

WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY



EQUITY AND DIVERSITY WORKING PARTIES
Annual Progress & Impact Report
2022

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With respect for Aboriginal cultural protocol and out of recognition that our campuses occupy traditional lands, Western Sydney University acknowledges the Darug, Eora, Dharawal and Wiradjuri peoples. We thank them for their support of our work in their lands.

Introduction

The Equity and Diversity Working Party (EDWP) initiative is a collaborative project originally by Equity and Diversity and SAGE Project Team, and has led to a widespread University EDWP network, embedded across each School, as well as Institutes and Divisions. The EDWP Network continues to bridge the gap between equity and diversity strategy, policy and practice at the University ensuring that local implementation reflects the overall vision and objectives of the University. As the VC recently announced, Western Sydney University ranked number one in the world in the 2023 Times Higher Education Impact Rankings, including a number one global ranking in relation to SDG Goal #5 – Gender Equality (up from third place in 2022) and number 3 in the world for SDG Goal #10 - Reduced Inequalities. The work of the EDWPs is an important contribution to the collaborative effort by the whole University to reach such excellent standards of performance in relation to issues of equity and diversity. The following report provides a range of examples demonstrating this significant body of work.

The work of the EDWP network continues to drive a focus on equitable and inclusive practice in local areas across our University, reflecting the University's core values. The work of the EDWPs align directly with the University's overarching *Sustaining Success 2021-2026* Strategic Plan:

- Principle 2: Equity Goal 2: As a globally recognised university of and for the Western Sydney region, we will set the benchmark for diversity, inclusiveness and equity.
- Office of People Strategic Priorities, Priority 1: To build an inclusive community that reflects diversity of opinion, ideas, experience, and circumstances.
- Equity, Safety & Wellbeing Portfolio Planning 2021: Embed inclusion and equity in policy, procedure and practice; lead collaborative partnerships to build inclusive practice across the University and the sector; identify opportunities and gaps in inclusion.

A key strength of the EDWP network is to identify local emerging areas of issue with a view of providing feedback on areas of opportunity for organisation-wide decision making and develop local initiatives and/or strategies which seek to address these issues.

Year in Review

Across 2022, there were 15 EDWPs operational across the University, including 13 as a School-based working party, one working party for the Institute network and one for the Divisional network. The total number of formal EDWP meetings in 2022 across the network sits at 40, with an additional 16 informal style meetings (noting the informal-style discussions use mediums other than a scheduled meeting, such as email interactions, discussions and Microsoft Teams Channels discussion threads).

Equity and Diversity continues to support the function of the EDWP network across 2022, with the provision of an Executive Officer per EDWP, providing guidance and supportive approaches to equity, diversity and inclusion, collaboration opportunities between EDWPs and identification of emerging themes across the network and University.

Equity and Diversity convened two EDWP Chair's meetings in 2022, one in July and one in October (noting the original meeting scheduled for April was postponed). Co-Hosted by Ms Michelle Falconer (Director, Equity, Diversity & Wellbeing) and Professor Janice Aldrich-Wright (SAGE Academic Lead), the EDWP Chairs' meetings provide an opportunity for EDWP Chairs to engage, discuss and identify priorities within each School, Division and Institute. The exchange between Chairs provides a platform to discuss emerging trends and challenges, collaborate on shared priorities, as well as recognition of successes and initiatives occurring across the University.

As the University community emerged out of the stressors of the lockdown and Covid years, it is important to note the impact this had on the EDWP network moving through 2022. Whilst the network was incredibly effective, the local strategic and operational planning alongside discussions to address gaps was significantly

disrupted. Equity and Diversity have utilised the Chair's survey responses and discussions held across the EDWP network to identify areas for focus in 2023 that ensure the network continues to strive to lead the industry with best practice when approaching equity and diversity.

As 2022 concluded, there were membership changes that occurred across the EDWP network, mainly due to staffing changes or departures; Equity and Diversity will continue to engage Chairs across the EDWP network to support and provide direction.

EDWP Chair Reporting – 2022

The Equity and Diversity team seeks to understand the unique challenges and opportunities that each EDWP faces. As part of the strategy to gain oversight of the overarching trends, Equity and Diversity engages EDWP Chairs in a regular Qualtrics survey, providing the opportunity for reflection on the various activities, challenges and opportunities for their EDWP. The Chair survey responses, along with deliberations from EDWP Chairs Meetings inform this annual report to Vice Chancellor's Gender Equity Committee and all Deans, Institute Directors, and Divisional Vice Presidents.

EDWP Chairs were invited in March 2023 to participate in a confidential survey to reflect on their EDWP's activities and outcomes achieved in 2022. The survey also sought the Chairs' views on the program design and structure and any suggested changes to better support the EDWPs. The survey tool included several targeted and open-text questions on topics such as EDWP activities, focus areas, function and visibility within their local area. We received 11 responses (73% response rate) from Chairs.

