

2024–2025

# Financial Inclusion Action Plan





**‘At UTS, our operations  
and culture are  
informed by principles  
of equity, diversity,  
and inclusion.’**




Amy Persson, Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor  
(Social Justice and Inclusion)

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## Acknowledgement of Country

UTS acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, the Boorooberongal people of the Dharug Nation, the Bidiagal people and the Gamaygal people, upon whose ancestral lands our university stands. We would also like to pay respect to the Elders both past and present, acknowledging them as the traditional custodians of knowledge for these lands.



# Introduction



**Amy Persson**, Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor  
(Social Justice and Inclusion)

UTS is proud to join the Financial Inclusion Action Plan (FIAP) program as part of our commitment to remove financial barriers to education.

At UTS, our operations and culture are informed by principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion. We are, and always will be, a university for all, ensuring everyone who desires and qualifies for a place at UTS is supported to reach their full potential.

Our diverse student community is one of our strengths, and we base outcomes on how we support our communities to thrive: economically, socially and culturally. To be truly accessible for students from diverse backgrounds we must acknowledge the realities of financial vulnerability. Equity and inclusion strategies can both break down the practical impediments to participation and build the structural supports necessary to ensure success for diverse cohorts.

Our Financial Inclusion Action Plan provides a whole-of-university framework. Working alongside our Widening Participation Strategy, the framework strengthens our efforts to remove financial barriers to education and improve economic inclusion for all students.

I am delighted to share UTS's first annual Financial Inclusion Action Plan, developed in consultation with our staff and students. The following pages detail how we will take strategic, practical, and measurable actions to reduce inequalities and improve the financial wellbeing of our students. This plan helps us enact our vision to be a leading public university of technology, recognised for our global impact.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy Persson".

**Amy Persson**

Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor  
(Social Justice and Inclusion)

# FIAP highlights

- Early and proactive financial vulnerability identification and intervention strategies.
- Targeted promotion of existing services.
- Interventions to reduce the stigma associated with asking for help.
- Financial capability building and support for students and staff.
- Forming strategic partnerships across the university.
- The removal of UTS Library fines.
- Increasing the availability of, and support to use, digital technology at UTS.



# About UTS

UTS is a public university of technology. We are an inclusive university, committed to research, innovation and the dissemination of knowledge for public good.

Our UTS 2027 strategy outlines our vision to be a leading public university of technology recognised for our global impact. We are driven to discover and share new knowledge and new ways to lead through our teaching, research, intellectual debate and use of technology.

We engage and work collaboratively with each other, and empower our community to grow, contribute to, and make a difference to the world at large.

We deliver on our obligations to our staff, students, partners and communities while maintaining high standards and ethical behaviour.

We sustain our local and global environment, organisational health, and our ability to create a positive, viable future.

We're ethical and transparent in our actions and foster the responsible use of technology across the entire UTS community.

We support individuals and communities to achieve their full potential, and we attract a wide range of students from Australia and overseas. Our students join a community that values diversity of thought, critical thinking and technical mastery.

UTS understands the importance of Indigenous education and knowledges for all Australians. We have a long-standing commitment to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' right to self-determination. We'll be home to a culture of excellence in Indigenous higher education, research, employment and community engagement, providing a new benchmark for the Australian higher education sector.

Everything we do is underpinned by a commitment to social justice and social impact. Through our research, graduates and engagement in public debates, we aim to ensure a just and equitable society.





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# About UTS's Financial Inclusion Action Plan

We believe that universities exist for the public good, and have a responsibility to use their resources and expertise to contribute to the creation of a socially just society.

Recognising the impact of rising living costs on students, we are implementing the UTS Financial Inclusion Action Plan (FIAP) to guide financial inclusion activities across the university.

A FIAP is an organisational commitment to implement actions that improve the financial wellbeing of stakeholders through a national framework, led by Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand on behalf of the Australian Government. Students are at the centre of our university strategies and initiatives. Through the plan, UTS aims to enhance the financial wellbeing of our student community, remove financial barriers for students, and achieve greater overall social impact.

