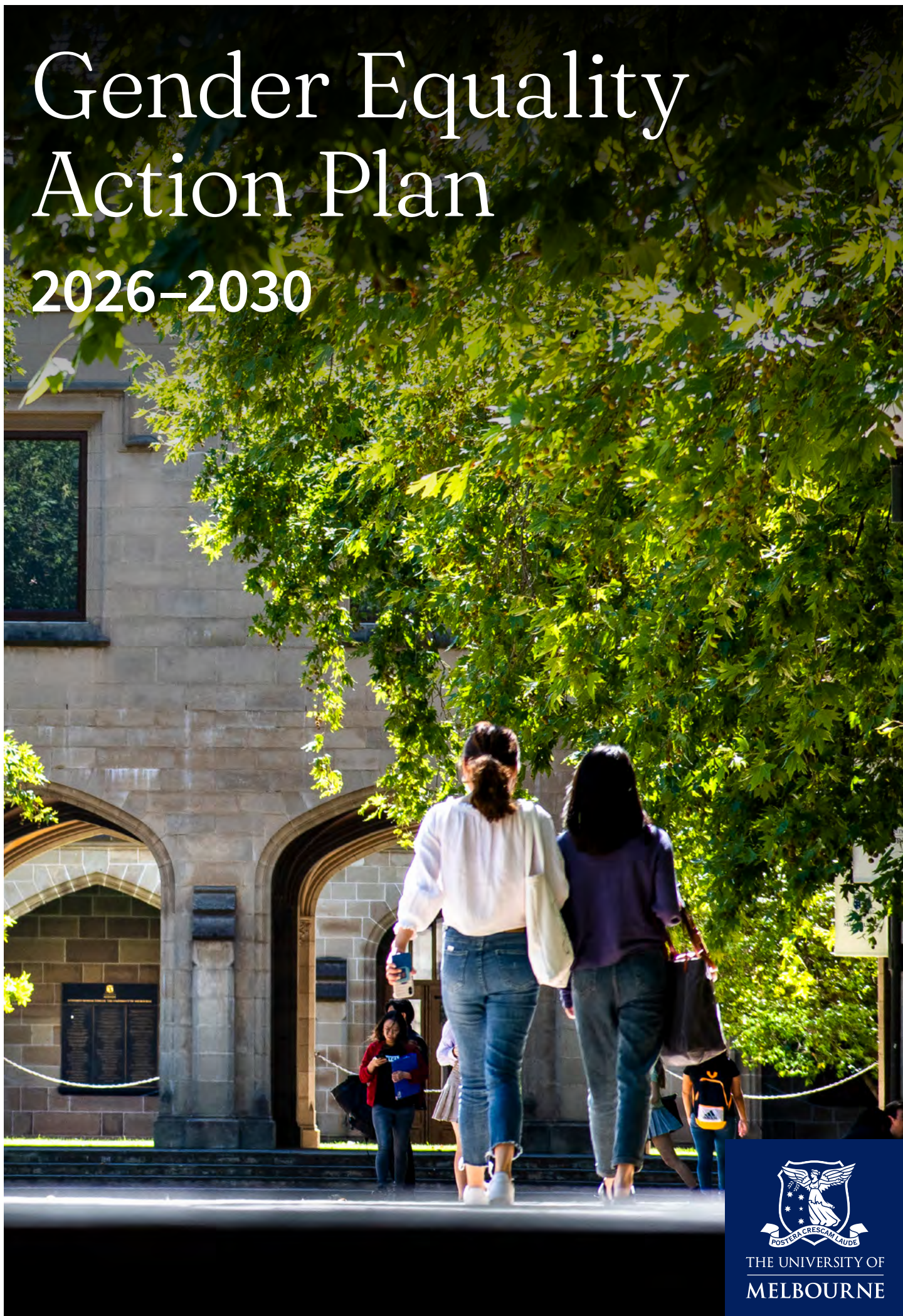


Gender Equality Action Plan 2026–2030



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

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Acknowledgement of Country

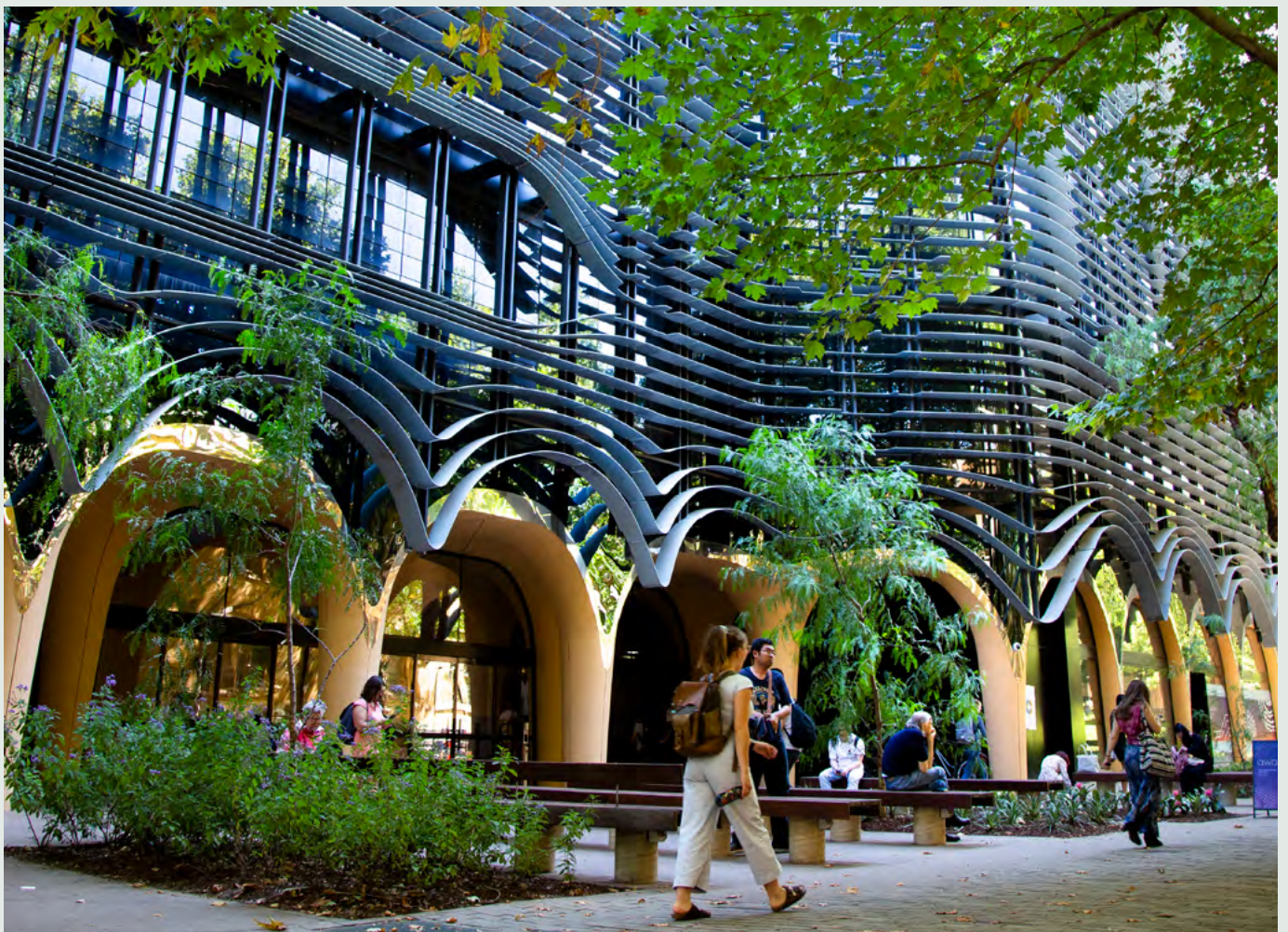
The University of Melbourne acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the unceded land on which we work, learn and live: the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong peoples (Burnley, Fishermans Bend, Parkville, Southbank and Werribee campuses), the Yorta Yorta Nation (Dookie and Shepparton campuses), and the Dja Dja Wurrung people (Creswick campus).

The University also acknowledges and is grateful to the Traditional Owners, Elders and Knowledge Holders of all Indigenous nations and clans who have been instrumental in our reconciliation journey.

