



SAGE Cygnet Award Application

Name of Institution	University of the Sunshine Coast
Date of Application	30 June 2025
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Acknowledgement of Country

UniSC acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live, and recognise their continuing connection to land, water, and community. We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging. UniSC deeply values and seeks to uplift, empower, and give a voice to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and perspectives.

Acknowledgement of Country

UniSC is a place where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's perspectives, culture and knowledge is acknowledged, valued, and respected. We share deep pride in, and seek to uplift, empower, and give a voice to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and perspectives.

If you are an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person, we encourage you to join the long tradition of trailblazers at UniSC, impacting our University and our world.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live, and recognise their continuing connection to land, water, and community. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.



Artwork

Knowledge is Sacred
Lyndon Davis





UniSC

Australia

UniSC: SAGE Cygnet 1

	✓	Barrier - List the Barrier addressed in this Cygnet - List the Barrier for Cygnets already submitted
Institution-wide barrier	✓	Academic Promotion
[Mandatory] Sub-group barrier		
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A note on data

The University's current data systems categorise gender as 'F', 'M', and 'X'. In instances where data relating to non-binary or gender-diverse individuals has not been captured, either due to system constraints or the absence of respondents identifying as such, the 'X' category has been excluded from analysis. In recognition of gender diversity, this report uses the terms 'women' and 'men' rather than 'female' and 'male' throughout.

Glossary

AS	Athena Swan
ASIC	Athena Swan Implementation Committee
AS Survey	UniSC Athena Swan staff opinion survey 2018
AS Consultations	UniSC Athena Swan staff consultations held 2023 and 2025
DEI Survey	UniSC Diversity, Equity Inclusion Survey 2025
Department	All other areas of UniSC not listed as School or Research Centre/Institute
DVC (A)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
DVC (R&I)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation)
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer
MyUniSC	UniSC staff intranet
Non-STEMM	At UniSC, all other Schools and Research Centres not included in the definition of STEMM
PDC	Performance and Development Cycle
P&C	People & Culture
PVC (E)	Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education)
Research C&Is	Research Centres & Institutes
RF	Research Focused
ROPE	Relative to Opportunity
SAGE	Science in Australia Gender Equality
SBCI	School of Business & Creative Industries
SETA	School of Education & Tertiary Access
SHSS	School of Health
Law & Society	School of Law & Society
SSTE	School of Science, Technology and Engineering
STEMM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine: At UniSC, this includes School of Science Technology & Engineering, School of Health, Forest Research Institute, Centre for Human Factors and Sociotechnical Systems, Centre for Bioinnovation and Australian Centre for Pacific Islands Research
TF	Teaching Focused
T&R	Teaching and Research
UniSC	University of the Sunshine Coast
VCP	Vice-Chancellor and President
WG	Working Group

1. Key Barrier

A longstanding challenge to gender equity at UniSC has been the underrepresentation of women at senior academic levels (Levels D and E), with academic promotion identified as a key barrier to progression.

Sub-issues identified during the Bronze Reference Period (2015–2017):

1.1 Gender disparities in application rates: Fewer women than men applied for promotion to senior academic levels. In STEMM disciplines, men accounted for 71% of applications.

1.2 Gendered promotion outcomes at Level C: Between 2015 and 2017, 50% of women applicants to Level C were successful, compared to 73% of men.

1.3 Perceptions of bias and inadequate support: Staff surveys highlighted perceptions of bias and inadequate support within the promotion process, indicating a need for greater transparency, consistency, and equity in how promotion pathways are navigated.

1.4 Underrepresentation of part-time staff: Despite their representation in the academic workforce, particularly among women, no part-time staff applied for promotion during the reference period.

These insights have driven a focused and sustained commitment to strengthening promotion pathways and support mechanisms across the University, ensuring that diverse academic contributions and career trajectories are more clearly recognised, valued, and supported.

2. Evidence of Barrier

Analysis of academic promotion data from 2015–2017, and staff surveys and consultations conducted as part of the Bronze Award application in 2019, identified persistent and systemic barriers to gender equity in academic promotion at UniSC.

Gender disparities at senior academic levels

Data from the Bronze Award period highlighted a clear gender disparity in senior academic roles across both STEMM and non-STEMM disciplines.

STEMM: A greater percentage of Level C, D and E posts are held by men, with greatest divergence at Level D and Level E (Figure 1).

Non-STEMM: The even more divergent underrepresentation of women for Level E, (Figure 2) reinforces the need for broad, systemic action.

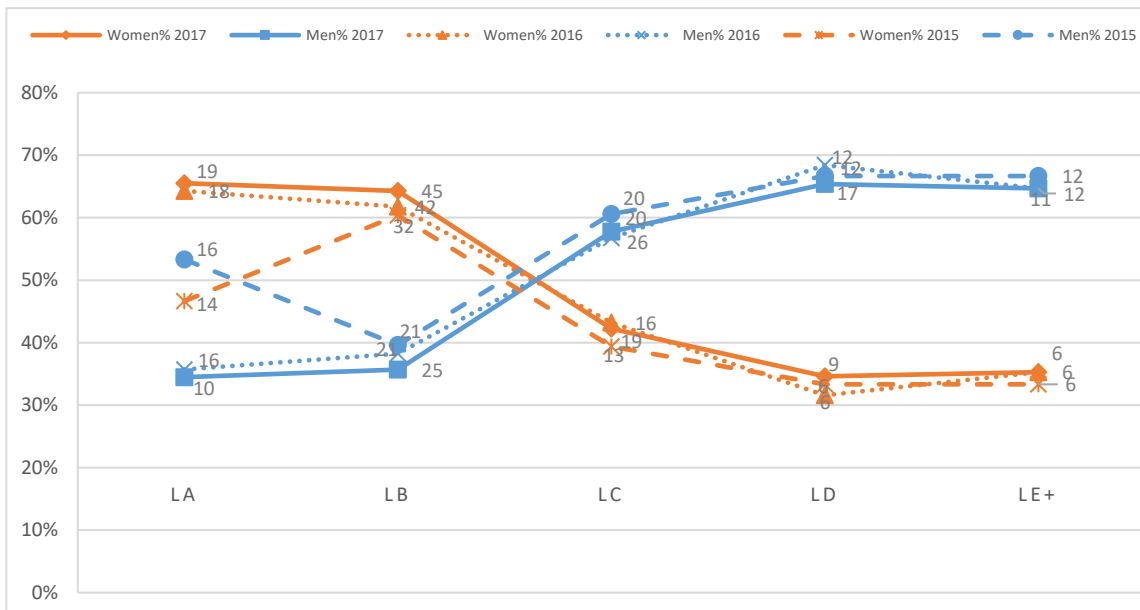


Figure 1: STEMM Career pipeline across the institution (2015-2017) by academic level and gender

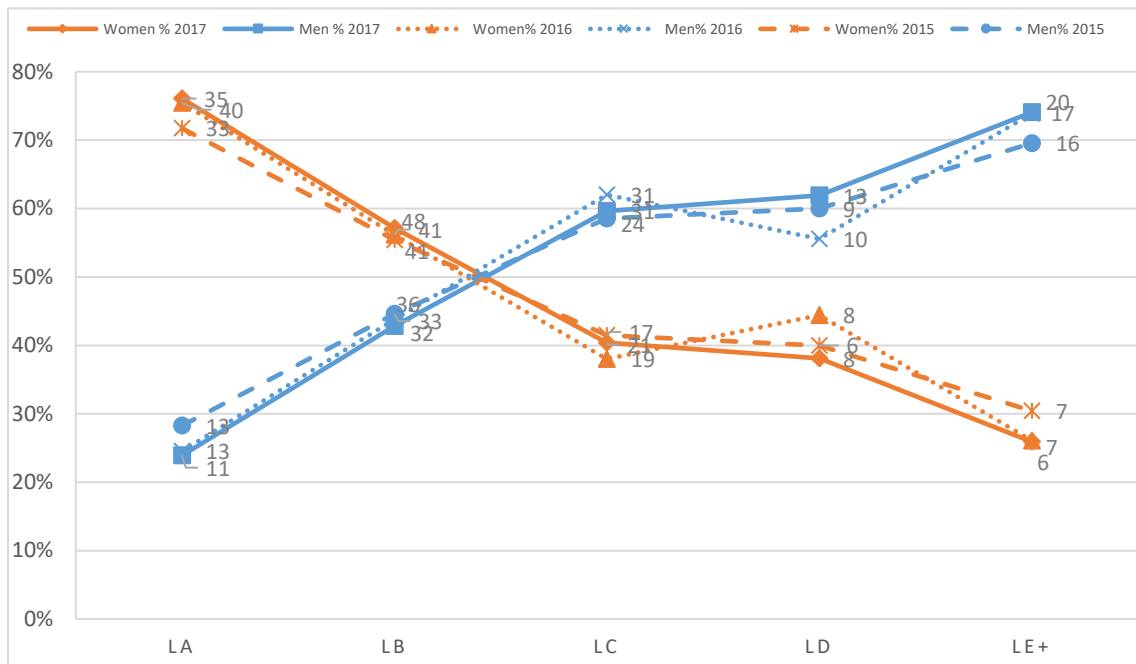


Figure 2: Non-STEMM Career pipeline across the institution (2015-2017) by academic level and gender

2.1 and 2.2 Gender disparities in application and success rates

Table 1 shows that between 2015 and 2017, men were more likely to apply for promotion than women in STEMM (71% vs 29%), despite comparable overall success rates (men 71%, women 70%). However, disparities emerged at key levels, most notably, STEMM women were less successful than men at Level C (50% vs 73%).

In non-STEMM, although women comprised 51% of applicants, they were underrepresented at Level E, with no women applying during the reference period (Table 1).

Table 1: Academic Promotion, STEMM and Non-STEMM, 2015-2017

	Level	Applications				Successful				Application Success Rate		
		Women	% W	Men	Total	Women	% W	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
STEMM	B	<6	50%	<6	<6	<6	50%	<6	<6	100%	100%	100%
	C	6	35%	11	17	<6	27%	8	11	50%	73%	65%
	D	<6	29%	<6	7	<6	33%	<6	6	100%	80%	86%
	E	0	0%	<6	<6	0	0%	<6	<6	-	50%	50%
	STEMM	10	29%	24	34	7	29%	17	24	70%	71%	71%
Non STEMM	B	9	82%	<6	11	9	82%	<6	11	100%	100%	100%
	C	14	45%	17	31	11	55%	9	20	79%	53%	65%
	D	<6	57%	<6	7	<6	75%	<6	4	75%	33%	57%
	E	0	0%	<6	<6	0	0%	<6	<6	-	50%	50%
	Non-STEMM	27	51%	26	53	23	62%	14	37	85%	54%	70%
Overall		37	43%	50	87	30	49%	31	61	81%	62%	70%

2.3 Perceptions of bias and inadequate support

Feedback from the 2018 Athena Swan Survey (AS Survey) reinforced this disparity. While 50% of respondents agreed they understood the promotion process, 80% did not feel the process was fair or well supported. These perceptions were consistent across gender. The Bronze Award review identified inconsistent practices across Schools in providing promotion-related guidance and mentoring. In some cases, applicants were unaware of available support or how to access it. Schools lacked formal structures to coach, review, and provide feedback to potential candidates. Line manager support varied widely depending on individual knowledge or prioritisation of equity.

