Re-engaging talent

Women returning to work.

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MINISTER FOR POLICE; ROAD SAFETY;
TRAINING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT; WOMEN'S INTERESTS

Office of the Premier and Cabinet room, Hale House, West Perth
The University of Western Australia is committed to a policy of equal opportunity in employment and education. The University accepts that it has a responsibility to create an environment free from discrimination, and to ensure that the principle of merit operates unhindered by regard to irrelevant criteria. To this end the University will act to ensure that its structures are free from direct or indirect discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital status or pregnancy, race, age, sexual orientation, gender history, religious or political beliefs, impairment, family responsibility or family status.

The University’s strong performance in equity, diversity and inclusion makes a significant contribution towards the ongoing promotion of a workplace, research and learning environment that prizes inclusivity, respect, fairness and dignity.

UWA is committed to the recruitment, retention and development of the best possible staff and monitors its process and progress with gender equality and inclusion. UWA conducts regular gender pay gap audits, monitors promotion and recruitment results for gender bias, and supports research projects investigating the career trajectories of women.

Alongside research and monitoring, UWA has a tradition of Leadership Development for Women programs, Senior Women’s networks, and peer mentoring. The leadership and development for women is also fostered through many programs and strategies specifically working with culturally and linguistically diverse groups, LGBTI staff and students, and people with disability.

Return to work policies and processes

UWA also boasts several unique policies including the Achievement Relative to Opportunity policy, Flexible Work and Leave Practices, and cultural leave. We provide breastfeeding facilities, child care on campus (limited), compressed and annualised hours and leave options, carers leave, work from home arrangements, and the ability to bring children to the workplace for short periods of time. The University invites all prospective staff to negotiate and job share agreement.

The parental leave strategy is strongly supported by the Senior Executive of the university, particularly the VC. There is little resistance to most of the parental leave strategies within the University. Some men have taken parental leave as primary carer. The University has had parental leave and return to work strategies in place since about 1985. Overtime the strategies have become more generous and included longer periods of paid leave and more accommodating arrangements on return from parental leave.

Parental leave is available for both men and women. Depending on how long staff have worked here, they can access up to 104 weeks unpaid parental leave. On returning to work from parental leave, staff may ask for an additional period of unpaid leave, or return to work at a reduced full time equivalent workload if they wish. This is subject to business imperatives and is one of the requirements of Fair Work.

UWA also has 4 collective agreements that set out the terms of parental leave. Also attached it the University Policy on Parental leave. You can find the two main staff agreements attached and you can locate the clauses about parental leave.

UWA strives to position itself as an institution that goes beyond compliance by proactively addressing systemic barriers and demonstrating equality and inclusion leadership in the sector and beyond.

We also try as far as possible to re-orientate people returning from long periods of leave and have introduced buddy and mentoring programs which will be broadened in the near future. We can say that since 2010, 375 people have taken parental leave, and we know that 172 people have returned on reduced FTE since 2003.

More recent numbers are difficult, because people may still be on parental leave (from 2010 really – say if they take 104 weeks and then some more unpaid leave.) so its difficult to draw conclusive figures about how many return. It is difficult to put an exact figure on how many of our people will return from parental leave but we can say that we would expect at least 70% of UWA staff to return after a period of parental leave.

Communication with the employees who have left for maternity leave?

This is something that is open to negotiation between the staff member and the University. Staff members do not work during their period of parental leave. However some staff do take up casual work from time to time, or may participate in less formal work arrangements like meetings or training/staff development courses. Some people may choose to come in to the workplace for morning teas, staff social gatherings or the occasional lecture or event. Some people prefer to maintain their privacy during this time and not come into the workplace until they formally return from leave. There are no encumbrances on a person taking parental leave i.e. no obligation for the person to appear in the workplace while on leave.

Key Transition Points

There are key career transition points for our staff, and that in many instances a lack of organisational support at these points can result in the staff member’s career digressing or stalling. These key career transition points include early career academics, staff who are returning from extended periods of leave for caring or illness, and women who have been recruited or promoted into senior academic levels where women are under-represented. We have endeavoured to put appropriate support structures in place at these key transition points.

