

# The UTS Social Impact Framework

The UTS Social Impact Framework is essentially a roadmap that articulates our desired future as a university and identifies contextually relevant pathways for change. Mapping our understanding of how change happens allows us to unify existing efforts and identify strategic interventions that can step us closer to where we want to be.

The poster depicts this map through stating our shared vision at the centre, then indicating the pathways to change and the key forces at play.

At the heart of the framework is our shared vision for UTS's role in this space. Our vision statement reads: UTS is an agent for social change, transforming communities through research, education and practice.

This is an important role for UTS to take up. As a public purpose institution that generates new knowledge, develops capacity and has a footprint in its local and global community, UTS has a responsibility and a desire to act for positive social change.

Our desire to see UTS acting as an agent for social change is based on the belief that this will result in:

1. Increased contribution to public good
2. Increased social mobility and equity
3. Enabling environments for communities to thrive

We believe that by positively influencing these three core areas, UTS will contribute to a healthy, sustainable and socially just society.

Through a collective effort, we have developed our initial theory for how this desired vision for UTS can become a reality. The framework that has emerged as a result of these deliberations identifies the series of outcomes that are needed for this change to be made possible.

In order for UTS to be an agent for social change, we need to see the following changes:

- Outcome 1: Increased number of equity target groups successfully completing a higher education degree at UTS
- Outcome 2: Students have the agency to enact personal and social responsibility
- Outcome 3: Staff have the confidence and are supported to maximise their social impact
- Outcome 4: Targeted research, teaching and program outcomes having social impact and actively contribute to communities
- Outcome 5: UTS is an advocate, critical voice and thought leader on issues that concern and impact communities

- Outcome 6: UTS business operations and strategies reflecting a long-term independent commitment to social impact

Outcomes 2, 3 and 4 are connected, showing the inherent relationship between students and staff, and their impact through research, teaching and practice.

These six outcomes work together in supporting UTS to reach its vision. Each outcome also is reliant on other interrelated outcomes as preconditions.

The following six sections represent the unfolding of outcomes under each domain. To further clarify relationships, a numbering system is used, with each number from 1 to 6 referring to the domains named, and dot systems further mapping out outcomes relating each domain.

## 1. Increased number of equity target groups successfully completing a higher education degree at UTS

In order for UTS to embrace its responsibility in relation to outcome 1, we need to see (1.1) Increased number of equity target groups access UTS and we need to know that (1.2) UTS supports retention and success of target equity group students.

Increased number equity target groups accessing UTS relies on the nexus of three preconditions read as: (1.1.1) Access schemes and pathway programs for equity target groups are in place; (1.1.2) Improved academic preparedness and outcomes prior to entering university; and (1.1.3) Increased awareness, confidence and motivation towards higher education.

Here we see the outcome (1.1.1.1/1.1.2.1/1.1.3.1) Policies of key internal and external influencers that support widening participation acting as an enabler to (1.1.1) Access schemes and pathway programs. This outcome, alongside two others named below, also contributes to (1.2.2) Improved academic preparedness and outcomes and (1.1.3) Increased awareness, confidence and motivation towards higher education:

- 1.1.2.1/1.1.3.1 Teachers, schools and communities have increased capacity to support students
- 1.1.2.2/1.1.3.2 Communities have the social, cultural and economic capital that enables access

## 2. Students have the agency to enact personal and social responsibility

While our students arrive with considerable civic capacity, UTS also recognises its institutional role as an enabler in this space. The outcomes that are needed, and work together, to achieve outcome 2 are:

- 2.1 Students demonstrate competence in ethical reasoning and empathic decision making
- 2.2 Students engage in critical thinking and collaborative inquiry

- 2.3 Students have the confidence to act
- 2.4 Students work with others across difference to solve public problems

Together, these proficiencies enable students to take personal and social responsibility and positively impact the communities of which they are a part.

The proficiencies enabling students to take personal and social responsibility rely on the following outcomes:

- 2.-.1 Students experience diverse perspectives in their home, community or social networks (including at university)
- 2.-.2 Civic literacy is embedded in teaching and learning
- 2.-.3 Students are recognised and rewarded for social impact related learning and engagement
- 2.-.4 Basic and academic needs of students are being met
- 2.-.5 Teaching and learning practices are enabling, accessible and inclusive

The last of these outcomes also contributes to (1.2) UTS supports retention and success of target equity group students.

One final outcome sits alongside these factors as a necessary precondition to this, as well as other key domains of change in the framework:

- 2.-.6/ 3.4.1/ 4.1 Transformative and generative partnerships are in place

The establishment of long-term relationships, grounded in mutual trust will enable two way learning opportunities that can result in deepened knowledge, improved capacity and impactful engagement in social change. This outcome is related to three other areas of the framework. Firstly, it has a direct relationship to notions of social capital and trust. Also, as indicated by the numbering, this outcome is connected to outcome 3 and outcome 4. These relationships will be detailed in the sections that follow.