We acknowledge the detrimental effect that financial stress can have on student success and educational outcomes. We will use this first 12-month commitment to deepen our understanding of financial inclusion, resilience and wellbeing, as well as open opportunities to collaborate with, and learn from, leaders across diverse sectors.

We will also implement tangible strategies to support student financial wellbeing across four identified action areas:

## **Products and services**

Providing access to low and no-cost programs and services that provide financial assistance, hardship support, and support student success.

## **Financial capability**

Enhancing the financial literacy and capabilities of our current and future university community.

## **Understanding of financial vulnerability**

Learning how we can best support students facing financial vulnerability and improve our response.

## **Economic security**

Removing barriers and developing student capacity to gain meaningful employment.





UTS is proud to be one of the first Australian universities to become a signatory to the University Commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

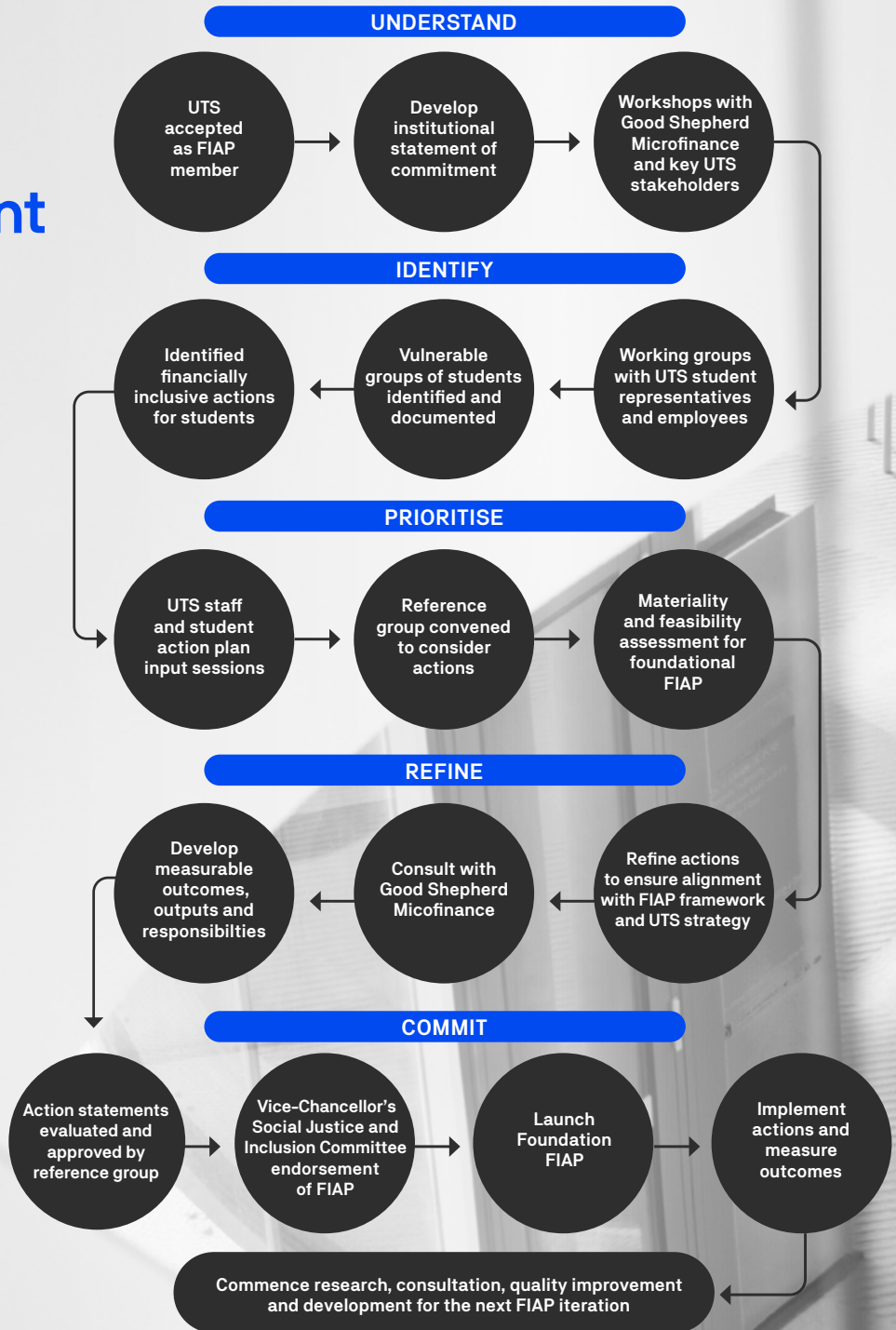
By taking action, FIAP members contribute towards 12 of the 17 SDGs, particularly those associated with reducing inequalities and enabling inclusive economic growth.



