

Operations and performance

Lifetime of learning

By the end of 2024, we aim to have built scale and growth in our lifetime learning offering, with a focus on supporting our learners through their career pathways and meeting future workforce needs. Our learner centric approach will be embedded in our systems and processes enhancing learner experience and engagement.

We had considerable success under this initiative in 2024.

Student experience

The UTS Student Experience Framework (SEF) remains at the heart of our mission to enhance the student journey at UTS. This framework promotes a comprehensive approach to student success, focusing on 4 essential pillars: academic engagement, wellbeing, belonging and partnership.

Our student experience team made significant strides in revitalising the student orientation program and improving our digital onboarding communications to better cater to students' needs. This initiative will continue throughout 2025 as we seek to integrate more personalisation and automation into our onboarding processes.

Collaborating closely with both staff and students, the team began the process of co-creating a new student voice framework. This will offer students more opportunities to provide real-time feedback on UTS systems, processes and services, ensuring they respond to evolving student needs. Further, we are developing an evaluation framework to assess and measure the impact and effectiveness of our student experience initiatives. This will help us identify and prioritise areas for improvement.

Digital global growth

In 2024, UTS created and approved the digital global growth approach to offshore learning. This new approach aims to lay the foundation for scalable online learning in targeted markets and modes. The first program to be launched, in 2025, is a strategic partnership with CinLearn.

Underlying this initiative is a broader need to take a digital-first approach to our curriculum, for both on and off campus students. The focus is on digital literacy for staff and students, wedded to the integration of generative AI (GenAI) in the curriculum and in assessment.

Curriculum design

In late 2024, UTS launched its new curriculum management system, CourseLoop, for our students. This implementation has significantly enhanced the efficiency and effectiveness of curriculum management, resulting in improved educational experiences for both students and staff.

Throughout the year, the curriculum transformation project made significant progress in providing a sustainable approach to teaching and learning at UTS. This project focused on clarifying and reshaping course and curriculum design, emphasising assessment reform, and integrating strategic initiatives, including the ethical use of GenAI.

Ethical use of AI

The University Leadership Team endorsed an AI Statement of Intent, which was developed in consultation with experts from across the university. This statement highlights our approach to integrating AI into our learning and teaching, research, and processes and systems.

To support our students and teaching staff in using GenAI responsibly and ethically, we have continued to develop relevant resources. We launched an 'Introduction to GenAI' short-form learning specifically for teaching staff, as well as another module designed by and for students.

Connected research

By the end of 2024, through our focus on research translation, we will have grown our research profile, augmented our research impact and increased external funding by business and industry. Our staff and students will be involved more deeply in industry and entrepreneurial experiences, supporting graduate development, career progression and industry needs.

This initiative delivered against its objectives this year. UTS has a thriving community of researchers — our students, staff and partners — who produce research with impact and of real benefit to society.

We had another record year for external research income (ERI) with \$127 million across all categories (1 to 4).

Research excellence

We rose to 88th in the QS World University Rankings 2025. A focus on research excellence, as measured by research citations per faculty, was a key reason for our result.

Research translation

We worked this year to ensure that research translation at UTS is an explicit and deliberate undertaking.

We completed our research translation plan in 2023. This year, we further cemented our commitment to research translation and embedded governance arrangements into the Research Policy, approved a new Intellectual Property and Research Translation Procedure and developed terms of reference for a new Research Translation Advisory Committee.

After last year's algae research translation pilot, we successfully executed a commercial agreement with Algenie for the commercialisation of efficient algae bioreactors and elite algae strains.

Research concentrations

We worked this year to expand cross-university membership of our research centres. In support of this, we continued to formally review our centres that have reached the end of their 3-year review cycle.

An example of a new cross-disciplinary collaboration formed in 2024 is the Green Infrastructure Lab, which brings together industry and researchers across disciplines to further research into nature-based solutions for urban environments.

We also provided dedicated support for the development and visibility of our research concentrations. As a result, we saw an increased number of UTS research groups come forward throughout the year expressing interest in pursuing research concentrations, in particular in the form of research networks.

All UTS research concentrations now have online group profile pages, which are available both internally and externally.

Success stories for our research concentrations include:

- The UTS Robotics Institute secured substantial funding through the award of \$5 million over 5 years for the Australian Research Council (ARC) Research Hub for Human-Robot Teaming for Sustainable and Resilient Construction. This program of work has been put together with increased cross-university collaboration in its design, bringing together researchers from the institute and the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology with a cohort from the Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building.
- The UTS Ageing Research Collaborative (UARC) significantly influenced the development of the new federal Aged Care Act (to commence in July 2025). UARC's detailed sector reporting and submissions to the Department of Health and Aged Care have led to notable amendments in the development of the Act, including enhanced whistleblower protections and refined definitions of high-quality care.

