike while the iron is hot. I wanted to make sure that I had enough allocation for research because I’m on a roll now [...] and so, I went and sought an opportunity externally.” (P18)</i>
	<i>“There were times where I felt quite lonely. I feel like I’m struggling. I also feel like I’m working really hard and I’m doing a really good job, and no-one knows. I feel like someone should say [something about that]. The fail rate [in my class] was down by 10%. I reduced the fail rate by 10% at the end of that first semester by ringing up the students and saying ‘do you know you’re borderline, and you really need to submit this final assessment to pass?’ I feel like you’re the first person to know this.” (P6)</i>
WHS Risks	<i>“I was so much at the limit that I was breaking down just before my classes [...] I kind of burnt out. I wasn’t functioning, I forgot to go to classes, and I forgot to pick up my kids, my brain just stopped working. [...] The load is unsustainable. [...] This is a structural consequence, and we need to recognise that, and I also need to keep surviving so I can’t just keep pushing myself at teaching workloads.” (P22)</i>
	<i>“I was burnt out. I felt it was really, really too much. It was very demanding. [...] It was very tight, tiring and very demanding. [...] I felt the pressure was way too much. [...] The last two years I was in front of the computer most of the time, no walking, and I have gained so much weight because of the stress, lack of sleep. [...] I have sacrificed my health quite a lot in this journey.” (P15)</i>
	<i>“I had a breakdown towards the end of semester because it just got too much. I’m also trying to do a whole bunch of research on the side. Because it’s not part of my allocation, it’s all in my spare time. I spend all weekend trying to do research. I had this breakdown. All the staff saw it. I don’t know how to explain it, but you just feel completely overwhelmed and devastated with the world and that no-one has your back and you’re just being flogged and no-one’s given you the credits that you deserve.” (P13)</i>
	<i>“I’ve had health issues from the beginning of last year. I was dealing with depression, and I have severe iron deficiency which led to my depression according to my GP. [...] After taking classes continuously for six hours one Thursday, I saw that I couldn’t breathe anymore. I went to the GP, and they told me to go straight to emergency and I stayed there overnight. [...] The doctor said that I need to take it slow, and this infection is the result of an untreated fever or flu I had.” (P3)</i>
	<i>“I’ve been really stressed. [...] It’s so much. Last year I was the most burnt out I’ve been in my life. It was the first time in my life where I have actually felt a loss of motivation. It was too much. It is too much. This year is going to be too much again. [...] When you’re not burnout you can do really good work because you’re genuinely excited to do the work and you have the energy to do the work and you see meaning in the work. When I burnt out, it was just too much.” (P32)</i>
	<i>“It’s a culture of overwork and it’s a culture of burnout. That’s what it is.” (P7)</i>

Improving Work Conditions and Supports

Decasualised staff offered key suggestions for how their experiences could be improved. Feedback aligned directly with identified challenges and has informed action planning (Table 56).

Table 56. Decasualised Staff Experiences: Specific Requests for Support

Decasualised Staff Experiences: Specific Requests for Support	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Workload Guardrails with More Autonomy in Load Design	<i>"I think there should be certain protections [put in place], even if the classes were spread out more across the week, that would have been a lot easier. [...] It should be clear that eight hours of straight teaching back-to-back isn't allowed and it shouldn't be that you are allowed to agree even if you're asked. I don't think it's fair to ask the question because we're not in a powerful position and some of us have fought for years for these positions." (P13)</i>
	<i>"[I would like to receive] some safety nets and essentials." (P22)</i>
	<i>"We should sit down and do workplan[s] together." (P17)</i>
	<i>"I feel like there could be a little more support for Level As to have more responsibility if they wanted. [...] if they were given an opportunity [for subject coordination] rather than going to somebody more senior [with the request]" (P9)</i>
	<i>"I don't want to do research; I want to teach and that's very unlike a lot of the academics. [...] A lot of those who are much higher than me can't teach in [practical subjects] because they haven't worked in [the industry] for 20 years. They don't know what they're doing. That's the difference and I feel like I'm valuable. I also think, use me for what I'm good at. Look at my reviews from the students and see. That's where I need to be making a difference out there in the classroom, not sit behind a computer bored to tears looking at data and crying in the corner. [...] Moving to a 40/40/20 workload is not going to suit me at all." (P19)</i>
Informed, Proactive and Supportive Supervision	<i>"[I would like to receive] better onboarding and orientation, not just for me as a decasualised staff member but for my supervisor." (P22)</i>
	<i>"Having [...] supervisors who actually have those conversations to catch you if you can't meet your workload, especially the teaching. [There should be] real structural resources to help you with those if you can't do it and [they should] tell you mentally that if you don't get to 95% your job is safe. [...] Saying if you can't mark all your marking, there are resources at the School, we can get a casual or another member [of staff] will help you with your marking and that doesn't mean you're failing and you're not going to lose your job for it." (P22)</i>
Funding Consistency, with Deadline Flexibility	<i>"Yes, we have the [Start Up funding], but what we can do within what's allowed should also be consistent." (P9)</i>
	<i>"[For funding deadlines] the system should be a little bit flexible. I really needed [this funding] for marking buyout for the Summer. Even if it is a small amount, it would have made a difference." (P4)</i>
Mentoring and Targeted Coaching	<i>"For someone like me who's new to academia, it would have been wonderful to have a mentor, someone who can guide me about how research works, what my plan could be going forward, what my options would [...] Some clear direction on what the pathways of doing a PhD are, and whether there are alternative pathways [would also be helpful]" (P29)</i>
	<i>"I feel like I really need some mentorship on how to apply for grants, especially external grants, not because I'm the typical academic that wants to tick all these boxes but because I do have some ideas that I really want to translate into research and community work, but I need funding to work with the community. I don't want to be that extractivist researcher that just takes and takes and takes from the community. I really want to work with the community, but I want to have money to spend with the community and do the empowering work that we want to do. That's something I really need mentoring for because I don't know how to access grants other than [internal] institutional ones." (P28)</i>
	<i>"You should put in place a structural system that makes it an obligation and responsibility of the mentor to include the mentee who are mainly Level A in their grants and publications. For example, I like research and I want to work on research but then if no one actually involves you, if X, Y and Z want to work with X, Y and Z and they don't want to work with me, and it's for subjective reasons which is usually the case, it's people who you have a relationship with, then even if I'm very good at research I will not have this opportunity." (P4)</i>
	<i>"I think [our peer support labour] needs to somehow be recognised as we move out [of the scheme] or have more of those supports without us always having to ask and fight for them." (P8)</i>
Extended ECR Consideration	<i>"My ECR status runs out next year and that has made me feel like I've missed out on certain grants, opportunities and schemes and I want the university to have something like a provision where you can apply for ECR prizes and awards without having to fight for it every time and by taking into account that those three years aren't part of your qualifying period. That's been a real disruption." (P8)</i>

Decasualisation Action Plan (2026–2030)

Executive Sponsor: Provost, Professor Deborah Sweeney

KEY PRIORITY AREA 4: DECASUALISATION						
REF.	RATIONALE	ACTIONS & OUTPUTS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	SUCCESS INDICATORS
1.	Decasualised staff report disparities in how <i>Enterprise Agreements</i> are interpreted, how Schools work plan policies and load calculators are applied and utilised, and how protections around work conditions are observed. Decasualised staff therefore report large variations in work arrangements, with many experiencing the compounded effects of high teaching loads and high demand work conditions. Many decasualised staff are experiencing negative effects on wellbeing, with significant WHS risks for some. Power dynamics in work planning negotiations disempower decasualised staff from raising valid concerns about workload impacts.	Implement best-practice Work Planning Allocation and Guidelines for Decasualised staff across all School contexts, with consideration of: - providing maximum research load allocations permitted by <i>Enterprise Agreements</i>; - cap total face-to-face teaching hours, with equitable and uniform use of School load calculators; - ensure reasonable breaks on high-teaching days and limit back-to-back high-teaching days; - cap total number of subjects and number of new subjects taught per year; - cap travel to multiple campuses per day/week; - cap marking load per semester, with relief provided above 150 students; - access to workplace flexibility, including opportunity to work from home on non-teaching days. Schools should involve Decasualised staff in work planning by: - valuing expertise, interests and goals in work planning conversations with supervisors and Deans; - consulting with caregivers, staff with chronic health conditions and/or staff with disability to personalise timetables, wherever possible.	2026 - 2027	School Deans, with support from Associate Deans Education & Students, Directors Learning & Teaching, and Heads of Discipline	Faculty Executive Deans	Decasualised staff report consistent work plan policy implementation across and within School contexts; Decasualised staff report greater capacity to deliver planned research outputs; Decasualised staff report equitable and manageable work planning arrangements and improved WHS indicators; Decasualised staff retention at year 4 of employment aligns with WSU averages.
2.	Decasualised staff report inconsistent access to key supports and entitlements, including access to and utilisation of Start-Up Funds. Some	Optimise and standardise key funding supports and entitlements for	2026 - 2027	School Deans, with support from Associate Deans	Faculty Executive Deans	Decasualised staff report equitable access to funding supports, with early and

