



# UNSW Strategy: Progress for all

**Discussion Paper**

July 2024



**UNSW**  
SYDNEY

## Acknowledgement of Country

UNSW is located on the unceded territory of the Bidjigal (Kensington campus) Gadigal (City and Paddington campuses) Ngunnawal (UNSW Canberra) Dharug nation (Liverpool and Parramatta) Birpai (Port Macquarie campus) Gumbaynggir (Coffs Harbour campus) Wilykali (Fowler's Gap) and Wiradjuri peoples (Albury, Griffith and Wagga Wagga campuses) who are the Traditional Custodians of the lands where UNSW is situated. We pay our deepest respect to the Traditional Custodians of the Lands and acknowledge Elders past and present.

## Contributors

This discussion paper has been prepared with contributions from Alison Avery, Cyrille Bouzy, Vinita Chanan, Claudia Carr, Perrine Huber, Kayla Lochner, and Davina McArthur.

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# Introduction from the Vice-Chancellor

UNSW Sydney is a wonderful University.

We are a community of people – students, staff, alumni and partners – who share an invaluable connection: the singular purpose of serving the public good through education, research and genuine engagement with the world around us.

From our earliest days, through to our 75th anniversary this year, UNSW has pursued this one, steady goal. We were established in 1949 to create educational opportunities, to give more people the skills NSW needed to progress and prosper after World War II, and to address great societal and environmental challenges. So too, in 2024 we focus on the transformative potential of education, the extraordinary power of innovative research and the great amalgam of these for positive societal impact.

UNSW is now one of the world's best universities. We are a high-calibre education and research institution with leading experts in disciplines that are having very real impacts on the prosperity of people and communities right across the world.

This current of positive societal impact runs from our earliest days through the UNSW of today into our aspirations for the future of what our University can be.

Now, as we mark 75 years in 2024, it's apt that we are also developing the University's next strategy.

*UNSW Strategy: Progress for All* will identify our priorities for the next 10 years and set the cornerstone for our centenary in 2049.

*UNSW Strategy: Progress for All* will enable us to adapt to the changing needs and expectations of the communities we serve.



It will allow us to anticipate and respond to the disruptions and dynamics of our global operating environment.

And it will ensure we are the best UNSW we can be, not for our own sake but for others – as we continue to pursue our ultimate goal of progress for all.

Anniversaries, of course, remind us of our past. But they also evoke the future, prompting us to consider existential questions like Why? and What next?

*The UNSW Strategy: Progress for All – Discussion Paper* asks some of these questions. It sets out where we've come from, where we are and where we want to be. It's designed to stimulate thought and conversation that spurs UNSW's people – you – to share your views, knowledge and experience in the strategy consultation sessions.

I invite you to read the discussion paper and to get involved in the consultation process.

Together, we can prepare UNSW for our next decade, for our centenary – and beyond.

Together, we can continue to pursue progress for all.

## **Professor Attila Brungs**

Vice-Chancellor and President  
UNSW Sydney

# Why the strategy is important

## Our dynamic operating environment

In these dynamic and uncertain global times, universities like UNSW are more important than ever. Striving for the public good and having a positive impact on society have never been more critical. Nor perhaps, more complex.

While our founding purpose endures, the environment in which we operate is increasingly dynamic. It's an environment affected by global trends, societal transitions and factors that UNSW must anticipate, prepare for, and respond to.

Significant disruptors and uncertainties – among them technological, sociological, environmental, geopolitical, economic and regulatory – are impacting our operating environment in Australia and internationally. Major transitions are currently underway that are affecting many facets of society, including the nature of work, social cohesiveness, environmental sustainability and energy, health and ageing, and the resilience of communities and societies.

This is an atmosphere primed for UNSW to demonstrate our value as one of the world's leading universities. Amid declining trust in public institutions, poor investment in research and development, and sluggish productivity, UNSW can demonstrate our significance as a national and international asset, building our social licence through expertise ethically applied and proven, verifiable positive societal impact.

*This is why the strategy is important.*

Our next strategy will enable us to be the best UNSW we can be and help us by:

1. Providing fit-for-purpose support and an environment geared to delivering world-class, innovative research, providing excellence in education and relevant student experiences, bringing together partners who share our vision for improving lives around the world, and advancing our genuine engagement with society.

2. Increasing our organisational agility and adaptability so we can respond to the dynamic, rapidly changing national and global contexts in which we operate.
3. Highlighting areas where our strengths and focus can make the biggest difference.

By tackling significant global challenges head on and embracing requisite opportunities with gusto, we can demonstrate UNSW's capacity to improve the world around us and to change lives for the better.

*This is why the strategy is important.*

But it's important to acknowledge that we simply can't do everything.

So, how do we prioritise? How do we think differently? How do we create the time to do the most important things?

In my first few years as Vice-Chancellor, I have met thousands of colleagues, students, alumni and University partners who are making significant contributions to their fields, to the community and to the world at large. The quest for positive impact is a lustrous thread that connects us all.

But I've also observed and I've had discussions with many people at UNSW about the breadth of work that we could do. There are seemingly innumerable ways we could improve lives around the world, with countless opportunities for research innovation and translation, for advancements in student experience and educational offerings, and for how our core functions are best enabled.

Colleagues are doing excellent, world-class work right across UNSW. It's important that we don't try to do too much and so dilute our impact or burn ourselves out.

*This is why the strategy is important.*

As we build the strategy together, we need to determine those areas in which we can really 'turn the dial' in terms of scale or effect: where we can have optimal positive impact on lives and communities right around the world. This also supports us to think about the future relevance of our work. We're doing many important things at the moment. The strategy will help us determine what we continue to do and what we change or stop doing.



## Strategic principles

To guide these determinations and our strategic priorities, we have established four strategic principles that will keep us focused on why we are doing what we are doing. These principles will help us continually validate the authenticity and effectiveness of our activities, for the life of the strategy.

