

UTS NTEU Branch Submission in response to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Quality of governance at Australian higher education providers

Our Organisation

Submission by the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) Branch of the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU).

We acknowledge the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, the Boorooberongal people of the Dharug Nation, the Bidiagal people and the Gamaygal people, whose land the university stands, and acknowledge Elders both past and present, acknowledging them as the traditional custodians of knowledge for these lands. We also acknowledge that this land was stolen, that a treaty or agreement for use of these lands is yet to be negotiated, and that a process of truth-telling is long overdue. As a union, NTEU commits to walking in solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in their struggles for justice, reparations and compensation.

The NTEU is a union for people working in Australian tertiary education, across academic and professional staff roles. The NTEU National Office has provided background material for this inquiry <https://betterunis.nteu.au/inquiry/>.

Questions relating to this submission can be addressed to uts@nteu.org.au

The authors of this submission are members of the UTS NTEU branch, and employees of UTS in various roles.

This submission represents the views of the authors, not the position of their employer or individual units thereof.

Overview of Submission

This submission is in addition to the one submitted by UTS NTEU to the 47th parliament as **Submission Number 92: University of Technology Sydney Branch of the National Tertiary Education Union**, which was more sector general.

This submission provides new information and evidence, especially in the context of the current environment at the University of Technology Sydney, which commenced and Operational Sustainability Initiative (OSI) in October 2024, and after the external consulting firm KPMG's was contracted, the result of which was a projected loss of 400 jobs at UTS (150 academic and 250 professional), announced in April 2025. Since our previous submission, we have evidenced a growing list of concerns at UTS regarding corporate governance.

In this submission, we mainly address failings of corporate governance at the University of Technology Sydney that have come to light since our previous submission. This submission specifically identifies our concerns following the recent action by UTS on 14 August 2025 suspending student intakes into multiple courses, over 130 across all seven faculty.

Recommendation

Further to those recommendations made in our previous submission, we are broadly supportive of the recommendations for further powers to address acute and systemic risks made in TEQSA's submission (n17) to this inquiry, and commend the recommendations made in the submission by Dr Marija Taflaga, Dr Francis Markham, and Professor Keith Dowding (n6).

We note that many of the concerns raised here relate to issues regarding the “important interdependencies [...] between the corporate and academic [governance] functions” (TEQSA Academic Governance guidance note), and the potential for claims of decisions being made under corporate governance to in effect override or sideline academic governance concerns, and correspondingly engagement with the academic governance community (which typically includes academics, professional staff, students, etc.). In this context, representation of students and staff on governing bodies – including finance, risk, and course planning committees – is crucial, but not sufficient for consultation.

Course suspensions at UTS

On 14 August 2025, the UTS Vice Chancellor communicated with all staff via email that the Provost had formally approved the temporary suspension of new student intakes for 136 courses across seven Faculties up to and including Autumn 2026. This occurred during the consultation period stipulated by the Fair Work Commission resulting from a dispute lodged by the NTEU for lack of initial consultation in the OSI, during which time neither party were permitted to escalate anything in relation to the UTS Operational Sustainability Initiative (OSI).

The unilateral course suspensions have occurred without appropriate consultation with the relevant Schools or Faculties. This means that rather than each course suspension going through due process with a business case within the respective faculty boards as required, all courses were part of one business case approved directly by the Provost, and these business cases were made after the announcement of course suspensions. This process has clearly by-passed UTS' own internal academic governance processes, involving corporate-style snap decision-making that came as a shock to academics, professional staff and current students. The announcement was made only two weeks before Open Day, causing chaos for all staff, not to mention prospective students, and school career advisors, who were all sent letters about the course suspensions by the DVC Education just a week before Open Day.

The course suspensions also raise major concerns in relation to equity. When looking at current enrolments for the courses suspended for future intake, many, such as Public Health, Education, and Nursing have majority female students, with many

Indigenous students, and several of these courses, such as Diabetes Education, serve Indigenous communities.

This situation at UTS provides a valuable case study to examine the inadequacy of the existing powers available to the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) to perform its role in identifying and addressing corporate governance issues at Australian higher education providers.