‘Almost two thirds of Australian university students experience financial hardship. By developing a Financial Inclusion Action Plan, we can support students to engage in their studies without worrying about their financial situation. We can empower them to learn about financial literacy, and how to make decisions that work for them. We can show them where to go, and what resources they can access when they’re struggling. By implementing this plan, we can take a huge weight off their shoulders.’

– Sonal Singh, Executive Manager, Student Access and Equity, UTS

# Our Foundation FIAP development process and beyond





## Working groups and input sessions

We are proud that the development of our FIAP was heavily consultative, bringing in the voices of UTS's diverse student and staff communities through working groups and input sessions.

Our working groups consisted of key staff and student representatives from across the university to:

- understand the risk and triggers for vulnerability in our prospective and current student communities
- identify and catalogue existing actions and identify potential new actions and timeframes
- embed financial wellbeing into existing strategic commitments within UTS.

In addition, input sessions were convened with the UTS community. These sessions were open to all UTS staff and students to rate the impact and importance of the proposed FIAP action statements, and provide feedback on potential additional action areas.

## The FIAP reference group

UTS would like to acknowledge the reference group's role in providing expert advice for the development, refinement and evaluation of our Foundation FIAP.

### Alex Sabharwal

Director  
Student Administration  
Lifetime Learner Experience Unit

### Jo Tilly

Director  
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion  
Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion

### Liz Penny

Manager  
Accessibility and Financial Assistance Service  
Student Services Unit

### Sarah Ellis

Manager  
Success and Strategy (Student Equity)  
Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion

### Sarah Lok

Director  
Student Services Unit

### Sascha Jenkins

Director  
Experience and Quality  
UTS Library

### Sonal Singh

Executive Manager  
Student Access and Equity  
Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion



# Our committed actions



## Products and services

We are committed to ensuring that all learners, irrespective of background, are supported through pathways to education and, as members of our student community, receive access to programs and services that are affordable, accessible and relevant throughout their studies.

Stakeholders	Action statement	Output	Outcome	Responsibility	Timeframe
Students	Review the conditions of award and application process for UTS scholarships and support fundraising, with the aim to enhance support for students experiencing financial vulnerability.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Scope and gather requirements for a streamlined scholarship application process. Recommendations developed.</li> <li>2. Continued review and update of conditions of award for existing scholarships. Report completed.</li> <li>3. Support fundraising for key student support areas, including the Equal Access Scholarship.</li> </ol>	<p>Improved support for financially vulnerable students.</p> <p>Increase in awareness and availability of appropriate financial services.</p>	<p>Lifetime Learner Experience Unit (Scholarships)</p> <p>Advancement</p>	December 2024
Students	Remove all UTS Library fines and streamline the process for waiving the lost item replacement costs for students experiencing financial hardship.	1. UTS Library fines removed. Process of referral to financial assistance for waiving replacement costs for lost items developed.	Improved support for financially vulnerable students.	Library	July 2024
Students	Enhance access to affordable course textbooks.	1. Development of staff guidelines for the affordable and equitable selection of course textbooks and reading materials.	Policies, processes and actions implemented to address economic inequality.	Library	December 2024

