

# Gender mix tips to women in research

## EXCLUSIVE

TIM DODD  
HIGHER EDUCATION EDITOR

Women now outnumber men in the ranks of early career researchers in Australian universities, which means time may be up on male dominance in research as younger academics progress through their careers.

New figures from League of Scholars, a data analytics firm that focuses on research talent, show that 53 per cent of researchers who are less than 10 years into their career are female.

This compares with 43 per cent of all Australian university researchers who are female, according to the figures, which come from analysis of publications in research journals.

The data also suggests that women are gaining in the prestige area of high-impact research.

League of Scholars ranks researchers using an impact algorithm that takes into account the quality of the journals they publish in, the quality of the researchers who cite their work, and their industry links.

Women make up only one quarter of the top 10 per cent of Australian researchers on the impact scale.

However, among early-career researchers, women make up 42 per cent of the high performing group. This means that, as they progress in their careers, the overall proportion of high-performing women researchers is likely to increase.

However, universities will need to ensure the careers of high-potential women are not impeded by the obstacles that have traditionally affected the careers of female academics, otherwise this talented group of young women

## 'Special' researcher ranked world No 1 in her field

University of Adelaide medical researcher Melissa Cantley is the world No 1 high-potential, early career researcher in periodontics, according to data analytics service League of Scholars.

Dr Cantley, who will return to work next week from maternity leave, earned her high ranking for work she did on treatments for bone deterioration suffered by people with gum disease.

Her feat is particularly impressive because she is also the mother of two young children, aged one and 2½, and has dealt with the career interruptions that come from taking time out for family.

Dr Cantley is now an National Health and Medical Research Council early research fellow working at the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute.



Melissa Cantley

She has switched her research field to multiple myeloma, a type of blood cancer. This is connected to her earlier work in periodontics because one of the effects of multiple myeloma is bone loss, which is the focus of Dr Cantley's present research.

"She's very special and definitely one to watch," League of Scholars chief executive and co-founder Paul McCarthy said. He said her high ranking was boosted by the prestigious medical journals in which she published. Unlike some other citation measures, his ranking algorithm takes account of this.

TIM DODD

researchers will not progress.

The League of Scholars data also shows that 23 Australian universities have more female researchers than male. However, women are still in a minority overall because of a high bias toward male researchers in science, technology, engineering and maths fields, which dominate research-intensive universities.

The new figures come after the launch last week of a new best-practice guide to lifting the proportion of women in leadership positions in Australian universities. Created by the Universities Australia Executive Women's Group and executive recruitment firm Fisher Leadership, it was de-

veloped with extensive input from the university sector.

"We wanted to develop a very practical resource that would help university leaders and human resources teams to achieve our shared goal of seeing more women in leadership roles," said the group's co-chairwoman Kerri-Lee Krause.

Its guidelines include: ensuring that roles are advertised in multiple media channels; appointing selection panels with equal numbers of male and female members; a recommendation to consider ranking male and female applicants separately; and providing an independent coach/mentor for a new appointee for six months.