

Casual Staff Inclusion: Improving workplace engagement, wellbeing and the prevention of discrimination and sexual harassment

2023 Gender Equity Fund
Final Report



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Acknowledgement of Country

With respect for Aboriginal culture and protocols, and out of respect that Western Sydney University campuses occupy their traditional lands, the University acknowledges the Bundjalung, Darug, Tharawal (also historically referred to as D'harawal), Gundungurra and Wiradjuri Peoples and thanks them for their support of its work in their lands (Greater Western Sydney) and beyond.

The researchers would also like to acknowledge the Burramattagal and Wangal clans where most of the work for this project took place, and pay their respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Acknowledgements

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Recommendations

These recommendations have been developed as a direct result of the survey and interview data collected in this study.

- **1. Casual teaching staff are missing important information, typically provided in inductions, that then negatively affects their wellbeing and sense of inclusion. Inductions should be available to all casual teaching staff and there should be better communication across the organisation regarding resources and opportunities for casual teaching staff.**

Inductions engage the employee with the organisation to demonstrate a commitment to that relationship and its success. Inductions provide incoming staff with essential administrative knowledge (e.g. timesheets, operating technology in the classroom, hot desks¹, policies), and create a community and culture of inclusiveness (as casual staff meet fellow casuals and other co-workers). Inductions were viewed by casual staff in this study as incredibly important but not always offered², inflexible (only run on one day), an information overload, and not always offered before the teaching semester/term commences (therefore, important information is conveyed too late). In this study, those who did not participate in an induction commented on not knowing about the campuses (finding their classroom, where to park, finding campus shuttle buses, finding the library, where they could print or prepare for teaching), were reliant on others (often other casual staff, contributing to unpaid work) to learn tasks (such as completing their pay claims or using vUWS).

Based on the data this project suggests that inductions are necessary, but could be delivered in different modes (face-to-face, online, pre-recorded videos and content), at different stages (before semester, during semester, inter-semester break) and for different groups (new casual teachers, returning casual teachers). For instance, new staff would likely benefit from a face-to-face induction on campus that included administrative information (e.g. timesheets, operating technology in the classroom, hot desks, relevant policies and processes). Another stage might be delivered online by schools and include information on policies (e.g. extensions, generative AI, vUWS, relevant/important contact information, professional development opportunities). Finally, a centralised repository might be useful as a point of reference for issues that arise. They might include pre-recorded videos (e.g. how to submit timesheets), updates on any changes to policy and procedures, and relevant information (e.g. on campus events, seminars, groups). The benefit of a central repository is that casual teaching staff can revisit induction content as needed.

It was also apparent for several participants that they lack awareness of resources and opportunities available to them. For example:

¹ A hot desk is an unassigned desk that is shared.

² Managers were asked to share their induction materials. Email replies from the School of Science, the School of Business and the College informed us that casual staff inductions were not currently taking place.

- two participants quoted in this report indicated that they had poor mental health but were unaware of mental health resources they could access (AccessEAP³).
- some participants indicated that they could not carry out research or access professional development; however, casuals can apply for the VC's Professional Development Scholarship, the VC's Gender Equity Fund and the Sessional Staff Learning and Teaching Program run by the Learning Futures team.

Greater awareness of these resources and opportunities for casual teachers could improve their wellbeing, mental health, sense of inclusion, and develop their research interests.

→ **2. Sexual harassment awareness is high at the university level, but more could be done at the school/subject level and with regard to awareness and reporting.**

Sexual harassment awareness (e.g. training, posters and flyers) is high among casual teaching staff (with less than 18% having not seen anything about sexual harassment at Western), but less than 5% know of the WSU Sexual Offences Reporting Portal. Additionally, Western information and material addressing sexual harassment is not always clearly/explicitly directed to staff. The survey and interview data indicate that more discussions and awareness raising at the school and subject level are required, not just at the university/college level. Given that the data indicate that students are the main perpetrators of sexual harassment towards women casual teaching staff, this might involve greater discussion with students at the school level and from subject coordinators about the University's position on sexual harassment and speaking to all teaching staff about where to access support and how to report incidents of workplace sexual harassment.

→ **3. Anti-discrimination attitudes at Western and in the wider community are assumed, but more needs to be done to address discrimination, including microaggressions and subtle bias that stems from discrimination.**

More than one in three (38%) casual teaching staff reported experiencing discrimination at Western. This figure is greater among women casual teachers and often intersectional ('double disadvantage'), e.g. casual work status and disability, ableism and gender discrimination, accent discrimination/prejudice and race. The primary perpetrators of discrimination are supervisors, followed by students and colleagues. Unsurprisingly, the impacts related to poor mental health and/or wellbeing. Similar to the previous recommendation, more discussions and awareness raising at the school and subject level should be considered, not just at the university/college level. This might involve discussion with staff at the school level about discrimination, including microaggression and subtle bias (relevant examples, such as the ones found in this project, should be provided), the University's position on discrimination, where to find support and how to report incidents of workplace discrimination. Additionally, encouraging bystander intervention when staff are witness to discrimination and microaggressions at work.

³ AccessEAP is a counselling service that partners with businesses and organisations.

→ **4. Workplace wellbeing among casual teaching staff could be improved with a focus on community and inclusion.**

Positive experiences from the perspective of casual teachers at Western were described as feeling part of a community and feeling included. This was particularly pronounced with participants who felt supported by their supervisor (typically the Subject Coordinator or Director of Academic Programs). Support included, being careful to not ask them to carry out unpaid work, valuing their contribution, willing to answer questions, providing updates on operational tasks (e.g. following up on CEAs), and checking in with them.