2.4 Underrepresentation of part-time staff

No part-time staff applied for promotion during the 2015–2017 period, despite representing 18% academic staff workforce, and among women (57%).

3. Progress (actions and outputs)

Between 2018 and 2025, a structured, evidence-based approach to addressing barriers in academic promotion was undertaken (Table 2 and Figure 3). Many of the initial actions were identified in the 2019 Bronze Action Plan and refined through iterative staff consultation, sector benchmarking, and continuous evaluation. Early efforts focused on increasing transparency, equity, and applicant support, particularly for women and part-time staff with foundational bronze actions including:

- the introduction of gender-balanced promotion assessment panels (2018)
- release of gender-disaggregated outcome data via MyUniSC (staff intranet) (2018); and
- School-based Promotions Advisory Committees to identify and support potential applicants (from 2019)

These laid the groundwork for structural and cultural change across the academic promotion process.

In 2023, the appointment of a new Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) marked an acceleration of promotion reform. Under their leadership the promotion process was re-examined and restructured through an Athena Swan-informed lens, enabling a more strategic approach. This shift led to a university-wide sector review of promotion practices and the subsequent revision of UniSC's promotion principles to embed best-practice, equity-centred design.

Several of these reforms were implemented prior to the 2024 promotion round and are likely to have contributed to the improvements observed in that year's outcomes data. Key actions in this category include:

- university-wide applicant/supervisor seminars
- enhanced applicant and supervisor guidance;
- and targeted supervisor tools and checklists to build accountability and early applicant identification.

While a number of additional actions were introduced in 2025, such as launch of new supervisor training, and the central Promotion Hub, these were designed to scale and embed the foundations laid in earlier years. Their full impact will be observable in the 2025 round and beyond.

Overall, the period from 2018 to 2025 reflects a deliberately staged and iterative reform process. Initial transparency and support mechanisms (2018–2020) were strengthened through leadership-driven strategy from 2023, leading to broader cultural and systemic shifts that shaped the 2024 round and have set the stage for continued progress.

Strengthening transparency, policy, and structural equity (Sub-barriers 1.3, 1.4)

Initial reforms focused on increasing transparency and embedding equity within promotion processes. In 2018, UniSC introduced gender-balanced promotion assessment panels, published gender-disaggregated outcomes on MyUniSC, and piloted School-based support committees, laying the foundation for a fairer, more consistent promotion system. From 2024, equity infrastructure was further embedded through the inclusion of the PVC (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy) on promotion assessment panels for Indigenous applicants, and in 2025 this was further enhanced with optional demographic data collection to support equity-focused tracking and evaluation.

Increasing application rates and gender equity at Level C (Sub-barriers 1.1, 1.2)

A key priority was increasing applications and success rates for women, particularly from Levels B to D. The 2019 redesign of the promotion application gave equal weight to teaching, research, and engagement, broadening recognition of diverse academic contributions. This reform was supported by a program of campus-wide and women-focused workshops, reaching over 100 staff annually. In 2024, targeted supervisor engagement, including checklists and role-specific training was introduced to build local accountability.

Embedding sector informed good practice (Sub-barriers 1.3)

In 2023, the Athena Swan Promotion Cygnet Working Group, with support from the DVC(A), conducted a sector-wide review of promotion practices across 14 Australian universities, alongside in-depth consultation with WSU and JCU. The resulting internal report benchmarked sector-leading

approaches. These findings directly informed the revision of UniSC's promotion principles, and the development of a long-term promotion strategy underpinned by equity.

Enhancing understanding and application of ROPE (Sub-barriers 1.3, 1.4)

A review of achievement relative to opportunity (ROPE) practices across 16 Australian universities in 2023 informed UniSC's comprehensive guidance for applicants, supervisors, and promotion assessment panels. This review highlighted the importance of cultural responsiveness, recognition of personal circumstances, and clear narrative structures. Revised guidance, workshops, and exemplars were implemented in 2025, along with updated templates that supported consistent and inclusive application of ROPE.

Expanding supervisor and applicant Support (Sub-barriers 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4)

University-wide seminars (2024–2025), co-designed with senior leaders and People & Culture (P&C), supported both applicants and supervisors. Role-specific sessions clarified expectations across teaching, research, and engagement. New supervisor training, launched in 2025, positioned PDC conversations as critical mechanisms for early, sustained support reframing promotion as a shared developmental responsibility. This further enhanced with launch of a central Promotion Hub, in 2025.

Scaling School-based support and peer mentoring (Sub-barrier 1.3)

Informed by a 2023 university-wide audit, School-based Promotion Committees were expanded in 2024 to ensure consistent, localised support for applicants. Successful mentoring models, particularly in the Schools of Health, Science, Technology & Engineering (SSTE), and Business & Creative Industries (SBCI) were scaled and shared.

Continuous feedback

All reforms were shaped by iterative feedback and engagement. Two rounds of Athena Swan consultation (2023, 2025), along with findings from Athena Swan survey (AS Survey 2018), DEI survey (2025), leadership feedback, and promotion workshops surveys (2024), directly informed refinements to policy, practice, and support resources. In 2025, UniSC launched a centralised intranet resource hub, expanded cohort-based tracking, and introduced inclusive clauses in the Promotion Policy to better recognise Indigenous academics and intersectional experience.

Table 2. Summary of Actions to Address Academic Promotion Barriers at UniSC (2018–2025)

Year	Action Area	Sub-Barriers Addressed	Objective	Activities	Outputs	Responsibility
2018	Transparency and committee reform	1.3 – Perceptions of bias and inadequate support	Improve transparency and committee equity	- Published promotion outcomes on MyUniSC - Introduced gender-balanced panels - Piloted School-based promotion committees	- Transparent reporting - Inclusive panel structure - Pilots informed later models	P&C, DVC(A), Schools
2019 -2022	Application redesign and information sessions	1.1 – Gender disparities in application rates 1.2 – Gendered outcomes at Level C	Increase participation and recognise diverse contributions	- Redesigned application to equally weight teaching, research and engagement - Held campus-wide and women-specific workshops	- New application implemented - Workshops reached 100+ staff/year	P&C, DVC(A)
2023	Sector review and equity strategy	1.3 Perceptions of bias and inadequate support 1.4 Underrepresentation of part-time staff	Benchmark UniSC's promotion policy against sector equity-focused approaches	- Reviewed 14 universities' policies - Consulted Western Sydney (WSU) & James Cook universities (JCU) - Conducted Athena Swan consultations - Identified equity principles	- Internal report to DVC(A) - Equity-informed principles drafted	Cygnnet WG, DVC(A)
2024	Strengthening Promotion Support & Supervisor Training	1.3 – Perceptions of bias and inadequate support	Strengthen support and build supervisor capability	- Strategic promotion seminars launched - Role-specific workshops (Teaching research an engagement (T&R/E) - Supervisor checklists and targeted training (2025) - Unconscious bias training - Leadership survey	- Expanded support across Schools - Over 100 staff reached annually - Supervisor training standardised	DVC(A), DVC(R&I), Deans, P&C

Year	Action Area	Sub-Barriers Addressed	Objective	Activities	Outputs	Responsibility
2024	Strengthening ROPE Understanding	1.3 Perceptions of bias and inadequate support	Strengthen ROPE practice, confidence and supervisory support across UniSC	- Reviewed ROPE at 16 universities - Developed tailored guidance - Launched supervisor and role-specific training - Mapped equity-aligned practices - Tailored training for applicants, supervisors, and panels - Strategic seminar and workshop series - Unconscious Bias training for Promotion Committee members - Created supervisor checklists and templates	- ROPE templates standardised - Supervisor tools embedded in training - ROPE guidance published (2025) - Integrated ROPE into training - Role-specific sessions embedded - Supervisor training standardised	Cygnnet WG, DVC(A), DVC(R&I), P&C
2024	School-Based Support Expansion	1.3 Perceptions of bias and inadequate support	Embed structured School-level support	- Audited School practices - Scaled school-based promotion support - Shared best-practice vignettes	- School-based advisory support expanded to all Schools - Peer mentoring embedded	Schools, Cygnnet WG
2025	Promotion Hub and Equity Infrastructure	1.1 Gender disparities in application rates 1.2 Gendered outcomes at Level C 1.3 Perceptions of bias and inadequate support 1.4 Underrepresentation of part-time staff	Embed structural equity and inclusion	- Launched intranet Promotion Hub - Expanded supervisor sessions with targeted sessions and integration with Performance Development Cycle (PDC) - Added clause for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants - Optional identity data fields - Delivered targeted support seminars for specific cohorts	- Promotion Hub live - PVC(Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy) on panels - Equity data tracking established - Promotion Hub live (2025) - clause in policy - Equity tracking mechanisms - Supervisor-specific sessions embedded	DVC(A), P&C, Governance, Cygnnet WG

Year	Action Area	Sub-Barriers Addressed	Objective	Activities	Outputs	Responsibility
2025	Targeted Support and feedback mechanisms	1.1 – Gender disparities in application rates 1.2 – Gendered outcomes at Level C 1.3 Perceptions of bias and inadequate support 1.4 Underrepresentation of part-time staff	Address systemic gaps in promotion journeys Address systemic inequities in feedback and guidance	- Conducted AS consultations - Conducted DEI survey - Expanded role-specific sessions - Expanded supervisor sessions with PDC integration	- Committee and feedback reforms - Updated templates - Ongoing cohort tracking - Hub live (2025) - equity clause in policy - Equity tracking mechanisms - Supervisor-specific sessions embedded	Cygnnet WG, DVC(A), DVC(R&I), P&C