KEY PRIORITY AREA 4: DECASUALISATION						
REF.	RATIONALE	ACTIONS & OUTPUTS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	SUCCESS INDICATORS
	decasualised staff require additional support to ensure funds are acquitted and of benefit.	decasualised staff across School contexts, including by: - ensuring access to Staff Start Up Funds, remedying access where it has not yet been provided; - enabling the consistent use of internal research funds for marking relief and teaching buyout; - providing open and ongoing channels of communication and support regarding the acquittal of research funds; - providing ongoing ECR research support grants with time-saving, streamlined application and accounting processes.		Education & Students, Directors Learning & Teaching, and Heads of Discipline		appropriate help to acquit grant funding.
3.	Decasualised staff demonstrate high diligence and conscientious commitment to their work, but also report insufficient orientation with ongoing information gaps about University systems and processes. Supervisors are underprepared to provide relevant care and support for decasualised staff transitioning into fulltime academic responsibility. Decasualised staff would also benefit from targeted coaching for academic skills development and ongoing mentoring, wherever possible.	Implement formal, structured and proactive supervision training alongside mentoring programs and targeted coaching to support Decasualised Level A staff, including by: - providing targeted supervisor training on WSU's Academic Decasualisation Scheme, School Work Plan Policies, WHS guidelines, promotions policy and procedure, and new career planning frameworks and systems (see Cygnet 1, Actions 1 & 2); - introducing more extensive onboarding to acquaint new staff with systems and processes that are essential to their work; - implementing formal, targeted and equity-informed coaching and/or mentoring in research, teaching and governance development (see also Cygnet 1, Action 4); - implementing accountability frameworks, especially in contexts where supervisors and mentors conduct self-evaluation.	2026 – 2027	School Deans, with support from Associate Deans Education & Students, Directors Learning & Teaching, and Heads of Discipline	Faculty Executive Deans	Decasualised Level A staff report sustained and/or improved wellbeing, effective and equitable transition support, and increasing research, teaching and service capability across the first three years of appointment.

KEY PRIORITY AREA 4: DECASUALISATION						
REF.	RATIONALE	ACTIONS & OUTPUTS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	SUCCESS INDICATORS
4.	Decasualised staff are eager for promotion but a supervision gap with conflicting policy advice risks existing myths and misconceptions about promotions processes taking root among the cohort. New support frameworks (e.g., <i>Academic Capability Framework</i> and <i>Teaching Quality Framework</i>) require strong socialisation and scaffolded implementation to benefit decasualised staff. Existing promotions mechanisms can also be mobilised and refined for tailored Level A support.	Proactively engage decasualised staff in new Career Planning processes and promotions supports , including: - targeted workshopping with new Career Planning frameworks (see Cygnet 1, Action 2); - dedicated <i>Spring Forward</i> promotions myth-busting workshops on promotions eligibility, application processes and evaluation criteria; - early promotions mentoring with Level D/E staff.	2026 - 2027	School Deans, Heads of Discipline & Western SAGE	Faculty Executive Deans	Decasualised staff report clear and accurate understanding of promotions processes and greater investment in their career growth and progression. Decasualised staff promotions are equitable across School/discipline contexts and broadly by gender, caregiver status, Indigenous identity and cultural background.
5.	Despite high performance, decasualised staff are at risk of burnout, attrition and career stagnation. Careful monitoring of cohort experiences, development, and integration into balanced academic workloads is required to ensure new supports are working as intended and risks are mitigated.	Track and evaluate wellbeing, retention, development, and progression for Decasualised staff, tailoring processes as relevant to enhance positive outcomes. Evaluation should include: - Mid-Point Decasualisation Check-In Survey to assess: - efficacy of new Work Planning Guidelines; - equitable access to key supports and entitlements; - salience of promotions (and other) information, workshops and supports. - End-Point SAGE Decasualisation Evaluation Project to assess: - retention and performance data (e.g., staff attrition, confirmation success rates, promotions applications and success rates); - staff development across Academic Fields of Practice; - staff integration into traditional academic roles.	Check-In Survey: Q2 2027; Evaluation: Q4 2029	Western SAGE	SAGE Deputy Academic Lead	Evaluations completed with targeted recommendations implemented.

KEY PRIORITY AREA 5: INDIGENOUS STAFF

Cygnets Rationale

WSU received a SAGE Cygnets Award for Indigenous Staff in 2024, recognising substantial and meaningful efforts to bolster Indigenous staff equity since the implementation of the University's first *Indigenous Strategy (2020–2025)* and the establishing of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Indigenous Leadership (DVCIL) portfolio. This Cygnets charted the University's progress across:

- galvanising Indigenous strategy, leadership and governance;
- structurally embedding Indigenous cultural recognition;
- nurturing, rewarding and promoting Indigenous excellence;
- building community, connection and cultural safety;
- developing a culturally-informed approach to evaluating progress at the University.

Cygnets findings highlighted a pivotal opportunity to embed sustainable culture change at WSU into the future. WSU's next *Indigenous Strategy (2026–2030)*, supported by a second SAGE Indigenous Staff Cygnets Key Priority Area (2026–2032), will entrench structural and cultural recognition for Indigenous excellence across the University and establish WSU as the employer of choice for Indigenous peoples across the Western Sydney region.

Evidence of Barrier

WSU's 2024 Cygnets Impact Assessment was the first Indigenous-led and culturally informed research into the experiences of Indigenous staff at WSU (see Table 1, p.xiv). Titled *Gathering Insights and Embedding Workplace Improvements for Indigenous Staff at WSU* (Kennedy, McKay & Talbot-Mundine, 2024), the project engaged Indigenous staff across the University in a collaborative evaluation of progress since the Bronze Era. Findings provided clear and compelling evidence of equity advancements for Indigenous staff at WSU, with collaborators detailing policy and practice changes that are having most impact and identifying areas for ongoing refinement. Key drivers of cultural change and priority areas for improvement have since been mapped into new Silver Cygnets Objectives (Table 57).

Table 57. Indigenous Staff Cygnets Objectives, 2026–2032

Indigenous Staff Cygnets Objectives, 2026 – 2032		
Gathering Insights Findings	Bronze Cygnets Result	Silver Cygnets Objective
Indigenous Strategy: A Driver for Change	Landmark Achievement	Extend
Galvanised Indigenous Leadership	Transformation Driver	Embed
Cultural Recognition, Viability & Safety	Transformation Driver	Embed
Community, Culture & Connection	Transformation Driver	Embed
Indigenous Employment	Area for Improvement	Improve
Local Indigenous Governance	Area for Improvement	Improve
Colonial Load	Area for Improvement	Improve
Non-Indigenous Staff Contributions to Indigenous Priorities	Area for Improvement	Improve
Non-Indigenous Staff Foundational Knowledge	Area for Improvement	Improve

1. Workplace Cultures: Indigenous Staff Experiences

Disclaimer: All survey and Yarn data provided below is drawn from Western SAGE's *Gathering Insights* Indigenous staff project (see Table 1, p.xiv), with the exception of Figure 36, Figure 37 and Table 70, which are drawn from WSU's Engagement Survey 2025, as noted in caption text.

Area for Extension: Indigenous Strategy

In 2024, Indigenous staff identified significant advances since the launch of the University's first Indigenous Strategy (Table 58). Frequently noted for its scale and significance, the *Indigenous Strategy (2020–2025)* was seen as a significant driver for change, marking an important shift in how Indigenous peoples are valued at WSU (Table 59). Despite the *Strategy's* high ambition, collaborators witnessed meaningful implementation, with accountability in place. Galvanised Indigenous leadership was seen as fundamental to Strategy achievements.

Table 58. Bronze Cygnet Outcome: Indigenous Equity Progress at WSU, 2024

Progressing Equity at WSU, 2023			
	Agree	Neither	Disagree
Q. Reflecting on the period since the launch of the University's Indigenous Strategy in 2020, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?			
Indigenous excellence is more visible at Western	100%	0%	0%
There is greater transparency around Indigenous events and activities	88%	9%	3%
There is more honest commitment by WSU's Indigenous leadership team	88%	12%	0%
There has been meaningful progress advancing Indigenous priorities at WSU	88%	12%	0%

Table 59. Bronze Cygnet Impact: *Indigenous Strategy (2020–2025)*, A Driver for Change