Several casual teachers indicated that having a staff card that expired every semester/term restricted their access to rooms, floors, and the library. This issue is exacerbated when CEAs are not processed in time for the teaching semester, for example, preventing casual staff from accessing classrooms (as reported by one interviewee). In the aftermath of COVID-19 lockdowns and teaching online, campus activity is returning but casual teaching staff who might be teaching across campuses are still reporting that they feel isolated. There was an overwhelming response from participants to be included in social events at Western, such as invitations to informal/formal lunches and meetings. Greater awareness in schools to include their casual teaching staff where possible, especially with regard to social, knowledge sharing and research opportunities, would allow casual teachers to build new and develop existing relationships within their School/s. For example, in the School of Social Sciences, casual teaching staff are invited to School meetings (there is a casual teaching award), and able to join and contribute to strategic research collaboration groups (e.g. Sexualities and Genders Research, Critical Pedagogies Research Group). The former gives recognition to casual teachers at the School, and the latter relates to knowledge sharing, and collaborating on academic projects.

Finally, it was acknowledged by many of the interviewees that Western's decasualisation program was a positive step towards reducing insecure work at Western and improved workplace wellbeing and inclusion.

Executive Summary

This project was a targeted Western Sydney University Gender Equity Fund (GEF) project developed by the GEF Committee in response to the 2021 Gender Equity Fund report, *Precarity, pandemic and gender: how did casual academic women experience teaching at the time of COVID-19 in 2020?* (Smith, 2022) which identified issues of workplace wellbeing, discrimination and sexual harassment among casual teachers. The two authors/researchers of this project are/were⁴ casual academics with almost two decades of combined teaching experience at Western, and therefore had personal experiences with the issues that this project sought to investigate.

The key aims of this project were to identify how inductions, wellbeing and inclusion for casual teaching staff could be improved, as well as ways to prevent workplace sexual harassment and discrimination. This research reviewed induction materials from three schools, liaised with four school managers for their insights⁵, and surveyed and interviewed casual teachers for their views, experiences and needs.

The findings from the data collected led to the following recommendations:

- 1. Casual teaching staff are missing important information, typically provided in inductions, that then negatively affects their wellbeing and sense of inclusion. Inductions should be available to all casual teaching staff and there should be better communication across the organisation regarding resources and opportunities for casual teaching staff.
- 2. Sexual harassment awareness is high at the university level, but more could be done at the school/subject level and with regard to reporting.
- 3. Anti-discrimination attitudes at Western and in the wider community are assumed, but more needs to be done to address discrimination, including microaggressions and subtle bias that stems from discrimination.
- 4. Workplace wellbeing among casual teaching staff could be improved with a focus on community and inclusion.

⁴ From 1st July 2023 Dr. E. K. Smith was employed into a permanent full-time position as part of Western's Academic Decasualisation Program. Under the same Program, Dr. J. Willis will commence her permanent full-time position from 29th January 2025.

⁵ The project reached out to all schools, institutes and the College for induction materials and to request that the survey be completed by the person/people who were in charge of inductions.

Itemised Budget Expenditure

Total funded amount \$ 7,500

Date	Activity / Item	Cost (GST incl.)
	Research Administrators • Writing the GEF application • Applying for ethics • Blue Knot trauma training • Creating two Qualtrics surveys • Meeting with the VC GEF committee • Writing the Mid-Year Progress Report • Analysing survey data • Conducting one-on-one interviews • Analysing interview data • Quality checking transcripts • Developing themes in NVivo • Coding transcripts • Examining school induction information provided • Writing the Final Report	\$5,483.08
	Gift Cards	\$1,012.66
	Transcription	\$1,004.26
	Total expenditure:	\$7,500

Notes on Expenditure

The project was awarded additional funds from the School of Social Sciences Research Committee under the 'Project and Grant Development Funding Application' which was used toward additional gift cards (\$303.80), interview transcripts (\$1004.26) and research administrative hours (\$1,690.16).

Research Report

Background

Extant literature relating to teaching within universities reveals that the majority of academic staff are casual, with most on teaching only contracts, with little opportunity for research or advancement (Crimmins, 2016). Studies identify “prevailing disparities in working conditions” for casual teaching staff compared to their permanent full-time counterparts (McComb et al., 2021, p. 97). Important factors affecting the wellbeing of casual teachers that featured in literature were exclusion and marginalisation (Khosa et al., 2023; Crimmins, 2016), unpaid or underpaid work (Cummins et al., 2017; Andrews, et al., 2016), and gender and other forms of inequality and discrimination (Kanitkar et. al., 2020; O’Keefe & Courtois, 2019).

Research also identifies instances of sexism and sexual harassment, particularly among women, and intersectional and gender-diverse employees. Recently, there have been numerous reports of workplace sexism and sexual harassment across various industries (AHRC, 2020; Hitch, 2021; Broderick, 2022; Cooper, 2022; King, 2022). The fifth Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC, 2022) survey focused on “the prevalence, nature and reporting of sexual harassment” in workplaces and “for the first time, also provided insight into workers’ views on the actions taken by their organisations to prevent and respond to workplace sexual harassment” (p. 7). The findings of this report, previous AHRC reports and other industry and government reports into workplace harassment and sexual harassment, indicate that the problem is systemically and culturally embedded, not a random occurrence.

Studies into the effects of workplace sexism and sexual harassment also report implications for the economy, society, culture, and health. For example, Deloitte (2020) estimates an average cost of nearly \$5,000 per victim, and \$2.6 billion in lost productivity for workplaces and the broader economy.