Knowledge exchange

Knowledge exchange is an integral part of UTS's research ecosystem.

In support of our endeavours in this area, we hosted Professor Trevor McMillan OBE, Vice-Chancellor of Keele University and lead on the United Kingdom's Knowledge Exchange Concordat, to work with key stakeholders at UTS to help identify opportunities and capabilities. The Knowledge Exchange Concordat was established in the UK to enhance collaboration and knowledge sharing between academia, industry and other stakeholders. It aims to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, expertise and resources to foster innovation, economic growth and societal benefits.

Global partnerships

In 2024 we focused on developing relationships with global partners for large-scale projects.

The Faculty of Science established the Global Forensic Science Alliance with Florida International University, Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, University of Dundee and University of Lausanne. This new alliance brings together 5 of the world's leading universities in forensic science to tackle the crimes of tomorrow with shared research and education initiatives.

And, in Vietnam, the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology established a Joint Research Centre – AI Hub – with Hanoi University of Science and Technology. The hub will promote collaboration between the 2 universities in applied AI research.

Work will continue in 2025 to explore potential partners in Europe for transnational funded projects.

Achievements

Research achievements in 2024 included:

- Distinguished Professor Guoxiu Wang received a \$3.6 million ARC Industry Laureate Fellowship to explore how to combat the self-combustion of ultrahigh performance batteries to make them safer and support the renewable energy transition.
- Professor Karu Esselle received the 2024 NSW Premier's Prize for Science and Engineering Leadership in Innovation.
- Jiayan Liao, UTS Chancellor's Research Fellow in the Faculty of Science, was awarded the 2024 NSW Premier's Prize for Science and Engineering in the Early Career Researcher of the Year (Physical Sciences) category.
- Associate Professor Nicholas Hart won the 2024 Outstanding Mid-Career Researcher Award at the NSW Premier's Awards for Outstanding Cancer Research.
- Professor Amir H Gandomi was awarded the prestigious IEEE TCSC Award for Excellence in Scalable Computing in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the development of scalable AI for data analytics and optimisation.
- Dr Xuan Li, UTS Chancellor's Research Fellow in the Centre for Technology and Wastewater, won the Royal Society of NSW Ida Browne Early Career Medal 2024.
- Dr Jennifer Matthews, UTS Chancellor's Research Fellow in the Climate Change Cluster, was awarded a Royal Society of NSW Early Career Research and Service Citation.
- Professor Daryle Rigney, Professor and Director, Indigenous Nations and Collaborative Futures Research, was made a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Humanities.
- Professor Meera Agar won the Advocacy Award and Dr Jiayan Liao won the Discovery Award at the Research Australia 2024 Health and Medical Research Awards.

Distinctive identity

By the end of 2024 we will be in high demand by students and learners seeking a transformational education experience, recognised for our positive impact, commitment to technology that improves society, the planet and the professions; known for our capability in innovation, transdisciplinarity and entrepreneurship.

UTS has firmly established itself as a university with a distinctive identity that embraces creativity, innovation and technology, embedding these attributes into its collaboration with industry and the community.

External engagement and partnerships

Strategic engagement efforts within this initiative are enhancing partnerships across industry, government and the public.

In response to the recommendations made in our 2023 external engagement review, a new External Engagement and Partnerships Division was established this year, led by Deputy Vice-Chancellor (External Engagement and Partnerships) Dr Alana Piper.

New digital presence

Work on the new UTS website has well advanced. The new website will deliver an improved online experience reflecting our distinctive identity and resulting in better engagement and brand awareness when launched in March 2025.

Creative industries

We finalised and endorsed our creative industries strategy this year. A key component of the strategy is the establishment of a creative industries faculty. Work was undertaken with the 3 faculties that primarily support the creative industries at UTS – Arts and Social Sciences; Design, Architecture and Building; and Engineering and Information Technology – to manage consultation on the new faculty to ensure we realise our aspirations in this area.

Enterprise learning

Enterprise learning (EL) continued its steady growth with a 20% year on year increase delivering tailored upskilling to over 50 different organisations. A targeted 'Plus UTS' branding campaign doubled traffic to the EL website this year.

UTS Startups

The UTS Startups community continues to thrive with 601 active startups at the end of the year.

We launched a new UTS Startups Growth Funding program that provides eligible startups with opportunities to receive mentorship, gain access to valuable resources and compete for the chance to pitch for \$100,000.

Our Practical Entrepreneurship Program, which allows high school students to start their entrepreneurship career while at school, received NSW Education Standards Authority approval in 2024. Seven hundred high school students completed the pilot program this year.