<i>Indigenous Strategy (2020 – 2025): A Driver for Change</i>	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Senior Indigenous Leadership and Indigenous Strategy: Signals of Cultural Value and Drivers for Change	<i>"The achievements of the Strategy have given me faith and confidence that Western is serious about Indigenous matters and shows a genuine, realistic and sustainable commitment to the success of my people." (SP19)</i>
	<i>"The Strategy, I remember when it first got put out, it was very ambitious. I was like, 'How did [VC] Barney ever sign off on this?'. And then, 'How did they ever get it across?'. And then, 'How are we ever going to achieve it?'. [...] To be able to sit at our staff conference this year and have our Deputy Vice Chancellor go through slides where green is what we have achieved, yellow is what we're working towards... it was amazing to see the Strategy kind of come to life." (Possum)</i>
	<i>"[The Strategy] shows the dedication and care the university has for First Nations people." (SP24)</i>
	<i>"I feel this strategy represents Indigenous staff and students as valuable contributors to the university in our own right." (SP15)</i>
	<i>"I really strongly hold and express this, that I think Western Sydney [University] is a leader in terms of Aboriginal leadership right from the top, and that feeds through right down to our students." (Milla)</i>
	<i>"[The Strategy] gives me hope and confidence. It sends a clear message that the senior leadership are invested in Indigenous people and that we matter." (SP8)</i>
	<i>"I believe that the commitment from Senior Indigenous Leaders has been instrumental in developing and driving policies and systems that have seen the seven strategic outcomes with, in some cases very ambitious goals (e.g. Indigenous Centre of Excellence) become a genuine reality." (SP15)</i>
	<i>"The changes made by the DDVCIL are impressive! [...] Among staff there is a strong sense that we belong and that we are valued and respected, this is testament to the leadership in the DDVCIL." (SP6)</i>
	<i>"My experience has been a very positive one since the introduction of the Indigenous Strategy. [...] This would have never occurred without the leadership of [DDVCIL]." (SP6)</i>
	<i>"The direction the OVDICIL and University has taken is not only the right one - it offers an avenue for young Indigenous people to see a path for success clearly set out before them." (SP19)</i>
	<i>"I feel like there's a really nice groundswell. And I know that a lot of this is happening because of one really strategic, amazing Indigenous scholar [DVCIL] who came on board a few years ago and rattled the chains." (Olive)</i>
	<i>"There's nothing I can say that 'that force' of the DVCIL is not already doing. [They're] at that level for a reason. I'm just on the sidelines supporting." (Crow)</i>

Indigenous staff perspectives on WSU's broader commitments to equity for its Indigenous workforce were also strongly positive (Table 60). Importantly, staff recognised an environment in which Indigenous priorities were aligned and supported by senior leaders across the institution (Table 61). Feelings of 'trust' in WSU's commitment to Indigenous priorities were built by University-wide Executive-level allyship, an example set by WSU's most senior leaders.

Table 60. Bronze Cygnet Outcome: Committed University Culture, 2024

Committed University Culture, 2024			
	Agree	Neither	Disagree
Q. Thinking about the University more generally, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?			
WSU is committed to equity for its Indigenous community	79%	21%	0%
WSU is committed to increasing employment for Indigenous people	79%	21%	0%
Indigenous knowledges and cultures are celebrated at WSU	73%	18%	9%

Table 61. Bronze Cygnet Impact: Non-Indigenous Executive Allyship

University Culture: Non-Indigenous Executive Allyship	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Strategy Embedment and Non-Indigenous Senior Executive Allyship: Valuing Indigenous Priorities Across WSU	<i>"The Indigenous Strategy has been a driving force to not just bring Indigenous staff together, but to set a common mission for the entire University. The fact that other areas across the University have also established their own Indigenous Strategies is a testament to the success of the 2020-2025 Indigenous Strategy. It has changed the fabric of how Indigenous business is done at Western both now and into the future." (SP8)</i>
	<i>"It was very interesting to see how quickly the Strategy was created and implemented, and then how soon after it was reported on, and then how quickly the rest of the university then came to fruition. [...] Now I think every School has a reporting process in regards to the strategy." (Magpie)</i>
	<i>"There's a strong university culture under the Vice-Chancellor's and Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor's leadership. There is a strong culture of valuing Indigenous work, and there's a strong culture of listening to the staff." (Wattle)</i>
	<i>"The culture here is: we're amazing and deadly, because we bring people with us. That's the culture that I get from here. And that's definitely coming from this [Indigenous] space. But I have seen it reflected in the Executive people that I've spoken to at different events, who aren't Indigenous. I can see them embracing it and going, 'This is really good'. Y'know, people want to be part of it. And they're advocating across." (Olive)</i>
	<i>"Going along to the Kingswood First Peoples Walk opening and hearing all the important people talk about the Indigenous Strategy and Indigenous futures, like... yeah... I feel like I'm instilled with a lot of trust and hope in the University there. Yeah, and going back again to like, sort of, workplace culture again... I feel like University-wide, it's very much trustworthy. They say like, 'We care about students', that's very trustworthy." (Eel)</i>
	<i>"That [First People's Walk], the University and the Executive really supported it and funded that space and celebrated it and advertised it, and promoted it across the University, not just in the Indigenous space. [...] The Executive were really proactive in talking about it [...] and they do that with the different spaces that are happening – so, the Badanami spaces that are being built in the new building, when there's things like the Yarramundi Lecture, which is linked to NAIDOC week. And the Executives, they turn up." (Olive)</i>
	<i>"There's something with that kind of idea of how we treat our most vulnerable people. When the worst happens, do we leave them to the wayside? Or do we step up and make sure that everybody's... y'know, accounted for and looked out for? I believe, I felt that that happened at this university. And it happened for me in two spaces: it happened through the Indigenous space, but also the university more broadly, like from the Executive down." (Olive)</i>

Area for Improvement: Non-Indigenous Staff Engagement with Indigenous Priorities

Despite feeling well supported at University-level, Indigenous staff expressed only moderate agreement about non-Indigenous colleagues' investments in matters of importance to Indigenous equity (Table 62). While some Indigenous staff report strong feeling that they are respected,

supported and encouraged by non-Indigenous colleagues, others attribute this support to “only a handful”, lamenting that Indigenous colleagues continue to carry the load for progressing Indigenous equity (Table 63). Several comments articulate explicit ambivalence, especially where making distinctions between ‘support’ for Indigenous equity and its ‘practice’.

Table 62. Area for Improvement: Non-Indigenous Staff Engagement with Indigenous Priorities, 2024

Experiences with Non-Indigenous Colleagues, 2024			
	Agree	Neither	Disagree
Q. Reflecting on your experiences with staff at the University who are not Indigenous, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?			
Non-Indigenous colleagues are active in learning about Indigenous Knowledges and cultures	58%	27%	15%
Non-Indigenous colleagues <u>support</u> equity for Indigenous staff and students at the University	64%	21%	15%
Non-Indigenous colleagues <u>practice</u> equity for Indigenous staff and students at the University	58%	30%	12%
Non-Indigenous staff contribute to progressing Indigenous priorities at the University	42%	45%	12%

Table 63. Area for Improvement: Non-Indigenous Staff Engagement

Area for Improvement: Non-Indigenous Staff Engagement	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Area for Improvement: Non-Indigenous Staff Engagement with Indigenous Priorities	<i>"I feel there are 'pockets' in which interest, engagement and investment in Indigenous knowledges and cultures is genuinely expressed and demonstrated and I believe that these 'pockets' have been growing larger and attracting attention in areas that Indigenous staff and knowledges were previously (last five-six years) not engaged." (SP15)</i>
	<i>"For the most part, there appears to be support from non-Indigenous colleagues, but the action varies from inaction, to piecemeal, to some action, to very active. [It] does not seem that everyone practices the same within Schools/Centres or across the University. In my experience, I have worked with exceptional colleagues who are active contributors who want to advance the Indigenous priorities, and I have also experienced racism and discrimination from other colleagues. Then there are those that do not really do anything but at least do not cause harm." (SP6)</i>
	<i>"I know that there can be a lot of push back from other sectors and Schools. They don't want to have to deal with that learning or the perceived issues of having an Indigenous trainee, or going that extra step to help them, to teach them. [...] Obviously, [DDVCIL] is trying really hard to have the trainees and to offer that, but then it's on [our] colleagues to push those Schools to say like, 'no it'll be worth it.' But they shouldn't have to do that." (Lyrebird)</i>
	<i>"I have had both positive and disappointing experiences with staff members. I have had staff who have demonstrated a committed to understanding and filling those gaps in their knowledge, going above and beyond to adhere and/or implement the Indigenous Strategy. I have had experiences where non-Indigenous colleagues demonstrated a lack of dedication to things like reporting on the successes, or implementing components of the Strategy. In good faith, I trust they were swamped with work and unable to provide their undivided attention to not just this matter, but other non-Indigenous matters too, but it is certainly disheartening and does leave one wondering whether they take the matters seriously." (SP19)</i>
	<i>"I am not lumping all non-Indigenous staff together. We have extremely considerate and open-minded colleagues here at Western, however there are staff who do not align with these four statements." (SP7)</i>
	<i>"There are some colleagues who are highly active and great contributors, but this is only a handful. There are plenty of colleagues who are not and plead the 'I don't know how' case. [...]" (SP13)</i>
	<i>"Culture events only celebrated by the Indigenous not the majority of university staff, especially lecturers. There is little to no cultural safety at WSU has been my experience." (SP28)</i>
	<i>"They support equity in principle but not in practice, often because they have a complete lack of understanding of equity and are unwilling to change their ways of working." (SP32)</i>

Area for Embedment: Community, Culture and Connection

Reflecting on DDVCIL activity, Indigenous staff reported feeling informed, engaged and consulted on matters of importance, with capacity to contribute where desired and to offer feedback where concerns exist (Table 64). For many, DDVCIL's active and regular efforts to bring staff together

across all levels of seniority had an important community-fostering effect (Table 65). Staff are strengthened by DDVCIL's all-embracing leadership approach, which is producing an inclusive workplace culture within the portfolio, a feeling of belonging at WSU, and a feeling of 'family' among Indigenous staff.

