



UTS Social Impact Framework



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Introduction

UTS is driven by its vision to be a leading public university of technology, recognised for its global impact and commitment to the public good.

The UTS 2030 strategy positions the University as a global, engaged institution with the resilience and agility to meaningfully shape a rapidly changing world. Central to this ambition is UTS's public purpose: **“to advance knowledge that positively impacts society through teaching and research”**.

Social justice is fundamental to this mission. It reflects the University's long-standing commitment to equity, diversity and the self-determination of First Nations Peoples, and to advancing the social, economic and cultural prosperity of the communities it serves. It is embedded in the University's history, identity and practice.

Alongside this, UTS places increasing emphasis on demonstrating **social impact** through the real-world, measurable change generated by its work. This reflects a deliberate shift from intention to outcome.

UTS 2030 articulates a distinctive model of engagement, where the University works alongside communities, industry and partners through collaborative and reciprocal relationships that prioritise co-creation and mutual benefit. In this way, global impact is grounded in local relevance, inclusion and shared values.

UTS Social Impact Aspiration

Through this approach, UTS contributes to a broader societal vision of a: **“socially just, healthy and sustainable society”**.

This is supported by its social impact aspiration to: **“drive transformational social change through collaborative research, education and practice”**.

Purpose of the Social Impact Framework

The Social Impact Framework operationalises UTS's public purpose and strategic vision by translating its commitment to social justice into a coordinated, institution-wide approach to delivering meaningful social impact.

The Framework sets out how social impact is understood, delivered and measured across the University, supporting planning, prioritisation and accountability at institutional, faculty, and individual levels.

The Framework is both:

- **An aspirational roadmap** guiding UTS's social justice vision
- **A reporting and accountability framework** enabling the University to capture, measure and demonstrate its impact.

As an operating model, it enables faculties, divisions and portfolios to align their activities with institutional priorities while adapting to their specific contexts.

This supports a shift from isolated and fragmented examples of social impact towards a more intentional, coordinated, institutional-wide approach.

As an operating model, the Framework enables UTS to:

- align social impact priorities across faculties, divisions and portfolios
- embed consistent planning, evaluation and reporting practices
- articulate a clear and credible institutional social impact narrative
- support evidence-based decision-making
- demonstrate social impact at scale across the University.

Social Justice and Social Impact at UTS

Social justice and social impact are central to the UTS approach and operate as complementary concepts that shape how the University delivers on its public purpose.

Social justice provides the ethical foundation for UTS's work. It involves ensuring equitable access to rights and resources, recognising diverse identities and lived experience, fostering inclusive participation and representation, and addressing systemic inequality and discrimination. It centres on human rights, including Indigenous self-determination, and the promotion of wellbeing.

Social impact represents the realisation of this commitment in practice. It is the positive, tangible, measurable change created through UTS's focus areas, core activities and partnerships, informed by evidence-based and inclusive approaches.

At UTS:

- **Social justice defines the why** – our values, responsibilities and commitments.

- **Social impact defines the what and how** – the outcomes and the ways these are achieved.

This relationship is crucial. Social impact is not inherently positive and must be interpreted through a social justice lens to ensure outcomes are equitable, ethical and aligned with the University's public purpose.

This means UTS:

- applies knowledge to real-world challenges
- works with communities as partners
- evaluates impact based on what has changed, who benefits and how.

Together, this ensures UTS is both values-driven and outcomes-focused with social justice guiding the intent and social impact demonstrating the results.

Operational Application of the Framework

The Social Impact Framework is designed to operate across multiple levels of the University and across successive institutional strategies. It provides a consistent foundation for faculties, divisions and portfolios to set priorities, coordinate activity and articulate their contribution to social impact within their specific contexts.

In practice, the Framework supports:

- mapping existing activity to identify strengths and gaps
- setting priorities and identifying areas for development
- embedding social impact into planning, performance and work processes
- enabling individuals and teams to align their work with institutional priorities

This supports a staged implementation of the Framework, with increasing alignment of goals, priorities and measures over time.