The four strategic principles are:

- **Ambition for all:** Embrace UNSW's position as an excellent and premier global university confidently, continuously meeting our responsibility to apply our incredible strengths and realise our immense potential, working together towards progress for all.
- **Distinctiveness:** Establish an unmistakable character that defines and distinguishes UNSW's people, our work and our impact.
- **Societal impact amplified:** Make bold choices that enable us to amplify the positive societal impact of UNSW's research, education and engagement on a global scale.
- **Setting our next foundations:** Make solid foundational operating decisions that embed the appropriate systems, processes, approaches and agility for a dynamic, disruptive global environment and equip UNSW for generations to come.

As you read this discussion paper and consider sharing your views and insights during the strategy consultation process, I encourage you to be guided by these four principles. They essentially create the 'vibe' of the strategy: its character, qualities and human connection.

## A strategy for everyone

That human connection is the heart of our work.

As I wrote in my introduction to this discussion paper, UNSW is a community of people – students, staff, alumni and partners – who share an invaluable connection: the singular purpose of serving the public good through education, research and genuine engagement with society.

*UNSW Strategy: Progress for All* will be a strategy for everyone in the UNSW community. It will be a strategy in which all students, staff, alumni and University partners will be able to see themselves and their work.

*UNSW Strategy: Progress for All* will put UNSW in the best position to fulfil our purpose in a dynamic, ever more complex global environment.

*UNSW Strategy: Progress for All* will enable UNSW to deliver our founding and our enduring purpose: positive impact for all parts of society on a global scale through education, research and engagement.

### That is why the strategy is critical to our success.

And that is why I encourage you to read this discussion paper and to participate in the consultation as we build our strategy, together.



## Why this discussion paper?

We have created this discussion paper to facilitate student and staff engagement in the strategy consultation process (July–September 2024).

The paper is designed to stimulate thought and conversation. It provides background information about UNSW's size and shape, our strengths and distinctive features. It describes our operating environment, setting out a range of focal points, opportunities and challenges facing the higher education sector.

The discussion paper will help us to explore perspectives from across the UNSW community and guide our discussions as we seek to answer the key questions outlined below.

Overall, the discussion paper seeks to highlight some of the key considerations in designing our next strategy – one that will enable us to be the best UNSW we can be, fully equipped for the dynamics of today and tomorrow. We want our strategy to be ambitious. We want to hear your ideas and provocations regarding the ways we can express and achieve our ambitions.

I encourage you to read this discussion paper and allow it to spark your thoughts as you take part in creating the *UNSW Strategy: Progress for All*.

For more information about the consultation process, including opportunities to get involved, please visit [unsw.edu.au/strategy/have-your-say](https://unsw.edu.au/strategy/have-your-say).

## The key questions we are seeking to answer

These are some of the questions we would like to answer during the strategy development process. They will form the basis of our discussions and guide our conversations.

- What is the ambitious vision for UNSW over the next 10 years and for our centenary in 2049? In education, research and engagement?
- What are the fundamental societal challenges that our strategy will address?
- What is UNSW's value proposition for students and staff? How is our value proposition distinct?
- What does UNSW excel at? What distinguishes us from others? In Australia? Overseas?
- How big or small should UNSW be? What should our student demographics look like?
- What should be the key strategic priorities to deliver in our strategy? Consider:
  - How will we evolve our education offering to exceed student expectations for personalisation, quality and convenience, at scale?
  - How will we deliver an ambitious societal impact agenda?
  - How will we continue to deliver research excellence including translation and commercialisation?
- How will we create strong and meaningful partnerships and collaborations?
- What are the critical operational changes in the following areas and how do we adopt them?
  - AI and other digital technologies
  - Financial sustainability
  - Systems, platforms and infrastructure
- What are the specific, actionable, measurable actions we will undertake to achieve our strategic priorities?
- What are the most important changes we need to make internally to the University to best set us up for success to deliver the new strategy?

# The current context for UNSW and the higher education sector

In developing the strategy it's useful to understand the current context for our University, including where we are at and our operating environment. In this section we provide an overview of the current state for UNSW, some of our strengths and distinctive features as well as the broader, dynamic operating environment in which we are developing the strategy.

## UNSW by numbers

### Profile

UNSW celebrates our 75th anniversary in 2024. We have seven faculties comprised of 47 schools across four main sites in Sydney and Canberra. UNSW is a member of the Group of Eight (Go8) research-intensive universities. UNSW College, a UNSW controlled entity, offers pathway programs to study at university.

### Students

In 2023 we taught 70,234 students for a total load of 48,682 equivalent full-time student load (EFTSL). Of these, 28,879 students commenced their studies in 2023. Students were 53 per cent undergraduate, 38 per cent postgraduate, seven per cent research, and two per cent non-award. Sixty per cent were domestic and 40% international.

In 2022, of our domestic students, 7.4 per cent were from low socio-economic status backgrounds, 1.2 per cent were Indigenous, 7.2 per cent were from regional or remote locations and 8.6% had a disability.

The most recent published retention rate for commencing bachelor students at UNSW is 91 per cent (2021), which is the highest in NSW and third-highest among Australian universities.

In the 2023 Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) Student Experience Survey of undergraduates, UNSW scored 71.7 per cent for the quality of the entire educational experience and 77.8 per cent for teaching quality.

The percentage of recent graduates in full-time employment sits at 81.3 per cent, equal second in the Go8 behind Monash (82.0%), and ahead of the all-universities average of 79.4 per cent (2023).

### Research

In 2023 UNSW was awarded \$67m new Australian Research Council (ARC) funding and \$106.2m new National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) funding across all schemes, placing us third in the Go8 and nationally for both funding bodies.

In the 2022 Survey of Commercialisation Outcomes from Public Research, UNSW recorded 12 spinouts and 47 patent applications, the highest number of new patent family applications for an Australian university and the second-highest overall, behind CSIRO. The spinout companies operate in fields including artificial intelligence, quantum computing, clean energy and sustainable packaging, medical treatments for chronic pain and tools to diagnose autism spectrum disorder.