Table 64. Bronze Cygnet Outcome: Feelings of Involvement, 2024

Feelings of Involvement, 2024			
	Agree	Neither	Disagree
Q. Reflecting on your engagement with initiatives aimed at advancing equity for Indigenous staff, students and community at Western Sydney University, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?			
I am informed about what is going on	85%	9%	6%
I am given the opportunity to contribute to areas of my interest	76%	0%	24%
I have input into decision-making about matters of importance to me	64%	12%	24%
I am encouraged to give feedback about matters of importance to me	76%	15%	9%

Table 65. Bronze Cygnet Impact: Fostering Community, Belonging and Inclusion

Senior Leadership: Fostering Community, Belonging and Inclusion	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Senior Leadership: Building Community	<i>"Although I believe there has been buy-in across the University from Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff as well as external stakeholders. I think the greatest achievement that has grounded all other elements of the Strategy has been in bringing Indigenous staff together. We are a more unified, united and collegial team (across the whole University) that work together for the betterment of our Indigenous University community, and broader Indigenous communities." (SP6)</i>
	<i>"It has been a welcome impact/change to my time as an Indigenous employee at Western. Before [the appointment of DVCIL] Indigenous units across Western were very separate and did not collaborate. Indigenous staff did not come together. Now we have a great Indigenous staff network, different Indigenous units are encouraged to collaborate. I have a positive experience most of the time at work when we get together for Indigenous-focused days. [...] I feel as though I have joined another family by working in an identified position at Western, I really enjoy it!" (SP21)</i>
	<i>"I love being part of such a dynamic environment where all our Indigenous staff are pulling together under terrific leadership." (SP11)</i>
	<i>"I feel more supported in my role. There are more avenues to pursue Indigenous matters within my role with the backing from senior management and university priorities." (SP13)</i>
	<i>"Indigenous Leadership at WSU has brought our community together providing more ways to connect and learn from each other. It's made me want to be more involved and excited to be here." (SP10)</i>
	<i>"We're a group with a common goal. [...] And we just do it together. Even the new ones [...] they just want to be part of, y'know, a community team." (Traveller)</i>
	<i>"One of the things that DVCIL does, and that [the] team does, is they hold different sorts of networking events for the whole Indigenous staff to get together and to sort of share what they're doing in their teams and what they've been achieving [...], just sort of having a yarn with each other about what we've been doing in our areas. [...] I've gained a lot of connections." (Penguin)</i>
	<i>"I feel like I've landed on my feet in a lot of ways I'm home. I feel like I'm home. Because I can just be me. You know, I don't feel like I have to put any special airs and graces or particular things." (Olive)</i>
Senior Leadership: Fostering Inclusion and Belonging	<i>"Everyone wants to feel a sense of belonging, right? I feel like we're shining a light on how it's done. And not just 'this is how it's done because we're Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander', but 'this is how it's done' because we're people and we care." (Olive)</i>
	<i>"I think what's different here is the inclusiveness of the Indigenous portfolio is probably stronger than at [my previous university workplace]." (Wattle)</i>
	<i>"I feel it every day. I feel included, I feel a lot more supported, I feel a lot more encouraged. [...] Y'know, we're all family. Like we're all mob. It's so easy. [...] It's all just so supportive. And it's a network, a big network." (Lizard)</i>
	<i>"I haven't had really a negative experience since I've been here at University. Everybody has been very welcoming, especially the Deputy Vice-Chancellor in the Indigenous unit. It's like walking into a room and walking into a giant hug. [...] Since I started, y'know, there's always somebody there if you need help. People just come out of the woodwork and say, 'Oh, yeah, I know who you are'. [...] It's just been a really, really positive experience." (Dyarrawunang)</i>
	<i>"I think the biggest support is the management here. [...] Here, the managers care, y'know. The managers support, the managers encourage. [...] I know sound probably cliché or whatever, but it feels like Indigenous family here at work. [...] You feel the strength from it." (Lizard)</i>

Area for Embedment: Cultural Recognition, Viability and Safety

Gathering Insights collaborators also cited the increased recognition and visibility of Indigenous excellence, and cultural recognition embedded across language, place, policy and process as contributing to cultural viability and enhanced feelings of cultural safety (Table 66). Several staff described the embedding of cultural recognition in place-making across campuses as significant personally and for community, and as an observable transformation in the University's approach to and support of Indigenous priorities. Staff sought the ongoing embedment of cultural recognition and more places of togetherness across campuses.

Table 66. Bronze Cygnet Impact: Cultural Recognition, Viability and Safety

Cultural Recognition, Viability & Safety	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Figurative and Physical Place-Making is Changing Culture	<i>"I'm looking at that particular landscaped area that was specifically designed and made in recognition of the Country we're on, and the Elders that are part of the University were involved in the creation of it, and their voices are part of it. I just feel so fortunate that I am sitting in an office and I'm looking at that space. And when I got here this morning, there was a family of kangaroo, two adults and two bubs, on that space because it's been planted with natives. Oh my gosh, that's a blessing." (Olive)</i>
	<i>"Securing funding for the Indigenous Centre of Excellence is extraordinary which has captured the imagination of the wider university and is changing the way the university thinks and acts on matters such as building on Country, procurement and Indigenous governance." (SP11)</i>
	<i>"That fits in with Cultural Viability. Like in terms of just actually having names and Acknowledgement of Country and Indigenous awards, it's just meaning that our culture is being intertwined, and part of everyday life at Western Sydney University. There's definite improvement in that and it would be great to keep going with that. The First Peoples Walk at Kingswood and the plans for it to happen at Campbelltown are fantastic." (Milla)</i>
	<i>"It's really important that we weave our culture and our way of doing things and our visibility in everyday practice. And so doing Acknowledgement of Country is something that is now more acceptable, it's more expected. And I think that doing little things like that are really important." (Milla)</i>
	<i>"One of the complexities is that we have so many different campuses, but students do love the opportunity to engage...." (Eel)</i>
	<i>"There shouldn't have to be an event. There should be a place that people go every week [...] where they can see [each other] and they can have something to eat. And they can talk to people and get to know people. [...]. Like I just think, from that perspective, you need a spot where they know that they can come and it's going to be safe for them." (Amber)</i>

Area for Improvement: Indigenous Staff Employment

While increased senior Indigenous leadership and rising Indigenous employment were cited as significant achievements under WSU's first Indigenous Strategy, Yarns illustrated ongoing need for more Indigenous staff in both identified and non-identified positions across WSU (Table 67).

Table 67. Area for Improvement: More Indigenous Employment

Area for Improvement: More Indigenous Employment	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Area for Improvement: More Indigenous Staff across WSU	<i>"There are not enough Indigenous academics in the Schools, y'know, and so we really, yeah, we need to have more Indigenous academics working here. And people probably still do need to realise that they don't even have to be identified jobs, y'know? An Indigenous academic can often do the same job anyone else can do and they bring all that additional value." (Wattle)</i>
	<i>"The biggest challenge in my School, in my department that I'm in now, is the lack of Indigenous people - which I feel like is probably a universal issue [...] You know, there's a lot of work to be done and there's only so many of us at the moment." (Olive)</i>
	<i>"[One area for improvement] is for Indigenous staff who are the sole Indigenous employee on a non-Indigenous team. A few of those sorts of positions could be bolstered or, y'know, adding a few more Indigenous positions in there or, y'know, just grow that network... That's what I'd like to see, just extending the network, growing the network, adding more support for the staff." (Lizard)</i>

	<i>"I suppose the only [improvement] would be for the University to maybe create more identified positions. That would be a good thing. But that's something for the rest of the university [beyond ILD to do]." (Dyarrawunang)</i>
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Area for Improvement: Local Indigenous Governance

In local School/Institute/Division contexts, Indigenous staff (especially academics) agreed that they are consulted and appropriately recognised (Table 68). However, Yarns illustrated that while DDVCIL's efforts to bolster culture, community and connection is taking effect among Indigenous staff, experiences are mixed within local work areas, including for identified teams (Table 69).

Table 68. Area for Improvement: Local Experiences, 2024

Local Experiences, 2024			
Q. Reflecting on your experiences in your School/Division/Institute, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?	Agree	Neither	Disagree
I am consulted about decisions that affect me as an Indigenous staff member	63%	22%	16%
I am properly recognised for my contributions as an Indigenous staff member	67%	15%	18%