Stakeholders	Action statement	Output	Outcome	Responsibility	Timeframe
Students	Ensure targeted promotion of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) financial support grant for students experiencing financial hardship, in relevant activities and student information packs.	1. Review, explore and update key contacts to assist in identifying relevant activities in faculty e.g. placements, field trips. Offer financial assistance content to be included as part of the information to students.	Improved access to relevant financial products and services  Increased opportunity/ decreased financial stress for students to participate in expensive/higher cost activities.	Student Services Unit (Financial Assistance)	December 2024
Students	Distribute financial equity scheme grants for ticketed and extra-curricular events, with an emphasis on students experiencing financial hardship.	1. Financial equity scheme grants for ticketed and extra-curricular events distributed for students experiencing financial hardship.  2. Evaluation of current financial equity scheme for ticketed and extra-curricular events completed.	Improved access to appropriate financial products and services  Improved support for financially vulnerable students.  Increased ability to meet current financial needs and expenses.	UTS Activate	December 2024
Students	Increase visibility and awareness of both financial and non-financial support services, particularly for students who may be experiencing financial vulnerability.	1. Digital visibility and presence of support services and resources on UTS website reviewed and updated.  2. UTS Housing website reviewed and updated to include fee support information for students experiencing financial difficulty or vulnerability.  3. Promotion of Jumbunna International Cultural Experience programs to increase Indigenous engagement. Costs for travel, food and accommodation covered.	Increase in awareness and availability of appropriate financial services.	Library Student Services Unit UTS HELPS UTS Housing Jumbunna	December 2024
Students	Address the digital divide by increasing availability of, and support to use, digital technology.	1. Laptops available for loan 24/7 from a self-service locker (loan vending machine).  2. Assistive technology study guide developed and distributed.	Improved support for financially vulnerable students.	Library ITU	December 2024

## Financial capability

We will continue to enhance the financial literacy and capabilities of our students across the student lifecycle. Our approach builds on existing financial education across the university, identifying new opportunities to empower students and positively impact their financial inclusion, resilience and wellbeing. Leveraging the expertise available through FIAP partners, we will explore opportunities that increase student financial literacy and build staff capability to support students.

Stakeholders	Action statement	Output	Outcome	Responsibility	Timeframe
Students	Continue to integrate financial capability building resources and training across the student lifecycle to increase their visibility and accessibility.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with other Good Shepherd FIAP member organisations who have resources and services relevant for students, to achieve a mutual benefit of matching our audience to their resources/services.</li> <li>Pilot wellbeing-themed activation held during UTS Orientation, with a focus on financial wellbeing.</li> <li>Embed financial literacy material into widening participation schools outreach activities.</li> </ol>	<p>Increased pathways and tools for ongoing support for vulnerable groups.</p> <p>Increased financial capability of individuals through awareness of relevant events and educational programs.</p>	<p>Centre for Social Justice &amp; Inclusion</p> <p>Student Services Unit (Financial assistance)</p> <p>Student Services Unit (UTS Careers)</p>	December 2024
Staff	Enhance staff capability to identify and support students experiencing financial vulnerability.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information guide developed and distributed to relevant staff, faculty and business units to increase understanding of students subject to financial exclusion and stress.</li> <li>Activate wellbeing representatives provided training to increase understanding of available financial assistance referral pathways.</li> </ol>	<p>Organisational culture enables staff to better identify and support financially vulnerable groups.</p> <p>Broaden the awareness of support for financially vulnerable students.</p>	<p>Student Services Unit (Financial Assistance)</p> <p>Centre for Social Justice &amp; Inclusion</p> <p>UTS Activate</p>	December 2024