• Re-Entry Postdoctoral Research Fellowship

Each year, the University offers a Fellowship to facilitate a person’s return to an academic or research career where that career has been interrupted by illness, caring or family responsibilities. The Fellowship is advertised nationally, offers a three-year full-time or part-time equivalent post and includes a relocation allowance. The Fellowship supports research undertaken independently, or in collaboration with a research team in any school of the University. All but one of the Fellowships have been awarded to a female applicant.

• Fay Gale Fellowship

The Fay Gale Fellowships assist staff at an early stage in their careers to spend a period of time overseas, normally of not less than three months, working in another educational institution. The Fellowship is intended to be broad so as to cater for both academic and professional staff. In assessing applications, the Committee gives preference to staff who have not previously travelled
overseas and who have a particular need for assistance because of their family commitments. The Committee also gives consideration to development opportunities previously provided to the applicant by the University, and gives consideration to those applicants who, thus far, have received few or no opportunities to advance their career. Generally three Fellowships are offered each year, and 67% of Fellowship recipients have been women. http://www.hr.uwa.edu.au/2221668

- **Internal Grants:**
The University has eleven internal funding schemes. All of these schemes assess the applicant’s demonstrated track record relative to opportunity, and where appropriate accommodate part-time employment options.

- **Safety Net Scheme:**
The UWA Safety Net scheme provides bridging support to fund the salary of key academic and professional staff normally supported by external research grant income, when continued funding is discontinued. The consequence of this lack of funding is that the employment of the key staff member would usually need to be terminated. Staff eligible to receive funding from the Safety Net Scheme include research fellows/research associates and senior technical or research staff who have been employed at UWA continuously for at least the past three years. Both full and part-time staff are eligible to apply. Funding is for one year only and is contingent upon matching funds from the faculty and/or school. Since its inception female staff have received 40% of the Safety Net awards. http://www.research.uwa.edu.au/456185

**Academic Promotion**

The University has a centralised Academic Promotion Committee that meets ten times each year. The operations of this Committee meet the good practice recommendations articulated in the 2005 research into Academic Promotion in Australian universities. The academic promotion process assesses an applicant’s achievements, relative to opportunity. Staff on fractional or joint appointments, and those whose career paths have been interrupted or delayed due to significant periods of leave for caring responsibilities, illness or other non-work related reasons, will have their applications assessed in terms of what has been achieved given the opportunities available. The Committee takes account of an applicant’s total body of work, against defined performance criteria, with a particular focus on the achievements since their last promotion.

The principle of assessing academic achievement relative to opportunity has been enshrined within the UWA academic promotion assessment guidelines for many years. The guidelines and their principles have been expanded in recent years, in line with the 2010 Australian Research Council initiative of more explicitly assessing research opportunities and performance expectations rather than ‘track record’, and in this regard we have worked closely with our Go8 partner institutions. The guidelines are relevant to both male and female applicants, but are of particular use to female applicants to identify within their application the relevant personal circumstances and working arrangements which may have impacted on their achievement and career trajectory. These circumstances may typically involve having career breaks, or a delayed or diverted career trajectory, due to caring responsibilities.

**Age and salary gap**

UWA is aware of the age of its workforce and monitoring suggests that women work longer into their careers.
The University recognises that offering flexible work and leave practices where paid work and personal life are not seen as competing priorities is both an attraction and retention tool. The University’s Flexible Work and Leave Practices policy supports a philosophy of Life Balance –. At the core of Life Balance is a commitment by the University to encourage employees to access flexible work and leave benefits. The University offers a wide range of flexible work/leave options including annualised hours, academic year employment, purchasing up to an additional eight weeks of recreation leave per year and a deferred salary scheme whereby staff receive a reduced salary for a period of time in order to fund additional leave up to a period of one year. Staff are also able to use their personal leave as carer’s leave in order to care for members of their family. The University adopts a wide interpretation of family and recognises, among others, same-sex relationships and those determined by cultural and other differences.

