
GENDER EQUALITY ACTION PLAN 2022–2025

**Our commitment
to progressive
inclusivity**

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Acknowledgement of Country



Victoria University acknowledges, recognises and respects the Ancestors, Elders and families of the Bunurong/ Boonwurrung, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri/Woiwurrung of the Kulin who are the traditional owners of University land in Victoria, and the Gadigal and Guring-gai of the Eora Nation who are the traditional owners of University land in Sydney.

Gender diversity and equity has been embedded in First Nations culture for over 65,000 years. How to care for each other has been passed on throughout time; through law, culture, ceremony, and language. We can learn these lessons from First Nations people today. At VU, we acknowledge this wisdom and commit to caring for Country in this way.

Responding to violence

This plan is not about crisis situations or how to respond to disclosures of gender-based violence.

Please call 000 if you are in danger now.

If you need counselling or support, or help to manage a disclosure of violence or to make a referral, please call 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732 or [chat to someone online](#).

These services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Foreword from the Vice-Chancellor

I am pleased to present the University's commitment to progressive inclusivity – our **Gender Equality Action Plan** turns words into actions.

We made an explicit commitment to progressive inclusivity in our [Strategic Plan 2022–2028: Start well finish brilliantly](#). To achieve this commitment, we have established a framework of interconnected streams that respond to intersectional inclusivity in all forms.

We have stated that 'We are proudly progressive. We care – and we act'. This tenet aligns perfectly with the gender equality and pay equity principles of the **Victorian Gender Equality Act**. And we will see them through. VU data and stories inform our activities to bring about change and ways of making sense of the work, as it evolves.

This means enacting our **Gender Equality Action Plan** with respect and collegiality. It means adopting a 'one VU' model of egalitarian operations.

This is all about normalising progressive inclusivity; ours is a principles-led culture, given life through our people, policies, and practices. Only then, can we achieve meaningful equality and justice.

A commitment is a great start. Now let's make it real.



Professor Adam Shoemaker

Vice-Chancellor

Overview

The **Gender Equality Action Plan** is about normalising gender equity. Achieving an equality of rights, opportunities, responsibilities, and outcomes between persons of all genders. To progress gender equity, it is essential our work explicitly occurs across the (oppression and privilege) junctions between gender **and** race, culture, ability, sexuality, class, and First Nations justice.

As such, we recognise violence against First Nations people, including family violence, cannot be confined within explanations of gender inequality, coercive control, and patriarchy. Rather, it stems from a legacy of colonisation, systemic and interpersonal racism, and the intergenerational impacts of trauma. It is embroiled with abuses of land, water and air. We work in solidarity with Moondani Balluk to action the VU **Bathelmun Yalingwa Plan** and see power shift back to Aboriginal structures, law and culture for healing and Protecting Country.

We are hearing from our communities that gender equity and justice will truly be effective when many different women and gender diverse people are represented in all aspects of VU.

Strategic context

In our **Strategic Plan 2022-2028: Start well, finish brilliantly** we explicitly commit ourselves to being an institution that privileges **Protecting Country**. Country encapsulates people, place and planet. At VU, this means an Indigenous-led and community-driven movement towards long-term social, cultural, physical and economic prosperity and sustainability.

VU Strategic Plan 2022-2028: Start well, finish brilliantly

People Plan 2023-2028

Our Commitment to Progressive Inclusivity

- ◆ Every facet of the institution reflects our commitment to diversity, inclusivity and intersectionality
- ◆ We demonstrate and celebrate values-led leadership

The People and Organisation portfolio signals Victoria University's commitment to continue to elevate and transform the experience of our people, comprising students and staff, to be a **thriving place to study and work**.

Critical to this is the University's **People Plan, 2023-2028**. This plan will lead the creation of an intersectional people-centric culture. A culture which promotes the equal parity of students and staff to build trust, opportunities, and success for all.

We are a place where people love to belong, and feel immense pride

Our story so far

PROGRESSING GENDER & DIVERSITY EQUALITY AT VICTORIA UNIVERSITY

This data is an extract from the Companion paper.

We acknowledge the people missing from this story and commit to respectfully hearing and sharing their experiences.

We are shifting cultures and practices at Victoria University (VU) so staff of all genders proudly use carers leave and flexible work arrangements.