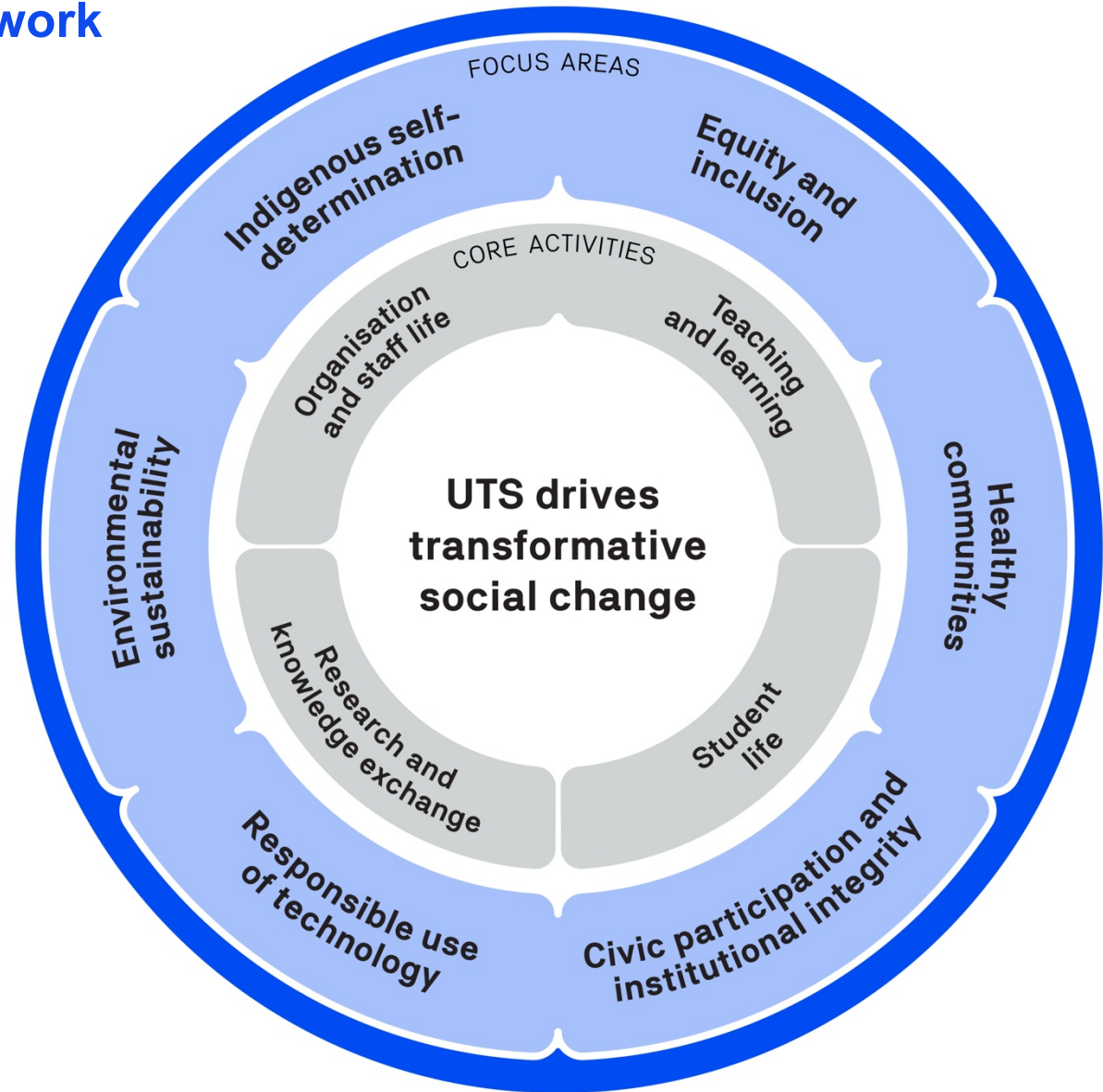
The Framework Structure

The Social Impact Framework operates through three integrated components.

- **Focus areas:** where UTS seeks to create change
- **Core Activities:** how UTS delivers that change
- **Measurement and Reporting:** how impact is assessed and demonstrated.

Together, these components translate UTS's public purpose into **coordinated action, measurable outcomes and a clear institutional narrative of social impact.**

UTS Social Impact Framework Diagram



Focus Areas: Where We Create Change

The Framework identifies six focus areas where UTS seeks **to create meaningful and lasting change** within the university and across broader society.

These focus areas provide a structure for prioritising, delivering and evaluating social impact, and align our work with the broader vision of contributing to **a socially just, healthy, and sustainable future**. They are underpinned by UTS's commitment to social justice and aligned with the UTS 2030 strategic principles/attributes.

Each focus area is supported by sub-priorities that provide further guidance for implementation. These are designed to: support faculties and portfolios to identify and articulate priorities; enable consistent approaches to evaluation and reporting; and align activity across the institution, while allowing for local flexibility.

Detailed sub-priorities are provided in the appendix, and are intended to guide application, rather than prescribe activity. Faculties, divisions and portfolios can prioritise areas most relevant to their context while contributing to shared institutional outcomes.

