

Operations and performance

Lifetime of learning

Student engagement and experience

In 2023, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) introduced the Student Experience Framework, a university-wide strategic initiative to develop a distinctive and valued student experience.

Work was undertaken to bring together the early parts of the student lifecycle, in particular through the student commencement onboarding strategy, which included reaching out to prospective students and helping with their initial onboarding.

This strategy was also particularly significant following the COVID-19 pandemic and the gradual reopening of our campus, which has led to increased student engagement.

Another key achievement through the Student Experience Framework was the establishment of student and staff-led committees and collaborative programs, aligning with our commitment to fostering genuine student partnerships. These included the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) Advisory Group and the Student Services and Amenities Fee Committee.

Distinctive curriculum design

Our transdisciplinary (TD) electives offer an opportunity for all UTS undergraduate students to collaborate and consider the evolving role of their disciplines and professions in society.

At the end of 2023, TD electives were fully embedded in 5 faculties (Arts and Social Sciences, Business, Health, Law and Science), with work continuing in the remaining faculties. The electives play a major role in developing distinct UTS graduate capabilities, with a particular focus on sustainability and social justice.

We continued to embed Indigenous content into the core curriculum for all courses as per our Indigenous Graduate Attribute (IGA) Curriculum Framework.

Graduate capabilities and career progression

As part of our efforts to enhance the student experience, we embedded work integrated learning (WIL) into more degrees. WIL allows our students to experience the shift from student to professional; where students learn from and with disciplinary professionals and start to develop their own professional practice skills and values.

We delivered the Designing your Future elective as a pilot in 2023. The elective introduces students to design thinking ideas, tools and methods to help students explore career prospects and how to get more out of opportunities presented to them.

We responded to the challenges of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI). We developed self-help resources for our students to help them responsibly and ethically navigate the use of GenAI and to support assessment integrity. We also embedded key principles into our course development.

Connected research

2023 was another successful year for the connected research initiative.

UTS received a record \$102.1 million in external research income across all categories, which represents an increase of 10% over 2022 income.

We performed strongly in Category 3 funding, with income of \$36.6 million (\$5.9 million above target at year's end and a 19% growth on 2022's result), largely attributed to the strong focus on research engagement with industry in Australia and internationally.

Category 1 income was also strong with \$29.7 million (an 18% increase on 2022).

Funding

In 2023 we received over \$21.6 million in Australian Research Council funding for 42 projects across all categories with a 20.1% success rate (compared with 18.5% nationally).

Research translation

A major part of our Research Strategy is research translation. We saw significant progress in our research translation in 2023, including the completion of our Research Translation Plan.

We are working to ensure that UTS will be a national leader in research translation. We will provide our researchers with a multitude of ways to engage in research translation, creating value for a diversity of different sectors and benefit for individuals.

One element of this are our research translation foci, where we use a portfolio approach to reduce the uncertainty and risk generally met when translation opportunities are explored separately. It also accelerates capability and allows for ready capture of multiple outlet opportunities and spillover benefits.

The first pilot, the Algae Research Translation foci, saw work underway to spin out the Green Genie carbon dioxide removal system into a company called Algenie, with pre-seed investment expected to be closed in the first half of 2024. This will be the first UTS spin-out since 2015.

The aim of Algenie is to create the most efficient algae bioreactor system in the world, and, in so doing, capture carbon at an economical and meaningful scale.

Three more foci were selected in 2023, which will support our medical and diagnostic technologies, our multidisciplinary ageing research capabilities, and our RNA vaccine research pipeline. Work will continue on this in 2024.

Industry partnerships

The UTS Vault was launched by the NSW Premier, the Hon. Chris Minns, MP in October. The UTS Vault is a purpose-built Department of Defence compliant facility that enables collaboration between private sector tenants and UTS researchers to advance research and commercialisation in cybersecurity and defence technology.

It will allow stakeholders to solve problems, innovate, test and develop cutting edge technologies while safeguarding critical intellectual property. The UTS Vault was funded by the NSW Government and is a key part of the Tech Central precinct (further information about Tech Central is in the distinctive identity initiative).

The GrapheneX-UTS Human-centric Artificial Intelligence Centre opened in November. The centre will undertake research on human-centric artificial intelligence. It will also provide the opportunity for students and researchers to partner with industry in this field.

GrapheneX has contributed \$10 million over the next 8 years to the centre, which is being led by Distinguished Professor CT Lin.

Research achievements

UTS researchers took out several major awards during 2023.