Stakeholders	Action statement	Output	Outcome	Responsibility	Timeframe
Students	Work in partnership with students to develop a campaign that aims to reduce the stigma associated with asking for help, and increases awareness of available low and no-cost student services.	1. Campaign co-developed with students for implementation across the university.	Increased understanding of barriers to financial inclusion, financial resilience and financial wellbeing (including economic inequality).  More partnerships and collaboration to support vulnerable groups.	Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion	December 2024
Students	Develop financial capability education materials that empower students to plan for the future and increase their protective economic supports (e.g. savings, planning).	1. Financial awareness module developed and promoted to students and staff. 2. Financial literacy podcast episode available and promoted to students. 3. Financial awareness guidelines for students who are leaving the parental home are developed and promoted accordingly.	Increased financial capability of individuals.  Increased ability to meet current financial needs and expenses.	Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion  Library  Student Services Unit (Financial Assistance)	December 2024



## Understanding of financial vulnerability

Financial hardship can impact the access, participation, retention and success of all students, with those from identified vulnerable and low-socioeconomic backgrounds at greater risk of financial exclusion. As part of our commitment to equity and diversity, we will increase how we identify the risks of economic exclusion and proactively remove barriers that disproportionately impact vulnerable groups. Consultation and co-design with students will increase our understanding of the barriers and how institutions can support student success.

Stakeholders	Action statement	Output	Outcome	Responsibility	Timeframe
Students	Build a financial wellbeing community of practice to facilitate intra-university collaboration and action.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Project plan developed and call for community membership administered with broad representation from across UTS business units.</li> <li>2. Project plan implemented, with a range of activities such as meetings, events and communications.</li> </ol>	<p>More partnerships and collaboration to support vulnerable groups.</p> <p>Increase in strategies to address economic inequality.</p> <p>Increased intra- and inter-sector engagement and collaboration.</p>	Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion	July 2024
Students	Implement early and proactive identification and intervention strategies for students experiencing financial vulnerability.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Targeted email sent to students who indicate interest in learning about financial assistance in their orientation "Tell us more" survey.</li> <li>2. Financial assistance information included in First Base program mentoring checklist.</li> <li>3. Link students who enter UTS via widening participation equity pathways into Financial Assistance Service.</li> <li>4. Link new students with identified financial disadvantage into Financial Assistance Service through Connect orientation and follow up communications.</li> </ol>	<p>Increase in strategies to address economic inequality (e.g. equitable pay, mentoring, superannuation, education, housing).</p> <p>Improved support for financially vulnerable students.</p>	<p>Student Services Unit (Careers)</p> <p>Centre for Social Justice &amp; Inclusion</p> <p>Student Services Unit</p> <p>SSU (Financial Assistance)</p>	December 2024