Project Aims

This project set out to address some of the findings and recommendations of the previously awarded 2021 Gender Equity Fund project, *Precarity, pandemic and gender: how did casual academic women experience teaching at the time of COVID-19 in 2020?* (Smith, 2022). As part of this project, Smith conducted a university-wide survey before facilitating follow-up focus groups and interviews with 22 casual staff about how the pandemic impacted their teaching experience. The final report of that project noted that “a high number of participants recounted experiences of sexual harassment, abuse, sexism, intimidation, bullying and aggression from students” (Smith, 2022, p. 6). Although the focus was on the pandemic, participants revealed similar experiences pre-pandemic. Recommendation 5 was thus that the University “address student misconduct towards teachers,” including discrimination and sexual harassment (Smith, 2022, p. 4). The current project has therefore aimed to understand

the experiences of casual academic staff in relation to wellbeing and the prevention of discrimination and sexual harassment.

Smith's 2021 Gender Equity Fund project also reported that a "lack of information" prevented many casual academics from reporting student misconduct when it occurred (Smith, 2022, p. 6) and recommended the creation of a central repository of relevant important information for casual academics (Smith, 2022, p. 4).

In this vein, the 2023 Gender Equity Project *Casual Staff Inclusion: Improving workplace engagement, wellbeing and the prevention of discrimination and sexual harassment* had three central aims:

1. Review existing school and institute casual academic staff induction materials to identify areas of success and areas for improvement.
2. Liaise with school managers (or school specific professional staff involved in the casual induction processes) for their insights and experiences of casual academic staff inductions and where they see potential areas for improvement/development.
3. Survey and interview casual academic staff for their views, experiences and needs that will help shape a collective resource for schools, institutes and the College to use in their casual academic staff inductions.

In working to suggest best practice and resources for inclusion in a central resource for casual academic staff, the project also aimed to address Smith's Recommendation 1: to "Retain and support women casual academics" (Smith, 2022, p. 4). It has done so by offering strategies for improving casual employee satisfaction and wellbeing at Western.

Methodology

This project involved two phases of data collection between May and November 2023. The first included the creation and deployment of two separate Qualtrics surveys: one intended for casual academic tutors and the second for managers (or school-specific professional staff) involved in casual induction processes.

In the first instance, a Qualtrics survey of 44 multiple-choice and open-ended questions was designed and promoted to casual academic staff (Phase 1).⁶ An invitation to participate in the project, including a link to the live survey was sent to all University School and Institute Managers and all Learning and Teaching Coordinators at the College for distribution to casual teachers.

To gain insights into experiences of casual academic staff inductions and potential areas for improvement, a 16 question Qualtrics Questionnaire was then developed and sent to all University School and College managers for completion by the main staff member/s

⁶ See Appendix 1: Qualtrics Survey Questions (Casual Staff)

involved in casual staff inductions at the School/Faculty.⁷ Managers were also asked to share induction materials where available. Four responses were received to the questionnaire including two from the School of Nursing and Midwifery and one each from the School of Education and the School of Health Sciences. The School of Nursing and Midwifery, the School of Health Sciences, the School of Education and the School of Law also shared induction materials. Email replies were received from the School of Science, the School of Business and the College to inform that casual staff inductions were not currently taking place.

Respondents to the casual academic staff survey were asked an initial screening question to ensure their eligibility to participate in the project. Participants were required to have been employed as a casual academic teacher/tutor at Western Sydney University and/or The College between 2020 and 2023 to take part. Of the 64 survey respondents, all but one qualified for the study. Except for The School of Law, School of Medicine and School of Psychology, responses were garnered from all Schools and various faculties across the College.

Upon completion of the survey, respondents were invited to participate in a follow-up interview (Phase 2) to allow for the gathering of more in-depth information about their experiences. Thirty-four of the 63 eligible survey respondents consented to an interview, a number equating to 53 per cent of the total responses.

Interview participants were then chosen based on their survey responses with particular attention given to ensuring representation across various schools as well as demographic subgroups including gender and sexuality, age, and ethnic and cultural background. Sixteen respondents were contacted with 13 responding to the invitation and participating in a one-on-one Zoom interview (Phase 2) lasting between approximately 45 and 80 minutes in length.

Interview participants were asked semi-structured questions related to casual staff inductions, experiences of discrimination and/or sexual harassment, as well as their sense of engagement, wellbeing, belonging and inclusion.⁸ Participants have been anonymised and any identifying information provided has been removed. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed before being captured in NVivo 14 for coding and thematic analysis.

Survey: Participant Snapshot

- The Qualtrics survey received 63 eligible responses (those who were employed by Western as casual academic teachers between 2020-2023), of which, 59 provided useable data.
- In terms of gender, 42 identified as women (71.19%) and 17 identified as men (28.81%).

⁷ See Appendix 2: Survey Questions (Managers)

⁸ See Appendix 3: Interview Prompts (Casual Academic Staff).

- Responses came from casual teaching staff who had worked in all schools at the University and the College, except for the School of Law, School of Medicine and School of Psychology.
- 33 identified as Caucasian, 15 as Asian, six as European, three as African, two as North African or Middle Eastern, one as Caucasian and European, one as Aboriginal Australian and two used different terms (one elaborated as Bangladeshi).
- Most of the participants were in the 30-39 age range (n=23), followed by 40-49 years old and 50-59 years old (n=11, respectively), 60-69 years old (n=5), 25-29 years old (n=3) and 70-79 years old (n=2). NB: 4 declined to respond.
- The majority of survey respondents identified as straight or heterosexual (n=50), 3 identified as bisexual, 2 identified as gay or lesbian, 1 participant identified as queer, 1 participant selected 'did not know', and 2 chose not to answer.
- In terms of employment at Western, most respondents had worked as a casual for 5-9 years (n=18), followed by 10 or more years (n=15) and 0-1 years and 2-4 years (n=13, respectively).
- When asked about inductions, 72.88% (n=43) had participated in inductions, while 27.12% (n=16) had not.
- In response to the question 'Do you feel a sense of belonging/inclusion at Western?', 45% selected 'Sometimes', 27.5% chose 'Yes' and 27.5% chose 'No'.
- 34 of the 59 respondents agreed to participate in a follow-up interview. Of these, 13 participants were selected for an interview based on their responses to the survey questions on sexual harassment, inductions and/or discrimination.