- NSW Premier's Prize for Excellence in Engineering or Information and Communications Technology: Australian Laureate Fellow Distinguished Professor Jie Lu AO
- Department of Defence Eureka Prize for Outstanding Science in Safeguarding Australia: Distinguished Professor Karu Esselle (with the MetaSteerers team)
- Australian Defence Industry Awards 2023 Academic of the Year: Associate Professor Marian-Andrei Rizoio
- Ngalya First Nations Law Awards First Nations Researcher of the Year: Professor Nicole Watson
- National Health and Medical Research Council Investigator Leadership (L1) Fellowship: Professor Meera Agar (\$2 million over 5 years)
- Coral Research and Development Accelerator Platform: Dr Emma Camp (\$2.1 million for her project 'Super Supplement – Boosting coral resilience through nutritional subsidies')
- NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer Tech Central Research and Innovation Infrastructure Fund: UTS researchers were awarded \$3 million for the Advanced Prototype Packaging Facility and \$1.4 million for the Vaccine and RNA Design Centre.
- Clarivate Highly Cited Researchers 2023: 9 academics in their research fields across chemistry, environment and ecology and materials science.

Distinctive identity

Enterprise learning

The strong year-on-year growth of enterprise learning revenue since 2020 augurs well for continued growth into 2024 with a strong pipeline of revenue and opportunities.

Significant performance and functionality enhancements have been made to the UTS Open platform improving user experience. We also introduced digital badging for our microcredentials and short courses.

Fourteen students have graduated from the Microsoft Graduate Certificate in Business Consulting and Technology Implementation, designed in collaboration with Microsoft and industry, with 41 students currently enrolled, and over 150 further applications pending.

Through our partnership with TAFE NSW, Microsoft and Macquarie University, the Institute of Applied Technology Digital (IAT-D) has generated strong student engagement, with over 33,000 enrolments in IAT-D microcredentials and micro-skills. UTS has developed and delivered the 4 most popular courses at the IAT-D, accounting for 66% of the microcredentials undertaken. The TAFE IAT-D is favourably mentioned in the Australian Government Employment White Paper and identified as an innovative tertiary collaboration model.

Startups

Entrepreneurship has maintained strong momentum with 762 active startups at the end of the year with 35% female members. During 2023 our startups have created 500 full-time jobs, more than 600 part-time and casual jobs, provided 170 paid and unpaid internships and raised approximately \$40 million in capital.

Our Startups@School high school program has engaged with high school students (and their schools and teachers) through school visits, addressing over 2700 students. A further 1500 high school students from 31 schools attended the UTS Startups Summit, held at the Sydney's International Convention Centre in June. The event was supported by the NSW Government and the ICC and featured an address by NSW Minister for Industry and Trade, Innovation, Science and Technology the Hon. Anouack Chanthivong.

The UTS Startups team held 47 events throughout the year attracting more than 5000 in-person attendees.

Precincts

UTS continued to lead and champion Tech Central. Precinct events this year demonstrated our capabilities and innovation to large audiences.

The Tech Central Forum showcased UTS to an enterprise audience of 250 in June. The forum heard from leaders in the innovation ecosystem through specialist panels and a dedicated exhibition space.

In July, we co-hosted the bilateral Decarbonising Australia Business Summit with Austrade Japan at UTS. Four hundred and fifty of the largest Japanese and Australian companies and industry groups met with government officials and leading researchers to discuss decarbonisation and the transition to net zero.

The SXSW (South by Southwest) Sydney festival was held from 15 to 23 October. As the official education partner, UTS hosted 1200 visitors across 26 events at the UTS House. Seven UTS panels were featured on the main conference stage. Our staff, students and alumni participated in the festival, with interns contributing their skills to various roles.

Partnerships with industry

Continued investment in sector-leading infrastructure created strong interest in partnerships from government and industry this year. We have established new strategic partnerships through memorandums of understanding with Thales, Aurecon, BT and Vitex.

Our SME@UTS program, which provides small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with customised access to UTS's innovation expertise and solutions, has gained significant traction, and built relationships with local councils and SMEs. It has delivered 6 futuremap (a business diagnostic tool that helps SMEs assess and understand their capabilities) workshops in strategic target locations in Western Sydney, completed 77 futuremap assessments, provided 19 business consultations/ factory visits, and facilitated the engagement of 85 students with 16 SMEs.

UTS Tech Lab continued to expand and deliver strong partnerships and impact in 2023. The collaborative research facility provides industry partners with access to experts, labs, specialist equipment, funding opportunities, student talent and office space.