Focus Area	
Indigenous self-determination	Commitment to Indigenous self-determination is at the heart of what we do. UTS contributes to Indigenous-led positive impact through Indigenous innovation and creativity.
Equity and inclusion	Promoting equity, accessibility and inclusion by removing systemic barriers and enabling full participation, regardless of background, lived experience or identity.
Civic responsibility and institutional integrity	Strengthening ethical leadership, civic participation, transparent governance, and critical and creative thinking to support a more equitable, informed and inclusive society.
Healthy communities	Fostering health, belonging and social resilience through community-led, place-based approaches grounded in reciprocal partnerships.
Environmental sustainability	Advancing climate action and environmental stewardship through sustainable practices, system change and a commitment to environmental justice.
Responsible use of technology	Promoting the ethical, equitable and accountable design, development and use of technology to promote inclusion and positive societal impact.

Core Activities: How We Make an Impact

*At UTS, social impact is embedded in our core functions and everything we do. **The four core activities reflect how priorities are translated into action across the University.***

Each activity captures a distinct way we make an impact: from generating research that informs policy and public debate; to designing inclusive learning environments; empowering students as changemakers; and cultivating a university culture grounded in equity, respect and sustainability. Together, the core activities ensure social impact is a shared, coordinated and lived commitment across the university.

Research & Knowledge Exchange

UTS advances social justice and societal change through research excellence, innovation and knowledge creation. This includes collaborative, community-led research and ethical partnerships, alongside research translation and thought leadership that shapes policy and public discourse to maximise social impact.

Teaching & Learning

UTS embeds equity, ethics, environmental accountability and social responsibility across curricula, delivering inclusive, sustainable and accessible learning environments responsive to diverse student need. Through inclusive teaching and learning practices, we foster belonging and prepare students to lead with integrity and impact.

Student Life

UTS delivers an empowering student experience that strengthens equity pathways and enables students to thrive. We foster leadership development, ethical practice and global citizenship, nurturing lifelong learning. Through student-led advocacy, volunteering and civic engagement, we build vibrant, connected communities supported by clubs, societies and student services.

Organisation & Staff Life

(Institutional Culture, Practices and People)

UTS promotes an ethical and inclusive institutional culture through equitable policies, responsible leadership and accessible environments. We support staff advocacy, volunteering and civic participation, and create space for respectful dialogue on social justice. We embed sustainability across campus operations and strengthen partnerships locally and globally, to amplify our collective impact.

Using the Framework for planning and measuring impact

The UTS Social Impact Framework supports strategic planning, alignment and accountability by enabling activity to be mapped across the six focus areas and four core activities of the university.

Measuring social impact is inherently complex. While there is increasing expectations from governments, funders and accrediting bodies to demonstrate social impact, there is no standardised, best-practice approach across the university sector.

UTS adopts a strategic, institutionally aligned approach that combines:

- high-level quantitative indicators,
- complemented by qualitative case studies

This enables a more comprehensive and meaningful evaluation of social impact, ensuring it is:

- evidence-based
- aligned with the University's public purpose, strategic vision and commitment to social justice
- reflective of both outcomes and lived experience.

Implementation and Next Steps

The next phase of the Social Impact Framework will focus on a staged implementation across the University.

This will include:

- co-designing faculty and portfolio-specific priorities aligned to the Framework
- developing appropriate measures and indicators to support reporting and evaluation
- embedding the Framework into planning, performance and work processes
- strengthening mechanisms for capturing, evaluating and reporting impact

Implementation will be supported through targeted socialisation and engagement across faculties and divisions to build a shared understanding and enable local application.

Over time, this approach will strengthen alignment of priorities, goals and measures, embedding the Framework as a core foundation for planning, decision-making and reporting across the University.

Appendix 1: Focus Areas Sub-Priorities and Detailed Descriptions



Indigenous Self-determination

Commitment to Indigenous self-determination is at the heart of what we do. UTS contributes to Indigenous-led positive impact through Indigenous innovation and creativity.

As a world-leading public university in Indigenous education and research, UTS embeds this commitment across all aspects of our work. An Indigenous lens guides every focus area, ensuring that Indigenous leadership, knowledges and priorities shape our impact and the way we move forward.

The UTS Indigenous Education and Research Strategy 2025-2030 (the Strategy) gives effect to UTS's commitment to Indigenous self-determination in the pursuit of excellence in Indigenous education and research. It is supported by the UTS Wingara Indigenous Employment Strategy and forms one of five principles (Championing Indigenous Excellence) in the UTS 2030 Strategy.