Interview: Participant Snapshot

- There were 11 women and 2 men who participated in a follow-up interview, reflecting on their collective casual teaching experiences at the School of Nursing and Midwifery, the School of Humanities and Communication Arts, the School of Education, the School of Health Sciences, the School of Social Sciences, and/or the College.
- Most of the participants were in the 30-39 age range (n=4), followed by 40-49 years old and 50-59 years old (n=3, respectively), 60-69 years old (n=2), and 70-79 years old (n=1).
- All but one of the interview participants identified as straight or heterosexual with one participant identifying as bisexual.
- Six identified as Anglo-Australian, three as Asian, two as North African or Middle Eastern, one as European and one as both Anglo-Australian and European.
- In terms of casual teaching employment at Western, most interview participants had worked for 5-9 years (n=5), followed by 10 or more years and 0-1 years (n=4, respectively).

Finding: Inductions

The project aimed to collect existing induction materials to identify areas of success and areas for improvement. The project was only able to receive induction materials

from three schools, and in consultation with casual teaching staff it was observed that inductions that were more successful included information on:

- administrative aspects (e.g. submitting timesheets, pay dates),
- explanations on 'what if' scenarios (e.g. plagiarism, AI, student wellbeing concerns),
- discussion of relevant policies and procedures (e.g. extensions),
- resources available to casual teaching staff (e.g. hot desks, tea/coffee facilities, photocopier/printer).

Finally, participants spoke positively of inductions that were social and relaxed, with opportunities for casual colleagues to talk to one another.

Participants were asked if they had participated in induction training/workshops, what they thought were the benefits and/or positive aspects, and what aspects could be improved. For those who had attended at least one induction, the most common response to the benefits and/or positive aspects of inductions was that it was good for meeting other teachers in person, which can be difficult, especially when classes might be taught across campuses:

It allowed me to see the [...] team and to provide a baseline of expectations for class. Otherwise, it would be nearly impossible to put a name to the face of another tutor. It fosters inclusion and a sense that you are part of a larger team.

For those who had not participated in an induction, or participated in an induction after having commenced teaching, there were memories of being confused, unsure and lost:

because I was brand new [...] I didn't know how to use any of the systems. I didn't know how Turnitin works, and I wasn't too sure about, you know, putting in my pays and I would email, and she would just ignore all of them. I would not get any support from [my supervisor].

Even just, like you get a casual contract and it's like, 'where are the hot offices?' You contact your supervisor and they're like, 'I don't know, maybe in this building'. Can I use the fridge to store my lunch and the microwave? Is there a kitchen? Are there markers? There's like nothing.

In terms of recommendations, the respondents had a range of useful suggestions to improve inductions which have been consolidated below:

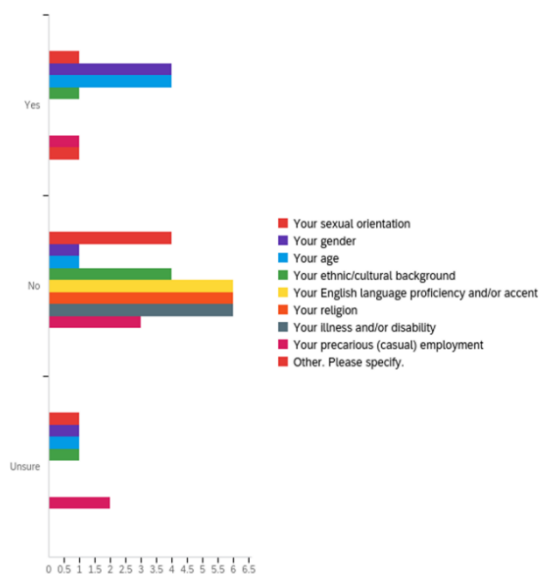
- Stagger the information across multiple sessions
- Create videos of various processes that staff can access when they need them, and if anything changes
- Have a pay/timesheet induction for all new staff
- Have inductions before the teaching semester starts
- Offer an induction renewal every several years for staff to have current information
- Awareness of policies/rules
- How to respond to situations that may arise from students and/or colleagues
- Have relevant/guest speakers, (e.g. someone to speak about pedagogy in the university setting, someone to speak about rules and policies that are relevant).

Finding: Sexual Harassment

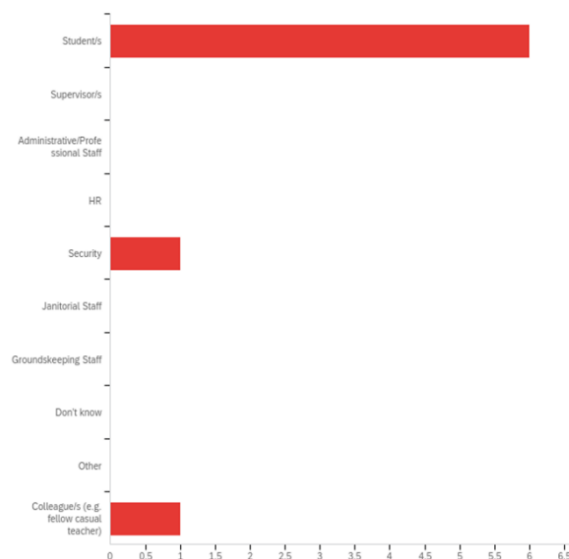
When asked ‘Have you experienced sexual harassment at Western Sydney University at any time during your employment?’, of those who felt comfortable responding, 13.21% selected ‘Yes’, and 86.79% selected ‘No’. Participants overwhelmingly identified students as the main perpetrators of sexual harassment (n=6), with one selection for ‘Security’ and ‘Colleague/s’, respectively (see Q4.9).

