



Women in STEM Decadal Plan

University of Southern Queensland Response

At the University of Southern Queensland, our continued success depends on our people. We have a long-standing commitment to inclusive workplaces that underpins current and future corporate strategies. Our Gender Equity Action Plan illustrates how our commitments and actions align with and support the Women in STEM Decadal Plan.

Professor Bernadette McCabe is a principal scientist at the University of Southern Queensland's Centre for Agricultural Engineering. Her research interest in energy capture, resource recovery of waste and bio-fertilisers has attracted over \$3 million in nationally competitive grants since 2010. Professor McCabe is USQ's Research Program Leader in the Fight Food Waste Cooperative Research Centre and the Energy and Bioresource Recycling program. She is also leading Australia's involvement in the International Energy Agency's Bioenergy Task on Biogas.

Opportunity 1: Leadership

USQ's leadership team has made significant progress in identifying and addressing gender inequity within the University. USQ's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Geraldine Mackenzie, is a female leader with 30 years' experience in the tertiary sector and is strongly committed to progressing gender equity in STEM, and more generally in research. Professor Mackenzie is also a Workplace Gender Equality Agency Pay Equity Advisor, was Chair of the RUN Executive Women's Group from 2016-2017 and Co-Chair of Universities Australia Executive Women 2015-2016.

The development of USQ's Gender Equity Action Plan is one of the largest STEM-focused Diversity and Inclusion initiatives ever undertaken at USQ. The strategies contained within the Action Plan have been developed and supported across all levels of USQ's leadership team. This high level involvement has been fundamental to changing the University's culture and progressing gender equity.

The delivery of the Action Plan is embedded across the University, with progress monitored through specific deliverables and reported through formal committee structures within the Research and Innovation and the Academic Divisions, and has been established as a key human resources strategic priority. Furthermore, progress and outcomes will be reported directly to the Vice-Chancellor, through the Vice-Chancellor's Executive.



Vice-Chancellor Professor Geraldine Mackenzie

Future initiatives:

Through the implementation of the Gender Equity Action Plan, USQ has committed to the following leadership-focused initiatives:

- Incorporating Gender Equity principles (including gender equity and diversity targets) into USQ's governance structure and future USQ strategic plans.
- Create University-wide diversity and inclusivity expectations for those in leadership roles.
- Address gender pay gaps by increasing representation of women at senior levels, with a particular focus on STEM.
- Building our pipeline of female staff in STEM areas and addressing the stalled progression of USQ's existing female staff in areas beyond Level B.

USQ's Gender Equity journey is fundamental in achieving a more **inclusive workplace**, especially in STEM disciplines. This initiative is firmly on the University's agenda and it will continue to receive ongoing support at the **highest level** of USQ's governance and leadership.

Mr John Dornbusch
USQ Chancellor



A workshop focussing on improving Gender Equity and Diversity at USQ conducted by USQ's Self-Assessment Team with representatives across the University including Heads of School, Research Directors, Human Resources and the Office for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching.

Opportunity 2: Evaluation

Each year, USQ conducts a gender pay gap analysis in accordance with Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WEGA) Guidelines to ensure equitable arrangements across both genders and also against sector benchmarks. Levelling the playing field and advancing gender pay equity requires a pro-active and deliberate effort and USQ has taken strong action to identify and address pay gaps evident in our workforce.

In 2017, USQ established a Self-Assessment Team (SAT); a group of 27 employees with a diverse range of backgrounds and experience, tasked with undertaking a thorough review of USQ's current status with regards to achieving gender equity. During 2018 and 2019 the SAT embarked on a process of broad engagement and consultation across the University via forums, employee focus groups, workshops and targeted events to gather information about how the USQ was progressing in our journey towards improving gender equity, diversity and inclusion. The data gathered in this process has informed the development of USQ's Gender Equity Action Plan.

USQ has committed to implementing the following ongoing evaluation activities:

- Establishment of clear targets and reporting and evaluation requirements to measure Action Plan impact.
- Review of the University's job evaluation tool for unconscious bias and introduce a certified gender inclusive job evaluation tool.
- Conduct a major review of performance management processes and systems to identify opportunities to improve performance and career development conversations.
- Undertake a review of job requirements and recruitment processes for STEM roles to improve shortlisting and appointment rates for females in STEM.

Opportunity 3: Workplace Culture

USQ recognises that the gender equity journey is one that involves the whole University and our values-driven culture will be critical to the creation of a more inclusive workplace. A range of initiatives to create a culture of diversity and inclusion in the workplace have been implemented in recent years:

- USQ continues to build on its long established pathways to support women in achieving their career aspirations. The Women's Academic Development Program has brought together current and future female leaders to discuss aspirations, share knowledge and build leadership potential.
- Completing an online equity and diversity training module is an annual mandatory requirement for all USQ employees and sits alongside a range of diversity and inclusion training.
- The 'USQ People Capability Framework' provides a tool for all employees to develop behaviours and capabilities for sustained growth and success, based on the key elements of 'Values, Capabilities and Leadership'.
- Implementation of flexible working arrangements for employees with caring responsibilities.
- A diverse and inclusive workplace is a key theme which underpins USQ's Strategic Plan, Social Justice Strategic Plan, Workforce and Talent Management Plan, Equity and Diversity Strategy, Reconciliation Action Plan, Cultural Competency Framework, Disability Action Plan, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Career and Development Strategy.
- USQ actively promotes and supports gender and diversity initiatives, with Senior Leaders playing key roles in IDAHOBIT Day, Wear it Purple Day, International Women's Day, White Ribbon Day, Reconciliation Week and R U OK? Day.
- Several internal USQ employee networks for minority groups with membership open to all USQ employees (e.g. Ally, Accessibility, Women's, Multicultural, Harassment and Discrimination Contact Officer, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employee, Health and Wellbeing),



Raising the rainbow flag at USQ's Toowoomba Campus to celebrate IDAHOBIT Day.