## Engagement

UNSW has more than 387,000 alumni around the world, together with extensive local, national and international partnerships.

## Rankings

In the 2025 QS World University Rankings, UNSW ranked third in Australia and 19th in the world. In the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2024, UNSW ranked sixth in Australia with a global rank of 84. UNSW placed seventh globally in the 2024 THE Impact Rankings.

## Staff

UNSW has a headcount of 7588 (excluding casual staff). Our staff profile is a mix of 45% academic staff and 55% professional staff, split 81% full-time and 19% part-time.

## Revenue

In 2023 UNSW generated \$2,689m in revenue. Of this, 43% was sourced from the Australian government, 41% from fees and charges and 16% from other sources, including consultancy fees and state government. Of the fees and charges, 80% can be attributed to onshore international students.

Even more important than revenue is the margin on various activities. Our domestic students and research cost more to educate and conduct than the funding we receive for those activities. International students and short forms of learning cost less than the income received. Philanthropic revenue and the revenue from short-form learning and international students are the only sources of funding in the University from which we can draw to make up the losses on most of our activities. While this does not mean that we will stop these core activities, we need to consider this when we work through developing the strategy.



# UNSW's strengths and distinctive features

When we asked what makes UNSW distinct and what our strengths are, we heard the following from staff and students in our community.

## Our motto

*Scientia Corde Manu et Mente*, 'Knowledge by Heart, Hand and Mind', distinguishes UNSW as a University that's committed to social justice and responsibility, yet is technology-focused with strong industry engagement, an entrepreneurial history and highly employable graduates.

## Our commitment to impact

The interweaving of excellence, impact and sustainability matters to us. For example, we are proud that our world-leading photovoltaics research has shaped the modern global solar energy industry. Our commitment to impact will increasingly define our focus, with our newly developed Societal Impact Framework providing guidance on increasing social impact and serving communities.

## Our commitment to students

We are one of the top universities in Australia and a global leader when it comes to employability for our students. In 2024 UNSW graduates were named the most employable in Australia in the *Australian Financial Review's* Most Employable University rankings, for the fifth consecutive year.

## Our reputation

We have a strong reputation with industry, government and the communities in which we operate. This is aided by strong rankings among the world's leading universities. This means we can be more influential in our engagement, creating a positive cycle where both domestic and international students aspire to study with us, especially among our global neighbours in Asia. UNSW ranked 19th globally in the 2025 QS World University Rankings and seventh globally in the 2024 THE Impact Rankings.



## Our programs

We have many world-leading initiatives and programs. For example, we are home to two of the six Australian University Trailblazers: the Trailblazer for Recycling and Clean Energy (TRaCE) and the Defence Trailblazer. These programs are tasked with strengthening sovereign capability for Australia and institutional capacity in research commercialisation. Another example is our Scientia program, which attracts and supports exceptional early to mid-career academics, helping them undertake impactful and world-changing research.

## Our collaborative culture

We are collaborative and innovative. We practise interdisciplinarity where appropriate in our research and in offering our extensive suite of combined degrees. We are focused on what we do and our impact in the world, as opposed to just who we are. We build an inclusive and collegial culture. We have a focus on excellence without being entitled or elitist.



## **Our innovation and entrepreneurship focus**

We have a commitment to entrepreneurship and innovation that comes through in many ways. We were the nation's top entrepreneurial university in 2023 in *The Australian's* 2023 Research Awards, first in Australia for alumni start-ups that raised less than US \$10m and we topped Australia and New Zealand for start-ups/spinouts, new patents, and for industry-university partnership with OciusX.

## **Our sustainability focus**

Through our three-year sustainability plans, we are committed to continuously improving environmental performance across our operations. From the way we plan, construct, operate and power our buildings, to how we reduce and manage waste and travel to and around our campuses, we are always looking at ways to reduce our impact on the environment.

## **Our Indigenous strategy**

In 2018 UNSW launched its first Indigenous Strategy, representing a powerful vision for the future of UNSW and our commitment to creating an environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, researchers and staff to thrive. We have always led the way as a pioneer in Indigenous education and research, as well as in contributing to important nation-building activities like the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

Our Indigenous strategy will be at the heart of our next strategy encapsulated through the development of a micro-treaty. By establishing a micro-treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff, alumni and our Aboriginal communities will gain a meaningful voice in shaping the dynamics of their relationship with the University now and into the future.

## **Our talented and resilient staff**

We attract exceptionally bright staff and in our recruitment processes we put a strong emphasis on talent. Throughout changes and disruptions, people have shown to be resilient in overcoming challenges. The talent of our people is a key differentiator for the future.



# The higher education operating environment

## Context

UNSW's operating environment is inherently dynamic. This has been the case since we were established in 1949. While as an institution we have continued to respond to this environment, the disruptors and transitions we are facing now are arguably some of the most complex in our history and may continue to be so.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly changed how universities teach and interact with their students, necessitating a swift shift to online learning. Another major change to education (which was in train but escalated through COVID-19) was that students have come to expect universities to provide personalised experiences aligned to their individual preferences and lifestyles.

Workplaces are fundamentally changing. People, business and society as a whole are demanding universities pivot to providing lifelong learning and skill building. Higher education institutions are now adding these education offerings to cater to rapid technological advancements and changing job requirements that demand regular upskilling. The emergence and proliferation of generative AI in late 2022 accelerates the potential of personalised learning and augments the ability to provide authentic learning.

Increasing pressures domestically, such as rising costs of living, university social license to operate and housing affordability also impact on the context in which UNSW operates. Furthermore, the changing geopolitical context and international events have a direct influence on our education, research and engagement. As these changes converge and intersect, universities will need to consider how their business and financial models evolve and adapt alongside new markets.