No rationale has been provided for course suspensions, except “viability”, and, in some instances, the decision defies rationality. The financial analysis released through a GIPA reveals that the method used by external consultants KPMG treats complex, shared university costs (buildings, systems, central services) as if they belong to each subject and course. When big overheads are pushed down to the smallest unit using simple formulas, most offerings will look like they’re losing money by design, not necessarily in reality. The cut-offs used to trigger review and course suspension are also blunt instruments. A small subject or course can be essential, e.g., accredited sequences, capstones, Indigenous studies, languages, clinical preparation, research methods, honours, or service subjects that other degrees depend on. Labelling them for immediate review or suspension just because they’re small in class size risks damaging overall student progression and professional accreditation requirements. Duplicate courses seem to have been checked by name, which is unreliable. The same title can hide different learning outcomes, assessment types, different offerings (spring and intensive) or accreditation requirements across faculties and cohorts. Merging by title without an academic audit risks watering down curricula, breaching accreditation, and creating a timetable mess.

While courses have been suspended across nearly all Faculties, in this submission, we highlight just a few examples of these to show how the suspensions clearly demonstrate UTS’s failure to comply with its own corporate governance requirements.

Primary Education: suspended within twelve months of approval

In the Faculty of Education, courses in the field of Initial Teacher Education have been suspended less than twelve months after commencement. This includes the:

- the two-year Master of Teaching (Primary), and
- the four-year Bachelor of Education Futures/Master of Teaching (Primary).

These degrees are the foundation of primary school teacher education in NSW. The ‘suspension’ has occurred at a time when there is a serious shortage of primary school teachers in the state.

These two courses had been subject to review and approval internally and externally over a period of two years (2022-24), involving considerable effort on the part of academic and professional staff. The Faculty of Education even hired external consultants during this time to test market viability.

In 2024, the two courses were accredited by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA). Students were recruited and welcomed into the inaugural Bachelor of Education Futures cohort in Autumn 2025.

Yet, less than 12 months later, UTS management declared the program ‘not viable’, citing ‘declining numbers’. Staff describe this as ‘whiplash governance’: long cycles of consultation, review and accreditation followed by abrupt reversals that render those governance processes meaningless. It undermines UTS’s internal course review processes, NESA’s accreditation authority, and the trust of external partners.

In making decisions to unilaterally ‘suspend’ courses, UTS senior management have breached internal governance processes, including the authority of the Course Planning Committee and Academic Board. Staff expertise has been sidelined while external consultants such as KPMG are elevated as decisive voices.

UTS Vice-Chancellor, Andrew Parfitt, has stated that the suspension of intake into these courses is not a closure of the programs, but a ‘pause for review’. He noted in meetings that UTS has the smallest teacher education programs in NSW and suggested that other universities can expand to fill the gap left by the suspensions.

However, there is already demonstrated strong demand for these courses. The previous Primary degree, accredited for implementation in 2021, was suspended without warning in September 2020, despite receiving 315 student applications.

As a result, UTS admitted no Primary Initial Teacher Education students for four years. When these new courses were finally approved and launched, they were declared unviable after only one year.

Staff know what a ‘pause’ means because they have lived through it before. The last “pause” in enrolments in Primary education led directly to discontinuation of these courses and the loss of many staff. Four academics who were made redundant were new hires who had only just completed probation. Others endured months of uncertainty and three who survived that round are facing the same threat again. To declare the new Primary courses “unviable” after less than a year is not just premature, it is insulting to the staff who spent years developing and accrediting them.

TESOL and Applied Linguistics: suspended within three months of Academic Board approval

The same pattern is visible in the areas of TESOL, Adult Literacy and Applied Linguistics. These programs were re-accredited by the University’s Academic Board on 28 May 2025. Less than three months later, management suspended them.

As with Primary Education, this is again in breach of UTS’s own governance processes for review and approval of courses. These programs were shaped with input from the NSW Department of Education, TAFE, Independent Schools, the Catholic Education Office, and representative of the English language colleges. These external partners contributed in good faith to ensure compliance with regulatory systems and alignment to workforce needs. To see the programs suspended just months after approval undermines confidence and damages industry and professional partnerships, not to mention research collaborations.