We recognise the unique place held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original owners and custodians of the lands and waterways across the Australian continent, with histories of continuous connection dating back more than 60,000 years. We also acknowledge their enduring cultural practices of caring for Country.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and future, and acknowledge the importance of Indigenous knowledge in the Academy. As a community of researchers, teachers, professional staff and students we are privileged to work and learn every day with Indigenous colleagues and partners.

In making this Acknowledgment of Country we commit to respectful and responsible conduct towards all others according to the Traditional lores of this land, particularly at times of formal ceremony.



Commitment

The University of Melbourne is committed to building a workplace and institution where gender equality is not an aspiration but a lived reality, where all staff can contribute and progress, free from discrimination, bias and structural disadvantage.

This Plan recognises that experiences of gender inequality are not uniform. The University acknowledges the intersecting disadvantages faced by women, transgender and non-binary people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, LGBTIQ+ employees, people with disability, and culturally and linguistically diverse staff. Achieving genuine gender equality requires us to understand and respond to these intersecting barriers rather than treating gender in isolation.

The University of Melbourne's commitment to gender equality is integral to our identity as a leading institution, one that recognises its people as its greatest asset, and that understands a more equal University achieves better outcomes for all.

Gender Equity at the University

This Action Plan builds on nearly a decade of sustained effort. During this time, the University has strengthened governance structures, embedded gender equality considerations across people and culture policies, improved pay equity reporting, and invested in leadership programs that build a more diverse and inclusive workforce.

We have worked to address the structural and cultural conditions that perpetuate inequality, including gender-based power imbalances, occupational segregation, barriers to flexible and equitable participation, and the underrepresentation of women and gender-diverse people in senior leadership.

Case for Change

In seeking change the University acknowledges that our organisation is large, complex and stratified and that it has legacies of exclusion and injustice that have become embedded in its structures, systems and practices over time. As indicated in the Workplace Gender Audit 2025 and confirmed in subsequent staff consultation, the University has not achieved gender equality to date. The Gender pay gap remains 9.5%, and women continue to be underrepresented in the most senior academic levels (40% at Level E). Despite gains made through an ongoing focus on addressing systemic barriers to access, inclusion and equity, most recently through our Athena Swan accreditation and Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Plan, the University recognises that it still has much work to do.

Existing gender equity initiatives at the University

Academic Women in Leadership (AWiL)

An intensive development program for academic women with the potential and intention to progress to senior leadership and decision-making roles. The program has run successfully since 1997.

Athena Swan Accreditation Program

Athena Swan is an accreditation program that helps the University review gender equity data, identify barriers to inclusion and develop actions to improve outcomes.

Supporting Talent and Enabling Progression (STEP)

A tailored mentoring program for Level C academics who identify as women or non-binary and are preparing for promotion.

Period and Menopause Staff Network

The PAM'S Network is a safe and inclusive space for staff to share, discuss, and learn about at-work menstruation, perimenopause, and menopause experiences.

Affirmative action recruitment strategy

In 2016, the University of Melbourne was the first university in Australia to advertise affirmative-action continuing academic positions to address low female representation in key STEMM schools.

Working Together with Men

In 2026, the University piloted the Working Together with Men model in partnership with RMIT. The model supports men to strengthen the skills and behaviours needed to contribute to institutional gender equality.

Grants to support career progression

Centrally administered and faculty-based grants support women's career advancement, with a focus on mitigating the impact of career interruptions.

Pathway to Politics

Pathways to Politics for Women is increasing the number of women in Australian politics by equipping diverse women to boldly embrace their political ambitions, thrive as leaders and make a profound contribution to society.

Women's promotion briefing sessions

These annual sessions support women and gender-diverse staff applying for promotion by acknowledging existing barriers and inequalities and providing guidance on Performance Relative to Opportunity.

About this Plan

This Gender Equality Action Plan covers the period 2026 to 2030. It sits under the University's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2030 and contributes to the University's strategic goals. This Plan is aligned with the Whole-of-Organisation Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Plan and the University's participation in the Athena Swan Accreditation Program.

The Plan has been shaped by the requirements of the Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic) and the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, as well as by staff feedback, sector-wide learning, and the evidence base on what drives, and what dismantles, gender inequality in complex organisations. The Plan has been submitted to the Commission in their required template which can be accessed [here](#).

How this Plan was developed

The consultation process for the Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) consisted of three key stages: reflection on the previous GEAP and audit results, review of priority areas, and action development.