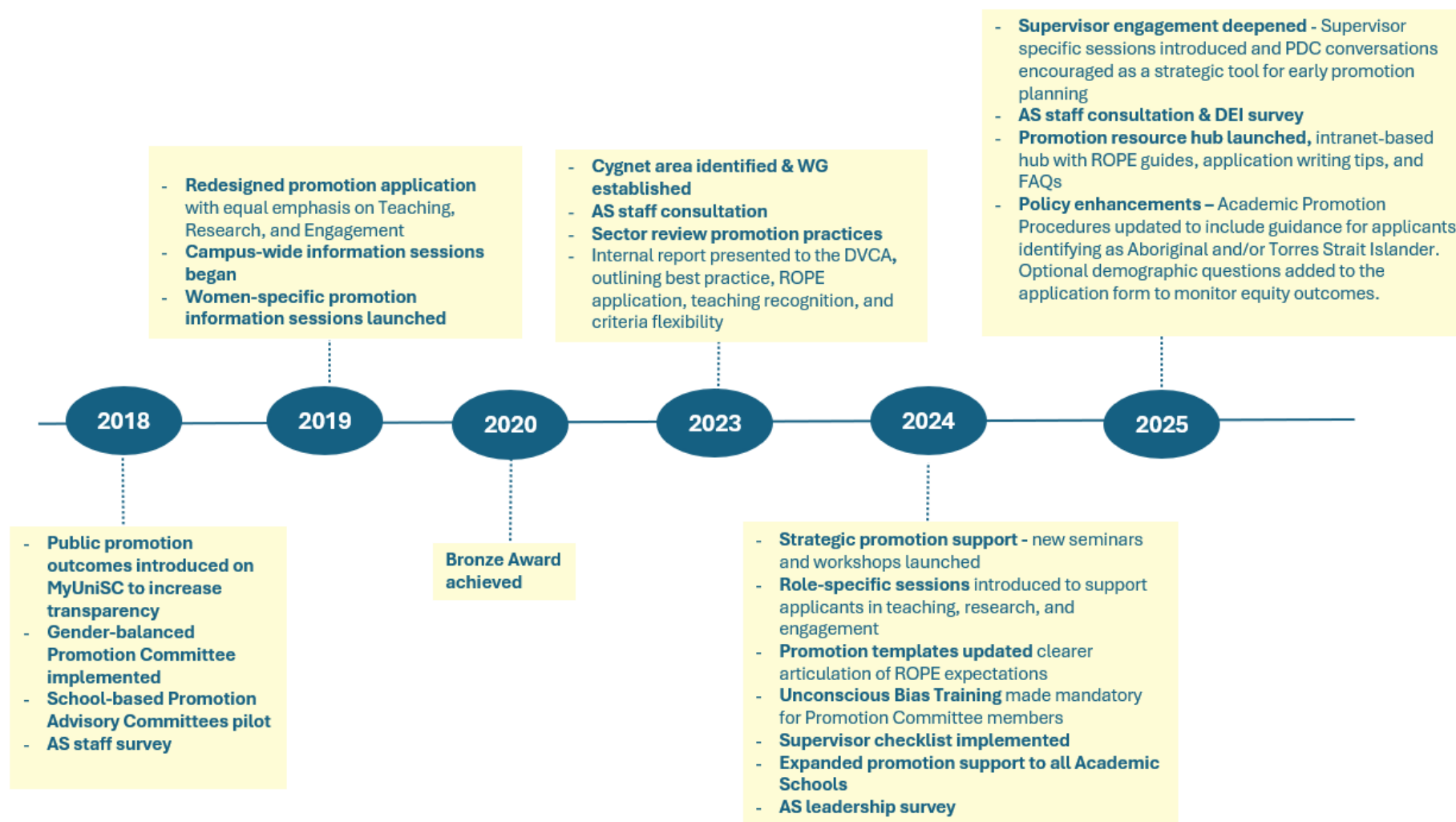


Figure 3: Timeline of UniSC promotion initiatives, 2018-2025.

4. Outcomes

Since the Bronze Award (2015-2017), targeted actions have directly addressed barriers to gender equity in academic promotion, leading to measurable and sustained progress across academic levels, disciplines, and staff cohorts.

4.1 Sub-Barrier 1.1 Fewer women than men applying for promotion

Women's promotion application rates have fluctuated since 2018, with growth periods linked to targeted equity initiatives and declines reflecting broader external pressures. Rates rose from 7% in 2018 to 11% in 2019, (Figure 4, Table 3) overtaking men for the first time following early Bronze Action Plan reforms and stronger institutional encouragement. High levels persisted in 2020 (10%) despite emerging pandemic impacts.

A sharp fall in 2021 (5%) aligns with sector-wide evidence of COVID-19's disproportionate impact on women, including increased workloads and caring responsibilities. Recovery began in 2022 (6%), accelerating in 2023 (9%) under the leadership of a new DVC(A), who oversaw a comprehensive, Athena Swan-informed review of promotion processes, enhanced ROPE guidance, and more consistent school-level support.

In 2024, women's application rate reached 13%, five percentage points above men's reflecting the cumulative effect of sustained reforms, targeted workshops, and visible senior leadership advocacy. This trajectory demonstrates the effectiveness of institutional interventions while highlighting the need for continued, consistent support. Monitoring will assess whether these measures, along with initiatives introduced in 2025 (not yet reflected in these outcomes), lead to greater stability in application rates and reduce year-to-year fluctuations.

In STEMM, women's promotion application rates have followed the overall pattern but from a lower base, with sharper fluctuations (2% compared to 16% for men in 2017) and a slower recovery after the 2021 dip to 6% (Figure 5, table 3). By 2024, women in STEMM matched the overall institutional high (13%) and surpassed men by four percentage points (9%), reflecting the impact of targeted, discipline-specific equity measures.

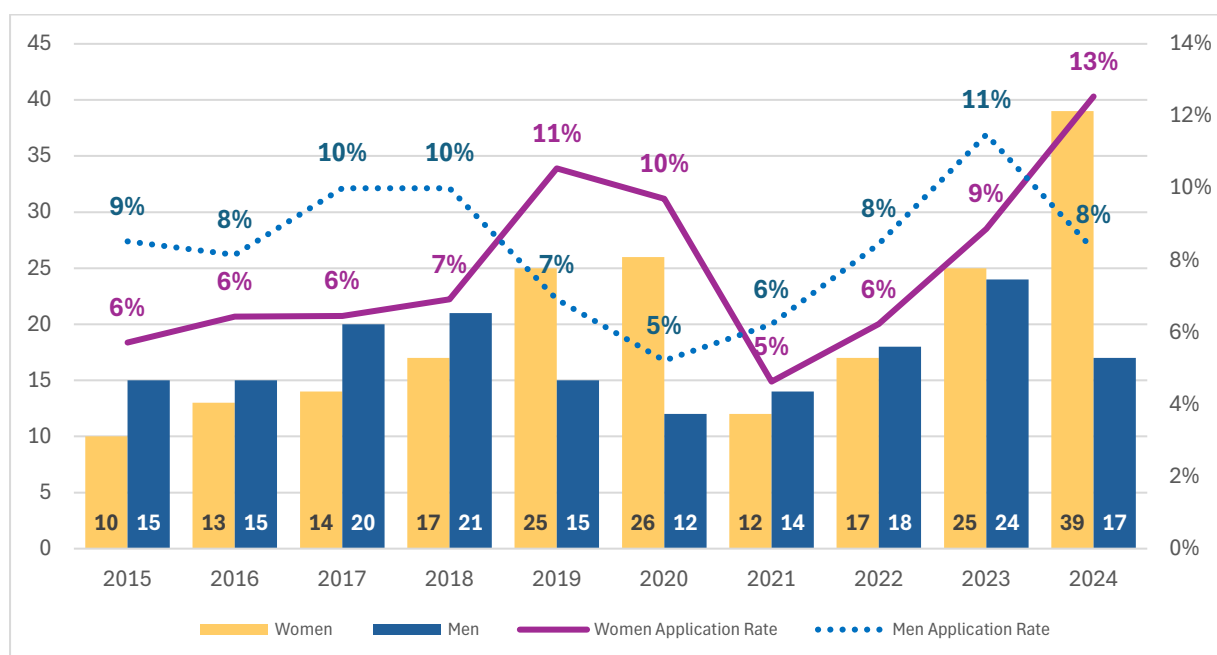


Figure 4: Overall application numbers and application rates (applications as % of ongoing & fixed term staff)

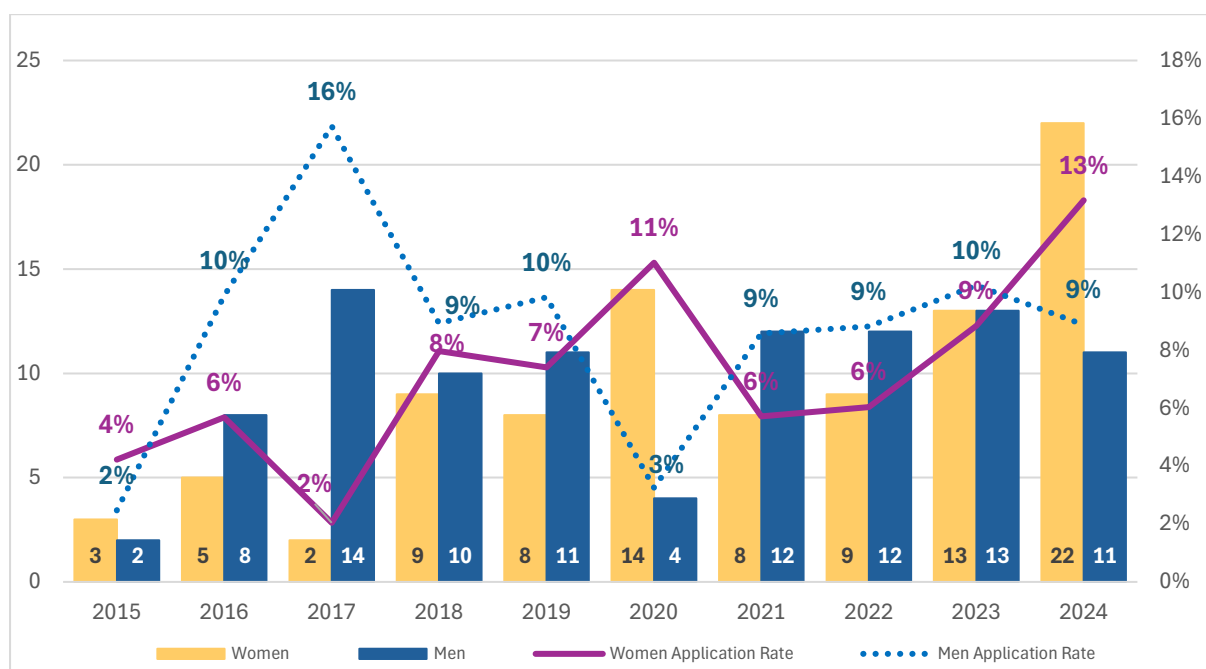


Figure 5: STEMM Application numbers and application rates (applications as % of ongoing & fixed term staff)