When asked about the presumed gender identity of the perpetrator/s of sexual harassment, ‘Male/Man/Men’, was the only selection (100%). When prompted to consider aspects that they felt may have contributed to their experience/s of sexual harassment, gender and age received the highest response, followed by sexual orientation, ethnic/cultural background, precarious (casual) employment and other (no response provided) (see Q4.8).

Q4.8 - Do you think any of the following have contributed to your experience/s of sexual harassment while working as a casual at Western?



Q4.9 - Who was/were the harasser(s)? Please select as many as apply if there were multiple harassers.



The survey asked all respondents, ‘The following questions relate to sexual harassment material at Western Sydney University. Do you recall seeing any sexual harassment related material from Western Sydney University on campus or online? Please select all that apply’, with the following responses:

#	Answer	%	Count
1	On Campus - e.g. posters, flyers	21.50%	23
2	Training module - Equal Opportunity	28.04%	30
3	WSU webpage/s	9.35%	10
4	I don't recall seeing anything	17.76%	19

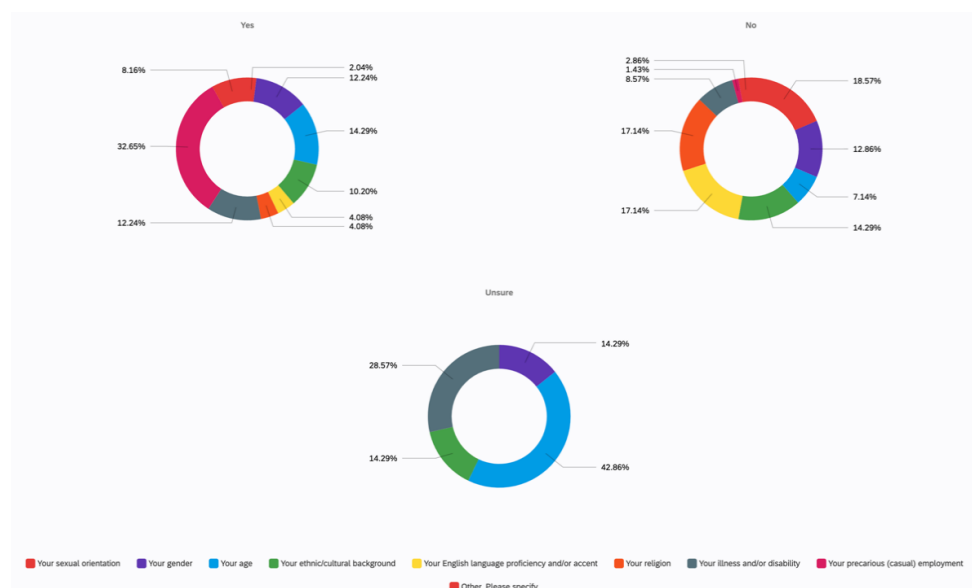
5	vUWS	0.93%	1
6	Other. Please specify:	1.87%	2
7	Policy - e.g. Western Sydney University's Sexual Harassment Prevention policy	15.89%	17
8	Reporting - e.g. Western Sydney University's Sexual Offences Reporting Portal	4.67%	5
	Total	100%	107

The survey respondents were asked to write about awareness of their rights, and abilities to identify, report and get support for sexual harassment at Western. The consensus was that there was not enough attention and discussion on this issue, especially at the school/subject level, and that there should be clearer pathways for teachers to report with support that any disclosures will not impact their current or future employment.

Finding: Discrimination

When asked 'Have you experienced discrimination as a casual teacher at Western?', of those who felt comfortable responding, 38% selected 'Yes', and 62% selected 'No'. When prompted to consider aspects that they felt may have contributed to their experience/s of discrimination, respondents selected 'precarious (casual) employment', followed by age, gender, and illness and/or disability (see Q5.4).

Q5.4 - Do you think any of the following have contributed to your experience/s of discrimination while working as a casual at Western?



One interviewee who identified as a Muslim woman who wore a hijab, recounted two occasions when she suspected that she had experienced microaggressions and discrimination due to her 'race' and religion:

One of the incidents I remember, [...] she said, 'hey hey' indicating with her finger, 'hey hey', I said 'okay, I have a name, my name's [participant's name], and she said 'whatever, whatever' [...] I don't want to fight or want to complain about it, and I said 'okay, what do you want?' [...] my friend, they said 'oh that's [a] kind of discrimination, maybe because you are wearing a hijab', [...] 'you are from overseas [that's] why she behaved like this with you'. I was really, really, at that time, depressed and annoyed and feel like [I was] discriminated, and I didn't do anything about this.

The interaction indicates a racial microaggression⁹ where the staff member showed a lack of interest/care in knowing the participant's name, and when they did learn her name, cemented their disinterest/care by refusing to use her name, thereby disempowering and estranging her. The same participant described another incident when a staff member repeatedly instructed the participant to 'be respectful':

I just asked her for her help and then she said 'okay, please be respectful'. Respectful for what? I didn't do anything I just asked you for your help and she repeated that many times. I thought that at that time, there was something, I don't know if it was that, maybe [a] kind of discrimination. [...] I reported that to the uni but unfortunately, they did not reply to my email.

The participant viewed the staff member's response as an overreaction, but the words, 'be respectful', are connected to a broader stereotype, and the perception that people of Middle Eastern ethnicity are disrespectful (Poynting et al., 2009). They were therefore seen by the participant as a "kind of discrimination" or a racial microaggression.

A participant who identified themselves as a woman of Asian ethnicity described how she is given fewer teaching hours compared to her white casual colleagues and feels that this is due to her 'race'. This consequently means she puts in more effort to prove to the subject coordinator that she is just as competent as her white casual colleagues:

I don't doubt my capability and my experience, but it's just because I'm worried that because I'm not part of the community, because I don't belong to the dominant group. [...] So that's why I want to prove myself. [...] But I still have that funny feeling that I don't feel included. [...] I know that I don't have any regular hours [...] compared to other casuels. So, I started to question myself, is it because I'm Asian?