## Key trends in higher education

### Digital transformation

Rapid evolution of technology is leading the digital transformation that will impact all areas of University operations. Generative AI technology is already disrupting traditional business models, creating a new division of labour between machines and humans. Along with being at the forefront of AI research, universities are uniquely placed to lead on both integration and governance of AI and other associated technological advancements, with key opportunities for commercialisation.

Advancements in AI technology are driving an increasingly sophisticated approach to unlocking knowledge from enormous volumes of text-based data to uncover new patterns, connections and ideas, with impacts on how universities operate, staff work and students learn. Technology has become increasingly ubiquitous and accessible, profoundly influencing every discipline and field, from academia to business and in our communities.

Recognising the significant societal implications of this transformation, universities must champion the ethical and responsible application of generative AI across their educational programs, administrative functions and research, and become advocates to build public acceptance of new technologies.

The future of UNSW is most likely to include only incremental staff growth but a plethora of new opportunities for the University. AI and digital technology will be key to freeing up staff time to focus on higher priorities, enabling them to devote time to more valuable activities and ensure ongoing workloads are manageable.

**A study by the McKinsey Global Institute reports that by 2030, at least 14% of employees globally could need to change their careers due to digitisation, robotics and AI advancements.**



## **New ways of learning and working**

Increasing use of AI for personal instruction for individual learners has seen universities applying adaptive learning technologies to a greater extent in their curricula or as extra-curricula supports. While there are many private providers of learning support, universities will usually have best access to student success data and reliable and curated sources for AI to draw on in an equitable sense. Assessment of student learning will need to adapt to include AI tools as part of the student processes and products. An increasingly small amount of assessment will be without digital or AI assistance.

With a rise in the number of badging and credentialing verification services and service providers, there are emerging partnerships and integrations between universities and providers that allow learners to show evidence of their learning and keep digital credentials from different providers attached to their online social and professional profiles.

Ensuring that universities also respond to the demand for hands-on modes of learning will continue to be important for complementing traditional university studies with skill-based experiences.

In addition to the digital transformation, shifts in international labour markets to favour skills development and lifelong learning will see the creation of millions of new jobs, with millions of existing jobs lost.

Flexible working is now the norm across many industries. Employees are looking for organisations that provide work flexibility, therefore organisations need to think creatively about this important aspect of culture and operations to accommodate flexible working practices and thus retain talent.

**Analytical thinking,  
creative thinking and  
training in AI and big  
data are now the top  
three priorities for  
skills development.**

## **University students of the future**

More than 235 million higher education students were enrolled globally in 2020, more than double the 100 million students enrolled in 2000.

By 2030 there will also be more 25–34 years old with a tertiary degree compared to 2013.

Jobs and Skills Australia anticipates that over the next decade more than 90 per cent of new jobs will require post-school qualifications. This includes around 50 per cent requiring bachelor-degree or higher qualifications and 44 per cent requiring vocational education and training (VET) qualifications. Further, evidence prepared for the review by Oxford Economics Australia for the University Accord suggested that 90 per cent of 25 to 34 year olds will require a tertiary education by 2050.

By 2050 66 per cent of the world's middle class will be in Asia, with an increasing number of the world's top 200 institutions now located in Asia. In STEM, 75 per cent of graduates will be in BRICS countries\* compared to eight per cent in the US and four per cent in Europe. This signals a swing to student markets from low- and middle-income countries over traditional US and European partners.

However, students will increasingly be 'fitting' university into their lives rather than dedicating a period of their life to post-school learning. This is evidenced by Australian government data showing that in May 2023 13 per cent of all students worked more than 35 hours a week – meaning they were effectively working full time while studying full time – up from seven per cent in 2019. In that time, the proportion of full-time local students not working has decreased from 33.4 to 27 per cent.

\* BRICS countries include Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

## Domestic pressures

While many pressures impacting UNSW are driven by macro-geopolitical forces and emerging technological practice, there are numerous domestic issues that UNSW will need to navigate to maintain social licence to operate. Key policy priorities for government, often reflecting constituencies, include cost of living, housing affordability and healthcare, support for the care economy, critical minerals and defence, with consideration as to how many of these issues intersect with population-related challenges such as migration.

The longer-term budgetary challenge of expenditure to mitigate impacts from cost of living and housing affordability converge with the increased spending needed on digital transformation, ageing populations and rising demand for care services, as well as global challenges such as population ageing and geopolitics.

Importantly, evidence suggests that public distrust of some innovation and declining public confidence in institutions may compromise UNSW's positioning as an education provider. Despite this, academics and scientists remain some of the most trusted professions, which gives UNSW a competitive advantage over other private research institutions.

It is vital that universities continue to maintain social licence to operate. Attitudes to universities tackling national and social challenges suggest that the public is supportive of universities engaging in these matters, although teaching and research remain their top priorities. Universities can safeguard this through benefit-sharing with the communities we serve and increasing access for student populations that have been unable to access tertiary education previously. Maintaining high rankings is a contributor to retaining social licence. It will also become increasingly important to reduce the emerging divides between international and domestic cohorts and between generations of learners.