Table 69. Area for Improvement: Mixed Experiences in Local Areas

Area for Improvement: Mixed Experiences in Identified Roles	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Mixed School-based Experiences	<i>"I feel strongly supported by the Manager of my School and know that I can always go to them for advice/support. I have met a vast variety of staff (academic and professional) and am learning to better navigate the policies/practices as well as the varied expectations and level of understanding of myself as an Indigenous academic and of Indigenous knowledges and perspectives more broadly." (SP15)</i>
	<i>"Certain people that I speak to [are] very open about how unsupportive [their School] is as a whole. [They] say [their] manager is great, but [the School] is really, really poor. Speaking to [another staff member] and knowing that this School is [also] problematic... yeah. Then it's like [another School, for example]. I have had a lot to do with [a senior leader within that School]. [That senior leader] and the School itself are incredibly supportive." (Amber)</i>
Mixed Experiences in Identified Roles	<i>"Coming into this position where it is an Indigenous-identified position and all the work that we do is centred around Indigenous people – whether that's, y'know, younger people, or whether that's mature age students wanting to come in – a lot of the work is centred around Indigenous communities. [...] When I was younger, I was very disconnected from [my culture], and so having the opportunities to come into this role and, y'know, learn more about my culture as well as being able to share that knowledge while learning.... Yeah, I think it's definitely been very important to me." (Penguin)</i>
	<i>"I've been able to learn a lot about my culture and even about myself and my cultural identity through this position and through Western. So, I think that's been very useful and very nice for me, because then I can go back and can share with my family who has also felt that disconnect from culture. And maybe they don't have the opportunities to go and learn, where I've been given this opportunity. So, now I can go back and I can share it with my family and community. [...] It's great to have that sort of cultural connection and to be able to talk about it and gain more knowledge." (Penguin)</i>
	<i>"It is a safe space within the team, but also, it's like a very strong, powerful group of people, which I associate with happiness but also strength." (Lyrebird)</i>
	<i>"Y'know, in terms of Indigenous culture, I feel like I see so much more Indigenous culture outside of my own regular day to day life. [...] I would honestly have thought that being in an identified team there would be more talk of culture and that. But, I don't know, maybe it's because it's just a regular thing that doesn't need to be explicitly stated, or maybe there's other reasons. But I feel like it's never talked about. Like, ever. I remember feeling like it's just a little bit, like, disappointing. But, y'know, I'm sure there's more to it than that. Like, it's just like our... whatever, y'know, that's all of us, we don't need to keep talking about who we are every single day and that." (Eel)</i>
	<i>"I am often not consulted about decisions that affect me as a *staff member* I am not recognised for my contributions as a *staff member*." (SP9)</i>
	<i>"Within the first month [of taking up my position...] there was a considerable amount of internal conflict, and I felt that our team lacked mutual respect, operating more as individuals rather than a cohesive unit. This individualistic approach is counterproductive. While I personally focus on the needs of my community and how best to serve them, not everyone on the team shares this collective mind-set. The prevailing attitude seems to be 'every man for himself,' which undermines the collaborative spirit necessary for our success." (Crow)</i>

However, WSU's 2025 Engagement Survey results appear to signal specific challenges within Faculty/School-based contexts, where Indigenous staff tend to be more distributed, rather than for Divisions where Indigenous staff more commonly work within identified teams. Looking broadly across high-level categories, Division-based Indigenous staff outperformed WSU benchmarks for staff positivity across almost all areas (Figure 36), while Faculty/School-based Indigenous staff reported much lower positivity across four categories: Alignment & Involvement, Social Connection, Teamwork & Ownership and Wellbeing & Inclusion (Figure 37).

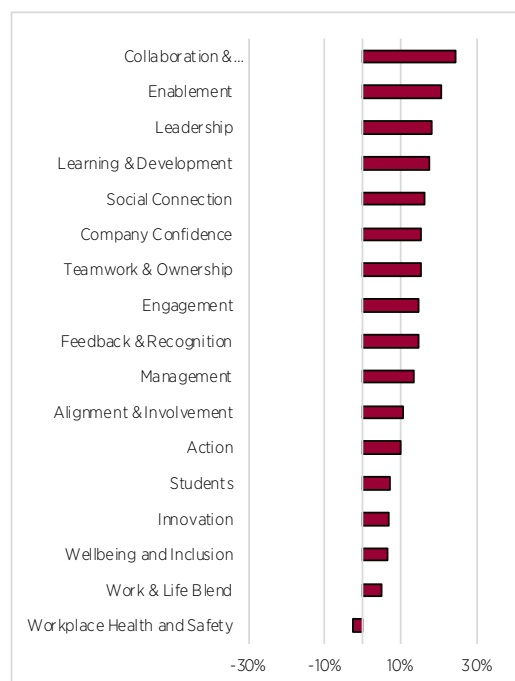


Figure 36. Cohort Gap: Divisions-based Indigenous Staff Category Positivity Relative to WSU, Engagement Survey, 2025

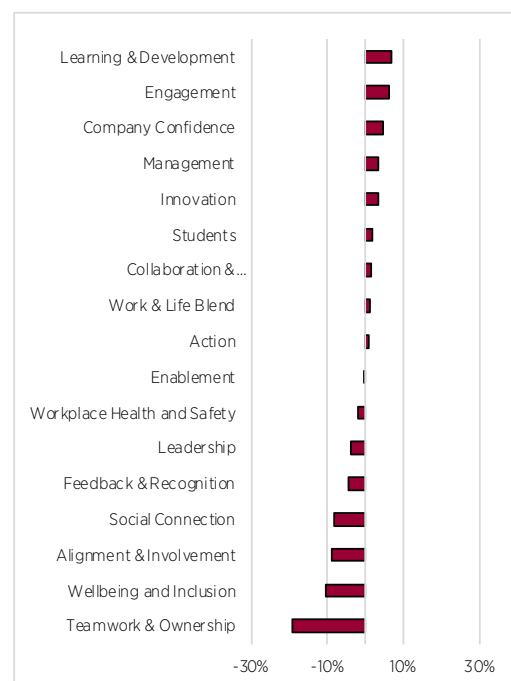


Figure 37. Cohort Gap: Faculty-based Indigenous Staff Category Positivity Relative to WSU, Engagement Survey, 2025

Further analysis indicates Faculty/School trends are most associated with differential patterns for Indigenous academics (Table 70). When compared with WSU's broader academic cohort and/or with Indigenous professionals, disproportionately low positivity for Indigenous academics signals challenges with workload fairness (potentially heightened colonial load, as below), lesser belief in the University's commitment to its social responsibilities, and substantially reduced feelings of belonging. Especially worrying is lower likelihood among Indigenous academics to report bullying and harassment.

Table 70. Comparative Indigenous Staff Positivity for Relevant Engagement Survey Prompts, 2025

Comparative Indigenous Staff Positivity for Relevant Engagement Survey Prompts, 2025				
	Positive Response Rate (%) by Cohort			
	ACADEMIC		PROFESSIONAL	
Prompt	WSU	Indigenous	WSU	Indigenous
CATEGORY: ALIGNMENT & INVOLVEMENT	72%	69%	72%	78%
I am appropriately involved in decisions that affect my work	53%	50%	57%	71%
I know what I need to do to be successful in my role	83%	83%	84%	87%
I know how my work contributes to the goals of the University	81%	75%	80%	79%
CATEGORY: SOCIAL CONNECTION	59%	54%	61%	73%
The University's commitment to social responsibility is genuine	62%	50%	66%	79%
The University really allows us to make a positive difference	56%	58%	56%	68%
CATEGORY: TEAMWORK & OWNERSHIP	46%	36%	61%	65%
I feel I am part of a team	59%	58%	75%	82%
Workloads are divided fairly among people where I work	29%	17%	40%	50%
CATEGORY: WELLBEING & INCLUSION	73%	60%	82%	86%
If I experienced harassment or bullying at work I would raise this with someone at the University	72%	58%	81%	86%
I can be authentic at work	65%	75%	80%	86%
I feel like I belong at the University	64%	42%	71%	79%

These findings indicate a pressing need to enhance supports and increase accountability for progressing Indigenous priorities in Faculty contexts. Across *Gathering Insights* Yarns, Indigenous academics spoke to these challenges and detailed their recommendation for more local Indigenous governance positions, predicting this would help to alleviate colonial load, diversify local leadership cultures, and enable genuine focus on Indigenous priorities in Faculty contexts (Table 71).

Table 71. Area for Improvement: Localised Indigenous Governance Roles

Area for Improvement: More Indigenous Employment & Governance Roles	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Area for Improvement: Localised Indigenous Governance	"Another gap is that the Strategy at a School level is dependent on the Dean. And if you've got a Dean who is extremely passionate and supportive, that's fantastic. But if you've got a Dean who is maybe not that way inclined, then they're going to do what they're mandated or required to do." (Milla)
	"I would love to see our School have an Associate Dean in Indigenous Leadership, where that person is able to focus their attention in terms of helping programs [...] that can oversee the ongoing professional development of all of the staff that sit within the School. [...] I'd love to see every School have an Associate Dean in Indigenous Learning and Teaching or Education, or whatever you want to call it. That would be amazing to have that at every School level. Because otherwise it falls on the Indigenous academics in that School, who aren't given the workload, or the actual time or acknowledgement of doing that. They're just expected to carry that cultural load on whatever pay scale and whatever role they're actually doing." (Milla)
	"There are many times I am not consulted when I should be especially in relation to decision making which directly affects me and my community." (SP32)
	"Deans still hold the power. Whereas if you create more positions and you have an Associate Dean who says [theoretically], 'No, I'm going to voice this. And I report to [PVC Education] as well as to you, my Dean'. It gives them that power. [...] It's one strategy that could potentially level the playing field even more." (Milla)

Area for Improvement: Colonial Load

Gathering Insights data indicated that one third of Indigenous staff report excessive Colonial Load (Table 72).¹⁰ In Yarns, unprompted discussions around colonial load impacts drew concerns around “burnout” and collaborators connected higher colonial loads to contexts of underrepresentation, the dominance of colonial or ‘white’ norms across institutional and academic structures, and lack of foundational knowledge among non-Indigenous colleagues (Table 73).