Table 3: Academic Promotion, STEMM and Non-STEMM, 2018-2024

	Applications						Applications as % of ongoing & fixed staff			% staff	Successful				Application Success Rate			
	W	% W	Men	%M	X	Total	W	W	Men		w	Men	x	Total	W	Men	x	Total
STEMM	83	53%	73	47%		156	52%	9%	8%	9%	54	48		102	65%	66%	-	65%
2018	9	47%	10	53%		19	50%	8%	9%	8%	3	9		12	33%	90%		63%
2019	8	42%	11	58%		19	49%	7%	10%	9%	6	8		14	75%	73%		74%
2020	14	78%	4	22%		18	51%	11%	3%	7%	7	2		9	50%	50%		50%
2021	8	40%	12	60%		20	50%	6%	9%	7%	6	8		14	75%	67%		70%
2022	9	43%	12	57%		21	52%	6%	9%	7%	5	6		11	56%	50%		52%
2023	13	50%	13	50%		26	54%	9%	10%	9%	9	9		18	69%	69%		69%
2024	22	67%	11	33%		33	57%	13%	9%	11%	18	6		24	82%	55%		73%
Non STEMM	78	61%	48	38%	<6	128	60%	9%	8%	9%	55	25	<6	81	71%	52%	50%	63%
2018	8	42%	11	58%		19	58%	6%	12%	8%	6	4		10	75%	36%		53%
2019	17	77%	4	18%	<6	22	57%	14%	4%	10%	12	1	<6	13	71%	25%	0%	59%
2020	12	60%	8	40%		20	58%	9%	8%	8%	6	2		8	50%	25%		40%
2021	4	67%	2	33%		6	60%	3%	3%	3%	3	0		3	75%	0%		50%
2022	8	57%	6	43%		14	63%	7%	8%	7%	5	4		9	63%	67%		64%
2023	12	52%	11	48%		23	63%	9%	14%	11%	8	9		17	67%	82%		74%
2024	17	71%	6	25%	<6	24	65%	12%	8%	11%	15	5	<6	21	88%	83%	100%	88%
OVERALL																		
2018	17	45%	21	55%		38	54%	7%	10%	8%	9	13		22	53%	62%		58%
2019	25	61%	15	37%	<6	41	52%	11%	7%	9%	18	9	<6	27	72%	60%	0%	66%
2020	26	68%	12	32%		38	54%	10%	5%	8%	13	4		17	50%	33%		45%
2021	12	46%	14	54%		26	54%	5%	6%	5%	9	8		17	75%	57%		65%
2022	17	49%	18	51%		35	56%	6%	8%	7%	10	10		20	59%	56%		57%
2023	25	51%	24	49%		49	57%	9%	11%	10%	17	18		35	68%	75%		71%
2024	39	68%	17	30%	<6	57	60%	13%	8%	11%	33	11	<6	45	85%	65%	100%	79%
Total	161	57%	121	43%	<6	284	55%	9%	8%	8%	109	73	<6	183	68%	60%	50%	64%

4.2 Sub-Barrier 1.2: STEMM women were less successful than men at Level C

Across the university, women's overall promotion success rates have generally equalled or exceeded men's, (Figure 6), with relatively stable year-to-year variation and high outcomes, post bronze in 2024 (85% vs 65%).

In contrast, women's success rates at Level C in STEMM continues to be more volatile, ranging from 33% in 2018 to 100% 2023, with 0% in 2022 due to no applications. (Figure 8). More consistent gains have only emerged in the past two years, with women achieving 100% in 2023 and 83% in 2024, exceeding men's 67% and 60% respectively. This divergence indicates that while equity gains are well embedded in women's success rates across the institution and within STEMM overall (Figure 7), targeted and sustained action is still required to reduce volatility at Level C for women in STEMM.

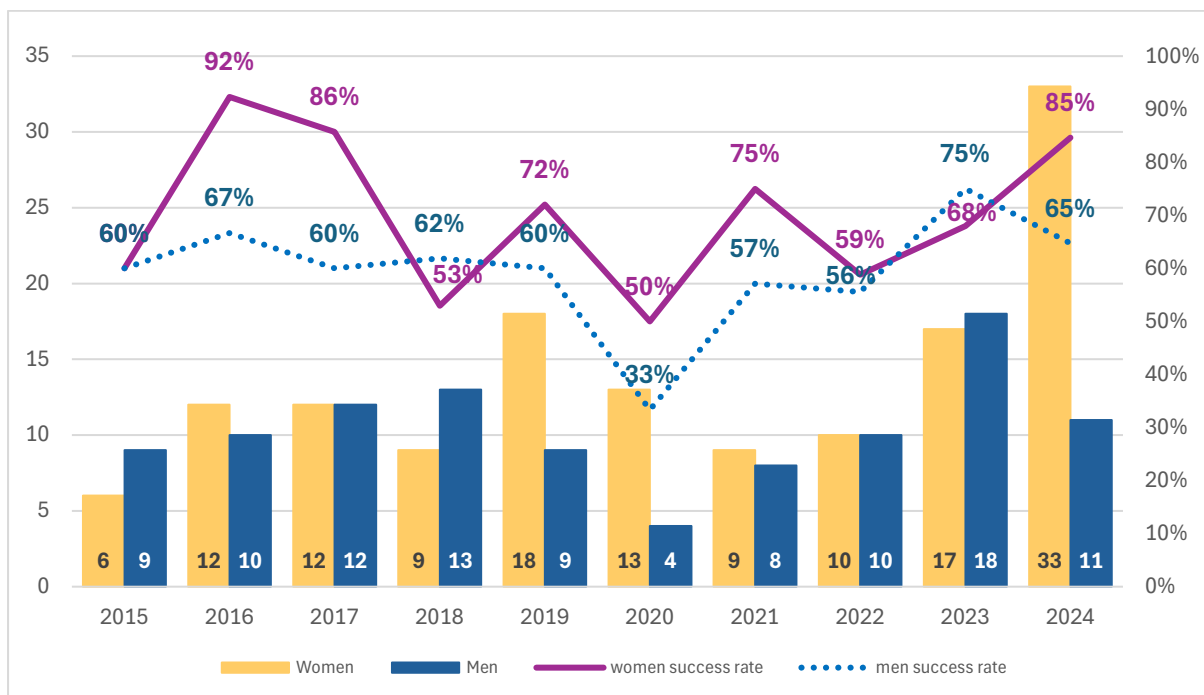


Figure 6: Overall successful application numbers and success rates, 2015-2024

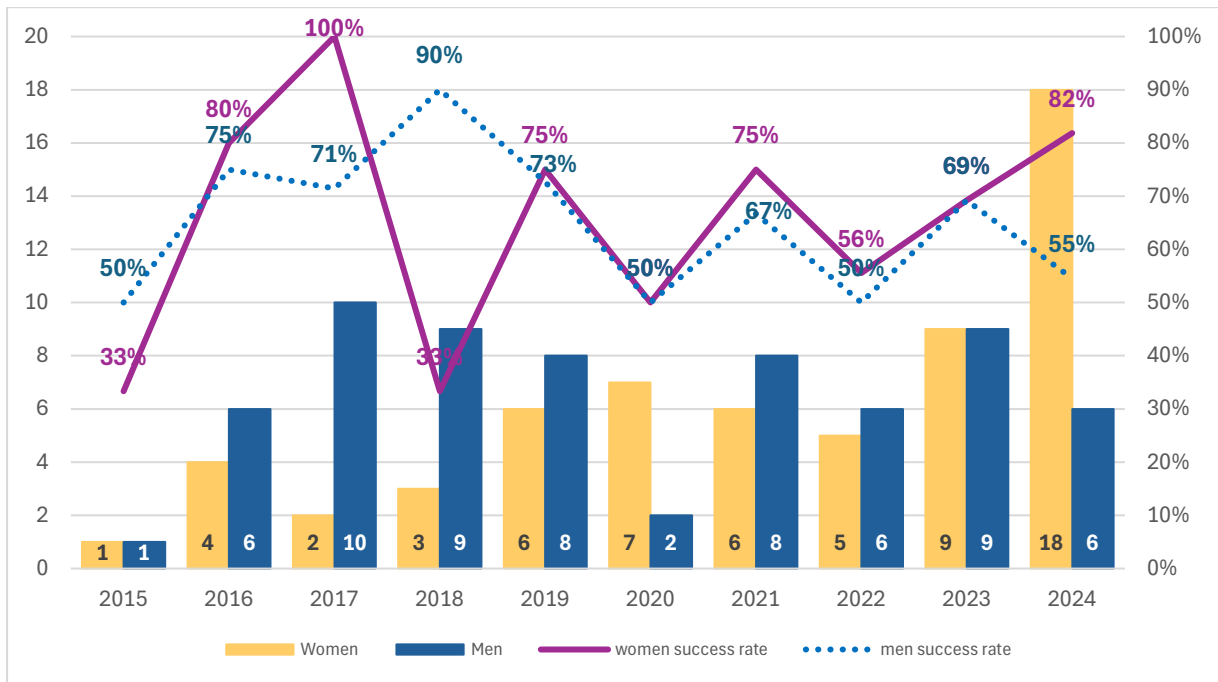


Figure 7: STEMM successful application numbers and success rates, 2015-2024

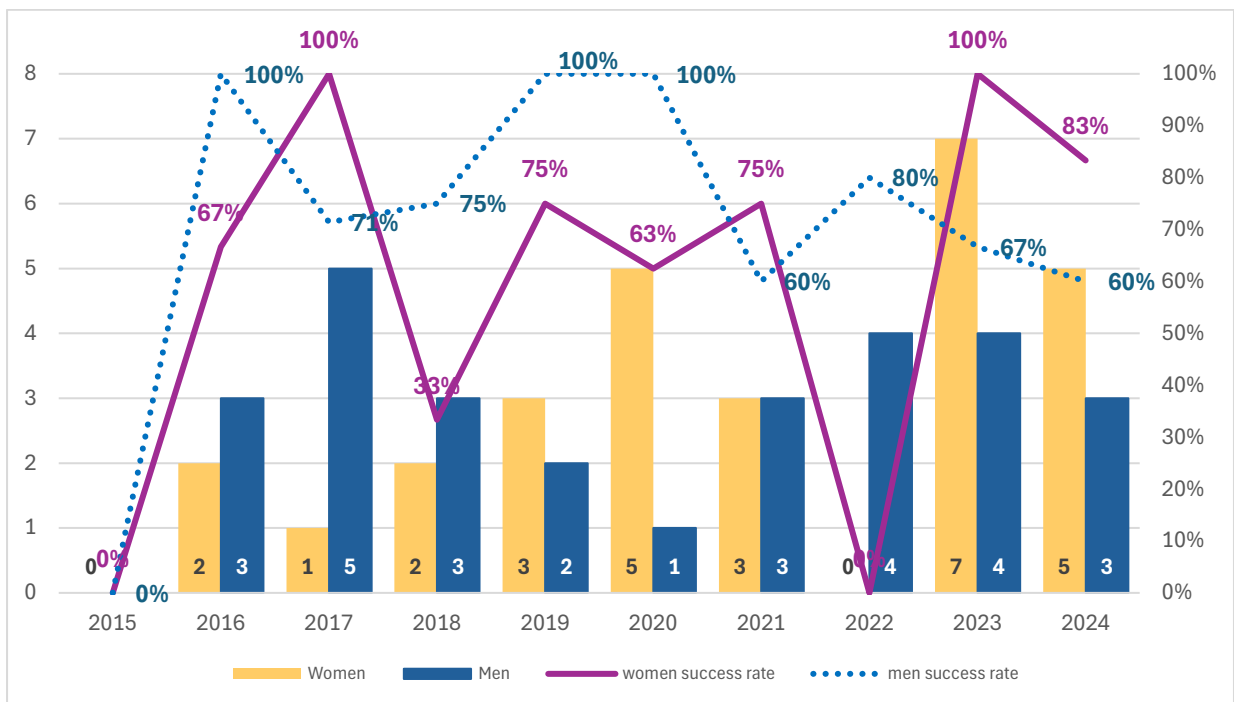


Figure 8: STEMM Level C successful application numbers and success rates, 2015-2024

