



Gender Equity Advocacy and Reference team Terms of Reference 2025–2026

JCU's **Gender Equity Advocacy and Reference (GEAR)** team provides advice to the Vice Chancellor and University on issues such as the higher rates of loss for women across career pipelines and the lower numbers of women in senior academic positions, particularly in STEMM disciplines where these trends are deeply entrenched across the higher education and research sector.

In 2025–2026, JCU is focussed on embedding key organisational priorities related to gender equity into the University's new Integrated Dynamic Planning process that commenced in 2024. JCU withdrew from the SAGE Athena Swan external accreditation program in late 2024 in favour of a more focussed, action-orientated approach that prioritises the time and resources available to achieve meaningful outcomes as rapidly as possible.

JCU has a business objective under the 'Empowering our People' of achieving no less than 50% female representation in senior academic roles by 2030. Further, the University needs to meet the legislative requirements of the Workplace Gender Equality Act.

Given this, the specific focus of gender equity activity for 2025 - 2026 at JCU relates to:

1. Activity that supports reaching no less than 50% women in senior academic roles by 2030.
2. Meeting the legislative intent and regulatory compliance of the Workplace Gender Equality Act.

The Senior Leadership Group is responsible for identifying and progressing gender equity improvements that are locally relevant in the work areas they each lead. The Human Resources Directorate, in their role as enablers of the 'Empowering Our People' objectives for the institution, have operational accountabilities to monitor progress toward the business objective and provide support to the Senior Leadership Group in their efforts to reach it (i.e. no less than 50% women in senior academic roles by 2030). The Human Resources Directorate is also responsible for compliance with WGEA.

The GEAR team is responsible for providing advice to the Vice Chancellor, and through the Vice Chancellor to the Senior Leadership Group.

In 2025, the Vice Chancellor will commence a new program — the Vice Chancellor's Gender Equity Project Fund. This \$30,000 pa fund will provide financial support for targeted projects led by professional and academic staff at JCU to facilitate gender equity initiatives. The fund will seek to support projects that can inform the objectives in JCU's Integrated Dynamic Planning, by:

- helping bridge real or perceived gaps between JCU policy and staff experience.
- advancing professional and academic practice through the implementation of recommendations for practical improvements to current University programs, initiatives and/or practices; and

- fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange between stakeholders within JCU to collectively promote gender equity.

This funding is for projects that would not normally be funded by Colleges, Institutes or Divisions.

The GEAR team will provide advice on the priorities for the Gender Equity Project Fund and may be successful applicants

Purpose of the GEAR team

GEAR is/will:

- An advisory board, providing advice early into processes, policies and practice that sit within the body of work under the University's strategic priority of 'Empowering our People'.
- Provide advice to the Vice Chancellor on priorities for the Integrated Dynamic Plan and the VC Gender Equity Project Fund.
- Provide space for JCU women to raise matters and provide feedback (via GEAR Forums).
- Champion gender equity within JCU; and
- Collaborate with other JCU diversity groups as appropriate.

Reporting

Minutes and Agendas from GEAR meetings are circulated to VCC. Reports from the GEAR Forums are published on the Gender Equity at JCU website and are circulated to VCC.

Membership and Meetings

GEAR meetings are held in March, June and September, with GEAR Forums for Women in July and October.

Membership of the GEAR comprises:

- Vice Chancellor (Chair)
- GEAR Coordinator (appointed by Chair)
- Director HR
- Singapore Representative (appointed by the DVC Singapore)
- Observer – Pacific Member Universities

An additional eight (8) GEAR members with consideration given to broad representation:

- No more than two-thirds of membership either male or female
- Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representation
- Attention to diversity (sexuality, dis/ability, culture, ethnicity, languages spoken, carer etc)
- Representation from across campuses
- Representation of STEMM and HASS members of different academic levels; A/B, C, D/E
- Representation from professional/technical roles
- Representation from contract types: fixed-term, casual, continuing, part-time, full-time
- Representation from students

Membership is self-nominated via an Expression of Interest (EOI) process, with targeted recruitment if required. The EOI will set out the reasons for the candidate's interest in participating, and relevant experience in qualitative/quantitative research and/or equity work. Each member will be appointed for a period of two (2) years with the option of renewal, endorsed by Chair. Continuity of knowledge will be maintained by ensuring membership expiry dates are staggered. Candidates need the support

of their managers to participate in the GEAR team, with approximately 6 hours per annum for meetings. Casual staff members who participate in the GEAR will be remunerated for their time.

Roles and Responsibilities

Chair

Vice Chancellor (or nominee)

- Chairs the GEAR team and provides high-level institutional advocacy for the strategic importance and resourcing of gender equity initiatives.
- Leads the VC Gender Equity Project Fund.
- Represents the GEAR team to VCC.

GEAR Coordinator

- Supports the Chair and coordinates the GEAR team's agendas and minutes.
- Is the point of contact for Managers at JCU who want to engage with GEAR for advice.
- Coordinates GEAR Forums for women, the webpage and the VC Gender Equity Project Fund.

HR Representative

- Provides information to GEAR on work plans under the *Empowering Our People* Corporate Goals and Business Objectives.
- Seeks advice from GEAR to inform the operationalising of the *Empowering Our People* Corporate Goals and Business Objectives, to enable a gender lens to be applied to work at early stages of development.

Singapore Representative

- Supports gender equity at the Singapore campus and provides advice to the VC & DVCS on harmonisation of gender equity initiatives across campuses.

GEAR Team Members

- Champion the strategic importance of gender equity to their broader academic and professional communities and raise awareness on JCU's gender equity activity.
- At meetings, GEAR members provide advice relevant to the *Empowering our People* Corporate Goals and Business Objectives
- GEAR members provide advice on the priorities of the Vice Chancellor Gender Equity Project Fund and may be successful applicants for funding on specific projects.

Background

Women are under-represented in senior positions across the higher education sector and at JCU.

In 2025, GEAR stands for Gender Equity Advocacy and Reference team, a change from Gender Equity Action Research team. This change reflects the team's primary role of providing advice on the actions the university is taking towards gender equity via the Integrated Dynamic Planning process across 2025–2026.

In December 2024, JCU withdrew from the SAGE Athena Swan accreditation program in favour of focussing on the University's Integrated Dynamic Planning process. (JCU had been a member of SAGE between December 2015 and December 2024 and was awarded Bronze under the program.)