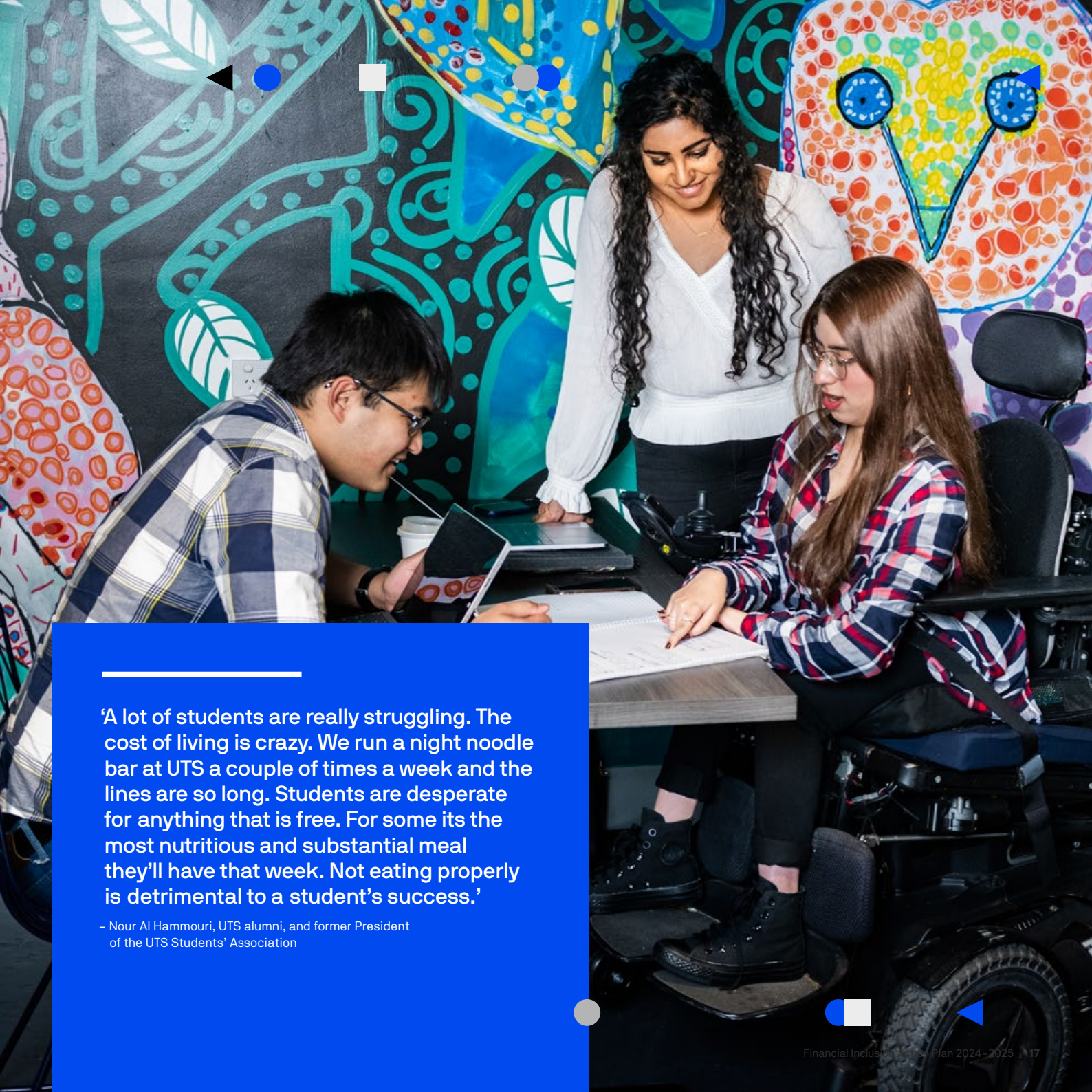


Stakeholders	Action statement	Output	Outcome	Responsibility	Timeframe
Students	Continue to consult with students and staff to enhance our understanding of the barriers to financial inclusion, resilience, wellbeing and potential interventions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consultation and evaluation held with UTS students. Report completed and shared with FIAP community of practice to inform actions.</li> <li>2. Socialise FIAP with UTS faculty Equity and Diversity Committees for consultation and collaboration.</li> </ol>	Increased understanding of barriers to financial inclusion, financial resilience and financial wellbeing (including economic inequality).	Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion	November 2024
Students	Investigate options to embed financial wellbeing measures into monitoring and evaluation, with the aim to identify students that are experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, financial hardship.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Options identified, and recommendations developed and shared with FIAP community of practice.</li> </ol>	<p>Increased understanding of barriers to financial inclusion, financial resilience and financial wellbeing (including economic inequality).</p> <p>Improved support for financially vulnerable students.</p>	Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion	December 2024
Students	Maintain and enhance relationships with peak and research bodies to raise awareness in governments and the broader community about ongoing and emerging systemic barriers to financial inclusion for students.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Contribute to program development and research regarding financial inclusion for students.</li> <li>2. Ongoing liaison with bodies and professional networks such as EPHEA (Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia), ACSES (Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success), and WAHED (World Access to Higher Education Day).</li> </ol>	<p>Advocacy for policy and regulatory change.</p> <p>More partnerships and collaboration to support vulnerable groups.</p> <p>Increased intra- and inter-sector engagement and collaboration.</p>	Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion	December 2024