4.3 Sub-Barrier 1.1 and 1.3: Outcomes by School

Across 2018–2024, women participated actively in promotion across all Schools, though with year-to-year variability in both application and success rates. Participation was particularly strong in the School of Science, Technology and Engineering (SSTE) and in Law & Society, where women often applied at higher rates than men. In SSTE, women’s application rates ranged between 11% and 21%, often exceeding men’s (6–16%), with the most sustained participation of any School. SSTE’s active Promotion Support Committee likely boosted women’s higher application rates, yet both genders experienced fluctuating success, suggesting discipline-specific variability.

In Law & Society, women’s application rates peaked at 18% (2019) and 14% (2024), with success outcomes ranging from 60–100%. In Health, and in the School of Education and Tertiary Access (SETA), women’s participation was more moderate (2–17%) and highly variable year to year, with success rates ranging from 0–100% in SETA and 33–100% in Health. In the Research Centres & Institutes women’s application rates were variable (0–13%) but when they did apply, they were almost always successful. In the School of Business and Creative Industries (SBCI), participation rates alternated between genders, with women’s outcomes more variable, which may point to inconsistent support.

Overall, School level support for promotion is fostering positive outcomes and is valued by staff. However, variability across Schools highlights the need for more consistent practices and clearer institutional expectations to ensure equity is embedded across all areas (*Further Action 5*).

Table 4. Academic Promotion by school, 2018- 2024

Applications - 2018-2024						Successful 2018-2024					Success rate		Ongoing & fixed term academic staff				Application rate	
	W	W%	Men	X	Total	W	W%	Men	X	Total	W%	M%	W	W%	Men	Total	W%	M%
2018	17	45%	21		38	9	41%	13		22	53%	62%	246	54%	210	456	7%	10%
Research C&Is		20%					0%				0%	50%	22	37%	37	59	5%	11%
SBCI		50%					71%				71%	29%	55	54%	46	101	13%	15%
SSTE		29%					20%				50%	80%	11	23%	37	48	18%	14%
SETA		0%					0%				n/a	100%	33	67%	16	49	0%	6%
Health		67%					40%				33%	100%	77	70%	33	110	8%	9%
Law & Society		50%					50%				100%	100%	36	61%	23	59	3%	4%
Department													12	40%	18	30	0%	0%
2019	25	61%	15	<6	41	18	67%	9		27	72%	60%	237	52%	217	454	11%	7%
Research C&Is		50%					60%				100%	67%	24	36%	43	67	13%	7%
SBCI		50%					67%				100%	100%	50	53%	45	95	4%	2%
SSTE		22%					29%				100%	71%	18	29%	44	62	11%	16%
SETA		71%					100%				40%	0%	30	65%	16	46	17%	13%
Health		86%					80%				67%	100%	75	68%	35	110	8%	3%
Law & Society		88%					100%				71%	0%	38	62%	23	61	18%	4%
Department													2	15%	11	13	0%	0%
2020	26	68%	12		38	13	76%	4		17	50%	33%	268	54%	230	498	10%	5%
Research C&Is		25%					50%				100%	33%	20	35%	37	57	5%	8%
SBCI		50%					50%				25%	25%	46	51%	45	91	9%	9%
SSTE		50%					50%				67%	67%	23	31%	52	75	13%	6%
SETA		100%					100%				67%	n/a	39	71%	16	55	8%	0%
Health		91%					100%				40%	0%	90	70%	39	129	11%	3%
Law & Society		83%					100%				60%	0%	47	59%	33	80	11%	3%
Department													3	27%	8	11	0%	0%
2021	12	46%	14		26	9	53%	8		17	75%	57%	259	54%	225	484	5%	6%
Research C&Is		40%					50%				100%	67%	19	33%	39	58	11%	8%
SBCI		100%					100%				100%	n/a	35	52%	32	67	3%	0%
SSTE		42%					38%				60%	71%	29	31%	64	93	17%	11%
SETA		50%					0%				0%	0%	36	73%	13	49	3%	8%
Health		50%					67%				100%	50%	96	69%	44	140	2%	5%
Law & Society		50%					100%				100%	0%	41	61%	26	67	2%	4%
Department													3	30%	7	10	0%	0%
2022	17	49%	18		35	10	50%	10		20	59%	56%	273	56%	213	486	6%	8%
Research C&Is		0%					0%					100%	14	29%	35	49	0%	9%
SBCI		63%					60%				60%	67%	35	56%	28	63	14%	11%
SSTE		20%					50%				100%	25%	28	31%	61	89	4%	7%
SETA		67%					100%				100%	0%	40	74%	14	54	5%	7%
Health		57%					57%				50%	50%	108	71%	45	153	7%	13%
Law & Society		50%					0%				0%	100%	47	65%	25	72	2%	4%
Department													1	17%	5	6	0%	0%
2023	25	51%	24		49	17	49%	18		35	68%	75%	282	57%	209	491	9%	11%
Research C&Is		33%					0%				0%	100%	23	42%	32	55	4%	6%
SBCI		36%					29%				50%	71%	34	53%	30	64	12%	23%
SSTE		38%					45%				100%	75%	25	30%	59	84	20%	14%
SETA		60%					33%				33%	100%	37	74%	13	50	8%	15%
Health		64%					67%				57%	50%	115	71%	46	161	6%	9%
Law & Society		83%					83%				100%	100%	47	66%	24	71	11%	4%
Department													1	17%	5	6	0%	0%
2024	39	68%	17	<6	57	33	73%	11	<6	45	85%	65%	311	60%	205	516	13%	8%
Research C&Is		100%					100%				100%	n/a	27	48%	29	56	4%	0%
SBCI		63%					57%				80%	100%	35	55%	29	64	14%	7%
SSTE		40%					50%				67%	44%	29	33%	60	89	21%	15%
SETA		83%					83%				100%	100%	38	76%	12	50	13%	8%
Health		88%					87%				87%	100%	132	74%	47	179	11%	4%
Law & Society		70%					75%				86%	67%	49	68%	23	72	14%	13%
Department													1	17%	5	6	0%	0%
7 year total	161	57%	121	<6	284	109	60%	73	<6	183	68%	60%	1876	55%	1509	3385	9%	8%

redacted

4.4 Sub-Barrier 1.3: Perceptions of bias and inadequate support

Between 2018 and 2024, women accounted for 57% of all promotion applications and achieved a success rate of 68% (Table 4), suggesting growing trust in the process, and an equitable assessment practice. These improvements are underpinned by university-wide efforts to strengthen fairness and transparency through clearer promotion criteria, revised policy documentation, expanded ROPE guidance, and supervisor development. Feedback from promotion information sessions, the DEI survey, and 2025 Athena Swan consultations show that women and part-time staff report more positive experiences of promotion clarity and support, affirming the value of targeted actions.

Consultation data (university-wide promotion session feedback, and school-based promotion support survey (2024) also reveal persistent perceptions of bias and inconsistency. Some staff, particularly unsuccessful applicants and those with intersecting equity identities described the process as opaque or insufficiently responsive to individual contexts. Some described receiving feedback that was either too late to act upon or misaligned with their individual context and lack sensitivity to the cumulative impacts of career interruptions and caregiving responsibilities. These issues were echoed in the 2024 senior leadership survey. While leaders acknowledged improvements resulting from the revised promotions framework, committee training, and clearer supervisor guidance, many also described ongoing inconsistencies in how these changes are implemented across Schools. This dual reality highlights the need to further embed equity-informed practices at both institutional and school levels. Continued focus is required to ensure the revised system is not only well-designed but also reliably enacted. (*Further Action 5*)

4.5 Sub-Barrier 1.4: Underrepresentation of part-time staff

Part-time staff, who were absent from promotion during the Bronze period (2015–2017), are now engaging consistently, with approximately three applications annually since 2018 (Table 5). Two-thirds of these applicants were women, with women's application rates as a proportion of eligible part-time staff averaging 4% and peaking at 7% in 2024, consistently exceeding men's rates (average 2%, with 0% in 2024). While these rates are lower than those of full-time women (average 10%, peaking at 19% in 2024), they represent a marked improvement from pre-Bronze levels when no part-time staff applied. Part-time staff achieved a 76% success rate exceeding their full-time counterparts (64%). These outcomes reflect successful institutional efforts to make promotion more accessible to staff with non-linear or flexible career trajectories.