Another participant who also identified as a woman of Asian ethnicity, compared her cross-institutional experiences of 'racial' and accent discrimination from her students:

That thing never happened at [another university in Sydney] when I was teaching there. Even though [I was] facing a group of local students, they never laughed at my accent. They never saying - because I come from a migrant background, I don't know anything about Australian society. I never have this kind of unpleasant encounters over there.

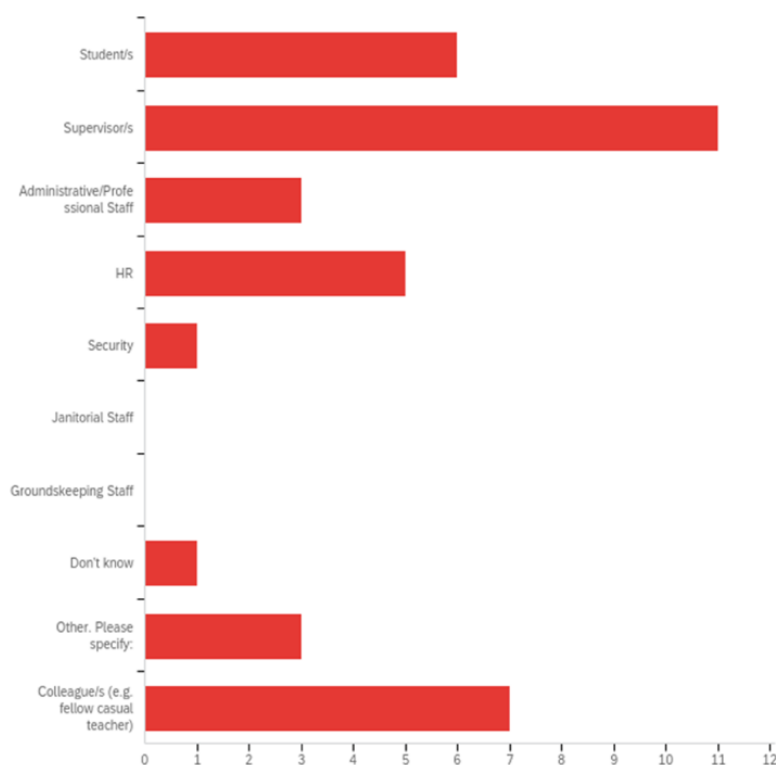
⁹ Racial microaggressions are intentional or unintentional hostile, derogatory or negative attitudes and/or insults towards those not of the dominant 'race'.

When considering how this discrimination might be addressed at Western, she said:

[...] if at the beginning of the introduction meeting [the subject coordinator] prepar[es] the tutors [for] what kind of students you're going to encounter. What kind of issues that might happen or [what has] happened before. Or what are the mechanisms to deal with that, to prepare the tutors beforehand. That would be great.

The survey data indicate that the perpetrators of discrimination were, 'Supervisor/s' (29.73%), followed by students and colleagues (see Q5.5). Participants were provided with space to add anything concerning their experiences of discrimination while working at Western. They identified their age/appeared age (appearing younger), class, disability, and gender (woman) as factors contributing to discrimination. It was apparent in the survey responses that many had experienced intersectional discrimination:

Q5.5 - Who was/were the offender/s behind the discrimination? Please select as many as apply.



I often feel like the fact that I am a younger woman impacts the way that, usually students, treat me.

I felt discriminated against when working with a disability. There is so much support for students, but I cannot find any for staff.

Disability has been the biggest factor - it's not taken seriously in rostering casual staff.

When asked if they would like to describe what the impact of the experience/s of discrimination has been, responses included feeling hopeless, not valued, depressed, bitter, sad, mentally distressed, frustrated and humiliated.

Finding: Wellbeing

When it came to positive workplace wellbeing, participants described working with great colleagues and supportive subject coordinators (positive work/workplace community). This was seen as an important aspect that one participant linked to

broadening their academic networking prospects, especially when fellow casual colleagues would mentor and support one another, rather than be hostile and competitive (the latter was a theme raised about negative experiences of workplace wellbeing).

My DAP is wonderful and includes me in invitations to lunches and faculty meetings and this is a huge help.

However, this response was not the norm, and there were some accounts of bullying behaviour towards casuals from colleagues and supervisors, a lack of recognition of their work, and being singled out/excluded from workplace social activities. Additionally, some saw themselves as strictly contracted, akin to a tradesperson called in to repair something:

I go in, nobody knows who I am. I have no idea who anybody else is. I teach and I go home. I may as well be any other person. It would not make any difference.

A sense of inclusion was also questioned by participants who had to renew their staff card at least twice a year, with some reporting that delayed CEAs were quite commonplace (e.g. teaching before their CEA has been sent and signed). This could mean that they could not access teaching floors and/or rooms:

Interviewer: Are there other things that you would like to say [...] in terms of things that would help you to feel a sense of belonging?

Interviewee: Not having apply for a staff card every 15 weeks. Yes, that really, really irks. I don't know why people - because it actually makes me feel like I'm not trusted. It really makes me feel like I'm not trusted. I can't be allowed onto that campus except for when I've got a contract. [...] If you're trying to keep kids, students out of classes that's one thing, but when you're keeping teachers out of spaces it's abhorrent. I really think that there should be a much better way to do this.

Interviewer: You're indicating that you're getting CEAs quite late? [...] You're not meant to teach, are you?

Interviewee: No, we're not meant to teach but I'm not going to turn down the money and create inconvenience.