Course suspensions in the International Studies program

The Bachelor of International Studies, offered in combination with more than 30 other courses from all UTS faculties, is among those UTS has paused. This means that new enrolments into the degree are currently stopped pending faculty-level decisions. The course combinations currently have over 1000 students across UTS.

The Bachelor of International Studies is a Social Sciences degree that is not a standalone degree but is offered in combination with 30+ other degrees offered at UTS. It develops students' ability to engage across cultures and societies and to learn and communicate professionally in languages other than English. It also strengthens top employability skills such as adaptability, effective multilingual communication, negotiation, ethical judgment, curiosity, teamwork, critical thinking, resilience, and leadership, fostering both career readiness and preparing students to contribute to public value in their communities and the wider world as engaged global citizens. In this way, the Bachelor of International Studies is key to delivering the UTS mission as a leading public university of technology recognised for its global impact.

The degree has a 30-year history and has been described as a flagship program at UTS and in Australia. It has over 1000 students enrolled across its 30 plus combinations. Over 300 new students enrolled in 2025. These figures show that the degree is highly desirable and enjoys a strong response from the community.

In a time of global upheaval, the need for understanding across countries, societies, and cultures is critical. Any pause in student intake will undermine UTS's commitment to communities who benefit from its graduates locally, nationally, and globally. The program embodies UTS's mission to create public value through education, research, and service.

Course suspensions in Public Health

The Bachelor of Public Health (BPH) is among those that UTS has suspended. It is a critical course and has strong subject enrolments since 2023. For example, Indigenous Health and Wellbeing has shown an 80% increase by headcount 2023 to 2025 (151->273). And overall subject enrolments across the BPH curriculum were 1257 in 2023 and have grown to 1400 in 2025. BPH also services the UTS core mission as a public purpose institution, preparing for local and global health challenges, like the recent pandemic, while also being aligned with the Australian Universities Accord, which places an emphasis on health and care professions, and calls for a doubling of university places by 2050 with particular emphasis on health and care professions. Suspending the program would undermine national policy directions at the very time public health skills are recognised as critical to Australia's future workforce.

The school has already delivered substantial cost efficiencies: subject mergers, suspension of persistently low- enrolment subjects, reduced reliance on casuals, and subject coordination by full-time staff. Based on these changes, we believe the course is at or near viability now, with substantial potential for growth over the next three to five years. These changes make suspension unnecessary and risk abandoning clear momentum.

Failure to comply with legislative governance and accountability requirements

The suspensions of courses have occurred with UTS not following its own Course Approval Policy and associated governance procedures. We contend that this constitutes breaches of the [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#) (“HESF”) relating to governance and accountability.

Section 6.1(3)(a) of the HESF requires the governing body to obtain and use such information and advice, including independent advice and academic advice, as is necessary for informed and competent decision making and direction setting. UTS has spent millions of dollars on KPMG reports that have been shown to be significantly flawed. It is our understanding that the KPMG reports, and the Academic Course Viability (ACV) data that has come out of them, have been used to inform the Operational Sustainability Initiative and the suspensions of intake. Given that the reports and data are flawed, it necessarily follows that there cannot have been informed and competent decision making in this regard, and so s 6.1(3)(a) has been breached. University leadership have since, in responding to our alternative proposals, attempted to downplay the role of these KPMG reports and the weight they have been given in decision-making. However, to date, the full copies of the reports and UTS’s own internal modelling have not been presented to staff for scrutiny to ascertain if this is the case.

Section 6.1(3)(c) of the HESF requires the governing body to confirm that higher education provision is governed by institutional policies and that operations are consistent with those policies.

UTS leadership has not followed sections 4.4-4.6 of its [Course Approval Policy](#). These sections mandate that a major change, which includes suspensions of intake, must:

1. Be authorised by the Provost via the Courses Planning Committee – the proposed suspensions have not been through the Courses Planning Committee.
2. Be processed through the Curriculum Management System – this has occurred, but it has been done in such a way that departs significantly from standard practice and does not show compliance with s 4.26 of the [Course Approval and Publication Procedures](#) in that there is no evidence of internal stakeholder consultation or analysis on impacts to applicants, students, graduates and other stakeholders. This is typical practice that has been avoided in this scenario. All of the Deans, in endorsing the suspensions, used an identical memorandum. This was then submitted to the UPMO office, rather than through the CMS as would be normal practice. To date, there is no evidence that internal stakeholders have been consulted.

