



Future Focused Capabilities for Impact

Exploring links between future-oriented capabilities and graduate capacity to create impact in professional environments

TD Research



As industries and organisations face escalating environmental and social challenges, the need for innovative, future-focused capabilities continues to grow. From climate change, governance issues, and public distrust in the Australian public and corporate sectors, the complexity and speed of change is intensifying—requiring fresh approaches to thinking, leadership and action.

So, how can we enable and support graduates to innovate ethically, respond to uncertainty with integrity and purpose, and lead responsibly, all while equipping them with the essential capabilities needed to drive meaningful, long-term impact across sectors?

Project Overview

This project seeks to develop a rigorous conceptual approach for evidencing the link between future-oriented capabilities and graduates' capacity to create impact in professional settings. Addressing a critical knowledge gap, it contributes new insights to the fields of education, sustainability, organisational management, and policy research.

The research also aims to spark action among educators, industries, and policymakers to rethink how undergraduate and postgraduate programs prepare graduates to create long-term social and environmental impact across diverse sectors—moving beyond the narrow focus on employability.

The project investigates the following questions:

1. What capabilities empower graduates to address complex problems and create meaningful impact?
2. How do these capabilities create impact within organisations?
3. What are the enablers and barriers to applying future-oriented capabilities in practice?
4. How can evidence of the impact of future-oriented capabilities inform teaching, professional education, and future research initiatives?

By answering these questions, the research team aim to strengthen the transformative potential of education and professional practice.

Our Impact

Currently, no comprehensive frameworks exist linking graduates' capabilities to their real-world impact. To fill this knowledge gap, the research team will create a framework to collect tangible evidence on graduates' contributions to a socially and environmentally just world, that will have a profound and far-reaching impact globally. Through this work, UTS continues to strengthen its position as a trusted knowledge leader and front-runner in future capabilities research. Importantly, the project recognises that future-oriented capabilities are inherently transdisciplinary—cutting across traditional fields to enable collaboration and systems thinking—which are all essential for addressing complex challenges of today, and those of tomorrow.

Work with us

We deliver a wide range of research projects for public and private sector partners seeking research expertise and support in overcoming their complex challenges using our unique transdisciplinary (TD) methodology. To find out how TD Research can help you and your organisation, please email - TDRresearch@uts.edu.au

PROJECT PARTNERS

UTS Transdisciplinary School, UTS Business School, UTS Institute for Sustainable Futures, Alumni and partner organisations.

RESEARCH TEAM

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