USQ acknowledges that many opportunities exist to improve the culture and experience of females at the University, particularly for those working in STEM in order to enable equitable career development and progression. The Gender Equity Action Plan targets these opportunities with the following actions:

- Development of an academic support program targeted at females in STEM, which delivers training and guidance to female promotion applicants and also upskills academic supervisors to improve career development conversations.
- Embed 'achievement relative to opportunity' as a guiding principle in academic promotion to address females who may have experienced career breaks due to caring responsibilities.
- Incorporate bias-literacy (unconscious bias) education into mandatory training for all academic promotion and assessment committees.
- Improve the uptake and accessibility of leadership and professional development programs to females in STEM through expanding the categories of eligibility and dedicate places for females in STEM, using tailored communication methods to promote opportunities, implementing STEM specific programs for females at Levels B, C & D and recording sessions to improve access to training.

- Supporting the entry and progression of non-continuing female STEM employees by adopting a 'grow your own' approach to build a talent pool and increase capability.
- Increase the availability of female senior role models in STEM by expanding the current mentoring program to include STEM industry mentors, adjunct STEM staff and mentors from other higher education institutions.
- Attract and retain female STEM academics who provide outstanding contributions to USQ research through the establishment of a STEM Female Research award within the University's existing Research Excellence Award Program.



Dr Niloofar Vaghefi is a Plant Pathologist working within USQ's Centre for Crop Health. Dr Vaghefi's research explores how diverse populations of pathogens survive and multiply in crops and transfer to surrounding fields, in order to improve disease resistance and enhance crop productivity and profitability.



USQ Astronomer Dr Belinda Nicholson has recently commenced in a new role as a post-doctoral researcher with the University of Oxford's Department of Physics and Exoplanet Group. Dr Nicholson will keep strong ties with USQ, staying on as an adjunct research fellow and member of the USQ Astrophysics team and will support the MINERVA-Australis observatory to examine exoplanets discovered by NASA's Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite.

Opportunity 4: Visibility

USQ encourages gender balance in role models and a conscious effort is made to consider diversity on USQ webpages and publications. USQ's recent commemorative publication "USQ: 50 Years 50 Stories" showcases the achievements of an equal number of female and male USQ alumni, whose memories and experiences provide a snapshot of our history. USQ's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Geraldine Mackenzie, is a highly visible role model and pay equity ambassador. In 2017, as part of Bluestocking week, the Women's Network developed a series of posters that were placed around campus which highlighted a number of female STEM academics.

USQ acknowledges that visible role models are instrumental in encouraging people within minority groups to aspire to and pursue the development of their career and is therefore committed to the following actions which aim to increase visibility and celebrate the success of females in STEM:

- The development of an Employee Value Proposition campaign including the production of promotional videos to showcase females in STEM for use across a range of University processes and systems, such as training, recruitment and student attraction.
- Developing USQ guidelines and setting targets to ensure equal gender representation on the USQ website, during guest speaker opportunities, in promotional materials and at events.
- Increasing female STEM representation in the University's Visiting Researcher Scheme.
- Implementing 'The Panel Pledge' to ensure gender balance among keynote speakers and on panels at conferences and events.
- Promoting female STEM ambassadors during national events such as Bluestocking Week, Queensland Women's Week, International Women's Day, National Science Week and IDAHOBIT Day.



USQ conducts a number of outreach programs which seek to engage females in STEM.

Opportunity 5: Education

USQ conducts an extensive annual STEM outreach program targeting both primary and high school students, as well as the community. We strive for gender balance among the presenters, staff, participants and student ambassadors participating in the outreach activities to ensure an appropriate representation of role models.

At the Higher Degree Research (HDR) student level, the following actions are being implemented to increase the number of females enrolled in STEM courses:

- Development of a contemporary HDR training resource on quality supervision and bias-literacy including training on diversity and inclusion.
- The allocation of eight HDR scholarships for females in STEM disciplines where females are underrepresented over four years.
- Scholarship assessment panels to complete unconscious bias training.

Improving the understanding of students, parents and educators about the impact of stereotypes and unconscious bias on the education choices of women and the longer-term impact on potential career opportunities is also critical to driving sustained change in gender equity. Female student bursaries are a key USQ initiative in this area, and the USQ Shine program showcases the diverse capacity and ability of women who have graduated from USQ and highlights their professional and personal achievements. At the same time, the program provides a platform to raise awareness and funds for women's causes and issues and the advancement and accessibility of education for all women and girls regardless of background, location or personal circumstances.



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