The failure to comply with internal academic governance requirements may also give rise to a derivative breach of Section 6.1(3)(b) of the HESF, as the governing body has failed to ensure appropriate delegations of authority are respected and monitored.

Section 6.1(4) of the HESF requires the governing body to foster an institutional environment in which students have opportunities to participate in deliberative and decision-making processes. Section 2.2(iv) of the [Standing Orders for Faculty Boards](#) says that Faculty Boards consider major changes. This step has been bypassed and

vehemently denied by management that it should take place. By bypassing Faculty Boards, the student representatives on the relevant Faculty Boards have been deprived of an opportunity to participate in decision-making processes.

Under the [Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011](#) (TEQSA Act), TEQSA has a suite of regulatory powers it may exercise where a higher education provider has breached, or is at risk of breaching, the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021.

Under s 127, TEQSA has the power to apply to a court for an injunction restraining UTS from engaging in conduct that breaches the HESF or compelling it to take action to secure compliance.

However, the process of intervention is complicated by: (1) the university's attempt to use 'suspension' of courses as a way to hedge and thus lessen its obligations to staff and students; (2) the high threshold that must be met in challenging any self-accrediting authority's (SAA) compliance with its own internal governance processes. Thus, although complaints have been received by TEQSA at least as of August 19th, and we understand they are undertaking investigation, as of September 5th, no intervention has been made.

In situations such as this, urgent action is required. As mentioned before, UTS announced the suspension of courses on 14 August, in the lead up to Open Day on 30 August. This has not only affected the suspended courses, but the lack of clear communication by UTS about the details of the suspended courses on their website has led applicants and their parents to misconstrue that entire disciplines had been suspended, and this in turn affected the number of visitors for all Faculties and disciplines on Open Day. For those who came to Open Day, academic staff serving at their discipline booths had not been advised or briefed on how to answer questions about courses students had already chosen but could not enrol in anymore, except to direct them to assigned booths which did not provide clear answers either, except to say that this was a "temporary pause" and that applicants should choose substitute courses for commencing university in 2026.

In the examples we have provided above, our recommendation may help to address *systemic* concerns regarding relationships between corporate and academic governance and compliance with internal policies, and *acute* concerns regarding the announcement of course suspensions with no notice to or consultation with staff.

Competence of governing bodies

Section 6.2(1)(e) requires that a provider must show that risks to higher education operations have been identified and material risks are being managed and mitigated effectively. Similar to the breach of s 6.1(3)(a) above, the use of flawed KPMG reports and data means that there is a strong risk that risks to the university are not being managed and mitigated effectively.

Section 6.2(1)(f) requires that mechanisms for competent academic governance are implemented according to the institutional academic governance policy framework.

The Course Approval Policy provides the relevant academic governance framework for changes to courses, including suspensions of intake. Failure to apply this framework constitutes a breach of this standard.

Section 6.2(1)(i) requires that credible business continuity plans and safeguards are in place to protect students affected by unexpected changes to a course of study. No such safeguards have been shown to have been implemented when intakes were suspended. Students were disadvantaged without adequate alternatives or continuity measures. There is no evidence that the required business cases and the associated planning for these changes (required under s 4.26 of the [Course Approval and Publication Procedure](#)) has been done. This also could mean a breach of s 3.1 of the HESF around course design, as due to the number of courses suspended, there has not been an analysis on any impacts to subjects, streams, majors and other courses linked to the suspended courses, meaning that there could be an adverse impact on course progression and learning outcomes. This, in turn, could mean a breach of s 5.3 of the HESF in that the impacted courses have not been monitored systematically in this instance.