2873 Total staff at VU



“
 Having visible out women as role models of the same or similar identity is important to me.
 ”

52.94% Strongly agree
29.41% Agree

Source: Australian Workplace Equality Index employee survey 2021

58% gave a favourable response to...

“
 There is positive culture within VU in relation to employees who use flexible work arrangements.
 ”

64% agreed to...

“
 Using flexible work arrangements is not a barrier to success in VU.
 ”

For staff with caring responsibilities this number drops. Staff caring for someone with a disability scored 32%.

Source: Employee Experience Survey 2021

Collecting and reporting the VU Workplace Gender Audit data has informed the Gender Equality Action Plan, including what actions to take and which measures may indicate impact.

We acknowledge though, our current data management system does not accurately capture the complexity of our identities, including race and culture, gender diversity, sexuality, faith diversity and diverse neuro-types and abilities. As such, it can unconsciously silence the way some of us make sense of our world and know about our workplace. We have further work to do, understanding who and why, and accordingly how to improve staff experiences.

Of all staff:

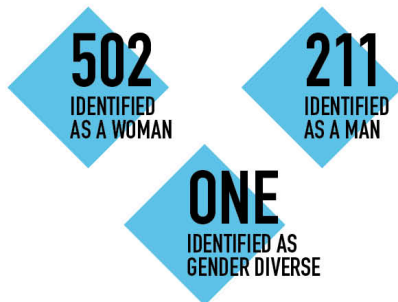
60% are favourable to...

“

Having caring responsibilities is not a barrier to success in VU.

”

Staff who accessed formal carers leave:



Source: Workplace Gender Audit 2020-2021

Between 1 July 2020 – 30 June 2021
486 staff were recruited, of which:



The composition of staff exits for
the same period:



NOTE: Four staff who exited identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and six identified as having a disability.

Source: Workplace Gender Audit 2020-2021

The **Employee Experience Survey** and follow up conversations about positive culture at VU for specific groups showed significant variances between overall very favourable employee responses and less favourable responses from people with lived experiences.

We are respectfully building a safer, nuanced consultation and data collection approach:

- ◆ Re-affirming practices such as community-building and truth-telling.
- ◆ Upholding our intention and obligation to be transparent and accountable to each other – colleagues, students, the community and the Commission.

Parental leave taken between 1 July 2020 – 30 June 2021.

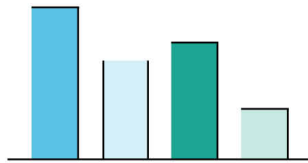


During parental leave 7 women exited the workforce, no men did.

Source: Workplace Gender Audit 2020–2021

VU reported 0 cases of formal sexual harassment or assault between 1 July 2020 – 31 June 2021.

56% feel safe to challenge inappropriate behaviour at work,



Source: Workplace Gender Audit 2020–2021

There is a positive culture within VU in relation to employees with disability.

70% positive overall score

Disaggregated by those who identify as gender and sexuality diverse:

58% positive overall score

Disaggregated by those who identify as having a disability:

54% positive overall score

Note: We cannot disaggregate Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander responses because of the sample size.

Source: Employee Experience Survey 2021

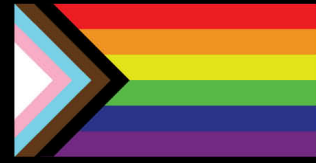


There is a positive culture within VU in relation to employees who identify as LGBTIQ+.

84% positive overall score

Disaggregated by those who identify as gender and sexuality diverse

72% positive overall score



Source: Employee Experience Survey 2021

Work is underway to improve our reporting processes at VU. We recognise some of the statistics presented, including numbers of staff with a disability, identifying as gender diverse and experiences of sexual harassment or assault do not accord with the Australian and international evidence. It is important we get better at cross-examining and contextualising our partial data.

Our approach

The gender equality work at VU is iterative, co-designed and collaborative. It will change as we change. We draw from research, evidence and lived experience. We acknowledge the logic unpinning this plan is culture-specific and not universal.

All elements of the **Gender Equality Action Plan** are unpacked further in the *Companion Paper* which provides greater detail for the reader to consider, as relevant to their work.