It also appears that the pattern that as people age the gender pay gap increases applies at UWA.

2015 Gender Pay Gap by age cohort
Strategies to address women returning to work

A broad consultative process was undertaken in 2015 across the UWA community to develop an exciting five-year UWA Equality and Inclusion Strategy befitting a world-class institution. This strategy will include taking part in the Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) Athena SWAN pilot, applying for Employer of Choice for Gender Equality in 2016, and addressing the National Health and Medical Research Council’s revised Administering Institution Policy aims to address the underrepresentation of women in senior research positions across Australia and applies to all institutions that receive NHMRC funding.

Strategies prioritised in the near future:

- Greater development of awareness of unconscious bias in selection, recruitment and career development
- The implementation of bold targets for recruitment
- Greater expectation of leadership in modelling gender inclusive behaviour and pro-active responses to gender equality
- Better facilities for parenting and child friendly workplaces (Breast feeding accreditation).
- Greater use of metrics and development of innovative and workable solutions to effect culture change with regard to acceptance and uptake of part-time work.
Recent successes include:

- In 2014 celebrating 20 years of the Leadership Development for Women Program, demonstrating the University's continued commitment to developing women to take on leadership roles and challenging the traditional organisational culture.
- Publishing *Leading the Way*, a book that captures and celebrates the many and varied achievements of the Leadership Development for Women program.
- Seeking improvement by self-evaluation such as Making use of the results of the biennial *Working Life Survey* to benchmark staff satisfaction with other universities.
- Sponsoring *Optimising Faculty Performance: Maximising the potential of academic women*. A research project looking exclusively at the careers of academic women in the Faculty of Engineering Computing and Maths.
- Facilitating a research project specifically investigating the role of sponsorship versus mentorship in the careers of Academic women.
- Completing research on the impact of non-linear careers on women in the Academy
- Our CEO, the Vice-Chancellor Paul Johnson, taking an active role in the Western Australian Chapter of the Male Champions of Change, *CEOs for Gender Equity*. Professor Carolyn Oldham is the UWA representative on the Education Committee of this group. Fay Davidson is a representative on the Diversity Working group.
- Annual Gender Pay Gap analysis, to monitor the gender pay gap and enables UWA to to diagnose performance, set goals and build a comprehensive gender equality strategy.
- Annual reporting to the workplace Gender Equality Agency on the gender pay gap, promotions and policies.
- Working to improve a flexible academic promotion and tenure system that has dismantled structural barriers impeding staff wishing to play active parenting or caring roles by the introduction of Achievement Relative to Opportunity.
- Introducing the Catalyst Program enhances the leadership and development program with focus on mid-career researchers. Leadership Development for Women.
- Implementing a performance management system that encourages all supervisory staff to be proactive in supporting flexible work practices and an appropriate work/life balance, and to model this behaviour themselves.
- Winning the prestigious 2014 Australian Human Resources Industry Award for Cross Cultural Management and demonstrating commitment to including culturally diverse women and encouraging cross-cultural competency
- Demonstrating commitment to including gender diverse and women of diverse sexuality by being ranked in the top 10 Employers by *Pride in Diversity* (PID) for LGBTI inclusion.
- Access to quality, affordable and accessible child care on campus.
- A range of flexible working arrangements through the enterprise agreements. These include flexible working hours, permanent part time work, job sharing arrangements, purchased leave, deferred salary scheme, working from home arrangements and parental leave arrangements.
- Adopting a very wide interpretation of family and recognises, among others, same-sex relationships and those determined by cultural and other differences.
- Hosting Uni-Super and other career events for women, including women approaching retirement.
- Offering programs to support key university initiatives such as the Education Futures and the Bio-zone program across several faculties focused on biomedicine.
- An individually negotiated phased retirement system that supports staff making the transition from full time work to full time retirement.
- Career planning and mobility, while not strictly for women only, encourages women to take an active role in steering their professional careers.
- Policies demanding gender balance on short-lists for recruitment, and selection panels.