The survey asked respondents what could be done to improve their sense of belonging/inclusion at Western. The following are some of their responses:

I feel like I belong in the culture of teaching and learning, but as a professional I feel totally excluded. Even after 15 years, my access to spaces is provisional, there is no professional development, I am not supported if I am sick, the sense that my job can be given to anyone else for arbitrary reasons (or no reasons!), while perm staff can enjoy the privilege of undertaking research, they can take holidays without concern for their job etc

If your career aspirations align, you may be included in those circles. As a casual, however, it can be particularly difficult to maintain a presence in those circles as there is no support for casual staff in terms of conducting research and enhancing their career as there is for permanent staff. While most everyone at Western is certainly friendly, that is often where the 'sense of belonging' and inclusion generally stops.

Staff cards that don't expire at the end of every term.

a more "completed" hot office space provided with computers that actually work

As a Muslim, greater inclusion of Muslim culture. [...] More broadly, I think there is a "secular prejudice" when it comes to both pedagogical and diversity/inclusion policies.

Invitation to school or discipline meetings.

A designated staff member who is paid to help onboard casuals and answer their questions that permanent staff have no ideas about.

Give tours for each campus - thrown in the deep when attending different campuses, I had no idea where to park, access hot offices, [...], where to leave my bag or have a cup of tea.

As a result, those who had experienced these behaviours felt that their mental health suffered:

[...] doing a PhD, having a lot - a lot of comments from supervisors, that was a lot. My mental health was always not good. That's something I have been working really hard [...] From the university perspective, I don't know if there's any free counselling service for tutors?

I just wanted to know what avenues there were, you know, should I be seeking support, especially this year has been probably my worst year in terms of feeling how I feel, I'd have to say.

These responses indicate an issue with the communication between the organisation and the casual teachers, especially regarding an important resource related to mental health (e.g. AccessEAP).

Conclusion

This project liaised with a) staff who were involved in inductions (Project Aim 2), b) casual teachers (Project Aim 3) and c) examined casual induction materials (Project Aim 1) with the purpose of identifying strengths and areas for improvement. It was found that casual staff find inductions incredibly helpful in terms of providing incoming staff with essential administrative knowledge as well as a sense of community and culture of inclusiveness. Based on the data collected, school and institute inductions could be strengthened with regularity (e.g. biannually or annually), increased flexibility as to when an induction is scheduled (e.g. multiple dates/times, hybrid), and prior to the semester/term commencing. Finally, participants who were provided with an 'information kit' or 'information booklet' found this a useful tool following an induction.

When it comes to sexual harassment and discrimination, these are not uniquely Western Sydney University problems, they are societal problems that exist in many workplaces and industries. Therefore, complex, multifaceted and nuanced ideas are required so that these issues can be addressed and hopefully eradicated. Based on the data gathered in this project, several suggestions have been made that may improve casual teacher wellbeing with regard to sexual harassment and discrimination.

In terms of sexual harassment, greater direct communication between the casual academic employee and their respective school/s and/or college faculty/ies, especially regarding further awareness and reporting is essential. More discussion on the topic can improve casual teachers' confidence (and their wellbeing) to be able to address matters of sexual harassment if/when they occur, especially as the survey found the main perpetrators of sexual harassment are students.

More than one in three casual teachers experienced discrimination at Western, thereby contributing to poor mental health and wellbeing. Microaggression and subtle bias emerged as the leading types of discrimination experienced, so it is suggested that schools/institutes conduct more discussion and awareness raising of these particular types of discrimination, as well as the importance of bystander intervention when witnessing discrimination occurring.

Finally, it was apparent that casual teachers want to feel included and part of the Western community. For many of the participants, working at Western Sydney University is more than a pay cheque. Having a supportive team, especially at the leadership level (e.g. Subject Coordinator, Director of Academic Program) was a key factor reported by participants who reported a greater sense of inclusion and wellbeing at work. Invitations to social events, lunches and relevant meetings were viewed as tangible ways casual teachers could feel included and have improved workplace wellbeing.

It is hoped that the project and its findings presented here contribute to further discussions at the University and at the school, institute and faculty levels with the aim of improving the lived experiences of casual teachers, and academic teachers more broadly at Western Sydney University.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Qualtrics Survey Questions (Casual Academic Staff)

Screening Questions (1)

Q1.1 Between 2020-2023, were you employed as a casual academic teacher/tutor at Western Sydney University and/or The College?

Demographic Questions (11)

Q2.1 How old are you?

Q2.2 Are you currently a higher degree student (e.g. Masters, Honours, PhD)?

Q2.3 How many years have you been employed as a casual academic at WSU/the College, including 2023?

Q2.4 From **2020-2023**, which School/s at WSU employed you as a casual **teacher/tutor** [select all that apply]:

Q2.5 What would you like your WSU employment situation in the future to be?

Q2.6 How would you describe your ethnic/cultural background? Please select as many as apply:

Q2.7 If you would like to describe your ethnic/cultural background, please do so below.

Q2.8 How do you describe your sexual orientation?

Q2.9 If you would like to describe your sexual orientation, please do so here:

Q2.10 How do you describe your gender?

Q2.11 If you would like to describe your gender, please do so here:

Induction Questions (5)

Q3.1 Have you ever participated in induction training at WSU?

*Inductions may be referred to by other names, but typically they are School/Institute meetings where teaching, rules, policy documents etc are discussed)

Q3.2 Please describe what was involved and/or what content was covered (e.g. information about policy/ies such as the extension policy, timesheets, vUWS, RePS, Allocate+, student engagement/pedagogical strategies, Academic Misconduct, AI etc)

Q3.3 What do you think were some of the benefits and/or positive aspects of this/these inductions?

How do you think these inductions could be improved?

Q3.4 Do you feel a sense of belonging/inclusion at Western?

Q3.5 What could be done to improve your sense of belonging/inclusion at Western?