Key actions contributing to this shift include tailored ROPE guidance, inclusion of part-time exemplar cases in guidance materials, and School-based mentoring that recognises diverse career paths. The strong success rates among part-time staff demonstrate the effectiveness of these supports, but ongoing attention is needed to ensure that part-time academics continue to feel confident, supported, and visible within the promotion system. (*Further Action 6*)

Table 5. Academic Promotion, Part time applicants, 2018-2024

	Applications						% staff	Successful				Application Success Rate				Applications as % of staff	
	W	% W	Men	X	Total	%		W	Men	x	Total	W	Men	x	Total	W	M
Fulltime	144	55%	116	<6	262	92%	10%	96	70	<6	167	67%	60%	50%	64%	10%	9%
2018	16	44%	20		36	95%	10%	8	12		20	50%	60%		56%	8%	11%
2019	25	63%	14	<6	40	98%	11%	18	9		27	72%	64%	0%	68%	13%	8%
2020	23	68%	11		34	89%	8%	13	3		16	57%	27%		47%	11%	6%
2021	10	43%	13		23	88%	6%	7	7		14	70%	54%		61%	5%	7%
2022	15	47%	17		32	91%	8%	8	10		18	53%	59%		56%	7%	9%
2023	20	45%	24		44	90%	11%	13	18		31	65%	75%		70%	9%	13%
2024	35	66%	17	<6	53	93%	13%	29	11	<6	41	83%	65%	100%	77%	15%	10%
Part time	17	77%	5		22	8%	3%	13	3	0	16	76%	60%	-	73%	4%	2%
2018		50%				5%	2%	1	1		2	100%	100%		100%	2%	3%
2019		0%				2%	1%	n/a	0		0	n/a	0%		0%	0%	2%
2020		75%				11%	4%	0	1		1	0%	100%		25%	6%	2%
2021		67%				12%	3%	2	1		3	100%	100%		100%	4%	2%
2022		67%				9%	3%	2	0		2	100%	0%		67%	3%	3%
2023		100%				10%	5%	4	n/a		4	80%	n/a		80%	7%	0%
2024		100%				7%	4%	4	n/a		4	100%	n/a		100%	6%	0%
Total	161	57%	121		284	100%	8%	109	73	1	183	68%	60%	-	64%	9%	8%

redacted

4.6 Outcomes overall

Since 2018, the proportion of eligible women applying for promotion has risen to an average of **9%** (up from 6% pre-Bronze, Table 6), while men's has declined slightly from 9% to 8%. This higher participation is evident across most levels, with the largest gains at senior levels where women were previously underrepresented. (Table 7). University-wide, women's average success rate post-Bronze is 66% (down from 79% with 3 year average)) but remains above men's 58%, with women ahead in five of the seven post-Bronze years. In STEMM, women's participation has also risen (6% to 9%), with success rates matching the overall post-Bronze average (66%) but showing greater year-to-year variability.

At Levels D and E, progress has been more recent. Women's participation at Level D has increased markedly, particularly in STEMM (4% to 14%), with strong but variable success rates, 75% in STEMM in 2024 versus 33% for men. At Level E, where there were no women applicants pre-Bronze, women now apply in small numbers and achieve success rates comparable to men, including 100% in STEMM in 2018 and 2024.

These outcomes reflect the cumulative impact of sustained institutional reforms, particularly clearer promotion policies and processes, strengthened supervisory engagement, enhanced committee training, and expanded ROPE frameworks. Targeted mentoring and support for equity cohorts have further contributed to a more inclusive and navigable system.

Table 6: Academic Promotion, Pre Bronze (2015-2017), by Level

	applications		successful		success rate		application rate	
	W	men	W	men	W	men	W	men
2015	10	15	6	9	60%	60%	6%	9%
Non STEMM	7	13	5	8	71%	62%	7%	14%
B	redacted				n/a	100%	0%	8%
C					60%	60%	12%	30%
D					100%	0%	12%	4%
E					n/a	100%	0%	11%
STEMM	3	2	1	1	33%	50%	4%	2%
B	redacted				100%	n/a	7%	0%
C					0%	0%	6%	5%
D					0%	100%	0%	5%
E					n/a	0%	n/a	n/a
2016	13	15	12	10	92%	67%	6%	8%
Non STEMM	8	7	8	4	100%	57%	7%	7%
B	redacted				100%	100%	13%	8%
C					100%	50%	5%	13%
D					100%	0%	5%	3%
E					n/a	100%	0%	10%
STEMM	5	8	4	6	80%	75%	6%	10%
B	redacted				100%	100%	6%	10%
C					67%	100%	7%	12%
D					100%	100%	6%	10%
E					n/a	0%	0%	15%
2017	14	20	12	12	86%	60%	6%	10%
Non STEMM	12	6	10	2	83%	33%	10%	5%
B	redacted				100%	n/a	11%	0%
C					86%	33%	15%	8%
D					0%	100%	5%	3%
E					n/a	0%	0%	15%
STEMM	2	14	2	10	100%	71%	2%	16%
B	redacted				n/a	100%	0%	10%
C					100%	71%	2%	28%
D					100%	50%	5%	8%
E					n/a	75%	0%	24%
3 year total	37	50	30	31	81%	62%	6%	9%

Table 7: Academic Promotion, Post Bronze (2018-2014), by Level

	applications		successful		success rate		application rate	
	W	men	W	men	W	men	W	men
2018	17	21	9	13	53%	62%	7%	10%
Non STEMM	8	11	6	4	75%	36%	6%	12%
LB	redacted				100%	100%	6%	10%
LC					60%	38%	10%	22%
LD					100%	0%	4%	4%
LE					n/a	0%	0%	10%
STEMM	9	10	3	9	33%	90%	8%	9%
LB	redacted				n/a	100%	0%	20%
LC					33%	75%	11%	14%
LD					0%	100%	8%	11%
LE					100%	100%	10%	4%
2019	25	15	18	9	72%	60%	11%	7%
Non STEMM	17	4	12	1	71%	25%	14%	4%
LB	redacted				100%	n/a	21%	0%
LC					40%	50%	10%	7%
LD					33%	0%	11%	7%
LE					100%	n/a	25%	0%
STEMM	8	11	6	8	75%	73%	7%	10%
LB	redacted				50%	100%	12%	18%
LC					75%	100%	8%	7%
LD					100%	60%	9%	15%
LE					n/a	50%	0%	8%
2020	26	12	13	4	50%	33%	10%	5%
Non STEMM	12	8	6	2	50%	25%	9%	8%
LB	redacted				50%	50%	6%	20%
LC					63%	25%	13%	11%
LD					0%	0%	8%	7%
LE					n/a	n/a	0%	0%
STEMM	14	4	7	2	50%	50%	11%	3%
LB	redacted				100%	n/a	4%	0%
LC					63%	100%	15%	3%
LD					33%	0%	11%	3%
LE					0%	50%	20%	7%

Table 7 (continued): Academic Promotion, Post Bronze (2018-2014), by Level

	applications		successful		success rate		application rate	
	W	men	W	men	W	men	W	men
2021	12	14	9	8	75%	57%	5%	6%
Non STEMM	4	2	3	0	75%	0%	3%	3%
LB	redacted				67%	n/a	11%	0%
LC					100%	n/a	2%	0%
LD					n/a	0%	0%	8%
LE					n/a	n/a	0%	0%
STEMM	8	12	6	8	75%	67%	6%	9%
LB	redacted				50%	0%	8%	5%
LC					75%	60%	7%	12%
LD					100%	100%	6%	9%
LE					n/a	67%	0%	10%
2022	17	18	10	10	59%	56%	6%	8%
Non STEMM	8	6	5	4	63%	67%	7%	8%
LB	redacted				n/a	n/a	0%	0%
LC					100%	67%	6%	11%
LD					67%	67%	12%	14%
LE					0%	n/a	50%	0%
STEMM	9	12	5	6	56%	50%	6%	9%
LB	redacted				60%	100%	19%	7%
LC					n/a	80%	0%	13%
LD					50%	0%	12%	11%
LE					n/a	50%	0%	7%
2023	25	24	17	18	68%	75%	9%	11%
Non STEMM	12	11	8	9	67%	82%	9%	14%
LB	redacted				33%	100%	9%	22%
LC					100%	100%	9%	14%
LD					50%	60%	14%	20%
LE					n/a	n/a	0%	0%
STEMM	13	13	9	9	69%	69%	9%	10%
LB	redacted				0%	100%	7%	8%
LC					100%	67%	10%	21%
LD					50%	67%	15%	15%
LE					n/a	n/a	0%	0%
2024	39	17	33	11	85%	65%	13%	8%
Non STEMM	17	6	15	5	88%	83%	12%	8%
LB	redacted				100%	100%	15%	14%
LC					89%	75%	16%	14%
LD					100%	100%	6%	4%
LE					0%	n/a	10%	0%
STEMM	22	11	18	6	82%	55%	13%	9%
LB	redacted				100%	100%	6%	14%
LC					83%	60%	8%	19%
LD					75%	33%	35%	7%
LE					100%	50%	11%	7%
7 year total	161	121	109	73	68%	60%	9%	8%

5. Impact

A multi-method evaluation was conducted to assess how actions undertaken since the Bronze Award have influenced staff experiences and perceptions of academic promotion at UniSC. Methods included Athena Swan consultation workshops (2023, 2025), the 2024 Leadership Survey, the 2024 university-wide promotion session feedback survey, a targeted school-based promotion support survey (2019–2024), and the 2025 all-staff DEI Survey. In total, 421 staff engaged via 2025 AS consultation and survey, including 371 DEI respondents (62% women) and 51 consultation attendees (100% women), highlighting both strong engagement from women and the need to broaden engagement.

5.1 University-wide impact

Promotion support sessions delivered centrally in 2024 were widely viewed as effective. Of the 78 attendees, 30 applied for promotion in 2024, with 28 successful (93%). The majority of attendees participated in multiple formats, with the Academic Promotion Overall Process session attracting the highest attendance, followed by targeted deep-dive sessions on Learning and Teaching, Research, and the Application Process. Respondents noted improved understanding of promotion criteria and heightened confidence. This outcome aligns with the deliberate redesign of support to address previous concerns around transparency and clarity.

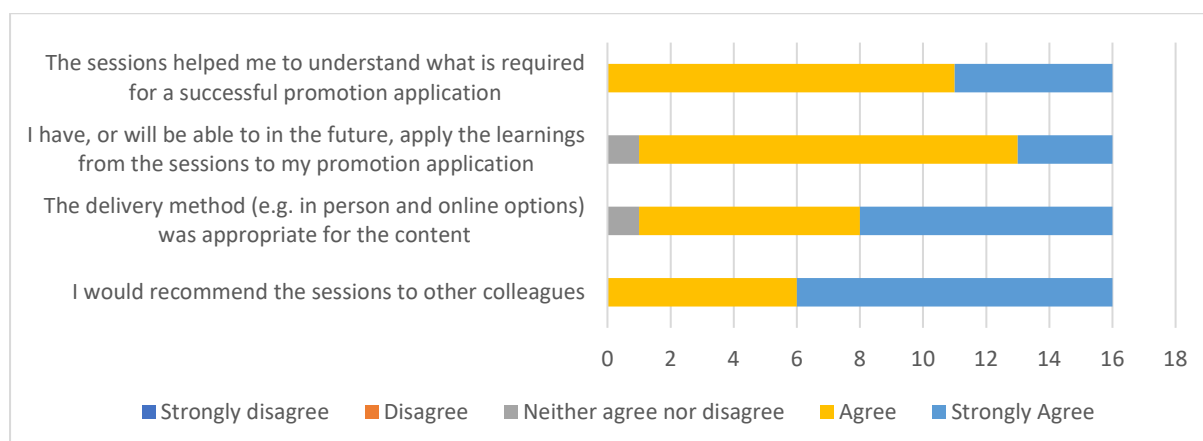


Figure 9. Survey responses from 78 staff who attended promotion support sessions (16 responses; 21% response rate)

This positive sentiment was echoed across the Athena Swan consultation in 2025, and the school-based promotion support survey (2024) where staff, particularly women and part-time academics reported more positive perceptions of promotion clarity and support. However, concerns remained around inconsistent feedback, lack of sensitivity to personal context, and perceived bias in some School-level processes persisted. For instance, a senior woman reflected that receiving feedback from school based all-male panel while juggling caregiving responsibilities felt “disconnected from reality.” This prompted further institutional emphasis on balanced panels and more tailored guidance.