Reflection on the previous GEAP occurred through the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Sub-Committee. Accountable leaders reported on their actions, key achievements, and challenges. This stage also involved reviewing audit results and assessing progress across the seven indicators.

The consultation process highlighted the diverse experiences that sit behind the audit data. Focus groups reflected a mix of positive and negative experiences. Participants proposed several actions to address these inconsistencies, including strengthening supervisor capability, establishing more transparent and equitable processes for requesting leave or flexible work, and providing training to reduce bias in performance development and career progression discussions.

During the action development stage, a workshop was held with key diversity and inclusion faculty representatives and implementation leads. Participants reviewed consultation findings to date and developed a draft set of actions. Potential actions were drawn from the previous GEAP and industry best practice. These actions were refined further before being shared with senior leaders and then the wider University community for review and feedback.

Governance and implementation

Progress on action implementation and against data measures will be reported to the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Sub-Committee annually.



Summary of the Gender Equality Action Plan 2026–2030

Gender balance across the University's workforce and leadership

Women remain under-represented in senior roles and over-represented in insecure and part-time work. These actions identify where those gaps exist and create more equitable pathways to progression and leadership.

- Build a workforce dashboard that tracks gender, contract type, part-time/full-time status and career progression, with scope to add intersectional analysis.
- Help professional staff build skills, and ensure part-time staff and those with parenting or caring responsibilities have access to leadership, development and progression.
- Run a structured program to help women at Level D prepare for promotion to Level E, combining career conversations with supervisors plus separate mentoring and coaching, building on the STEP Mentoring Program.
- Support faculty initiatives that increase the proportion of women in senior academic roles.
- Run a University-wide campaign encouraging staff to self-report demographic data, so our workforce reporting is more accurate.
- Publish gender composition data each year for Council and key decision-making committees, and take documented action where we miss gender balance targets.
- Introduce occupational coding so we can accurately analyse and report patterns of gendered segregation.

Progress will be measured by the achievement of the following targets by 2030:

- Sustain gender balance of 45% women, 45% men and 10% any gender including self-described genders for academic level D
- Achieve gender balance of 45% women, 45% men and 10% any gender including self-described genders for academic level E
- Sustain gender balance 40:20:40 of the Vice-Chancellors Advisory Group and Deans

Closing the gender pay gap

Pay gaps can arise from differences in pay, progression and starting salaries. These actions identify where these gaps occur and the policies and decisions that contribute to them.

- Conduct an annual pay equity analysis at University and faculty level, and take targeted action to address gaps.
- Ensure the Remuneration and Benefits policy supports equal pay, including pre-approval of starting salaries and allowances.

Progress will be measured by the achievement of the following targets by 2030:

- A mean total remuneration pay gap of 5% or less
- A mean total remuneration pay gap for non-managers of 5% or less

Gender equitable recruitment and promotion

Bias in recruitment and promotion disadvantages women and gender-diverse people. These actions aim to embed equity at every stage.

- Embed equitable recruitment requirements from the revised Recruitment Policy into everyday practice: diverse shortlists, gender-balanced panels, diversity and inclusion in selection criteria, and mandatory bias-aware training for hiring managers and panel members.
- Collect, analyse and report recruitment data across every stage, from applications to appointments, and act to remove barriers for under-represented groups.
- Provide consistent feedback to everyone whose academic promotion application is unsuccessful.
- Strengthen the performance review framework for fairer outcomes, including Performance Relative to Opportunity (PRO) and bias mitigation, supported by training and resources.
- Collect employee experience data consistently from a range of sources, linked to our equity demographics, to better understand staff experiences over time.

Progress will be measured by the achievement of the following by 2030:

- Recruitment rounds meet equity requirements: gender-balanced panels, diverse shortlists, completed bias-aware training.
- All unsuccessful academic promotion applicants receive feedback.
- Performance Relative to Opportunity is applied and recorded in performance and promotion processes.

Leave, flexibility and family support

Caring responsibilities, parental leave and menopause affect women's careers disproportionately. The following actions aim to ensure that these factors do not disadvantage staff in their progression.