The second UTS Startups Summit, held at the ICC Sydney, provided year 9 and 10 high school students with an overview of how tech skills can lead to careers in a range of industries. Students heard from young entrepreneurs at UTS about their journey and work, with live demonstrations showcasing use of AI and technology.

Social impact

2024 has been a big year for Shopfront and UTS SOUL, our programs where students are given the opportunity to gain real-world experience and make a meaningful difference in the community sector.

Nearly 2200 students undertook a coursework project with a client and 3734 students undertook a project and engaged in Shopfront modules as part of their course. This was up from 1900 in 2023. The number of clients that Shopfront works with also increased from 49 to 84 in 2024; almost doubling our impact in small to medium community organisations.

The SOUL program also grew in 2024. Five students received a new social activation grant that was introduced to support student leadership in social impact. Project areas included helping international students, conducting STEM workshops for girls, and distributing food to support students with cost of living.

This year, 1439 new students registered for the SOUL program, nearly double the number of students (751) recruited to the program in 2023. A total of 19,604 social impact action hours were logged with 251 community organisations.

The SOUL program will look to broaden its opportunities for students in 2025 by including networking and career support to enhance student experience and prepare our students for life beyond university.

Sustainable partnerships

By the end of 2024, our staff will have the systems, tools, processes, support and capabilities to collaborate and deliver partnership outcomes. UTS will be a partner of choice, delivering mutually beneficial outcomes for our growing community of learners, donors, industry and community partners.

Precincts and creative partnerships

UTS again partnered with South by Southwest (SXSW) Sydney.

As the official education partner and conference workshop partner, UTS hosted panel discussions, workshops, live music and interactive sessions on campus.

UTS speakers included renowned climate scientist Professor Chris Turney, accounting educator and YouTube star Associate Professor Amanda White OAM, behavioural data scientist Associate Professor Marian-Andrei Rizoiiu, tech policy expert Sophie Farthing and UTS alumnus social entrepreneur and restaurateur Shaun Christie-David, founder of Plate It Forward, a Sydney-based collective of social impact restaurants that provide food relief, training and employment opportunities for people in need.

UTS students had special access to the festival via wristbands to gaming, music and screen events, as well as the opportunity to win tickets to attend the full conference. Some UTS students received SXSW internships and worked directly with SXSW Sydney partnerships, conference programming and event operations teams.

Estimated foot traffic on campus during the festival was an additional 4500 people. The Gaming Hub in the UTS Great Hall attracted more than 5300 participants; the opening night Platinum Party in the Great Hall hosted 400 people; and The Underground became home to Rolling Stone, offering 5 nights of music within the music showcase.

Industry partnerships

We continued to partner with industry to address the challenges of today and position NSW and Australia as leaders in innovation. In March we launched the TPG-UTS Network Sensing Lab; a world-first lab using cutting-edge technology to deliver real-time flood and storm intelligence. This timely initiative with TPG Telecom, the NSW State Emergency Service and led by Distinguished Professor Jay Guo of the UTS Global Big Data Technologies Centre aims to revolutionise the approach to flood risk management for emergency personnel.

UTS signed a 5-year strategic partnership with HeraMed, focused on care and wellbeing of women and babies. And we renewed a memorandum of understanding with the City of Sydney and progressed several potential partnerships for 2025.

The SME@UTS team focused on growing the number of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) engaging with students and academics and using UTS infrastructure. Five futuremap workshops, which use a business diagnostic tool to help SMEs assess and understand their capabilities, were conducted. Reports associated with these workshops were submitted to the NSW Department of Education, the NSW Boosting Business Innovation Program, and the Australian Industry (Ai) Group.

Alumni

In 2024, the UTS alumni community grew to over 280,000 graduates globally. The university continues to build alumni networks both in Australia and internationally. The number of engaged alumni increased in 2024, exceeding the target of 5.4% with a year-end engagement score of 7.8%.

The Global Alumni Network on LinkedIn has grown by 40% since 2023, now reaching 14,000 members.

Locally, the 2024 UTS Alumni Awards Gala Dinner attracted 170 distinguished alumni, staff and guests, with alumni award winners celebrated for their contributions to the professions and society. We held a reception for 120 of our Friends of Distinction; supporters of the university's vision with a strong and unique connection to UTS. And our UTS Young Alumni program events received over 500 registrations in 2024. Other significant UTS Alumni activities in 2024 included:

- Establishment of the UTS UK/EU Advisory Board to provide strategic support in building and sustaining a thriving community of alumni and friends in the United Kingdom and Europe.