## Economic security

We aim to support all learners to achieve their full potential at university and beyond. Acknowledging the positive impact of education and employment on economic security, we will prioritise actions that improve equitable access to university, support financial wellbeing, and prepare all students for life outside of university. This includes initiatives that develop student capacity to gain meaningful employment and contribute to their communities, building on our distinctive graduate attributes.

Stakeholders	Action statement	Output	Outcome	Responsibility	Timeframe
Students	Provide support for students seeking accommodation.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Scape Accommodation Scholarship continued to be administered in 2024 for UTS students experiencing financial hardship.</li> <li>2. UTS Housing check-out communication email updated to include information to support student transition into more permanent housing.</li> <li>3. Explore partnership options between UTS Housing and NGOs for affordable external housing. Report and recommendations provided.</li> </ol>	<p>Increased ability to meet current financial needs and expenses.</p> <p>More partnerships and collaboration to support vulnerable groups</p> <p>Increased pathways and tools for ongoing support for vulnerable groups.</p>	UTS Housing	December 2024
Students	Develop recommendations to inform the remuneration provided to students involved in consultation on-campus.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recommendations developed and socialised.</li> </ol>	Advocacy for policy and regulatory change.	Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion	October 2024
Students	Continue to support UTS alumni in their career development and review current communication of alumni offerings.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review of alumni information on UTS Careers website completed.</li> <li>2. Increased promotion of UTS Careers alumni support.</li> </ol>	<p>Increased pathways and tools for ongoing support for vulnerable groups.</p> <p>Increase in awareness and availability of appropriate financial services.</p>	Student Services Unit (UTS Careers)	December 2024
Students	Further embed career development education and support within curriculum.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increased number of courses with integrated employability learning outcomes. To be implemented during course refresh.</li> </ol>	<p>Increased pathways and tools for ongoing support for vulnerable groups.</p> <p>More partnerships and collaboration to support vulnerable groups.</p>	Student Services Unit (UTS Careers)	December 2024



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**'A lot of students are really struggling. The cost of living is crazy. We run a night noodle bar at UTS a couple of times a week and the lines are so long. Students are desperate for anything that is free. For some its the most nutritious and substantial meal they'll have that week. Not eating properly is detrimental to a student's success.'**

- Nour Al Hammouri, UTS alumni, and former President of the UTS Students' Association

# Statement from the FIAP group

FIAP members are part of an important movement to reduce inequalities and promote inclusive growth in Australian communities.

Financial stress can impact us all, at any stage in our lives. Through the FIAP program, our aim is for organisations across all sectors to understand the impact of financial vulnerability on people's lives and commit to providing timely and effective responses to support them.

We congratulate the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) on developing its Foundation FIAP and for committing to strengthening financial wellbeing. By building capacity, awareness, and greater access to appropriate products and services, UTS will generate better social and economic outcomes for its students, employees, and the wider community.