## University business and funding models

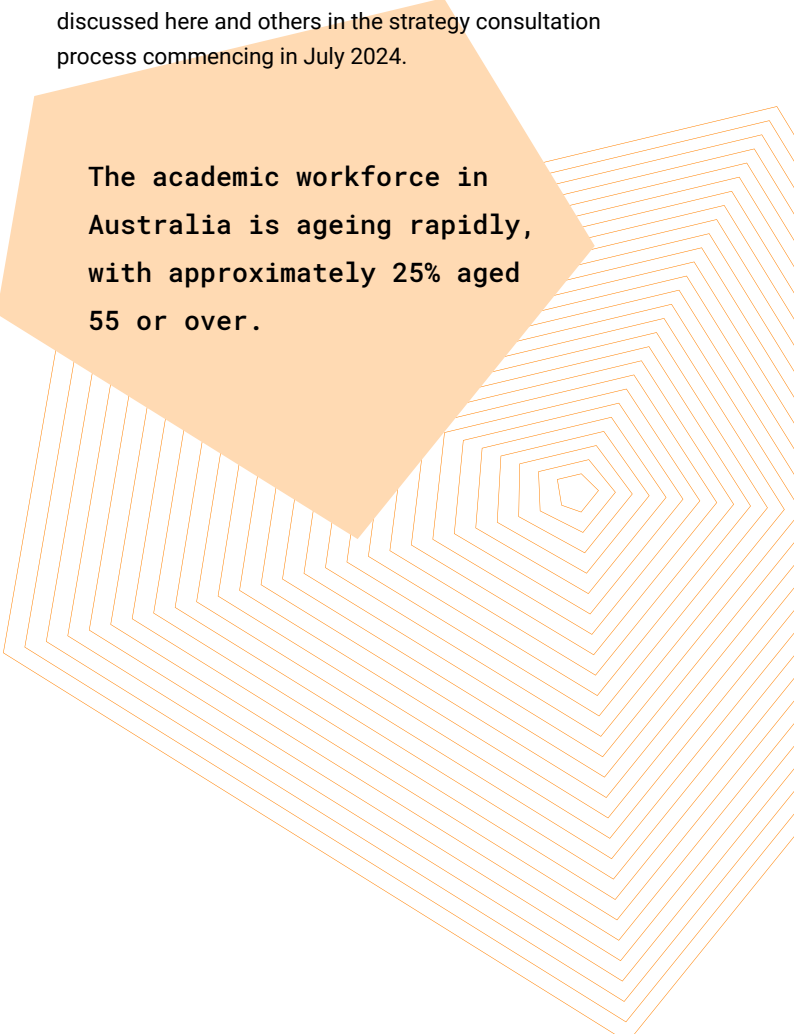
Universities were designed around the functions and needs of academics, but current market trends are demanding new models aligned to the social and economic realities of the communities universities serve.

Long-term research funding issues mean that universities are increasingly needing to fund more of their research themselves. These issues compromise research quality and reputation and can limit the university from pursuing opportunities. New revenue streams and business models will be required into the future.

University funding models have seen tuition prices tied to previous-year student costs, the rate of inflation and competitor pricing. This ignores what it costs the institution to offer education.

Finally, universities will need to attract new talent to replace an ageing workforce, while combatting the corresponding loss of institutional knowledge and the emerging need for non-traditional operating models.

We will continue to explore the trends and influences discussed here and others in the strategy consultation process commencing in July 2024.



**The academic workforce in Australia is ageing rapidly, with approximately 25% aged 55 or over.**

# UNSW opportunities for our future strategy

Building on the discussion above, we have considered our areas of focus and challenges. These represent opportunities for UNSW to develop a strong, forward-thinking strategy that will focus our efforts for the next decade and equip us to anticipate and respond to future dynamics and complexities.

## Focal points and challenges

What we need to focus on	Challenges we need to adapt to
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leveraging our expertise in key emerging industries and issues (such as AI and climate science) to build commercialisation, research and education opportunities (for example, consider ‘first mover’ advantages in all areas).</li> <li>• Emerging integration of AI and new technologies globally provide space for UNSW to create workload changes, education delivery and data access and storage.</li> <li>• Partnering with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, colleagues and communities so that they have a meaningful voice in shaping the dynamics of their relationship with the University now and into the future.</li> <li>• Meeting our commitments to equity and access for underrepresented students.</li> <li>• New and emerging student populations in Asia and the Pacific could provide new student market opportunities.</li> <li>• Increasing partnerships and collaborations in teaching, research and engagement to further drive impact.</li> <li>• Consider diversifying our teaching offerings and revenue streams through lifelong learning, transnational education and greater utilisation of our different locations (campus and locations in Greater Sydney, NSW/ACT and globally)</li> <li>• Strengthening our commitment to student safety and employment conditions to maintain UNSW being an institution and employer of choice.</li> <li>• Exploring and testing new opportunities for staff to develop including lifelong learning, flexible working and support for digital upskilling.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New market competitors (for example, non-traditional educational institutions including private sector) offering compelling educational programs that impact on traditional delivery modes.</li> <li>• Dependence on income from international students leaves us susceptible to global events (for example, COVID-19) or local policy (for example, student caps) that impact on this revenue stream.</li> <li>• Increasing competitiveness and impact from universities located in and outside Australia (for example, in Asia) may reduce the significance of UNSW’s reputation and rankings if commitment to excellence is not maintained.</li> <li>• Changing nature of global workforce and role of universities may constrain UNSW’s impact if it does not enhance graduate employability or social licence to operate.</li> <li>• Overleveraging our ‘expertise’ will affect our social licence if we appear out of touch and imperious. We need to make sure we appreciate when and where the higher education sector is not understood or appreciated by the community.</li> <li>• Climate change and the related non-linear consequences to our operations, our community and Earth systems</li> <li>• Cyber security and other online safety threats that require significant investment in the latest digital infrastructure.</li> </ul>

UNSW must be committed to increasing innovation pipelines for education, research and workforce development, while also embracing the new opportunities in collaboration and diversity these changing contexts offer. As a large organisation, exploring what being a ‘first mover’ looks like for us will be critical to working flexibly as 2049 rapidly approaches.

Overall, UNSW is well placed to respond to and shape the future of higher education. Building on our significant strengths in research and education, and a reputation for working within changing global contexts, there is a need to consolidate and prioritise UNSW’s ambitions towards 2049 to ensure the University maintains its social license to operate.



