Gender Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan

2026–2028

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Contents

Introduction

CQUniversity (CQU) champions inclusivity, equity and diversity as integral to its identity. As a regional, dual-sector university with a large equity cohort, including women in non-traditional fields, First Nations students, students with disabilities, people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, LGBTIQ+ and those from low socio-economic backgrounds, CQU is committed to creating safe, accessible and empowering learning, research and working environments for all.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

This Action Plan sets out a roadmap to:

1. Advance gender equity and social inclusion.

2. Remove barriers to participation in education and employment.

3. Improve representation and outcomes for under-represented groups.

4. Support cultural change across all campuses and communities.

Student equity overview (2021–2025)

CQUniversity is one of Australia's most inclusive and diverse universities, particularly as a leading regional institution. Its student body reflects this diversity, with strong representation across gender, cultural, linguistic, Indigenous and socio-economic lines.

In 2024, the student cohort comprised (domestic only unless specified):

› 59.4% female (domestic and international)

› 11.3% women in non-traditional areas of study such as STEM subjects

› 7.5% identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

› 5.4% from a non-English speaking background

› 9.5% identifying as living with a disability

› 52.9% first in their family to attend university

› 44% from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds

› 70.4% resided in regional or remote areas.

In 2025 YTD, CQUniversity reported continued diversity across the student population (domestic only unless specified):

88.1% of students identified as belonging to one or more equity groups.

43% of students were from low SES backgrounds.

5.5% of students were from a non-English speaking background.

71% of students resided in regional or remote areas.

These figures highlight the University's sustained focus on inclusive access and the growing confidence among students to identify within equity categories.

GENDER PARTICIPATION (STUDENTS)

Tracking gender diversity remains central to CQUniversity's equity agenda.

› Female students represented 59% of the total student population in 2024 and 59% in 2025 (domestic and international).

› Female completions accounted for 62% of all completions in 2024.

› Women in non-traditional areas of study declined slightly from 8.67% (2022) to 8.03% (2024) and 7.91% (2025).

While female participation remains strong overall, the decline in women in STEM and other non-traditional disciplines indicates a continued need for targeted support. Programs such as the Women in STEM Ambassador Program and STEM Girls provide mentorship, networking, and scholarships to encourage more women into these fields.

Pass rates (domestic bachelor students, new to course, 2024):

› female: 84.5%

› male: 85%

› non-binary/gender diverse/unspecified: 66.7%.

FIRST NATIONS STUDENTS

CQUniversity continues to strengthen its engagement with First Nations communities and students.

› Indigenous students represented 7.5% of the domestic cohort in 2024, slightly up from 7.3% in 2023.

› Re-enrolment rates for Indigenous students rose from 67.46% (2021 T1–T2) to 73.31% (2025 T1–T2) now exceeding that of non-Indigenous students (68.65%, 2025 YTD).

› Pass rates improved from 65.9% (2021) to 70.7% (2025 YTD), compared with 84.6% (2025 YTD) for all students (HE domestic bachelor new to course).

This upward trend indicates that targeted initiatives, such as the Nunbal Wayu Symposium and the First Nations Education and Student Success Strategy (2024–2028), may be having a measurable impact. Culturally tailored support provided through the Indigenous Student Support Team continues to strengthen academic and wellbeing outcomes.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY

CQUniversity is dedicated to ensuring equitable access and success for students with disability.

› Students identifying with a disability (HE and VET, domestic only):

  › 9.5% (2024) → 9.2% (2025 YTD).

› Pass rates (HE domestic):
  › students with disability: 76.64% (2024) (up from 75.35% in 2021)
  › all students: 82.30% (2024).

CQUniversity's Accessibility and Equity Service plays a key role in this improvement through tailored accessibility plans, free equipment and assistive technologies and individualised support from accessibility consultants. The ongoing focus remains on closing the success gap between students with and without disabilities.

LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS (SES) STUDENTS

Students from low SES backgrounds continue to represent a significant portion of CQUniversity's diverse population.

43.73%
of low SES students in 2025 YTD (down from 44.1% in 2024) (HE and VET domestic).

Retention and pass rates have improved steadily, though they remain below those of higher SES peers.