- ◆ We respect First Nations first and act in solidarity with self-determined, distinctive, strengths-based, community-led solutions focusing on decolonising processes
- ◆ We work together and as active allies with all our VU communities to 'build a movement' to achieve intersectional gender equality
- ◆ Our VU leaders lead and are accountable for the work and we are each equally responsible and accountable for our sphere of influence

- ◆ We interrogate, reflect on and respond to the drivers of inequality, discrimination and oppression to support truth telling and bring about change
- ◆ We use a variety of co-created strategies to generate momentum across all parts of VU, including at the levels of individual employees and students, VU as a whole community and the University in its role as an institution
- ◆ We commit to a long term, enterprise wide, diversity and equity program with activities that reinforce each other
- ◆ Our teaching and our research underpins this progressive approach. This is not a series of policies which will gather dust on a shelf.

Objectives and actions

The key to progressing gender and intersectional diversity equity is weaving it into everything – our actions, our leadership, our decisions.

This plan is agile. It is designed to adapt and respond to complex system change.

Objective 1

Actions

Ensure all VU policy, programs and services are informed by critical gender and diversity impact assessments.

- ◆ Embed gender and diversity targets, measures of impact and data collection to propel meaningful change. Regularly review to exceed legislative requirements and external equity benchmarks.
- ◆ Emphasise safety and inclusivity for our different abilities, cultures, and genders.
- ◆ Design working and learning environments which are First Nations responsive and respectful.

Objective 2

Actions

Support and increase the diversity of people (first nations, gender, race & culture, sexuality, ability) throughout VU.

- ◆ Engage a diversity of staff and students to design, implement and review recruitment and onboarding processes.
- ◆ Embed structural supports which prioritise appointing staff with intersecting gender and diversity identities (and with a focus on First Nations women) across professional, teaching and research portfolios, in leadership positions and on all selection panels and committees.
- ◆ Normalise a flexible work environment that enables (without perceived penalty) care and cultural practices, such as parenting, Elder and disability care, religious observance, and to transmit and preserve Law, ceremony, languages and knowledges.

Objective 3

Actions

Progress gender transformative practices across all levels of the workforce.

- ◆ Use the recruitment, remuneration and internal progression systems – paired with gender responsive budgeting – to close the gender and diversity pay gap.
- ◆ Showcase and prioritise a diversity of identities, neurotypes, and qualifications in VU capability frameworks and measures for employability and promotion

- ◆ Promote pride, respect, equality and visibility, and actively celebrate the leadership and contributions of gender, sexuality and ability diverse people, our migrant and refugee communities, and First Nations people.

Objective 4

Improve and promote reporting systems, safety and support for people affected by violence

Actions

- ◆ Implement all recommendations made in Universities Australia Guidelines for university responses to sexual assault and sexual harassment.
- ◆ Engage subject matter experts and groups with lived experience as active participants in all aspects of system design, implementation and review.
- ◆ Record and analyse demographic data so instances of harassment, discrimination and oppression based on protected attributes are identified, extracted and responded to effectively.

Measuring impact

We measure change in relation to the Gender Equality Indicators set out in the *Gender Equality Act* and will regularly report to our VU community and the *Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector* of this progress. Internal and external key metrics act as our proxy indicators.

This work is nuanced, and our understanding of change is as much about hearing and sharing VU stories as it is about collecting 'hard data'. Our principles focused evaluation will interrogate the unexpected shifts in direction and failures, to better understand the impact of our approach and how this is leading to real improvements in peoples' working lives.

External measures of success

- ◆ Continue achieving citation as a Workplace Gender Equality Agency, Employer of Choice – Gender Equality
- ◆ Achieve gold status in the Australian Workplace Equality Index
- ◆ Met all key areas of the Australian Network on Disability (AND) Employment Access & Inclusion Index

Current VU key metrics

- ◆ Balanced women and gender diverse participation in Senior Management
- ◆ Achieved gender balance within all levels of workforce (AHEIA metrics)
- ◆ Reduced gender pay gap by portfolio
- ◆ Employee experiences at VU: gender and diversity increase in % favourable
- ◆ Gender equitable and management level % increase of staff using flexible working arrangements and leave provisions
- ◆ 100% of students and staff are aware of support services available to those who disclose experiences of violence

Compliance measures

- ◆ Compliance with the Gender Equality Act (Vic)
- ◆ Compliance with the Workplace Gender Equality Act (Cth)

For more information contact:
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