Table 72. Area for Improvement: Local Experiences, 2024

Local Experiences, 2024			
Q. Reflecting on your experiences in your School/Division/Institute, to what extent do you agree with the following statement?	Agree	Neither	Disagree
I am called upon <u>too often</u> to represent or advise on Indigenous matters (*Colonial Load)	36%	30%	33%

Table 73. Area for Improvement: Colonial Load

Area for Improvement: Colonial Load	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Area for Improvement: Colonial Load	<i>“Western is an amazing place to work but I do feel that cultural load still exists here. I see Indigenous employees being called upon all the time to give advice, input and most frustratingly, to give Welcomes to Country. Just because I’m Indigenous it doesn’t mean I can/should/will give a Welcome.” (SP21)</i>
	<i>“I personally have only been called on a few times but there is another staff member who is called on for everything just because she is Indigenous. It is not an Indigenous support role but she [is] constantly given an extra workload because she is Indigenous.” (SP29)</i>
	<i>“It’s not necessarily a [WSU] thing. I feel like there needs to be more recognition [...] for the additional black load that staff have. Whether it’s community expectations or institutional expectations [...] I not only have a responsibility to my students and to the School but I have one to community and if I do a really shit job they’re going to kick my butt. So, yeah... I feel like there needs to be more recognition [...] there needs to be more of an understanding of the black load that we all have.” (Possum)</i>
	<i>“[Where] you actually have people within the university that are in particular roles, where they’re actually being asked to carry cultural load, then let’s recognise it in a work plan.” (Milla)</i>
Colonial Overload: Underrepresentation, Colonial Norms, and Cultural Incompetence	<i>“In the same way of having a diversity of opinions is really good, having a diversity of people would be good. If I was one Indigenous person in a team of Indigenous people giving my input, yeah absolutely that makes sense. But I feel like having to speak on behalf of a whole group of people... it’s exhausting. There’s obviously [...] a sort of cultural burden there. [...] You hear a lot about that cultural burden. [...] It’s that additional responsibility, it’s that additional workload, the additional effort, pressure, often with no additional compensation. Just because of who you identify as, right?” (Eel)</i>
	<i>“I consider most of the calls on my time as part of my job, but there are considerable demands, which sometimes arise because there are not enough Indigenous staff overall.” (SP11)</i>
	<i>“You want to wade in and really... via the right arm-depth, so you can manage it, not just do a dive at the deep end. Because you’re gonna get overwhelmed and engulfed by all of the expectations and, ‘Oh my God, you’re Aboriginal, you can help us do this, you can write that...’ Y’know, as much as I’d love to dive in at the deep end, I have to get in and make my way and navigate to where’s the right space. And [determine] where I can be most effective and how I can be most effective, because we all have a limited capacity. And I don’t want to burn out and then be useless to everybody.” (Olive)</i>
	<i>“A lot of us outside of work are trying to find that connection and culture, and we do then bring that into work. And it’s not an easy journey, it’s tiring, it’s hard and it’s emotional. So, it [takes] a lot to get there.” (Lyrebird)</i>
	<i>“As an Aboriginal person I bring my whole self to the job. You can’t cut out the Aboriginal side of being me. So, I want to share all of that, but I find it difficult because you often have to meet white parameters. And I also need to recognise that I’m also writing this to be published for a white institution. So, it’s like, who am I to hand over my stories and my peoples’ stories, my language. It’s complex to find your voice and try and do it the right ways as a young black [...] academic in a white space, when you want to do it the right way. [...] I want to protect those knowledges, and it’s complex. [...] I’m very much still trying to figure out how to strengthen my voice.” (Possum)</i>

¹⁰ Also called ‘black load’ and ‘cultural load’ by Indigenous staff, ‘Colonial Load’ refers here to the additional (formal and informal) workload placed upon Indigenous staff to provide Indigenous knowledge, education and support in the workplace.

Area for Improvement: Foundational Knowledge

Explicitly linked to heightened Colonial Load and an obstructive factor for Cultural Safety, Yarn discussions identified low foundational knowledge among non-Indigenous staff (Table 74). Most impactfully, Indigenous staff described a lack of sophisticated understanding about when, where and how Indigenous staff should be called upon to contribute Indigenous knowledge, advice and/or support. Staff sought greater foundational knowledge among non-Indigenous colleagues regarding Indigenous sociocultural contexts, the diversity of Indigenous cultures, Knowledges, and ways of being, the 'additional value' that Indigenous staff bring to their work, and more understanding of the cultural responsibility involved in performing Acknowledgements, Indigenous curriculum, and sharing cultural insights and information.

Table 74: Area for Improvement: Non-Indigenous Staff Foundational Knowledge

Area for Improvement: Non-Indigenous Staff Foundational Knowledge	
Theme	Sample Feedback
Area for Improvement: Non-Indigenous Staff Lacking Foundational Knowledge	<i>"I'm over-consulted on tokenistic matters, yet under-consulted on the real issues. Perhaps because the answer with these matters is not easy and often a challenge to the status quo." (SP32)</i>
	<i>"I find in many meetings or situations that Indigenous people are expected to give an Acknowledgment of Country - I am beginning to find this rude and somewhat offensive that because I am Indigenous that I am expected to perform this Acknowledgement. Requests to acknowledge Country are often dropped on me very short notice or sometimes with no notice at all." (SP21)</i>
	<i>"I think it showed their little understanding about different tribes and clans as well, when [non-Indigenous colleagues] would ask that of me a lot of the time. And I would be, like: 'this [perspective] could be different, I'm off Country, this isn't my land.' Hopefully something sunk in in the end, I don't know." (Lyrebird)</i>
	<i>"I can't tell you what Indigenous people in Western Australia do. I'm not an Elder. You know these things about communities and Countries and that, but the term Indigenous is sort of broad already. So, you can't really make that connection, y'know? Like, 'you're a woman so you must know every issue about every woman'... That's not necessarily how it works." (Eel)</i>
Specific Areas of Foundational Knowledge Required	<i>"I think widely if there was more understanding... a lot of Indigenous people don't know their background or their tribe or their family information or, y'know, it changes as time goes on because you find or learn more information. [...] Even sometimes when you think you know the information it can change, and we're not all experts about culture, and there's a lot of us who may have a lot of information or not at all. I think sometimes, especially non-Indigenous people can just expect you to know everything or to have all that information, or... they might ask me how to pronounce something in language, but I'm reading the same word on the page that they are." (Lyrebird)</i>
	<i>"I think there are measures that are being put in place and support structures not just for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members, but education for non-Indigenous that we cannot be the cultural experts to everybody." (Possum)</i>
	<i>"[Another improvement would be] addressing expectations around... like, it's okay for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to not want to share. Even if they know a tonne about their cultural backgrounds, they don't have to feel the pressure to share additional knowledges and whatever." (Possum)</i>
	<i>"There's a paper on it that colleagues at Western Sydney University wrote in the higher education space, and it states that black academics and professionals in tertiary education spaces bring additional attributes, skillsets, knowledges to the table and often are required to do additional roles. And I would like for the university to [...] start by acknowledging that. For example, our Deputy Vice-Chancellor could go and step into a role across [the University], whereas a white academic at the same level couldn't step into her role, because she brings so much more to the table as an Aboriginal person in that role. But it doesn't make her any more competitive, for example, for the Vice-Chancellor's role. But she has all that additional knowledge. [...] We need to be acknowledged. [...] There needs to be space created for celebrating that." (Possum)</i>
	<i>"I think some of that understanding in the wider organisation would be helpful. And I think also that understanding that a lot of Indigenous people do come from a lot of trauma. Not a lot of us come from privileged backgrounds or, like, generational wealth. [...] Not all of us have had good examples of someone who's gone into higher education or been business-focused. A lot of people are focused on healing more than having a career. So that wider understanding would be helpful as well. [...] And [if] we don't have to make them aware... it's tiring doing that too." (Lyrebird)</i>
	<i>"So just having those trainings, or even like you said, those networking events, where they can come and meet people, and we can talk to them about and tell them about what these programs are, and you know, the importance of it, and just giving them a bit more cultural knowledge so they don't make all those assumptions." (Penguin)</i>

2. Recent Progress: Preparing for Sustainable Culture Change at WSU

WSU has already begun to make advances on *Gathering Insights* findings, with a focus on preparing the structural and systemic enablers for progress in the coming period.

In July 2025, WSU's Strategic Plan, *Western 2030*, codified commitments to centre Indigenous voices and promote integrity, cultural inclusivity and respect across the University (Table 75).

Table 75. Indigenous Pillar in *Western 2030*

Indigenous Pillar in <i>Western 2030</i>	
Objective 3. Leading Indigenous Acceleration	
WSU will be a global exemplar in higher education for Indigenous excellence and leadership.	
Our Ambitions	
1.	Be an Indigenous Learning and Teaching exemplar
2.	Build a strong and continuous pipeline of Indigenous researchers who thrive and have impact
3.	Enable Indigenous people to thrive in an advanced economy
4.	Accelerate Indigenous success through personalised experiences
5.	Place Indigenous voices at the centre of our University
6.	Enable Indigenous leaders to excel
7.	Invest in the Indigenous Centre of Excellence to elevate Indigenous knowledges, cultures and communities to prominence through education, research, and engagement

In February 2026, the University launched its second *Indigenous Strategy (2026–2030)*. Co-designed with Elders, staff and students, the *Strategy* is grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. It sets new, ambitious objectives to consolidate the vision by which Indigenous excellence will shape institutional transformation at WSU (Table 76).