# Strategic framework

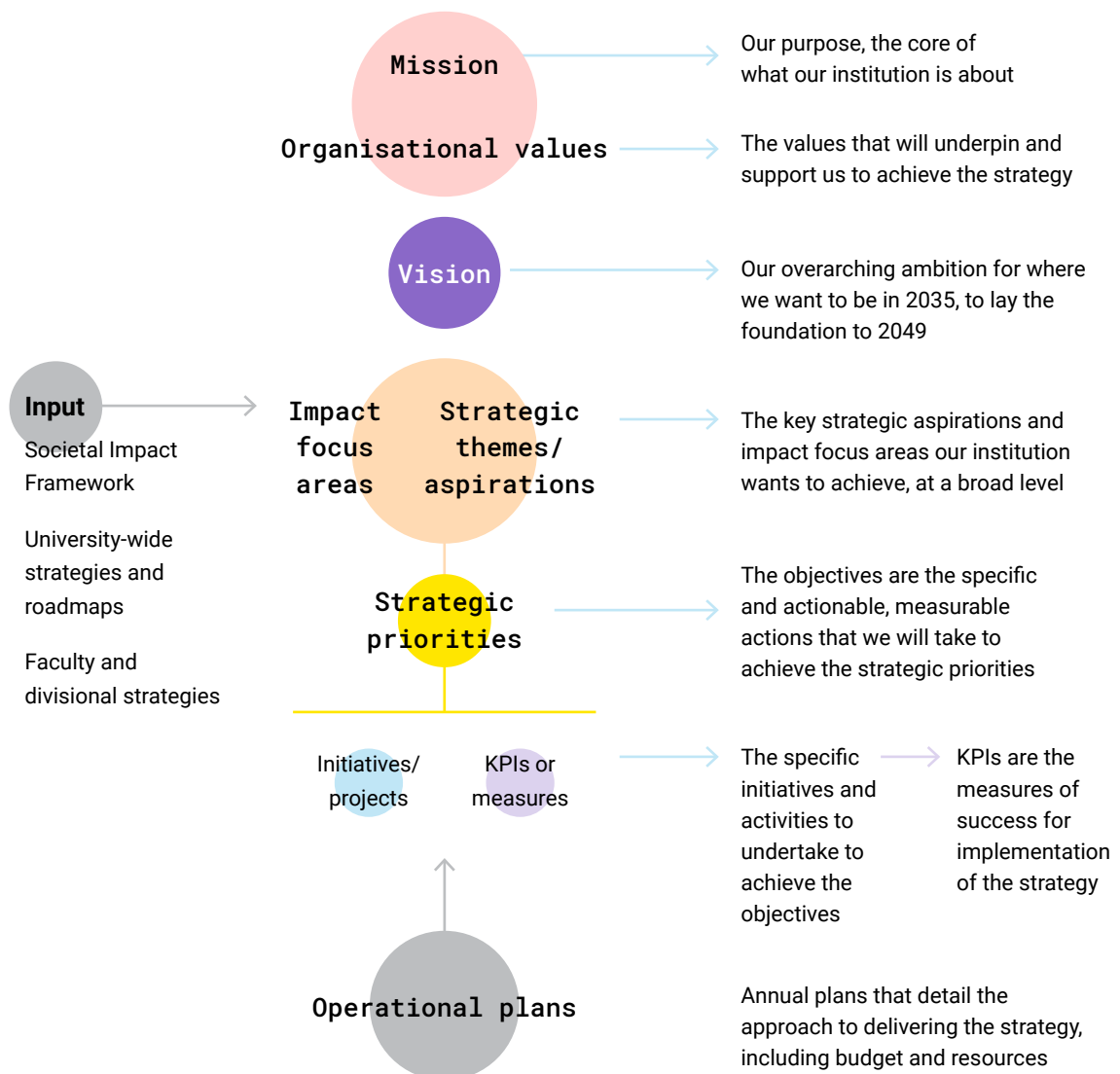
As we develop our strategy, we will be guided by the strategic framework in the diagram below.

The framework will help us structure discussion about our ambition for UNSW's future and the aspirations or themes that will help us achieve our vision.

The core purpose – or **mission** – for UNSW, namely our focus on education, research and engagement, and the existing UNSW **values** will continue into the new strategy.

In developing the strategy, we will focus on the **vision**, our **strategic themes, priorities, initiatives** and **key performance indicators** (KPIs).

The **impact focus areas** (the green circle in the diagram) will be developed through the work on the Societal Impact Framework.



# Work that will inform the strategy

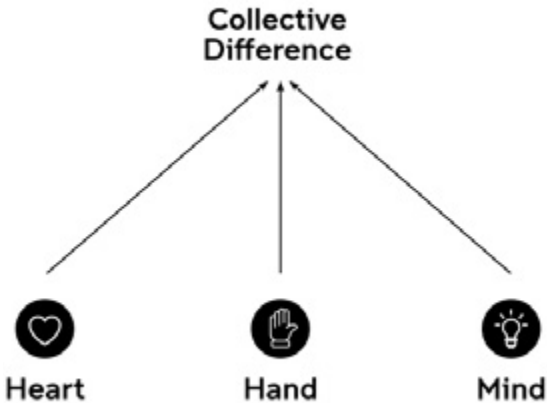
We are conscious that there is significant work underway across the University that will provide critical inputs to the development of the strategy. Several key programs are described here.

## Project Symphony

UNSW has respectfully updated and refreshed our brand over the years to ensure it is contemporary and relevant. In 2019 we undertook a major brand project that aimed to elevate and increase consistency in how we present UNSW in all contexts. We wanted to build a greater emotional connection with audiences and present compelling reasons for them to choose UNSW.

The most critical and widely embraced output of this updated brand strategy was the introduction of **heart** to elevate UNSW's existing focus on **hand** and **mind**.

In 2023 Project Symphony commenced the most recent brand work with the aim of sharpening our brand strategy for a post-COVID world. The work sought to improve collaboration and coordination internally to optimise UNSW's brand impact.



UNSW added 'corde' (heart) to our motto as part of the brand strategy developed in 2019.



The Project Symphony research took an evidence-based, collaborative approach. It involved approximately 4500 respondents across seven countries and our most important stakeholder groups, including current and future students, staff, alumni, industry, government, donors and the community.