› Re-enrolment (2025 T1–T2):
  › low SES: 75.20%
  › high SES: 77.57%.
› Pass rate (proportion of subjects passed, new to course) in 2024:
  › low SES: 79.33%
  › high SES: 85.58%.

CQUniversity continues to support low SES students through CQUniCares, tuition and living costs scholarships, and free academic and wellbeing support services.

These initiatives reduce financial barriers and enhance engagement and persistence for students facing socio-economic disadvantage.

REGIONAL AND REMOTE STUDENTS

As a leading regional university, CQUniversity continues to serve students outside metropolitan areas.

70.36%
of students in 2024 resided in regional or remote areas, up from 68.37% in 2022.

The University's multi-campus model, extensive online learning platforms, and local learning hubs ensure that regional and remote students can access tertiary education opportunities without relocating.

Across all equity groups, CQUniversity's data reflects a clear commitment to improving participation, retention, and success outcomes. Highlights include:

› sustained diversity across student cohorts
› improved retention and success rates for First Nations, low SES, and students with disability
› continued gender equity challenges in STEM fields.

CQUniversity's evidence-based approach ensures continuous refinement of initiatives that drive equity and inclusion, aligning with national priorities such as the Australian Universities Accord 2024, and SDG 5: Gender Equality.

For more detail please see: Diversity Gender Equity and SDG 5 Gender Equality – CQUniversity.

Workforce equity and staff commitments

CQUniversity is committed to promoting equity, diversity and gender equality among its staff and workforce. These commitments are guided by national frameworks such as the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 (WGEA), the Fair Work Act, and CQU's internal Code of Conduct and Equity and Anti-Discrimination Policies, the Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan and our Disability Informed Action Plan.

ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

CQU fosters a learning and working environment based on:

› our values – Engagement, Leadership, Can Do Approach, Inclusive, Openness

› social justice and equal opportunity

› equity, diversity, and social inclusion

› zero tolerance for discrimination, harassment, bullying, or victimisation

› respect, dignity, and fairness for all.

Appointments and promotions are based on merit and capabilities, not gender, sexuality, age, identity, parental status or background (the only exception being where roles are specifically identified to meet affirmative action targets such as women or men in non-traditional roles or where identity is a requirement for the success of the role such as identified roles for First Nations Peoples).

GENDER EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE

CQU defines gender equity as:

› equal access to promotions, leadership opportunities, training, and resources

› equitable outcomes that account for different needs and life circumstances

› work-life balance through family-friendly policies and flexible work

› closing the gender pay gap and ensuring inclusive recruitment and retention practices.

CQUniversity's gender profile by employment type as at 12 November 2025

GENDER	EMPLOYEES PER TYPE
Female – Total	**2437**
Casual	1035
Fixed term	288
Continuing	1114
Male – Total	**1304**
Casual	585
Fixed term	134
Continuing	585
Non-binary – Total	**29**
Casual	6
Fixed term	7
Continuing	16
Grand total	**3770**

Employee gender by management status

GENDER	NUMBER OF MANAGERS	%
Female	57	53%
Male	49	46%
Non-binary	1	1%
Grand total	107	100%

WGEA GENDER EQUALITY INDICATORS (2024 PERFORMANCE AND ACTIONS)

Indicator	Outcome	Analysis	Key actions
GEI 1: **Workforce composition**	› 75% of key management personnel are women. › 53% of management. › 66% of non-management. › 87% of part-time roles. › 64% of casual roles held by women.	Strong female representation: over-representation in casual and part-time roles.	› Promote flexible roles for all genders. › Offer leadership development for junior staff of all genders. › Maintain transparency in recruitment. › Conduct an analysis that considers academic profiles, academic levels (A to E), work time status (part-time/full-time), schools and managerial/leadership levels by gender.
GEI 2: **Governing bodies**	› University Council: 38% women. › Goal of equal gender representation on committees and boards.	Reflects inclusive leadership practices.	› Encourage women's participation in governance roles. › Provide mentoring and professional development.
GEI 3: **Equal remuneration**	› Policy in place. › No current pay gap analysis conducted.	Lack of data impedes targeted intervention.	› Conduct pay equity analysis. › Develop remediation plans.
GEI 4: **Flexible work and family support**	› 26-week paid parental leave with super. › Flexible work policy active.	Uptake data needs to be monitored more closely.	› Monitor uptake by gender. › Communicate entitlements widely.
GEI 5: **Employee consultation**	› Staff entry surveys. › Staff exit surveys. › Joint Consultative Committee. › Job satisfaction surveys. › Psychosocial health surveys.	Continual improvement processes with both qualitative and quantitative data analysed with improvements identified and implemented.	Ensure employees are provided with updates on actions as a result of their feedback.
GEI 6: **Prevention of harassment and discrimination**	› Policies exist. › Processes under review. › Anonymous psychosocial health surveys conducted as well as bi-annual staff satisfaction surveys.	Continued improvement needed.	› Conduct regular reviews. › Improve reporting.