Table 76. Strategic Objectives, *Indigenous Strategy (2026 – 2030)*

Indigenous Strategy, 2026–2030	
Strategic Objective	Objective Description
Indigenous Student Success	Promote a sense of belonging and inclusion for Indigenous students through creative practices, nurturing partnerships, and leadership opportunities, while enhancing academic programs to empower Indigenous retention and student success.
Indigenous Employment	Empower a culturally safe workplace environment which encourages Indigenous Australians to pursue meaningful career opportunities and promote professional growth, enabling long-term success.
Indigenous Research	Foster a research culture that empowers Indigenous researchers and delivers meaningful outcomes for Indigenous communities, grounded in ethics and strong community impact.
Learning & Teaching	Magnify Indigenous learning and teaching through enhanced curriculum, pedagogical practice and scholarship.
Community Engagement & Partnerships	Establish and sustain respectful, collaborative partnerships with Indigenous communities and people through structured, inclusive engagement that supports mutual priorities and long-term relationship building.
Cultural Knowledges	Recognise, respect, and promote the diversity and strength of Indigenous cultural knowledges as foundational to identity, learning, caring for Country and community wellbeing.
Indigenous Leadership, Governance & Self-Determination	Centre and support Indigenous leadership and governance by upholding self-determination, cultural authority, and decision-making across all levels of the University.

Truth-Telling	Commit to institutional truth-telling about the ongoing impacts of colonialisation and associated injustices, by amplifying Indigenous narratives, creating a more accurate account of Australia's history to recognise the strength and contribution of Indigenous peoples.
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Since 2024, the University has continued to develop future generations through its flagship Indigenous Ignite traineeship program (Table 77), with 2026 Ignite trainees embedded in every Division.

Table 77. Indigenous Ignite Trainees, Completions and Employment, 2022 – 2026

Ignite Traineeships, 2022–2026			
	Trainees	Completions	Post-Traineeship Employment
Year	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>
2022	11	8	8
2023	3	3	1
2024	6	5	5
2025	8	7	6
2026	11	TBD	TBD

Indigenous staff numbers continue to increase year-on-year. WSU met its Indigenous employment target of 3.0% (ongoing/fixed-term) in August 2025, having more than tripled academic employment (+21 staff) and almost doubled professional employment (+31 staff, Table 78) since the Bronze Era. The University has set a new target to reach 3.8% representation by 2030.

Table 78. WSU Indigenous Staff (Ongoing and Fixed-Term), 2026

WSU Ongoing and Fixed-Term Indigenous Staff, 2026						
	WSU		PROFESSIONAL		ACADEMIC	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
2026	93	3.0%	64	3.2%	29	2.6%

Note: Data extracted at point-in-time 28 February 2026; An additional 59 Indigenous casual staff are also employed at WSU.

Following Western Reset, three new Faculty Associate Dean Indigenous positions were created in January 2026, with two awaiting appointment (Table 79).

Table 79. Faculty-based Indigenous Leadership Roles, January 2026

New Faculty Associate Dean Indigenous Roles, 2026		
Senior Leadership Role	Established	Status
Associate Dean Indigenous, Faculty SABEL	January 2026	Appointed
Associate Dean Indigenous, Faculty Health	January 2026	Vacant
Associate Dean Indigenous, Faculty ECS	January 2026	Vacant

Faculty Associate Deans Indigenous will also join WSU's growing Indigenous Leadership Forum, which brings senior academic and professional Indigenous staff (HEW 8+ and Academic D+) together for critical discussions and strategic planning around Indigenous priorities. Since 2024, this Forum has increased by three members, now totalling 17 staff (Table 80).

Table 80. WSU's Indigenous Leadership Forum Membership, January 2026

WSU Indigenous Leadership Forum Members, 2023 – 2026		
Title	Organisational Unit	Name
DVC Indigenous Leadership	ODVC Indigenous Leadership	Professor Michelle Trudgett
PVC Indigenous Education	ODVC Indigenous Leadership	Professor Susan Page
Director Indigenous Research	ODVC Indigenous Leadership	Professor Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews
Director Indigenous Futures	ODVC Indigenous Leadership	Aunty Fiona Towney
Director Badanami Centre for Indigenous Education	ODVC Indigenous Leadership	Josh Mason
Manager of Operations	ODVC Indigenous Leadership	Gabrielle Talbot-Mundine
Executive Officer	ODVC Indigenous Leadership	Kelsie King
Associate Dean Indigenous	Faculty of SABEL	Professor Corrinne Sullivan
Associate Dean Indigenous	Faculty of ECS	vacant
Associate Dean Indigenous	Faculty of Health	vacant
Clinical Chair of Midwifery	School of Nursing and Midwifery	Professor Donna Hartz
Senior Student Advancement Officer	Infrastructure Strategy & Planning	Wayne Clark
Senior Project Officer, Indigenous Engagement	Future Student Engagement	Tania Shepherd
Cultural Wellbeing Officer	Equity, Safety & Wellbeing	Heidi Duncan
Director	Data Integrity, Quality & Operations	Jess Gleeson
Development Manager - Indigenous Leadership Project	Advancement	Tom Evans
Indigenous Engagement Coordinator	Infrastructure, Strategy and Planning	Anna Dasler

An Indigenous Employment Strategic Consultative Committee has also been established to consider immediate policy recommendations for recognising Colonial Load, with ongoing capacity for future responsiveness to arising workplace equity matters (Table 81).

Table 81. Indigenous Employment Strategy Committee Members, 2026

Indigenous Employment Strategic Consultative Committee, 2025-		
Committee Membership	Organisational Unit	Name
DVC Indigenous Leadership (Chair)	ODVC Indigenous Leadership	Professor Michelle Trudgett
PVC Indigenous Education	ODVC Indigenous Leadership	Professor Susan Page
Manager of Operations	ODVC Indigenous Leadership	Gabrielle Talbot-Mundine
CPSU Indigenous Representative	ODVC Indigenous Leadership	Aunty Fiona Towney
NTEU Indigenous Representative	Badanami Centre for Indigenous Education	Adrian Atkins
Nominated WSU Indigenous Staff Member	School of Health Sciences	Dr Sarah Kennedy

Indigenous Staff Action Plan (2026–2032)

Executive Sponsor: Deputy Vice-Chancellor Indigenous Leadership

KEY PRIORITY AREA 5: INDIGENOUS STAFF						
REF.	RATIONALE	ACTIONS & OUTPUTS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	SUCCESS INDICATORS
1.	WSU's first <i>Indigenous Strategy (2020–2025)</i> aimed to embed Indigenous excellence across the organisation. The next <i>Indigenous Strategy (2026–2030)</i> will secure the University's efforts. The new Strategy takes a bold and ambitious approach to Indigenous advancement across all areas of the University, with milestone commitments to Indigenous leadership, self-determination and truth-telling.	Implement WSU's second five-year Indigenous Strategy (2026 – 2030) and continue to progress extant Decadal and Research Strategies, with clear expectation that driving Indigenous priorities is the responsibility of all staff at WSU.	2026 - 2030	DDVCIL and Senior Executive Team	DVC Indigenous Leadership	<i>Indigenous Strategy (2026–2030)</i> launched and implemented; Strong Indigenous staff positivity around newly-established workplace culture measures sustained (±5%).
2.	WSU has expressed its commitments to raise Indigenous employment and to ensure Indigenous people take up their rightful place at the centre of decision-making across the University. WSU met its previous target of 3% Indigenous staff representation in August 2025, but employment for Indigenous academics remains especially low and the proportion of ongoing Indigenous staff is 70%. More secure Indigenous employment, leadership and governance is needed to continue progressing equity for Indigenous peoples across WSU.	Progressively increase Indigenous employment and job security across WSU , including by: - committing to a target of 3.8% Indigenous employment by 2030; - appointing a Director of Indigenous Employment; - embedding IGNITE trainee positions across all Faculties and Divisions; - expanding the Deadly Talent Register; - targeting secure Indigenous recruitment (identified and non-identified roles) across WSU's Faculties and Divisions; - establishing an Indigenous Postdoctoral Research Fellowship Scheme.	2026 – 2032	DDVCIL and Office for People & Culture	DVC Indigenous Leadership and Chief People Officer	3.8% employment target is met by 2030 and sustained; Director Indigenous Employment appointed; Minimum 10 IGNITE trainees per year; Indigenous academics increase from 27 to 45; Proportion ongoing positions increases from 70% to 85%; Postdoctoral Indigenous Research Fellows appointed each year across various disciplines.
3.	Indigenous staff report significant colonial load, with substantial impacts. Colonial load is exacerbated by underrepresentation, limited engagement by non-Indigenous staff with Indigenous priorities, and limited foundational knowledge among non-Indigenous staff. An Indigenous Employment Strategic Consultative Committee was established in 2025 to review appropriate University-wide colonial load provisions. Local Faculty and Division contexts	Recognise Colonial Load , including by: - establishing University-wide colonial load provisions, formalised in policy; - embedding recommendations arising from the Indigenous Employment Strategic Consultative Committee across WSU.	2026	Office for People & Culture	Chief People Officer	Colonial load recognition is formalised; Indigenous staff report appropriate recognition of and accommodations for colonial load (≥75% agreement).