The research findings informed the way we are now able to guide perceptions of our main audiences to increase brand impact and create new cross-audience campaigns that drive business outcomes.

Our brand personality has three main traits that resonate with our audiences. UNSW sparks curiosity, provokes thought and inspires action. We are concise, using restrained, clear and simple language and messages. Our University is optimistic, energetic and confident, “adding yellow in a world of grey”.

### Progress for All

Project Symphony discovered ‘**Progress for All**’. It encapsulates what UNSW is all about.

In an age of anxiety and gloom, the world needs a new philosophy for the future. We want to spark the conversation and progress for all, by shining a light on our relentless progress to date and our determination to help it persevere in the future for the benefit of all. We can be the optimistic antidote in environments of pessimistic discussion and ignorance of facts.

*UNSW Strategy: Progress for All* is the title of our new strategy, ensuring positive societal impact is at the heart of everything we design and do.

## Societal Impact Framework

The inaugural UNSW Societal Impact Framework (SIF) is our anchoring purpose and commitment to improve life on earth. The SIF is a vital input into the strategy.

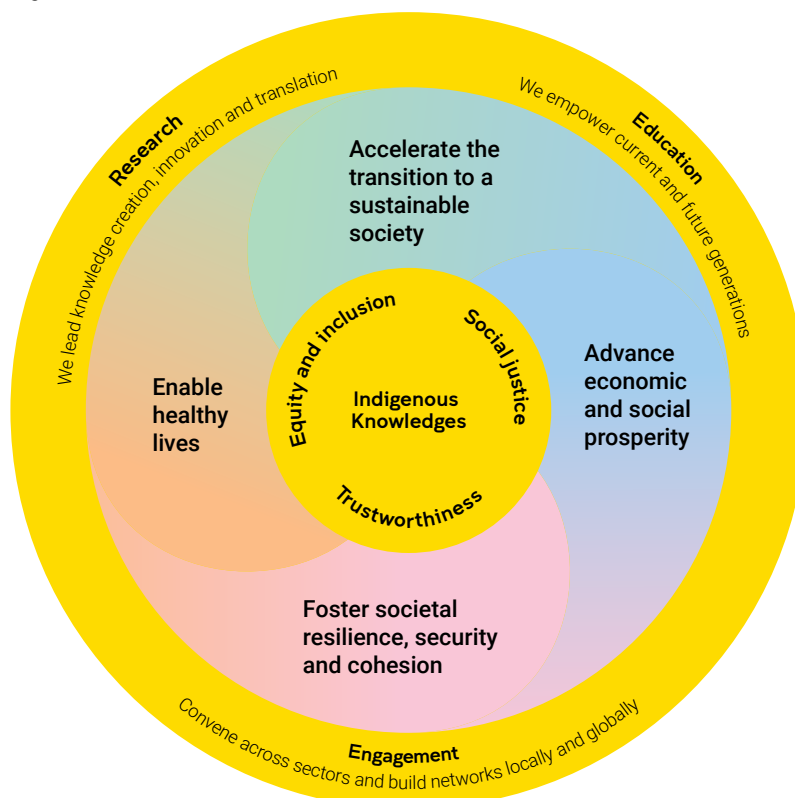
The framework has been informed by consultation with more than 850 UNSW stakeholders, cross-sector research into best practice, recommendations from UNSW strategic initiatives and the ongoing work throughout 2024 to develop the UNSW strategy.

UNSW students, staff, alumni, industry, not-for-profit and government partners, philanthropists, and Indigenous stakeholders were consulted in an appreciative inquiry process designed to answer the question ‘How can we increase our societal impact locally, regionally and globally and build on our outstanding foundations that began when UNSW was established in 1949?’.

The SIF has three components:

1. Societal Focus Areas and cross-cutting themes
2. Areas of UNSW Leadership (our disciplines and enablers for impact)
3. Measures of Progress (being developed throughout 2024)

Work on the SIFs **ongoing, with a draft to be released in coming months.**





### Other UNSW strategies

In developing *UNSW Strategy: Progress for All*, we are considering the University's current and future states. This includes reviewing many of our existing strategies, commitments and roadmaps that are already setting us up for future success.

Many of these documents articulate how specific work areas will contribute to a bold vision for UNSW. *UNSW Strategy: Progress for All* is integral to a symphonious approach, consolidating some of the existing priorities and creating space to explore new opportunities and ways of working.

In the existing strategy documents, which spanned faculties, divisions and business units, there were multiple overlapping themes. These included maintaining a commitment to research and education excellence, exploring lifelong learning and post-experience pathways, and focusing on employability. There was also a strong focus on how UNSW can make meaningful societal and environmental impacts and strengthen our multidisciplinary approaches. It was clear that we need to maintain our social licence through delivering high-quality research and education offerings.

In addition to strategies that guide our education and research activities, UNSW's commitment to our ambitions as the University for all of NSW will impact on where we are by our centenary in 2049. This includes our increasing engagement and activities in Greater Sydney, work with and in regional and remote communities, and those based at our metro campuses at UNSW Canberra and UNSW Paddington. All of our activities will continue to be underpinned by our Values in Action and our unifying brand statement of **Progress for All**.

We see and acknowledge the excellent work underway across the University as we move from our 75th anniversary into our next decadal strategy and towards our centenary.