1. **Advancing Indigenous Student Participation and Success**

- Strengthen pathways and increase Indigenous student participation, ensuring sustained growth
- Provide tailored support through Indigenous specific programs to foster a positive student experience and enable success
- Strengthen Indigenous graduate employability and post-study opportunities.

2. **Indigenous Teaching, Learning and Curriculum**

- Embed Indigenous perspectives and content in all onshore courses to support students in achieving the UTS Indigenous Graduate Attribute (IGA)
- Increase staff capability to develop and teach IGA content.
- Increase Indigenous teaching and learning academics in faculties.

3. Fostering Indigenous-led Research and Innovation

- Elevate Indigenous-led and community-driven research that embraces Indigenous self-determination
- Provide Indigenous-led institutional guidance on engagement with Indigenous Knowledges and knowledge systems
- Build Indigenous-led innovation and creative practice
- Advance Indigenous-led research and strengthen Indigenous leadership as global leaders, through sustained capacity building and international collaboration
- Increase internationalisation of Indigenous education and research.

4. Creating Conditions for Culturally Safe Environments

- Take action to provide racially and culturally safe environments for Indigenous students, staff and guests
- Respect, protect and maintain Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property
- Recognise and embed practices that uphold Indigenous-led data sovereignty and stewardship
- Ensure respectful, ethical, community-driven engagement in research, curriculum development and community partnerships.

5. Measuring and Sustaining Impact

- Measure impact through an Indigenous lens, recognising Indigenous specific values, measures and contexts.

The Office of the PVC Indigenous Leadership & Engagement will lead the development of a university-wide UTS Indigenous Impact Framework, which will inform and shape the Social Impact Framework.



Equity and Inclusion

Promoting equity, accessibility and inclusion by removing barriers and enabling full participation in university and society, regardless of background, lived experience or identity

1. Advancing Systemic Equity

- Address institutional and societal barriers through targeted policies, practices and partnerships
- Contribute collaborative solutions to complex social challenges, including housing security, food access and gender-based violence

2. Enabling Full Participation

- Ensure institutional structures support self-determination and full civic, academic, and professional engagement

- Co-design and deliver programs and services that are responsive and accountable to the needs of diverse or marginalised individuals and communities, including people with a disability.

3. Expanding Pathways and Equitable Access to Education

- Expand and strengthen equity pathways for students from diverse backgrounds, embedding culturally informed and inclusive practices.
- Provide integrated financial, academic and wellbeing support to enable student success, and positive graduate and employment outcomes.

4. Creating Safe and Inclusive Environments

- Embed inclusive policies, practices and capability training across leadership, employment, and learning contexts.
- Design and maintain accessible, identity-affirming environments that reflect intersectionality across physical and digital contexts.

5. Elevating Diverse Voices

- Strengthen representation and influence of diverse communities in governance and decision-making.
- Champion respectful dialogue and celebrate diversity as integral to university life.



Civic Responsibility and Institutional Integrity

Empowering individuals and institutions to build an equitable and inclusive society through ethical leadership, civic participation, transparent governance, and critical and creative thinking

1. Strengthening Ethical Leadership and Civic Agency

- Foster ethical decision-making, critical thinking and social awareness across the university community
- Promote student and staff engagement in advocacy, activism, volunteering, and community service
- Support student leadership development grounded in civic responsibility and global citizenship
- Encourage freedom of expression and critical engagement with misinformation and disinformation

2. Fostering Institutional Accountability and Civic Participation

- Promote active participation in university governance and decision-making to support institutional transparency and accountability
- Uphold academic freedom and encourage thought leadership on social and institutional reform
- Strengthen civic and community partnerships to extend the university's social impact
- Support student and staff civic and political engagement, including voting and democratic literacy

3. Advancing Inclusive and Transparent Institutions

- Promote awareness of the role of institutions - legal, financial, educational, and governmental - in shaping equitable societies
- Advocate for strong, inclusive institutions that uphold human rights and support social cohesion and economic stability
- Encourage cross-sector collaboration to address systemic challenges and advance social justice.



Healthy Communities

Fostering health, belonging, and social resilience while co-creating solutions with communities grounded in respectful, reciprocal partnerships that drive cultural, social, environmental and economic prosperity for a thriving society.

1. **Supporting Health, Wellbeing and Social Connection**

- Support individual and community physical and mental health
- Strengthen social connection through peer support networks and community engagement

2. **Empowering Communities**

- Build thriving communities through education, service, and collaboration with a focus on our local precincts.
- Support community-led approaches grounded in lived experience, reciprocity and respectful partnerships

3. **Fostering Culture, Belonging and Creative Expression**

- Support cultural identity, and artistic and creative expression to strengthen belonging, community wellbeing and social cohesion
- Create inclusive, shared spaces through place-making and community design

4. **Advancing Innovation for Social Impact**

- Encourage social innovation and entrepreneurship through creative, technological and community-led solutions
- Improve access to essential services and care through inclusive, tech-enabled approaches.