STAFF-FOCUSED ACTIONS (2026–2028)

Area	Actions	Identified WGEA target area and type	Lead area(s)	Timeline
Workforce development	Provide opportunities for training, mentoring and leadership development for women.		People and Culture	2026–2028
Flexible work and family	Develop guidelines on flexible working, remote and hybrid teams for managers and employees.	GEI4: Action	People and Culture	2026–2028
Pay equity	› Conduct gender pay gap analysis. › Report the results of the analysis to Council. › Identify strategies to improve the gap. › Implement strategies. › Develop a pay equity policy that includes accountability for managers regarding pay equity outcomes.	GEI3: Action and Numeric	People and Culture, Finance	2026–2028
Governance and leadership	› Support female participation in boards and committees. › Achieve representation of all genders on University Council and University Council sub-committees with the goal of 40%, 40%, 20% or better.	GEI2: Numeric	Governance, People and Culture	2026–2028
Employee consultation	› Provide regular scheduled updates to Joint Consultative Committee and continue with regular anonymous feedback opportunities. › Utilise other representative groups as appropriate such as the First Nations Success Strategies Committee (FNSSC), the RESPECT Committee, the Ally Network and the Access and Equity Alliance Group as a support, advocacy and consultation channel for employees with disability.		People and Culture	2026–2028

Area	Actions	Identified WGEA target area and type	Lead area(s)	Timeline
Gender-based violence prevention and support including sexual harassment and discrimination prevention	› Improve support for employees experiencing or at risk of family and domestic violence through training for key personnel.	GEI4: Action	People and Culture, Safer Communities	2026–2028
	› Guidelines and procedures for referring employees experiencing or at risk of family and domestic violence to support services.			
	› Enable anonymous disclosures, improve processes to respond to concerns raised.			
	› Report annually on the incidence of reporting gender-based violence or sexual harassment to the University Management Committee (UMC) and Council: › identified risks and actions to prevent › analysis of trends › outcomes of reports and consequences.	GEI6: Action		

MEASURING SUCCESS

By 2028, CQUniversity will aim to:

› have equal representation in leadership roles

› continue to reduce the average total remuneration gender pay gap (–11.4% 2023–2024)

› ensure those staff who seek flexible work are able to access it

› maintain a robust zero-tolerance framework for harassment and discrimination

› ensure gender representation on all University governing committees (Council and sub-committees).

Detailed Action Plan (2026–2028)

PARTICIPATION (STUDENTS AND STAFF)

Year	Action	Activities	Measures of success	Lead area(s)
2026–2028	Increase female students in non-traditional areas	Target disciplines with low female representation. Use 2025 baseline (7.91%) to track growth.	Increase in women in non-traditional areas by end of 2028.	Schools, Global Brand and Marketing (GBM) (promote women in STEM Ambassador Program and STEM Girls to encourage more women into these fields)
2026	Mentoring and leadership pathways	Support for women from low SES, disability, regions.	Increased number of staff and students supported.	People and Culture, Student Life
2026–2028	Build on RAP and First Nations Education and Student Success Strategy and First Nations Workforce Strategy outcomes	Extend participation in northern and regional Queensland, leveraging data showing rising re-enrolment (73.56% in 2025).	Improved retention.	Indigenous Engagement, GBM, People and Culture