### Share your future-focused activities and priorities

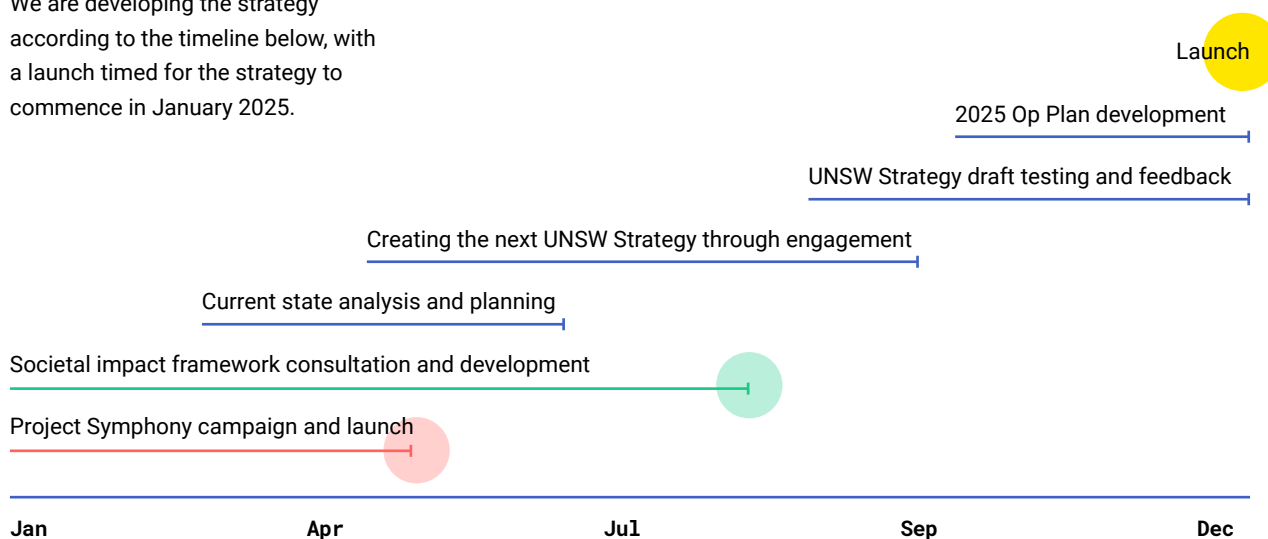
Our desktop audit is not exhaustive, so there is an opportunity for you to let us know what is happening in your area. Capturing what is already underway forms an important part of how we write the *UNSW Strategy: Progress for All*. Sharing your priorities and participating in consultation helps you play a critical role in shaping the new strategy.



# Strategy development process

## Timeline

We are developing the strategy according to the timeline below, with a launch timed for the strategy to commence in January 2025.



As noted in the previous section, the work we are undertaking for the strategy builds on extensive work that is already underway in the Societal Impact Framework and our Progress for All campaign. It will also be critical to draw on and align with various existing strategies across the University, such as new and existing faculty strategies and University-wide strategies like the technology roadmap.

## Co-creating the UNSW Strategy

To ensure as many students, staff and members of our extended stakeholder groups as possible can participate in building the *UNSW Strategy: Progress for All*, a series of in-person, online and digital consultation opportunities will be offered between July and September 2024.

Engagement activities will include in-person discussion groups, online forms, online staff town hall meetings and other events. We would like to hear from you and consider your thoughts and expertise as we develop the strategy – whatever your field, your work, your role or your location.

### Get involved

Details of engagement activities, including how you can get involved, are listed on the UNSW Strategy website at [unsw.edu.au/strategy/have-your-say](https://unsw.edu.au/strategy/have-your-say). This information will be updated as we accommodate new suggestions, themes to explore more deeply, and demand to be involved.

You are invited to participate in as many ways as you can. We look forward to working with you on this vital project for UNSW.

# Strategy development governance and operations

## UNSW Strategy Steering Committee

The UNSW Strategy Steering Committee's purpose is to provide assurance and oversight of and insight into the development of the new UNSW Strategy.

The members are:

- Professor Vlado Perkovic – Provost (Co-Chair)
- Professor Verity Firth – Vice-President – Societal Impact, Equity & Engagement (Co-Chair)
- Professor Claire Annesley – Dean – Arts, Design & Architecture
- Professor Shayne Gary – UNSW Business School
- Professor Colin Grant – Deputy Vice-Chancellor – Global
- Professor Leanne Holt – Deputy Vice-Chancellor – Indigenous
- Rebecca Lawrence – Faculty Executive Director – UNSW Law & Justice
- Professor Greg Leslie – Director – UNSW Global Water Institute
- Sofia Lloyd-Jones – Executive Director, Marketing & Digital Experience
- Professor Dane McCamey – Pro Vice-Chancellor – Research
- Shelley Valentine – Chief Executive Officer – Arc
- Professor Bruce Watson – Pro Vice-Chancellor – Inclusion

## UNSW Strategy Team

The UNSW Strategy is being coordinated in the Provost's Office, with a virtual team comprised of representatives from key areas of the University. The team includes:

- Davina McArthur – Strategy Lead
- Alison Avery – Director, External Engagement & Alumni Experience
- Cyrille Bouzy – Director, UNSW Planning & Performance
- Claudia Carr – Writer & Communications Manager, Vice-Chancellor's Office
- Vinita Chanan – Director & Executive Lead, Strategic Alliances & Initiatives
- David Cross – Chief of Staff, Vice-Chancellor's Office
- Scott Hoggan – Project Officer, Provost Office
- Perrine Huber – Project Manager, Societal Impact
- Emily Jiminez – Senior Project Officer, Provost Office
- Kayla Lochner – Senior Project Officer, Alliances
- Fiona Maclean – Executive Director, Provost Office
- Jessica Stanley – Senior Analyst Societal Impact

## Get in touch

**Davina McArthur – Strategy Lead**

[d.mcarthur@unsw.edu.au](mailto:d.mcarthur@unsw.edu.au)

**UNSW Strategy Team**

[strategy@unsw.edu.au](mailto:strategy@unsw.edu.au)

# References

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- [Department of Education 'Australian Universities Accord: Summary of the Final Report' 2023](#)
- [KPMG 'Geopolitics and the Australian Higher Education Sector' 2021](#)
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- [UNESCO 'Higher Education Global Data Report' 2022](#)
- [Universities Australia 'Data Snapshot' 2022](#)
- [World Economic Forum 'Future of Jobs Report' 2023](#)

All information related to UNSW draws from internal data and information sourced by the team.