Sexual Harassment Questions (14)

Q4.1 Do you recall seeing any sexual harassment related material from Western Sydney University on campus or online? Please select all that apply.

Q4.2 Have you seen this? (Example of visual material related to sexual harassment)

Q4.3 Have you seen this? (Example of visual material related to sexual harassment)

Q4.4 Have you seen this? (Example of visual material related to sexual harassment)

Q4.5 Have you completed any workplace training about sexual harassment and/or assault as a casual at Western Sydney University?

Q4.6 Is there anything you would like to tell us about your awareness of your rights, and abilities to identify, report and get support for sexual harassment at Western?

Q4.7 Have you experienced sexual harassment at Western Sydney University at any time during your employment?

Q4.8 Do you think any of the following have contributed to your experience/s of sexual harassment while working as a casual at Western? (Options of sexual orientation, gender, age, ethnic/cultural background, language proficiency/accent, religion, illness and/or disability, precarious (casual) employment and other (please specify).

Q4.9 Who was/were the harasser(s)? Please select as many as apply if there were multiple harassers.

Q4.10 What was the gender of the harasser(s)? Please select all that apply.

Q4.11 Please tell us more about your experience/s of sexual harassment while employed at Western. You can be as detailed or brief as you feel comfortable.

Q4.12 Can you describe what the effects of this/these sexual harassment experience/s have been for you?

Q4.13 What do you think Western Sydney University could do to better prevent sexual harassment? And/or is there anything that could have been done to prevent the sexual harassment that you experienced?

Q4.14 Is there anything you would like to tell us about your experience/s of sexual harassment that has not been asked?

Discrimination Questions (10)

Q5.1 Do you recall seeing any discrimination related material from Western Sydney University on campus or online? Please select all that apply.

Q5.2 Have you seen this? (Example of visual material related to discrimination)

Q5.3 Have you experienced discrimination as a casual teacher at Western?

Q5.4 Do you think any of the following have contributed to your experience/s of discrimination while working as a casual at Western? (Options of sexual orientation, gender, age, ethnic/cultural background, language proficiency/accent, religion, illness and/or disability, precarious (casual) employment and other (please specify)

Q5.5 Who was/were the offender/s behind the discrimination? Please select as many as apply.

Q5.6 What was the gender of the perpetrator/s of discrimination? Please select all that apply.

Q5.7 Please tell us more about your experiences of discrimination while employed as a casual at Western. You can be as detailed or brief as you feel comfortable.

Q5.8 Can you describe what the effects of this/these experience/s of discrimination have been for you?

Q5.9 What do you think Western Sydney University could do to better prevent discrimination? Is there anything that could have been done to prevent the discrimination that you experienced?

Q5.10 Is there anything you would like to tell us about your experience/s of discrimination that has not been asked?

Phase 2 (Interview) opt-in questions (3):

Q6.1 Is there anything you want to add to your responses in this survey, or something that was not asked that may be of relevance to this project?

Q6.2 The next phase of this project involves one-on-one interviews or focus groups (60min) to explore the experiences of casual academic teaching staff in more detail. You can participate in an interview anonymously (eg. camera off, pseudonym). Interviews will be conducted via Zoom and each participant will be compensated with a \$100 Prezzy gift card for their time. Would you like to be considered for Phase 2 of this project?

Q6.3 If yes – please provide your name (a pseudonym is acceptable), your email (a non-WSU email is acceptable) and/or phone number so we can contact you about participating in an interview.

Appendix 2: Survey Questions (Managers)

Q1 Name:

Q2 What School/College Faculty at Western Sydney University do you represent?

Q3 Does your school offer school-based inductions to casual tutors?

Q4 How frequently do you have these inductions for casual tutors?

Q5 What is included in these School inductions for casual tutors?

Q6 Does your school offer school-based inductions to casual subject coordinators?

Q7 How frequently do you have these inductions for casual subject coordinators?

Q8 What is included in these School inductions with casual subject coordinators?

Q9 With regard to your School's casual tutor/subject coordinator inductions, do you think there are aspects that work really well?

(Your response may assist other Schools in developing/updating their induction processes).

Q10 With regard to your School's casual tutor/subject coordinator inductions, do you have any suggestions for improvement?

(e.g. ideas you have, add/remove items to inductions, improve casual staff well-being, make casual staff inductions more efficient and/or informative).

Q11 Do you have a vUWS site for your casual staff?

Q12 What's in this site (e.g. vUWS, Teams, SharePoint)? Who is in charge of managing the content and access?

Q13 Does your School/Faculty invite casual staff to any of the following activities? (choose all that apply)

Q14 If a casual tutor or casual subject coordinator reports sexual harassment to you, what is your School's process for dealing with these reports?

Q15 If a casual tutor or casual subject coordinator reports discrimination to you, what is your School's process for dealing with these reports?

Q16 Is there anything else you would like to add that has not been asked or you think we should know?

Appendix 3: Interview Prompts (Casual Academic Staff)

Induction Process Questions

1. I'm interested in your experiences of teaching inductions you have participated in; can you reflect on some of the positive and useful aspects of this training?
2. Can you reflect on some aspects that you thought could have been improved?
3. Did you find the induction/s beneficial?
4. Did you have time to ask questions and have them answered?
5. Did the inductions address things related to your inclusion, e.g. what facilities you had access to (e.g. free tea and coffee, photocopier, hot desks), where you could access help/who to contact, events that you could participate in (e.g. professional paid training run by the University, social events)?
6. Would you like to be included in more School related activities (e.g. meetings, training, social events)?
7. What would you like your induction training to include? Would you like your induction training to include:
 - info on policies
 - info on counselling services
 - reporting sexual harassment
 - reporting bullying
 - anything else?

Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Questions

1. I would like to know more about your experiences, directly and/or as a witness of sexual harassment and discrimination.