PROGRAMS, SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

Year	Action	Activities	Measures of success	Lead area(s)
2026–2028	Scholarships for diverse women	› Grow NCWQ, Women in STEM, CQUni Cares uptake. › Prioritise low SES (39.17%) and First Nations (5.34%) women.	Increased uptake to equity groups.	Advancement, Scholarships
2026–2027	Disability and parenting supports	Improve accessibility plans for student flexibility.	Increased uptake growth for support plans, flexible work arrangements, closing the success gap for students with disability vs. non-disability (81.1% vs. 84.4%).	Accessibility and Equity, People and Culture

CULTURAL CHANGE AND ENGAGEMENT

Year	Action	Activities	Measures of success	Lead area(s)
2025	Gender Equity Visibility Campaign	Promote GrowHer, Women in Agri-Tech, WiT staff stories, WiT awards and memberships.	Broad engagement across platforms.	GBM
2026–2028	Promotion of gender-equity scholarships, mentoring and supports	Coordinate and promote scholarships, mentoring opportunities and related engagement activities that support women's access, participation and academic progression, in collaboration with internal and external partners.	Increased visibility of programs; number of promotional activities delivered; participation across regions and cohorts; evidence of diverse engagement.	Student Success Division
2026–2028	Celebrate diversity via Ally Network with opportunities to educate, guide policy and achieve positive outcomes	Training, visibility, LGBTIQ+ women in STEM.	Network growth and staff/student feedback.	Safer Communities, Wellbeing

POLICY, DATA AND GOVERNANCE

Year	Action	Activities	Measures of success	Lead area(s)
2026–2028	Strengthen equity reporting	Use WGEA, SDG5, internal dashboards.	Annual reports: gaps identified.	Business Intelligence, People and Culture
2026	Inclusive policy review	Revise Code of Conduct, Leave, Anti-Discrimination.	100% inclusive, intersectional policies.	People and Culture, Governance, RESPECT
2025–2027	Data tracking	Disaggregate by gender, socio-economic status, disability.	5% reduction in equity-related attrition by 2027.	Business Intelligence

Key programs and initiatives (ongoing)

SCHOLARSHIPS

› Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering's (ATSE) Elevate: Boosting diversity in STEM
› National Council of Women of Queensland Inc (NCWQ) Bursary
› Downer Scholarship
› CQUni Cares Student Support Scholarship
› Transport and Main Roads (TMR) Women in Engineering (Regional) Bursary
› Female Founders Program

MENTORING AND CLUBS

› WinTECH
› Women in Technology
› GrowHer
› Future Female Conference

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

› STEM, Trades and Agri-Tech outreach
› Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research

SUPPORT SERVICES

› Parent and feeding rooms
› Safer Communities
› Wellbeing
    › CQU Ally Program
    › Accessibility and Equity Service
› EAP