Tech Lab hosted 2388 visitors in 2023, including federal, state and international government officials. In September the Hon. Ed Husic MP, Federal Minister for Industry and Science, attended the Advanced Navigation launch of their new, high-tech manufacturing facility; and we hosted US Acting Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, Jennifer R. Littlejohn, with participation of industry partner Space Machines.

In August we launched a 5-year agreement with NBN Co, the first of its kind for the telecommunications sector, with the aim of bringing together cutting-edge research and industry insights to make the internet experience better for millions of Australian homes and businesses. The partnership aims to attract more students, particularly women in STEM, to the telecommunications sector by providing opportunities to work on NBN's vital national infrastructure.

Sustainable partnerships

Creative industries

We continued to investigate how we can position UTS as the preeminent Australian university in the creative industries, developing our vision for creative industries in the second half of 2023.

We established a senior executive steering committee and a faculty representative working group. We also consulted via staff and industry workshops.

We aim to develop a strategy that strengthens and better supports UTS's creative disciplines and practices to attract academics, staff and students, and grow opportunities for research and creative practice. This will help us to build our distinctive identity. The Creative Industries Strategy will be finalised in 2024.

To enhance the way we work and collaborate, we established the Tech Central Creative Industries Steering Committee, a governance body that includes the Powerhouse, TAFE NSW, the Australian Fashion Council and the Greater Cities Commission. The committee commissioned a report on the creative industries that operate within the Tech Central precinct, showing there is already a thriving ecosystem of over 3000 organisations. As Chair of this steering committee, UTS will continue to support the creative industries in our precinct.

In partnership with the NSW Government (Create NSW), UTS opened Haymarket Creative: an arts, screen and cultural hub that offers creative industries office and development spaces on the UTS campus. To date, we have welcomed groups including the Sydney Youth Orchestra, the Sydney Writers Room, Arts Law, Campfire X, Chaser Digital Pty Ltd, DNX Media, Floating Leaf Pictures, Soft Tread Enterprises and The House That Dan Built.

Creative partnerships

In its inaugural year, the UTS and Powerhouse Ultimo partnership delivered a strong program and success in fostering educational and industry-oriented student learning outcomes, including 19 student internships spanning Sydney Design Week, Powerhouse executive mentorship, programming, publishing and collections research.

Additionally, UTS students worked on 3 different studios across interior design, landscape architecture and visual communication that involved Powerhouse experts and their extensive collection. In total, these courses engaged around 250 students, providing them with industry knowledge and real-world problems to solve through creative practice.

The partnership also provided UTS Galuwa students with opportunities to engage with Powerhouse collections, exhibitions and operations through dedicated sessions across the year, reaching 37 Indigenous high school students.

Public programming and engagement included collaborations and co-delivery during Sydney Science Festival and Sydney Design Week, which both drew substantial attendance, in particular the Sydney Science Festival Family Science Day in Parramatta Square, which attracted 8000 people and showcased UTS expertise across the faculties of Science and Engineering and Information Technology.

UTS delivered 16% of the events for the Powerhouse during Sydney Design Week, selling out 93% of tickets. UTS staff were highly involved in other programming, including in roles such as taking part in design competition juries and selection panels, contributing to podcasts and exhibitions, and delivering programs through Powerhouse Late.

UTS secured 4 out of 8 fellowships through the 2023 Powerhouse Research Fellowship Program, granting researchers exclusive access to the collection and staff. We also established further research collaborations including 4 graduate research students being co-supervised by Powerhouse industry experts, and a research sub-committee that has identified several research projects that will be taken forward in 2024.

Alumni

In 2023, the Australian Alumni Network was established to stimulate domestic alumni participation and increase alumni engagement in Sydney and beyond. Thirty UTS Ambassadors were recruited and contributed their time and expertise to support the network.

UTS also established the UTS Global Alumni Network, an online community for global alumni to manage their professional networks and make connections. Over 12,000 UTS alumni located across the world have joined the network.

Alumni ambassadors took part in the inaugural UTS Alumni Forum in September, engaging in thought leadership in partnership with the UTS Ageing Research Collaborative, Faculty of Health and UTS Business School, and facilitated by the Institute for Sustainable Futures.

The UTS Young Alumni Committee made significant strides in 2023, increasing engagement on LinkedIn by 45% and hosting 5 successful events with over 700 attendees.

UTS engagement with alumni increased 8.1% from 2022 with 24,000 alumni now actively connected with the university across various volunteering opportunities, domestic and global events, and philanthropy.