In relation to the function and outcomes of their EDWPs, the 2022 survey participants indicated:

- 72% responding EDWP Chairs reflected positively around the collaboration possibilities across EDWP network and saw this as an important mechanism for meaningful change, to pool resources reach more broadly and highlight local equity and diversity challenges.
- All responding EDWP Chairs reported positive outcomes from 2022, suggesting that their EDWP is well embedded into their local area and that there is visibility of the function within their School, Institute or Division.
- There were reflections from 64% of school-based EDWP Chairs indicating gaps in the resourcing of the EDWP network (in particular workload and finances available to achieve the work). There were a small number that suggested clearer endorsement for the EDWP network could lead to positive outcomes and provide leverage when initiating relevant systemic change, activities and programs.

Emerging Themes from Across EDWP Network in 2022

Equity and Diversity have identified four emerging themes from across the EDWP network in 2022, using responses from the 2022 Chair's survey, discussions at EDWP Chair's meetings and Executive Officer reports on EDWP activity across 2022. The emerging themes across the EDWP Network in 2022 are:

- Supporting Career Progression
- Embedding Equity and Diversity in practice
- Equipping staff when responding to equity issues
- Intersectionality and Diversity in representation

Supporting Career Progression

There was a continued focus across many of the EDWPs on academic and professional staff career development and progression. EDWPs around the network progressed initiatives and research to understand staff experiences of the available development opportunities and promotions processes,

considering ways to better skill, mentor and support staff transitioning through the various stages of career progression, and the unique challenges to career progression for university staff, including casual research staff.

Almost all EDWP's across the network highlighted their approaches to Professional and Academic Staff mentoring with a view to support and develop career and/or promotion opportunities, discuss barriers for staff equity employability and career progression and sought to share concepts across the network.

There are many examples across the EDWP network that exemplify the work undertaken to support career progression with equity and diversity as a driving theme, one such example is the collaborative approach of SAGE Project Coordinator, Dr Kierny McKay and the School of Nursing and Midwifery to develop and implement delivery of the 'Spring Forward' mentoring sessions, now adopted across other schools and divisions. The 'Spring Forward Mentoring and Promotions seminar' assists prospective promotions applicants to complete an application, provide mentoring support, advice from the promotions team and debunk myths associated with the promotions process. The seminar receives excellent engagement.

Other examples across the network include:

- School of Health Sciences EDWP's approach in providing shadowing opportunities for DAP and APA positions in order for staff to gain exposure to governance roles provides one example.
- School of Social Sciences EDWP reported the integration of attention to carer responsibilities for undergraduates through Student Transition, Retention and Success (STARS) and Equity portfolios, COVID carer grants for academics and understanding and responding to needs of HDR candidates who are parents.
- School of Science EDWP reported providing promotions workshops, assisting participants to plan for promotion and where to seek supports.
- School of Business EDWP reported supporting colleagues from diverse backgrounds to help address competitive career and grant opportunities. The EDWP also sponsored a workshop to support colleagues to use of a wide range of teaching metrics to demonstrate their teaching performance, and to better engage and understand the University's promotion policy and processes.
- The Institutes EDWP reported an internal Early Career Researcher (ECR) funding scheme and provision of financial support for Higher Degree Research (HDR) students.
- The Divisions EDWP reported discussions around retention of professional staff using professional development and mentoring as a tool.

Embed Equity and Diversity in practice

Across 2022, the EDWP network reported individualised approaches and activities, leading to outcomes that have specifically embedded principles of equity and diversity into usual practice. As EDWPs provide a forum for targeted discussions and review of equity and diversity considerations, this theme was displayed in various capacities across the network.

Discussions captured across the 2022 Chairs Meetings and Survey responses, showed the following examples where this theme has arisen:

- School of Health Science reported confidential and anonymous reporting of equity issues, staff handbooks to include equity information (sessional, new staff, DAP), and an equity induction for sessional academics.
- School of Humanities and Communications Arts reported to have provided unconscious bias training for the School's Executive.
- School of Nursing and Midwifery reported a 'Pride in Diversity' Workshop that was run in collaboration with the then School of Health Science Chair, David Lim and Brahm Marjadi.
- School of Psychology worked to align the EDWP with the UN Sustainability Development Goal and expanded EDWP-related research.

- School of Law facilitated a number of reading groups to enhance staff understanding of issues pertaining to equity and diversity, as well as delivered events relating to disability rights and education.
- The Institutes EDWP reported focusing on transparency and an understanding of culture, completing a culture audit, with policy written around authorship.

Equipping Staff for Responses to Issues of Inequity

Across 2022, the EDWP network (alongside the broader University community) was required to consider post-pandemic factors impacting the work of the group particularly in relation to arising obstacles to equity, diversity and inclusion more broadly. As a result, an emerging theme across the EDWP network in 2022 was the introduction of activities seeking to appropriately equip and prepare staff to address matters where inequity and/or non-inclusive practice may be identified. EDWPs around the network reported progressing training and initiatives to ensure all staff are adequate in their response.