In the 2025 DEI survey, senior women rated the growth domain, specifically, the statements “People from all backgrounds have equal opportunities to succeed at UniSC” and “UniSC believes that people can always greatly improve their talents and abilities” less favourably than senior men (58% vs 64%) (Table 8). This disparity underscores the need to strengthen long-term career development and progression pathways for women, beyond initial promotion success.

Table 8. Selected DE&I Survey Responses. Scores are % (+/- difference from Employees Overall, unless otherwise stated).

Factor	Employees Overall (n=370)	Men (n=89)	Women (n=230)	Senior Women (n=40)^	Senior Men (n=89)*	Gender (non-binary and I use a different term) (n=5)	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (n=5)	CALD (n=85)	Disability (n=26)
Inclusion	61	65 +4	66 +5	78 +12	79 +14	64 +3	76 +15	66 +5	47 -14
Equity	61	64 +3	64 +3	73 +9	74 +10	60 -1	73 +12	63 +2	47 -14
Diversity	58	61 +3	61 +3	69 +8	66 +5	47 -11	70 +12	61 +3	38 -20
Growth	51	57 +6	55 +4	58 +3	64 +7	30 -21	60 +9	51 0	38 -13
Voice	38	41 +3	42 +4	56 +14	51 +10	30 -8	25 -13	43 +5	20 -18

^comparison with all women; *comparison with all men

Intersectional differences were also noted. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff responded positively, though numbers were small. Gender-diverse staff and those with disability reported less favourable experiences. These findings have directly informed intersectionality-focused actions (see *Further Action 6*).

5.2 Local impact – School-based support

Targeted surveys and qualitative feedback gathered from four of the five UniSC Schools illustrate the value and variability of localised promotion supports. (Feedback from the School of Law and Society was requested but not obtained.)

5.2.1 School of Science, Technology & Engineering (SSTE)

The SSTE Promotion Support Committee, built on equity principles, offers peer mentoring matched by gender and discipline. Feedback from a 2024 applicant highlights the value of diverse mentor representation:

“It was good to have female mentors and both research and L&T represented... [the Dean] was my biggest influence for success” (*Woman_parent_Level B_2024 Applicant*)

Yet earlier applicants cited inconsistencies between School and executive advice, suggesting a need for improved alignment.

5.2.2 School of Health

A structured, panel-based approach incorporating supervisor review and ROPE feedback proved effective.

“The committee identified several ways to enhance the clarity and structure of my application... it prompted me to think more strategically.” (*Woman_Level C>D_2024 Applicant A*)

However, concerns remained about the tone of some feedback and the emotional toll of the process:

“Telling someone ‘this isn’t good enough’ without context just demoralises... but actionable feedback was invaluable.” (*Woman_parent_Level C>D_2024 Applicant B*)

5.2.3 School of Business and Creative Industries (SBCI)

SBCI introduced a mentorship scheme, “Promotion Writing Club,” and ROPE workshops. These were praised by equity cohort members:

“As someone with self-doubt... the ROPE workshop gave me the confidence to even begin the process.” (*Woman_parent_Level C_2024 Applicant*)

Others valued timely and personalised mentoring:

“Support from my Discipline Lead helped me clarify and articulate the strongest aspects of my work.” (*Man_CALD_Level B_2024 applicant*).

5.2.4 School of Education and Tertiary Access (SETA)

SETA adopted a staged mentoring and self-assessment model.

“Collegial mentoring and leadership support were central to the process.” (*Woman_2024 applicant A*).

Early identification of readiness was also praised:

“The headline approach meant people who weren’t ready were identified early, saving time and effort.” (*Woman_ 2024 applicant B*).

While many described the process as constructive and empowering, challenges persisted around resourcing and timing: “Waiting three weeks for feedback with only two weeks left before submission is not sustainable. Uni sessions create expectations that don’t align with actual School capacity.”

Table 9. School-based promotion support and vignettes

School of Science, Technology & Engineering	
The School of Science, Technology and Engineering have formed a Promotion Support Committee, which provides peer mentoring to applicants in each annual promotion round. The membership of the Committee has been formulated according to principles of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, considering gender balance, career stage, and discipline of expertise. Each applicant is assigned two mentors from the Committee, with mentor-mentee matches again considering gender balance, career stage, and expertise. Applicants can request specific mentors from the Committee, or from the staff of the School. Applications from women or gender-diverse applicants, particularly from Early- or Mid-Career Researchers, are encouraged through interviews with supervisors through the Performance and Development Planning (PDP) process. Feedback on draft promotion applications is given by PDP supervisors, and Promotion Support Committee mentors, with specific guidance provided to applicants from diverse perspectives.	<i>“It was good to have female mentors, and both research and L&T represented. Can we pay [DEAN ST&E] a retainer to assist as adjunct? I think he was my biggest influence for success”.</i> <i>Woman_Parent_Level B_2024 Applicant</i> <i>“Review of my application was useful; however, some of the advice was inconsistent with advice that I received from Exec when not promoted; so, ensuring clarity/alignment here would be useful.”</i> <i>Man_Parent_Level B_2019 Applicant</i>
School of Health	
Annual process aligned with Professional Development Process (PDP) to plan for promotion with supervisor; School-based Professional Development sessions re Promotion; School Mentoring Program, Supervisor and Discipline Lead review application; School Promotion Support Panel (Discipline Lead, Dean, Deputy Dean, AD(R) and AD(L&T)) each review application and advise on content, strengths, ROPE, and determine whether a compelling case for promotion has been made (can recommend not applying).	<i>“The school’s promotion committee played an important role in the successful preparation of my academic promotion application. The committee offered constructive feedback, targeted at the academic level to which I was hoping to be promoted to ... identified several ways to enhance the clarity, structure and overall quality of my application, ... suggestions prompted me to think more strategically about the types of evidence I included to demonstrate my impact across all aspects of my application ... [and] encouraged me to shift the emphasis of my narrative towards my leadership and mentorship roles.”</i> <i>(Women_ level C_2024 Applicant A)</i>

	<i>"I benefitted from the 'leadership team' feedback on my application. The diversity of expertise and experience in our leadership team resulted in constructive feedback on all aspects of my application. I feel this was an invaluable part of the process. While it was sometimes challenging to reconcile all of the feedback, I have no doubt that this led to my application being clearer and evidence based."</i> <i>2023 Applicant</i> <i>"The direct feedback from School leadership was useful and I appreciate the time taken to do this. Of course, there is a careful balance between what is constructive/actionable feedback and what isn't ... Comments such as "OK, but this isn't good enough for Level D" are not particularly constructive, unless there is going to be a separate conversation that perhaps the application should not proceed. It just can lead to the applicant feeling demoralised around what already is a bit of a soul-destroying process. However, there was also a lot of very actionable feedback received that was invaluable."</i> <i>(Woman_level C_parent_2024 Applicant B)</i>
School of Business and Creative Industries	
SBCI has introduced several initiatives aimed at enhancing the promotion process, including: • A mentorship scheme where all interested candidates were allocated an academic mentor (or given the opportunity to request one). • A 'Promotion Writing Club' • Structured feedback on draft promotion applications from the Dean and mentors, with tailored guidance offered from diverse perspectives. • A school-specific workshop on 'How to Write a Relative to Opportunity Statement' available to all candidates. • An additional workshop for Discipline Leads, Associate Deans, and mentors on 'How to Support Colleagues in Writing a Relative to Opportunity Statement'	<i>I thought the mentoring was a good idea and (in my case) the match up was effective and done well. I did not get to attend the other SBCI workshops due to conflicts, so perhaps they could be scheduled more in advance in the future? But the workshop ideas are good ones... SBCI's support combined with the centralised support was very, very effective (and I think our high success rate reinforces that)...</i> <i>2024 Applicant A (woman, level C, with disability).</i> <i>The "How to Write a Relative to Opportunity Statement" session was incredibly valuable in helping me establish a foundation for my application. It enabled me to clarify my position and approach the task of articulating my achievements with greater confidence. The timing for this was perfect.</i> <i>As someone who struggles with self-doubt regarding my work, I found this grounding essential before beginning the application process. Understanding that promotion applications should present a clear, factual narrative of progress and achievements—rather than excessive self-promotion—gave me the confidence to overcome my initial reluctance and fear about starting the process.</i> <i>The most significant support, however, came from my discipline lead and Head of School,,, guidance in helping me identify and articulate the strongest aspects of my work was invaluable and deeply appreciated.'</i> <i>2024 Applicant B (woman, parent, level C)</i>

	<i>I found the Structured feedback on draft promotion applications from the Dean extremely helpful in highlighting the key achievement summary.</i> <i>2024 Applicant C (male, CALD, level B).</i>
School of Education and Tertiary Access	
Annual process (starting in April) includes identifying mentors, providing feedback on high-level dot points, offering SETA professional development, and encouraging participants to attend university information sessions. Current-year applicants submit dot points in May for review and meet with supervisors and professoriate. Future applicants complete a self-assessment in May for feedback from the professoriate in June. A full draft of the promotion is reviewed by supervisors before intention to apply open in July and again before the August deadline.	<i>"The process of promotion within SETA was heavily and intentionally supported through collegial interaction, mentoring and leadership support." 2024 Applicant A (woman)</i> <i>"Starting with a short outline of the case for promotion (headlines) meant that people who weren't ready were identified early, before they invested too much time." 2024 Applicant B (woman)</i> <i>"The SETA PD on 'Writing the promotion application narrative' and ... feedback on my draft application were both very insightful." 2024 Applicant C (woman)</i>
School of Law and Society	
Annual process whereby those putting in for promotion are assigned a senior staff member as mentor. In addition, when they have completed their application it is given to a senior staff member (either inside or outside the school) for a blind review.	<i>Vignettes sought from school but not obtained.</i>

5.3 Strengthening leadership for inclusive and equitable practice

A total of thirty-four leaders (19 women, 15 men) responded to the 2024 Leadership Survey. The survey was distributed to Deans, Directors of Research Centres and Institutes, and Discipline Leads. The 34 responses represent the majority of the targeted leadership cohort.

Most respondents reported confidence in supporting staff through the promotion process overall, however, this confidence declined for higher-level promotions (Figure 10) and when providing guidance on ROPE statements (Figure 11). Women reported slightly more confidence than men in supporting staff with ROPE statements, with a mean difference of 0.38 points on the 5-point Likert scale (female mean: 3.52; male mean: 3.14), though responses from women showed greater variability.