Environmental Sustainability

Enhancing planetary health and tackling the challenges of climate change and environmental degradation through systemic action, climate risk management, and ecological stewardship to contribute to an equitable, sustainable, and just future.

1. Driving Climate Action

- Reduce carbon emissions and advance climate action through innovation and sustainable operations
- Embed climate risk management and adaptation strategies into planning and decision-making.
- Align institutional strategies with global impact goals

2. Advancing Sustainable Practices

- Promote responsible resource use, including water conservation, energy efficiency and sustainable land management
- Advance circular economy models through reuse, repair, remanufacturing and waste reduction
- Embed sustainability and ethical practices in procurement, infrastructure, and design
- Support staff and student-led sustainability initiatives that foster innovation and accountability.

3. Promoting Environmental Justice and Planning

- Address the disproportionate impacts of environmental harm on marginalised communities
- Foster environmental planning that incorporates community voices and Indigenous knowledge and leadership as foundational to sustainability efforts
- Advocate for governance and policy reforms that recognize environmental justice as a matter of power, equity, and land rights.

4. Ensuring Equitable Access to Healthy Environments

- Improve equitable access to clean air, water, and green spaces
- Monitor environmental health and impact on individuals and communities and encourage innovative solutions for identified issues.
- Embed environmental health as a shared responsibility by integrating sustainability into institutional policies and practices.

5. Equity and Future Impacts

- Advocate for future-focused environmental policies that uphold intergenerational equity and long-term sustainability.
- Drive collaborative efforts to dismantle systemic barriers and advance human rights alongside environmental goals.



Responsible Use of Technology

Promoting the ethical design, development, use and governance of technology to ensure equitable access, participation and accountability, addressing digital divides and upholding individual rights

1. Strengthening Digital Literacy and Ethical Use

- Promote digital literacy and the ethical, responsible use of technology to enable informed participation and protect rights in digital spaces
- Foster safe, inclusive digital environment and address harmful behaviours through education and proactive governance
- Recognise Indigenous data sovereignty and stewardship.

2. Bridging Digital Divide

- Address the digital divide by promoting equitable access to digital tools and skills, while challenging assumptions of universal digital access tackling barriers such as affordability, infrastructure, and usability.
- Encourage human-centered design and inclusive innovation of AI and digital technologies that reflect diverse cultural, gender, and community perspectives.

3. Digital Inclusion and Empowerment

- Uphold individuals' rights in digital environments, including privacy, surveillance, and civic freedoms
- Promote data responsibility through consent, protection, transparency, and accountability to prevent exploitation especially of marginalised groups
- Ensure equitable access to and translation of data for individuals and communities to support informed decision-making.

4. Accountability in Design and Governance

- Embed ethical principles and ensure participation of affected communities in the governance, design, and deployment of AI and digital systems to reflect diverse voices, prevent exclusion and mitigate harm

- Strengthen institutional responsibility for the ethical development, use and regulation of technology

5. Leveraging Technology for Social Impact

- Explore the social impacts of emerging technologies on identity, interaction, wellbeing and the environment
- Harness technology for positive impact and solutions that address societal challenges.

Appendix 2: Indicative Measures and Reporting Approaches

Core Activities	Measure	Type (input, activity output, outcome or impact)	Existing data
Research	Policy Citation score	Outcome	Partially (Council KPIs)
	Social Impact Research Case Studies	Impact (qualitative)	Partially
	Indigenous Impact Case Studies	Outcome and Impact	Partially
Teaching & Learning	Mapping of social justice/community engagement content in the curriculum	Activity	In progress
Student Life	- Success Rates of Culturally Distinct and Equity Groups - Low SES student participation and success - Indigenous student participation and success - Students with a Disability participation and success - Regional & Remote student participation and success	Output/ Outcome	Existing (Council KPIs)

Core Activities	Measure	Type (input, activity output, outcome or impact)	Existing data
Organisation & Staff Life	Proportion of female senior academic staff	Outcome	Existing (Council KPIs)
	Number of women trained in leadership programs	Output	Partially
	Gender Pay Gap (base and total remuneration)	Outcome	Existing (Council KPIs)
	Sustainability Index	Outcome	Existing (Council KPIs)
	Sustainability Impact Dashboard	Output	Existing

Acknowledgement of Authors and Contributors

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