GOVERNANCE AND POLICIES

› Mindwaves 2.0
› Workplace Harassment, Workplace Bullying, Unlawful Discrimination
› Code of Conduct
› Equity Policy
› Sexual Harassment and Gender-based Harassment Prevention
› Parental Leave Policy
› Student Conduct Policy and Procedure
› Academic Freedom
› Recruitment and Selection Procedure
› Disability Support (Employees and Students) and the Disability-Informed Action Plan
› Reconciliation Action Plan
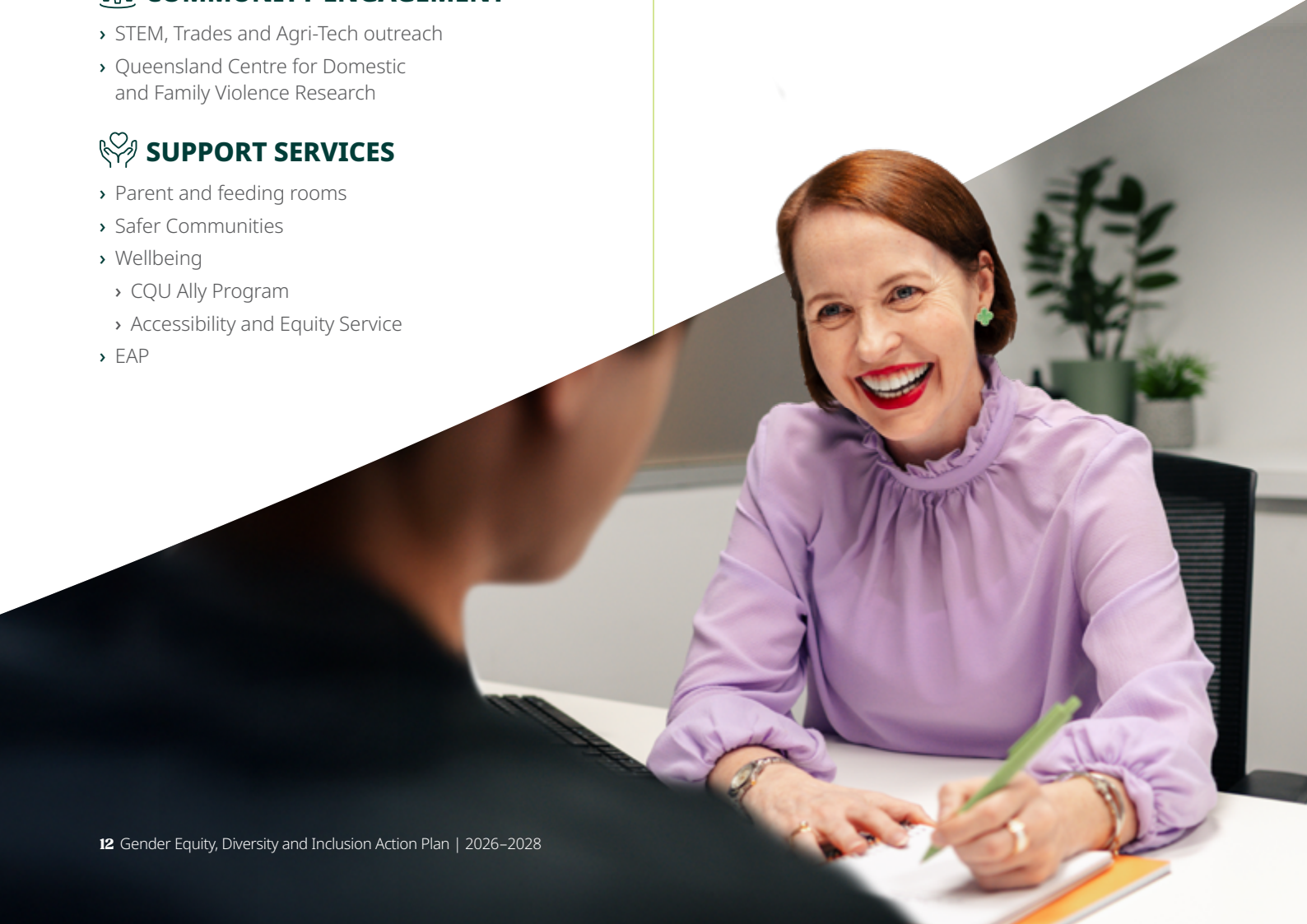
Success indicators (by 2028)

Female participation in non-traditional areas of study

Target:
Up from 8% to 10%.

Graduate cohort made up of women

Target:
≥ 65% sustained.

Reduction in gender equity gaps (low SES, disability)

Target:
Build on RAP and Nunbal Wayu Symposium outcomes.

SES success gap: ~3–4% Disability gap: ~3% (2025 baseline)

Target:
Success gap halved by 50% (to ≤1.5%).

Increased Ally network participation

Target:
Increasing the number of employees who have completed PDC93089 Understanding Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity (458 completions as at 5 November 2025).

Scholarship and mentoring uptake by equity women

Target:
Up 15%.

Key policies reviewed and inclusive

Target:
100% complete.

Governance and reporting

Progress will be overseen by the RESPECT Committee and reported annually to:

› Joint Consultative Committee
› University Management Committee
› Audit Risk and Finance Committee
› CQUniversity Council
› Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA)
› Department of Education
› public equity performance platforms.

Regular feedback loops, including surveys, forums, and stakeholder engagement, will ensure continuous improvement and transparency.

Conclusion

CQUniversity's Gender Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2026–2028 embodies our commitment to creating a truly inclusive, safe, and supportive environment for all students and staff. This Plan is a living document that will be reviewed and updated regularly to ensure relevance and effectiveness.

Informed by:

Gender Equality Action Plan template

Diversity Gender Equity

SDG 5 Gender Equality – CQUniversity

Gender Equality at CQUniversity

CONTRIBUTORS

A special thank you to the following people who contributed to the development of the Plan:

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