Confidence and perceptions of being adequately resourced both declined as promotion levels increased, with the most notable drop occurring beyond Level B to C (Figure 8). These declines were more pronounced among men, while women reported marginally higher levels of perceived support capacity across all stages. Limited training was identified as a key barrier, informing the introduction of targeted supervisor training in 2025.

Many leaders welcomed reforms including alignment with the performance development cycle, improved clarity, and more structured workshops. However, calls remain for more inclusive, less burdensome processes, particularly for staff with caring responsibilities or teaching-heavy roles:

“The current process is too complex and time-intensive for staff already stretched by teaching and service.”

Recurring themes included:

- **Inconsistent support across Schools:** While some units model best practice, others rely on informal networks, disadvantaging staff unfamiliar with promotion norms.
- **Need for inclusive frameworks:** Current criteria may still under recognise teaching, engagement, and career interruptions, requiring more flexible narratives.
- **Supervisory capacity gaps:** Many supervisors feel underprepared to support ROPE writing or unsuccessful applicants effectively.

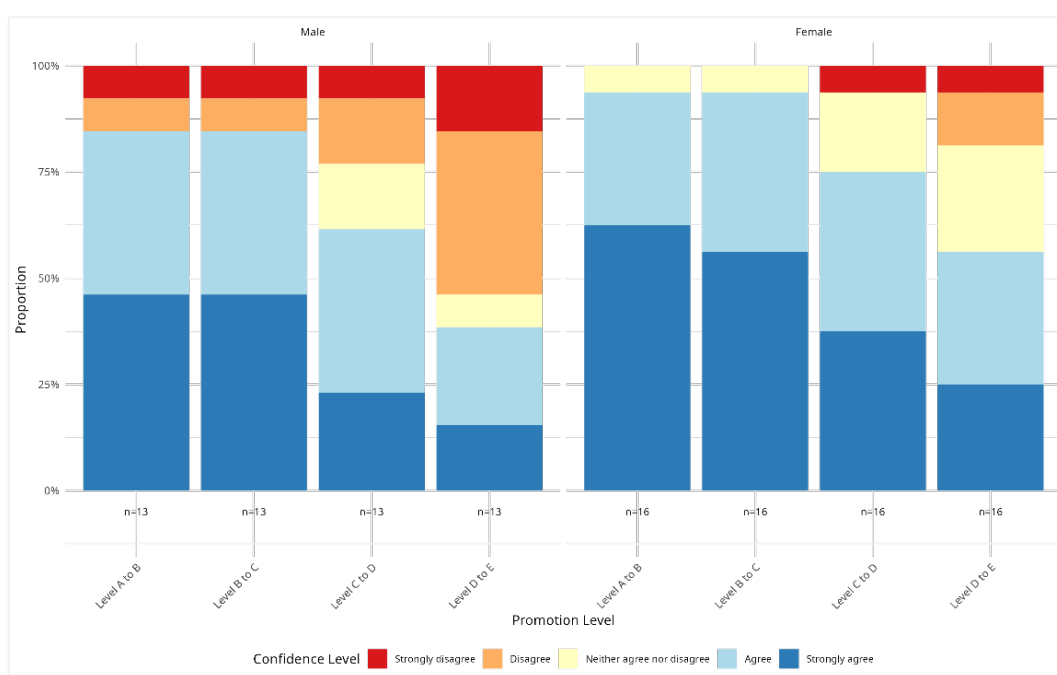


Figure 10. Confidence in supporting promotion across grades by gender

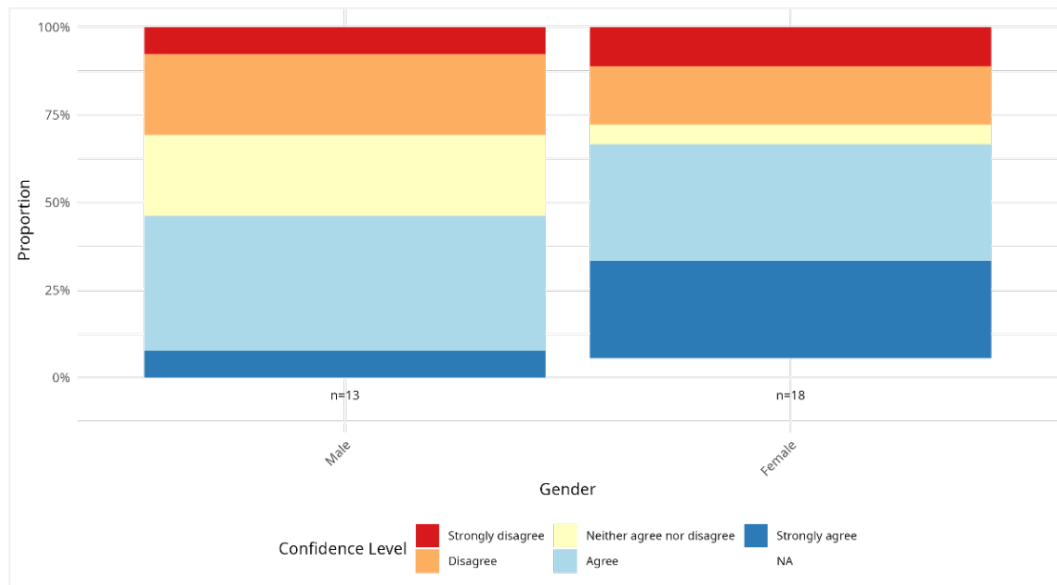


Figure 11. Confidence in supporting staff with ROPE statement by gender

The cumulative impact of the actions is clear in increasing application and success rates among women, especially in previously underrepresented cohorts such as part-time staff and those in STEMM. Qualitative feedback demonstrates that staff increasingly experience the process as transparent, supported, and equitable, though not uniformly.

At the same time, disparities in perceptions and outcomes across identity groups and Schools signal that deeper cultural change is still required. (*Further Action 5*)

6. Further Action

Despite sustained improvement in women's promotion application and success rates, particularly at Levels C and D, gaps remain, including limited visibility of promotion pathways for staff in non-traditional roles, and uneven access to support across Schools. These issues were consistently raised in Athena Swan consultation workshops (2023, 2025), the 2024 leadership survey, and the 2025 DEI survey. While university wide reforms such as clearer policies, enhanced ROPE guidance, and structured and role-specific promotion support sessions have improved transparency and contributed to greater success, qualitative feedback points to continuing disparities in local practice.

School-based promotion support models, such as formal mentoring panels, structured application reviews, and tailored workshops have proven highly effective in Schools like Health, Education and Tertiary Access, and Business and Creative Industries. These Schools saw greater alignment between representation, applications, and success rates, particularly for women. However, other areas, particularly within the Research Centres & Institutes, continue to lack systematic support structures, leading to inconsistent staff experiences and confidence in the process.

Key challenges include insufficient supervisor training, limited guidance on preparing ROPE narratives, delayed or unclear feedback, especially for unsuccessful applicants and the absence of visible pathways for staff in non-traditional roles (e.g., teaching-focused, engagement-based, clinical educators). While the foundational systems and processes supporting equity is now in place, ensuring consistent, inclusive implementation at the local level remains a priority. Further action is required to formalise School, Centre and Institute based supports, build capability among supervisors and assessors, and expand accessible pathways, ensuring that all staff, regardless of role, discipline, or identity, can equitably engage with and succeed in the promotion process.

Ref.	Rationale/ Evidence	Actions & Outputs	Timeframe (start & end)	Person/Group responsible for implementing action	Senior Leader accountable for action delivery	Desired Outcomes/ Targets/ Success Indicators
1	A sector-wide review of promotion policies was conducted to benchmark UniSC's practices against equity focused approaches. Findings highlighted opportunities to strengthen equity in UniSC's promotion framework.	Develop revised promotion principles and a longer-term improvement framework informed by best practice. An internal report was delivered to the DVC(A) in 2024, informing this work. Administrative updates to the were made to promotion policy in 2024.	2025-2026	DVC(A)	DVC(A)	Revised, equity-focused promotion principles and framework implemented.
2	Leadership Survey and Athena Swan consultations identified inconsistent, delayed, and under-resourced support for promotion across Schools, Centres, and Institutes.	Develop and deliver targeted training and resources for staff supporting promotion applicants, ensuring equitable support across all work areas. Expand this initiative to include Centres and Institutes, with the option of establishing a joint promotion support committee across these units to strengthen coordination and shared practice.	2025	DVC(A) P&C	DVC(A)	Training program developed and implemented. High participation by staff supporting promotion applicants. Increased consistency in applicant supports across work areas.
3	Feedback from Athena Swan consultations and the 2024 Leadership Survey highlighted a need for greater clarity, consistency, and transparency in promotion processes, especially around ROPE and equity considerations.	Introduce ROPE training and a dedicated resource hub (launched 2025) with FAQs, guidance, and writing tips. Embed equity principles into assessment processes. Refine promotion seminar series for 2025, including sessions tailored for supervisors, prospective applicants, and gender-diverse staff.	2025	P&C	DVC(A)	Increased staff confidence in the fairness, clarity, and inclusiveness of promotion processes, as reflected in staff surveys.
4	Leadership Survey results raised concerns about a lack of gender, cultural, and disciplinary diversity on promotion panels.	Maintain mandatory unconscious bias training (introduced in 2024) and promotion panels reflect gender, cultural, and disciplinary diversity.	ongoing	P&C	DVC(A)	Promotion panels reflect gender, cultural, and disciplinary diversity. All members complete unconscious bias training.

5	Athena Swan consultations and the 2024 Leadership Survey highlighted a strong demand for more consistent, constructive feedback for unsuccessful promotion applicants. Leaders also noted a lack of training and resources to support this process.	Strengthen feedback processes by providing clear, actionable development plans for unsuccessful applicants. Share anonymised data to highlight common challenges and publish case studies of successful applications to support learning. Implement a review process to monitor panel feedback for gender bias.	2025-2026	P&C	Promotion Panel Chair & DVC(A)	Consistent, high-quality feedback provided to all unsuccessful applicants. Increased staff satisfaction with the feedback process (measured via survey). Reduction in reported instances of biased or inequitable feedback. Improved reapplication success rates.
6	Athena Swan consultations and survey data highlighted limited support for staff on non-traditional academic pathways. Gender-diverse staff and those with disabilities reported fewer growth opportunities (DEI Survey)	Expand promotion frameworks to better recognise diverse academic roles (e.g., clinical, teaching-focused, engagement-heavy, part-time). Develop exemplar pathways and implement targeted strategies for gender-diverse staff and those with disabilities. In 2025, added promotion procedure clause for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants and included optional demographic questions on the application form.	2025-2026	DVC (A) PVC (Education) PVC (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy)	DVC (A)	Resources and exemplars developed and available to support those from diverse pathways apply for promotion. Improved perceptions of opportunity and support among equity groups (measured via staff surveys).