### **3. Staff have the confidence and are supported to maximise their social impact**

Social impact, and the desire to support the positive transformation of communities, is embedded in the fabric of our institution. A clear demonstration of this is the contribution of our staff in this space. UTS staff work vigorously, both within and external to their professional roles, towards social change. UTS values the contribution of our staff and, through institutional strategies, processes and programs, it can further recognise and support staff to maximise and multiply their impact.

Four complementary necessary conditions have been identified in relation to this domain. Together they state that, for staff to be supported to maximise their social impact, the following outcomes need to be realised:

- 3.1 Staff have the opportunity to develop their capacity to contribute to social impact (knowledge, skills and abilities)
- 3.2 Staff are recognised and rewarded for their social impact
- 3.3 UTS organisational structures, policies and processes support staff contributions to social impact
- 3.4 Staff work effectively in coordination, collaboration or partnership with others

As previously indicated, outcome (2.-.6/ 3.4.1/ 4.1) contributes to the final outcome in this set. Transformative and generative partnerships underpin effective coordination, collaboration or partnerships.

A relationship between 3.3 and 3.2 is also shown recognising that organisational structures, policies and processes inform staff recognition and reward in relation to impactful work.

## 4. Targeted research, teaching and program outcomes having social impact and actively contribute to communities

Our social impact agenda, and the desire to support the positive transformation of communities, is ambitious in scale. In addition to our focus on widening participation and our contribution to the enhancement of social impact of students and staff, the achievement of our vision for change requires a whole of institution approach that brings together the efforts of our university community. To this end, a commitment to targeted research, teaching and programs that have social impact and actively contribute to communities is required. Transformative and generative partnerships, that are reciprocal and interdependent in nature, are again a necessary precondition of this outcome. Deeply integrated and longstanding relationships can give meaning and relevancy to selected zones of focus.

In addition, two other factors need to be simultaneously realised. These read:

- 4.2 UTS staff are afforded academic freedom within the scope of their field of expertise or when supported by evidence
- 4.3 Internal and external funding and resources support focused practice

The preconditions to the first of these outcomes are also explored. Being afforded academic freedom relies on:

- 4.2.1 UTS environment encourages creativity, radical ideas and interrogation of the status quo
- 4.2.2 Staff acting as evidence based critics are protected from retribution

## 5. UTS is an advocate, critical voice and thought leader on issues that concern and impact communities

Universities act as vessels through which social, cultural and human capital flow and grow. With this comes an advocacy and thought leadership responsibility. To effectively take up its role in this space, UTS needs to engage in meaningful dialogue with society. This form of exchange requires trust and respect of academic integrity by communities - and this in turn relies on academic staff acting with integrity.

- 5.1 Meaningful dialogue takes place between the university and society, sits on the inner grey layer and points to outcome 5
- 5.1.1 Academic integrity is respected outside the university, sits on the centre grey layer and points to 5.1
- 5.1.1.1 Academic staff act with integrity, is the final precondition sitting on the outer layer and pointing to outcome 5.1.1

Sitting alongside 5.1 are another two outcomes that are needed in order for UTS to take up its role as an advocate, critical voice and thought leader on issues that concern and impact communities. They read:

- 5.2 Appropriate channels of communication are used to popularise ideas
- 5.3 Explicit financial support or resources are in place for staff to work in this way

## 6. UTS business operations and strategies reflecting a long-term independent commitment to social impact

UTS's investment in the Social Impact Framework is a reflection of the organisation's long-term commitment to the public purpose role of the institution. The critical role the organisation itself plays in bringing about social change is well recognised and reflected in its operations.

The roadmap identifies five outcomes that work together to further enhance UTS's position in this space. They read:

- 6.1 UTS business practices are ethical, responsible and sustainable
- 6.2 UTS strives for exemplary workforce policies and practices
- 6.3 UTS is inclusive and accessible
- 6.4 Recruitment and retention of staff equity target groups is exemplary
- 6.5 UTS processes are fair for students

## Other elements of the framework

The six outcomes covered, and their preconditions, speak to the change that is needed at UTS in order for our vision to be realised. A number of other elements also need consideration.

### UTS leadership and culture

UTS leadership and culture is a critical foundation to the six domains of change identified. Without supportive and inclusive institutional cross-level leadership and culture, the desired change we seek will be unattainable. In the framework, this is represented by a foundational outcome:

- Leadership and the culture at UTS is inclusive and supports the public purpose role of the university

### Social capital and trust

Social change does not happen in isolation. Meaningful relationships, strengthened by mutual trust and respect, are essential preconditions to the transformational change to which UTS seeks to contribute. A final area of significant importance, therefore, is UTS's social capital both within the organisation, and in terms of the relationship it holds with the communities of which it is a part.

"UTS has the social capital and is trusted to bring about social change" represent this.

The next factor reads: "Alumni and partners are willing to act through and with UTS". With social capital and trust, we will be able to sustain longstanding relationships that contribute to greater impact for communities.

### External influencers

We also recognise that we do not operate in a vacuum and that there are a number of external influencers that will impact our progress in positive and negative ways. The sections that follow describe these and discuss their representation on the map.

Four significant external influencers have been identified as relevant to this framework. They read:

- Government policies and practices
- Industry
- Media
- International frameworks