KEY PRIORITY AREA 5: INDIGENOUS STAFF						
REF.	RATIONALE	ACTIONS & OUTPUTS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	SUCCESS INDICATORS
	should also be conscious of colonial load, wherein requests for contributing cultural knowledge or advice is guided by the self-determination of Indigenous staff within their organisational unit.					
4.	Indigenous professional staff report structural limitations to their advancement at WSU. <i>(Note: shared Action Commitment with Cygnet 2, Career Planning for Professionals)</i>	Bolster opportunities for professional Indigenous staff career progression and enrichment, including by: - Ensuring close engagement with Career Planning frameworks and processes (see Cygnets 1 & 2); - Fostering engagement with the Wumarra Indigenous Mentorship initiative; - directing policy and people to ensure culturally-informed co-design for the University's future Internal Mobility Program (see Cygnet 2, Action 5), ensuring culturally safe mobility opportunities for Indigenous professionals in both identified and non-identified roles; - providing upskilling, training and development aligned with individual professional staff aspirations (within and beyond existing roles).	2026 – 2030	DDVCIL and Organisational Development	DVC Indigenous Leadership and Executive Director Organisational Development & DEI	Relevant Career Planning actions co-designed with DDVCIL; Professional staff retention indicators and Learning & Development positivity sustained (±5%); Strong Indigenous professional participation and satisfaction with (≥75% agreement) Internal Mobility Program.
5.	While Indigenous staff generally agree that “I am consulted about decisions that affect me” (69%) and “I am properly recognised for my contributions” (74%), Indigenous staff also report mixed experiences of manager and collegial support and mixed views about the progressing of Indigenous priorities in local School/Institute /Division contexts. 2025 Engagement Survey results also indicate differential experiences for Indigenous academics working in Faculty/School contexts. To broaden the impact of the <i>Indigenous Strategy</i> and associated local Strategies, more localised accountability is required.	Strengthen accountability for Indigenous Strategies in local contexts, including by: - appointing Associate Deans Indigenous across each Faculty; - annually reporting on local strategy implementation to WSU's Senior Executive Team and Academic Senate; - annually presenting at Divisional, and Faculty fora about the progress of Indigenous priorities at local levels.	From 2026	Faculty Executive Deans	Faculty Executive Deans	3x Associate Deans Indigenous appointed; Indigenous Professoriate group grows from 8 to 10 members; Local annual reporting implemented; Faculty/School-based Indigenous academics report increased positivity against identified Engagement Survey prompts (minimum alignment with WSU's broader academic cohort).

KEY PRIORITY AREA 5: INDIGENOUS STAFF						
REF.	RATIONALE	ACTIONS & OUTPUTS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	SUCCESS INDICATORS
6.	WSU campuses are built on Aboriginal lands and Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing are at the centre of culture. The continued embedding of cultural recognition and active establishing of community is essential for fostering 'being' and belonging, and for promoting collaboration amongst Indigenous staff. Given the geographic dispersal of WSU campuses, the University should continue to make active efforts to establish spaces of recognition to bring Indigenous staff together, to celebrate Indigenous cultures and to foster a sense of belonging across all WSU campuses.	Continue to foster place-making for Indigenous staff, students and community, including by: ▪ establishing the Indigenous Centre of Excellence as a landmark site of cultural recognition and an active space to foster 'being', belonging and collaboration for Indigenous staff, students and community; ▪ prioritising the promotion of Indigenous languages within campus planning activities; ▪ ensuring all campuses have unique Indigenous spaces that incorporate, celebrate and connect through Indigenous stories, histories and contemporalities.	2026 – 2032	DDVCIL and Division Operations	DVC Indigenous Leadership & Chief Property and Commercial Officer	Indigenous Centre of Excellence is established as a landmark site of cultural recognition, celebration and enrichment at WSU; Indigenous cultural recognition is embedded through languages and spaces of gathering across all campuses at WSU; Indigenous academics report increased feelings of belonging at WSU.
7.	Indigenous staff demonstrate low agreement that "non-Indigenous staff contribute to advancing Indigenous priorities at WSU" (42%). Yarns elaborated that non-Indigenous staff engagement occurs in "pockets" and ranges from high involvement to inaction.	Continue to promote cultural safety for Indigenous staff, including by: ▪ Conducting a truth-telling campaign across the University, including: ○ implementing a publicly-available University Truth Telling Statement to acknowledge the impacts of ongoing colonialism; ○ developing a dedicated library guide of truth-telling materials; ○ ensuring University buildings embed signage and websites reflecting Indigenous stories and truth; ○ establishing an annual truth-telling event. ▪ promoting non-Indigenous staff engagement with Indigenous priorities and foundational knowledges; ▪ establishing a Racism Register to record and respond to acts of racism against Indigenous people;	From 2026	DDVCIL and Senior Executive Team	DVC Indigenous Leadership	Truth-telling event held annually; University Truth Telling Statement prominently displayed on WSU website; Racism Register established, monitored and leads to effective incident response and resolution; Faculty/School- based Indigenous academics reflect increased likelihood to report bullying and harassment (minimum alignment with WSU's broader academic cohort). Indigenous staff reflect increasing cultural safety and inclusion at WSU.

KEY PRIORITY AREA 5: INDIGENOUS STAFF						
REF.	RATIONALE	ACTIONS & OUTPUTS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	SUCCESS INDICATORS
		taking an increasingly intersectional approach to Indigenous engagement and priority-setting.				
8.	While Indigenous staff agree that “Indigenous Knowledges and cultures are celebrated” at the University-level (77%), fewer believe that “non-Indigenous colleagues are active in learning about Indigenous Knowledges and cultures” (57%). Further, Indigenous staff are only moderately convinced that non-Indigenous colleagues either “support” (64%) or “practice” (58%) equity for Indigenous staff and students at the University. The building of foundational knowledge about Indigenous cultures is connected to reducing colonial load, increasing cultural safety, and increasing wellbeing, belonging and inclusion for Indigenous staff. A 2024 Western SAGE Research Week event focused on engaging non-Indigenous staff in advancing Indigenous priorities at WSU, including by foregrounding good allyship practice.	Increase non-Indigenous staff’s foundational knowledge about Indigenous cultures, including by: - more widely promoting existing DDVCIL resources and events, including educational videos about Indigenous cultures, Knowledges, experiences and place-making initiatives; - more widely promoting Black Lives Matter and forthcoming Truth-Telling library resources as valuable materials for non-Indigenous staff to self-educate about Indigenous cultures, Knowledges and ways of being; - embedding information about DDVCIL resources within on-boarding processes; - promoting cross-cultural learning through the Indigenous Centre of Excellence; - socialising recorded materials from the 2024 Western SAGE event <i>Indigenous Cultural Safety is Everyone’s Responsibility</i>.	2026 – 2028	Western SAGE and Organisational Development & DEI	SAGE Academic Lead and Manager DEI	Strong and improving uptake of DDVCIL resources; Indigenous staff report increased confidence (+10%) that “non-Indigenous colleagues are active in learning about Indigenous Knowledges and cultures” and “practice equity for Indigenous staff and students at WSU”.
9.	Preliminary research raises some concern about cultural competence in policy-making at WSU. Specifically, Indigenous staff observed an insufficient policy structure and some exclusionary practice around parent and carer supports, where policy definitions of “immediate family” and/or “carer” that rely on legislative definitions may be too confining to accommodate Indigenous family structures (30% disagreed that policy frameworks were inclusive enough). Supervisor/manager workplace practices, values, and perspectives appear to be individual and often personalised. Integrating culturally competent and fluid policy	Conduct an intersectional inclusive review of the University’s policy frameworks, with focus on Indigenous cultural considerations and Indigenous equity.	2026 – 2028	Western SAGE and Organisational Development & DEI	SAGE Academic Lead and Manager DEI	WSU policy frameworks are inclusive of Indigenous cultural considerations; Indigenous staff report policy inclusiveness across sample prompts (+10%).

KEY PRIORITY AREA 5: INDIGENOUS STAFF						
REF.	RATIONALE	ACTIONS & OUTPUTS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	SUCCESS INDICATORS
	and practice is vital for the holistic support of Indigenous staff at WSU.					
10.	The continued monitoring of workplace experiences and perspectives is essential to advancing equity for Indigenous staff at WSU. The <i>Gathering Insights and Embedding Workplace Improvements</i> research project has established a strong Indigenous-led research approach, affording comprehensive insights into Indigenous staff perspectives on <i>Indigenous Strategy</i> progress and experiences of WSU's workplace culture.	Conduct an Indigenous-led mid-point evaluation of <i>Indigenous Strategy</i> (2026–2030) implementation , including by: - ensuring ongoing compliance with the <i>SAGE Indigenous Staff Collaboration Framework</i>; - implementing culturally-informed research methodologies, as established by <i>Gathering Insights and Embedding Workplace Improvements for Indigenous Staff at WSU</i> (Kennedy, McKay and Talbot-Mundine, 2024); - tracking progress against identified areas for improvement.	2028	SAGE Indigenous Staff SWAG	SAGE Indigenous Staff SWAG Lead	<i>Indigenous Strategy (2026–2030)</i> implementation is effectively assessed; Progress against benchmark measures is monitored, with arising and ongoing barriers to Indigenous staff equity identified and addressed.