Philanthropy

The UTS Indigenous Campaign was strengthened through recruitment and development in 2023, and the Indigenous-led design of the UTS National First Nations College was announced. With support from partners including Woolworths Group, the NSW Government, the City of Sydney and the Oranges and Sardines Foundation, the National First Nations College will promote excellence in Indigenous participation in higher education and provide cost-covered access to culturally informed and enriched accommodation.

The Paul Ramsey Foundation (PRF) gave \$5,007,000 to Human Technology Institute Thrive: Finishing School Well, a research program that applies lived experience, community co-design and the power of statistical machine learning to understand what factors impact NSW school students finishing school well.

In addition, the PRF pledged \$330,000 to the Michele Bruniges' Fellowship. Dr Michele Bruniges AM, an Industry Professor in the UTS Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion, will investigate policy and practice options for improving Australia's school system for students who are disadvantaged.

PRF also gave \$1 million to establish and develop an Australian Network for Quality Digital Education. This network will bring together leaders from education and technology sectors to examine the potential of artificial intelligence and educational technology to address educational inequalities in Australian schools. The network is led by Industry Professor Leslie Loble.

Cognizant gifted \$528,000 for the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology STEM x and the Optik equity programs. These programs provide student outreach programs and internships to inspire interest, increase diversity, foster innovation and nurture talent.

Rolex SA gifted \$300,000 to the Faculty of Science coral restoration research program. The program works to develop innovative solutions to replant Great Barrier Reef coral species that have been decimated by pollution, overfishing and climate change.

Neuroblastoma Australia gave \$175,000 investigating combination therapies to overcome drug resistance, and The Ian Potter Foundation gifted \$100,000 for the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology to purchase equipment to support safety testing of bioengineered tissues.

Working together

This year we launched our People Strategy, which was co-created with UTS staff to reflect the views, values and priorities of our workforce.

The strategy has 4 focus areas:

1. Fostering a diverse workforce with a focus on excellence
2. Helping people grow their careers
3. Enhancing staff experience in a complex environment
4. Managing our workforce

Under this strategy, we have delivered over 15 initiatives addressing the 4 focus areas. Some of these initiatives are multi-year initiatives that will continue in future years, such as a new enterprise resource planning tool and health, safety and wellbeing initiatives aligned to our new Health, Safety and Wellbeing Strategy.

The head of school leadership program, launched in 2023, will continue into 2024 with coaching sessions and masterclasses. To date, 23 heads of schools have attended the program. Pending review and funding, we aim to extend this program to faculty general managers and directors.

The mid-career academic mentoring program assisted 30 mid-career academics to develop clear and focused career goals with the help of a UTS mentor from the professoriate cohort.

A key part of the new strategy is the supporting Learning and Development Strategy, which was also launched in 2023. This strategy prioritises staff learning and development, making learning opportunities readily available to support career growth. The Learning and Development Strategy acts as a critical enabler of the People Strategy by equipping staff with the skills, knowledge and mindset needed to drive organisational and personal success.

We also consulted widely on the development of an inaugural Employee Value Proposition, which will inform recruitment and retention strategies and articulate our distinctive identity as an employer.

Staff surveys

We have adopted a new approach to our traditional bi-annual staff survey to ensure we have a more real-time response to feedback on areas of concern or issues arising. From 2024, we will begin to implement a more holistic staff listening plan, which will consist of measuring employee engagement and wellbeing with shorter surveys and taking a more comprehensive view of measuring staff views across the full employee lifecycle.

Ways of working

We're dedicated to enhancing the staff experience and improving our business processes. An integral part of this commitment is ensuring all staff can access support services quickly and efficiently. Work commenced this year on a new ServiceConnect portal.

The ServiceConnect initiative will help staff more easily access services across UTS, initially enhancing access to IT support services. This platform will be launched in late March 2024 and will expand to enable staff to access support from other operational support teams.

Staff

	2022	2023
FTE staff (non-casual)¹		
Academic	1,316.4	1,374.4
Professional	1,918.8	2,063.0
Total	3,235.2	3,437.5
FTE staff (casual)²		
Academic	444.4	471.0
Professional	260.0	274.7
Total	704.4	745.7
Actual persons (non-casual)³		
Academic	1,433	1,486
Professional	2,013	2,162
Total	3,446	3,648

Note: Staff may be employed as both academic and professional staff. Data was sourced from the NEO HR Information System via its reporting platform as at 21 December 2023.

1. Figures are the average nominal FTE for continuing and fixed-term staff over 2023.
2. Figures are an average of the finance FTE paid to casual staff over 2023.
3. Figures are based on continuing and fixed-term staff over 2023.