- Improve how flexible work is set up, recorded and reported, with clearer guidance for staff and managers and targeted training for supervisors.
- Improve parental leave, including secondary carer leave, and introduce structured re-onboarding and peer support for parents and carers returning from extended leave.
- Improve parenting rooms and lactation facilities across all campuses.
- Strengthen support to help early and mid-career academics keep their research moving after parental leave.
- Update procedures and resources to better support staff experiencing menopause and related conditions.

Progress will be measured by an improvement in the following by 2030:

- Gender composition of parental leave takers.
- Uptake of flexible work, by gender.
- Perceptions of a flexible work culture, by gender.

Preventing and responding to gender-based violence

Gender-based violence and sexual harassment disproportionately affect women and gender-diverse staff and students. Gender inequality is one of the four drivers of gender-based violence identified by Our Watch's Change the Story framework, alongside the condoning of violence, rigid gender stereotyping, and harmful peer relations. Improving gender equality across the University's workforce and student community is therefore a form of prevention in its own right: the actions in this Plan that address pay equity, career progression, leadership representation and flexible work directly contribute to shifting the conditions that allow gender-based violence to occur.

The University's Whole-of-Organisation Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Plan sets out how the University prevents and responds to gender-based violence across its campuses, accommodation, affiliated colleges, placements and online environments. The Plan covers prevention education for all staff and students, support for people who experience or disclose gender-based violence, fair and trauma-informed complaint and investigation processes, data collection and reporting, and arrangements with affiliated and partner organisations. It is informed by a Respect Theory of Change that links the drivers of gender-based violence to the University's prevention and response activity across three domains: prevention, early engagement, and response and recovery.

Several actions are shared between the two plans. Mandatory gender-based violence training for staff and students, men's engagement in prevention, and the annual de-identified report on complaints sit in both, reinforcing the connection between the University's gender equality and gender-based violence work.

The following actions strengthen how the University prevents harm and responds when it occurs:

- Deliver a whole-of-organisation plan to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.
- Set up a confidential, opt-in way for people to share feedback after a complaints process.
- Publish an annual de-identified report on complaints, covering types, pathways and outcomes.
- Maintain mandatory GBV training for all staff and students, with annual updates, improved content on drivers of GBV, new tailored modules for priority cohorts and refresher training.
- Develop and deliver a coordinated approach to engaging men in prevention efforts, including leadership role-modelling and community engagement.

Progress will be measured by achievement of the following by 2030:

- A closer alignment between rates of sexual harassment reported in surveys and the number of reports and disclosures made to the University.
- Feedback from people who have been through a sexual harassment complaint is routinely collected and used to improve the process.

Student gender equity

Some fields of study remain gender segregated. These actions assess the impact of University decisions on students and broaden participation where it is most uneven.

- Apply Gender Impact Assessments to major policies, programs and services that significantly affect students.
- Continue to provide targeted scholarships for women and gender-diverse students in disciplines where they are underrepresented.
- Continue to deliver outreach initiatives that strengthen the pipeline of women and gender-diverse students in highly gender-segregated disciplines and industries.

Progress will be measured by an improvement in the following by 2030:

- Number of Gender Impact Assessments completed for major student-facing policies, programs and services.
- Number of targeted pipeline initiatives and scholarships delivered in gender-segregated disciplinary areas.

Student gender equity initiatives at the University

UMSU Women's Department

The UMSU Women's Department is passionate about making sure all female, non-binary and gender diverse students feel heard, seen, and understood.

Scholarships

The University offers scholarships, prizes, bursaries and grants to support women and gender-diverse students in disciplines where they are underrepresented, including science, engineering, finance and technology.

Outreach

Targeted outreach programs inspire girls and young women to pursue study and careers in areas where women are underrepresented. Initiatives such as SheCommerce, Girl Power in Engineering and IT, STEM Edge and Girls Programming Network build confidence, skills, aspiration and belonging.

Preventing sexual misconduct eLearning module

The module provides students practical information about understanding sexual misconduct, contributing to a safe and respectful campus, getting support or making a complaint. The module is completed by all students.

To learn more about gender equity at the University of Melbourne visit: about.unimelb.edu.au/diversity-inclusion/gender-equity

To access the full version of the Gender Equality Action Plan 2026–2030 submitted to the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, visit: about.unimelb.edu.au/diversity-inclusion/gender-equity#navigation-geap





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