- The second annual UTS Alumni Forum in Sydney brought together 10 leading academics in AI and health together with UTS Ambassadors to develop a vision for the future of AI and health innovation.
- Two international alumni events were held in China with 300 alumni and panel discussions by UTS academics and local alumni. Senior alumni participated in a UTS Vietnam Symposium and a reception for alumni and friends was held in Hanoi attracting almost 100 guests.

Philanthropy

At year end, donations and bequests received totalled \$18.1 million (2023: \$16.9 million). This result reflects an increase in partnerships with individual academics and faculties and units for the benefit of our students through scholarships, research and other important community programs led by UTS.

Total philanthropic gifts secured for the National First Nations College stand at \$12.4 million.

The inaugural National First Nations Scholarship, sponsored by the Woolworths Group, was awarded this year. The scholarship sets a new standard for how Indigenous scholarships can be awarded. First Nations people can apply, whether completing high school or considering university as a mature-age student. The scholarship is offered before classes start, ensuring recipients can enrol in university without financial concerns.

Other philanthropic highlights included:

- In collaboration with the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology a second gift of \$387,000 was secured from the Garnett Passe and Rodney Williams Memorial Foundation for Associate Professor Nham Tran's research into oropharyngeal cancer patients.
- In collaboration with the Faculty of Law, Professor Nola Ries was awarded \$420,000 from the Wicking Trust for an ageing and end-of-life project.
- The Rebecca L. Cooper Medical Research Foundation awarded \$1 million each to Dr Jiao Jiao Li and Dr Gang Liu, 2 next-generation UTS biomedical researchers. Awarded through the 2025 AI and Val Rosenstrauss Fellowships, the gifts will support research aimed at improving the lives of those suffering from joint and respiratory diseases.
- The Snow Foundation contributed \$200,000 to the UTS Business School to fund the development of a new longitudinal study. The project, led by Dr Anne Summers AO, will seek to obtain key data on social issues related to domestic violence. Another \$15,000 gift was made to the Elsie Conference in support of 50 years of women's refuges in Australia.
- The Brian M Davis Charitable Foundation made a \$435,000 pledge to the Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion to help fund the Strengths-Based Tertiary Pathway project. This initiative aims to redesign entry pathways for students from low-SES backgrounds by focusing on their skills and capabilities.
- The Kyndryl Foundation made a \$513,000 gift, enabling UTS to empower non-profits to strengthen their cybersecurity practices, ultimately contributing to a more secure and inclusive digital environment.

Working together

By the end of 2024 our people will enjoy exciting, productive work and attractive career pathways enabled by our people-centred and digital first approach to our spaces, services, processes, tools and systems.

The People Strategy and the Learning and Development Strategy initiatives focused on improving staff experience and developing leadership capability.

Staff Pulse Survey

Our staff survey is crucial for understanding and improving staff engagement and wellbeing. The feedback we received in 2024 led to local area action plans and is reflected in the University Leadership Team's approved strategic projects, including a new leadership academy and a revised approach to internal communications.

Staff enhancements

Our Information Technology Unit and People Unit collaborated on the development of a systems catalogue to improve staff visibility of systems available at UTS. We soft launched the catalogue in late 2024 with a wider roll-out planned for 2025.

In 2024, the People Unit focused on developing early and emerging leaders, heads of schools, and enhancing the UTS capability framework.

LEAD Program

The UTS LEAD Program focused on nurturing emerging and early career leaders, providing them with the tools and support needed to make an impact in their leadership roles and career progression. By investing in their development, the program equipped these leaders with essential capabilities to effectively assume leadership responsibilities and contribute to UTS's strategic goals.

Heads of school program

The heads of school development program, launched in August 2023, was designed to enhance leadership capabilities by focusing on essential skills and mindsets to support effective leadership approaches. In 2024, the People Unit delivered masterclasses on managing change, facilitating quality conversations and understanding key business aspects of UTS, such as funding streams and budget cycles.

Capability Framework

In 2024, we focused on building a capability framework. This initiative involved extensive consultations with both academic and professional staff to ensure a holistic approach. The feedback and insights gathered during these consultations have been instrumental in shaping the framework. This work will continue into 2025 to ensure that we develop a solution that is fit for purpose and meets the evolving needs of UTS.

Academic performance

This year we launched a new SharePoint site to streamline the academic promotions process and provide clear guidance for staff. Additionally, we implemented an academic work planning tool to enhance user experience, centralisation, efficiency and governance.

AI developments

The Data and AI Strategy has been drafted and endorsed. UTS will communicate the strategy to its community in early 2025.

We continued to use AI this year. Predictive AI was deployed to support recruitment and GenAI was deployed to support the curriculum management modernisation program.

Bots are being developed to support our staff and students. We also continued our pilot of Office 365 Copilot, which has created efficiency savings for the 200 pilot users.