The School of Humanities and Communication Arts EDWP have reported on the strategy undertaken across the school to ensure all staff (professional and academic) felt adequately prepared to understand and respond to any arising issues of inequity, incivility and/or exclusionary practice. A summary of their approach includes:

- Developing classroom safety and respect awareness materials for School staff, with a focus on better supporting casual staff. The materials were developed in 2022 and delivered in classrooms in Autumn 2023 – materials included a classroom safety and respect statement for students, support guidelines for staff and a “Message from The Dean” video pod.
- Planned and delivered a series of unconscious bias training sessions for the School Executive across 2022, alongside Dean and staff, and completed the training with follow-up feedback sessions which led to 3 action items for the school.

Other examples across the EDWP network include:

- School of Law EDWP reported conducting training for domestic and family violence for school staff and responding to incidents, as well as cultural diversity sessions with staff members.
- School of Health Sciences EDWP reported the availability of confidential and anonymous reporting of equity issues (broadcast via staff email and handbook), the provision of staff handbooks (for sessional, new staff and DAPs) and equity induction for sessional academics.
- School of Psychology EDWP reported the development of a Disclosing Sensitive Information Document alongside ongoing Professional staff reporting.
- School of Medicine EDWP reported to be investigating what measures the school can implement to better respond to harassment experienced by students during placements.

Intersectionality and Diversity in Representation

In 2022, the EDWP network provided a mechanism for Schools, Divisions and Institutes to design local responses to complex equity and diversity considerations, with the support of the members as local content experts. The design of the network allowed for each EDWP to reflect the unique landscape of their function, considering the diverse people, perspectives and experiences from within the school, institutes or divisions to allow for informed decision making, balanced solutions and responses. One emerging theme across the EDWP network in 2022 highlights approaches to intersectionality and diversity in representation.

As encouraged by the EDWP framework, each EDWP in 2022 held a unique circumstance in which to apply approaches to intersectionality and diversity in representation, and while there are varied approaches, it is clear from the Chair’s reports and discussions at meetings that this theme is important across the EDWP network. Some EDWP’s have identified supporting the School’s Indigenous Strategy as an important part of the EDWP work, while others are implementing different activities and space transformations to ensure intersectionality and diversity in representation across the school or area.

Discussions captured across the 2022 Chairs Meetings and Survey responses, highlights the following outcomes across the EDWP Network:

- School of Education EDWP reported developing a Diversity Statement for the School.
- School of Science EDWP and School of Business EDWP outlined more explicit approaches to supporting the School's Indigenous Strategy
- School of Social Sciences EDWP outlined hosting an intersectionality, culture inclusion activity with staff and students, and presentation at the school's annual planning day.
- School of Humanities and Communication Arts EDWP reported embedding an intersectional and inclusive approach in practice through the EOI process to appointment 2023 EDWP members. The core aim of the process was to diversify the group's profile on different fronts, including CALD, LGBTQ and other diverse members.
- School of Psychology EDWP reported hosting a 'Celebrating Diversity' event that will be ongoing, and the School of Medicine EDWP reported the hosting of a cultural day within the school that includes sharing of traditional foods from respective cultures and wearing traditional dress.
- School of Law EDWP approached the physical space within the school to encourage concepts of diversity in representation, and invested in Indigenous Art to be displayed. The school also held events for Indigenous students including the Indigenous Students Welcome Lunch.
- School of Business EDWP reported the support of relevant research with promotion of EDWP-related research in School forums. A School of Business Research Project invited collaboration across the EDWP network, seeking to better understand staff experiences, benefits and challenges of working from home. The project is reportedly looking to specifically understand experiences from the perspective of continuing staff, manager/supervisor perspectives and sessional/casual staff perspectives.

EDWP – Focus for 2023

EDWPs continue to be important for the University to continue our work as an industry leader when addressing equity, diversity and inclusion across the organisation. Using Chair responses to survey, discussions held across the EDWP network, and discussions from across the Executive Officers within Equity and Diversity, the following focal points for future work have been identified for the network across 2023:

Administration & Governance

- Equity and Diversity to continue implementing the 'EDWP Refresh Project' whereby increased support and focus is offered to each EDWP from the Equity and Diversity team to help overcome disruptions experienced across the network during the COVID period.
- Understand workload implications of EDWP work on members across the network and resourcing gaps to help identify any mitigative steps.
- Align the EDWP network scope and Terms of Reference to better align with upcoming changes to the Vice Chancellor's Gender Equity Committee.

Research, Training and Supports

- Integrate above emerging themes across the EDWP network and continue to strengthen the collaboration and partnerships across the network for training and research opportunities. For example in the areas of Intersectionality training, Parent and Carer Considerations and supports, Unconscious Bias training, Disability supports for staff or students, Indigenous inclusion and engagement, Cultural diversity networks and programs, LGBTIQ inclusion, Gender based violence prevention and response.
- Implement whole-of-University measures to help all Professional and Academic Staff to better understand how to access mentoring programs and support across the University, particularly where this may help to improve equity outcomes.