## FIAP team

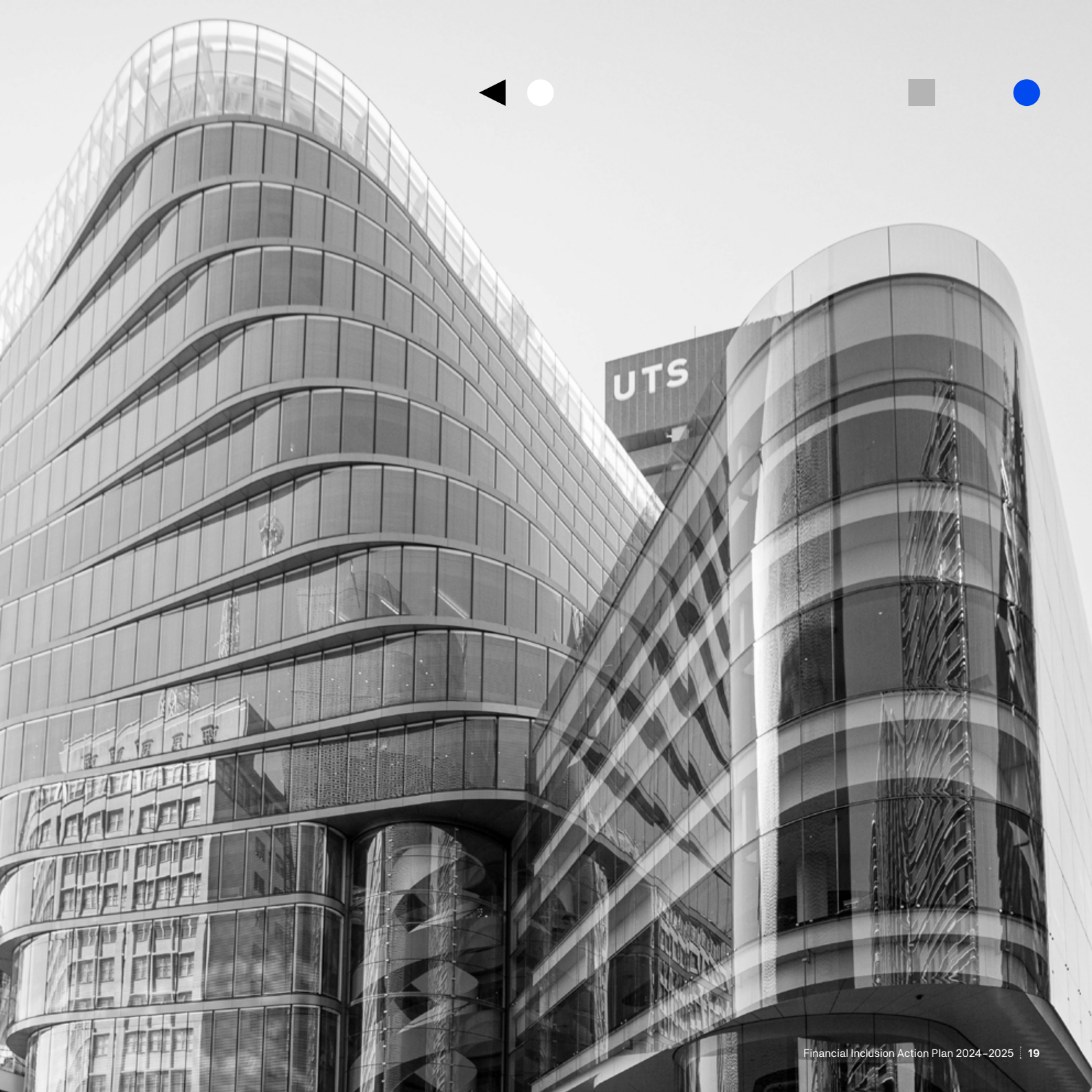
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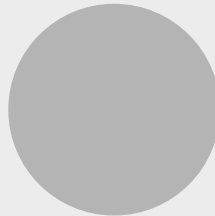
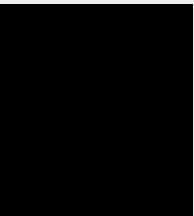
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‘A student may not become a student due to financial hardship. That’s the bottom line. Many struggle to access a degree, or they drop out. This can lead to a decline in future career opportunities, and it can affect their health and wellbeing. We need to support our students to thrive throughout their studies, and one way to do that is through policies, programs and initiatives that support financial inclusion.’

– Nick Cooper, Financial Assistance Coordinator, UTS



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