Furthermore, in relation to s 6.2(1)(i), there are a large number of HDR students (at least 250) who will be adversely affected by unexpected changes to their courses of study as a result of the OSI and suspensions of intake, which are expected to result in the anticipated job loss of one or both of their HDR supervisors. This is in spite of UTS providing assurances that “current students are not affected”. Due to the changes introduced by OSI, these students' supervisors may not be able to continue as the courses they teach are now suspended, leaving these students unable to complete their HDR programs. There are also some cases of HDR applicants who had applied in April 2025 and been accepted, who were sent letters informing that their admission offers and their scholarship has been rescinded. At least in one case, this has caused great distress to an applicant who had resigned from their job and was getting ready to enrol at UTS in September 2025.

Section 6.2(1)(k) requires that lapses in compliance with the HESF are identified and corrected promptly. Despite repeated concerns raised internally in conciliation workshops, UTS has not acknowledged or taken corrective action in respect of its failure to follow institutional governance processes. In fact, they vigorously assert that they remain compliant with the HESF.

Accountability of governing bodies

Section 6.3(1)(d) of the HESF requires governance structures to provide competent academic advice to the corporate governing body. By excluding Schools, Faculty Courses Committees, and Faculty Boards, UTS denied itself access to essential academic advice, thereby breaching this requirement.

Sections 6.3(2)(a)–(b) of the HESF requires that academic policies are developed, monitored, and applied effectively, and that delegations of academic authority are implemented. UTS's failure to apply the Course Approval Policy demonstrates a breakdown in the implementation and monitoring of its own academic delegations.

Section 6.3(3) of the HESF requires that students have opportunities to participate in academic governance. As noted above, by excluding Faculty Boards, UTS has directly denied students this participation, in breach of the standard.

Psychosocial risks and impact on staff and students

UTS commenced an OSI process in October 2024. Despite ongoing concerns from staff about the chaotic and at times dishonest implementation of OSI, UTS senior management refused to commit to considering our concerns regarding psychosocial risks or to commit to meaningful consultation with staff and students. As a result of a significant number of complaints to the NSW workplace regulator, an unprecedented investigation commenced in July 2025 by SafeWork NSW, focusing specifically on the OSI and its psychosocial risks caused to university staff and students due to “wilful and negligent” mismanagement. On September 1st SafeWork NSW took the step of issuing a Prohibition Notice to UTS, preventing UTS from releasing change proposals until concerns regarding risk assessment and consultation on that risk assessment were addressed.

Superficial and ultimately harmful consultation processes undertaken by UTS in relation to the psychosocial risks associated with the Organisational Structural Integration (OSI) process

The document titled “UTS WHS Consultation Plan” delivered as part of this process does not satisfy the University’s legal obligations under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)*, the *WHS Regulation 2017 (NSW)*, or the *UTS Staff Agreement 2021*, and we contend that it causes further harm by diminishing and trivialising the real and ongoing psychosocial injuries faced by staff as a direct result of this process.

1. Failure to Conduct a Genuine Risk Assessment (s 17 & s 19 WHS Act)

The consultation session does not constitute a genuine psychosocial risk assessment as required under sections 17 and 19 of the *WHS Act 2011*. These provisions impose a *positive duty* on the employer to eliminate risks to health and safety so far as is reasonably practicable, or, where elimination is not possible, to minimise them. What UTS offered in these sessions was not a risk assessment but a superficial workshop using Menti (an audience polling tool) to collect general impressions. No methodology was provided; no baseline risk data were presented; and no assessment of the *likelihood and consequence* of identified hazards was discussed in a systematic or expert-led fashion, as would be required by a *risk matrix approach* consistent with SafeWork NSW guidelines.

A psychosocial risk assessment must include:

- Identification of specific hazards through consultation and data analysis (e.g. survey fatigue scores, exit interviews, sick leave data, internal complaints).
- Risk evaluation using an evidence-based matrix.
- Expert analysis, not simply crowdsourced impressions from staff in a deeply anxious and insecure environment.

The use of anonymous Menti polls—while perhaps useful as an adjunct tool—cannot replace the obligation to conduct a *formal* and *expert-led* psychosocial risk assessment. Instead, this approach places the burden of identifying and articulating harm on already distressed staff and does so without transparency as to how the feedback will be used or meaningfully implemented.

2. Breach of Consultation Obligations (Part 5, WHS Act & cl 52.13(d) UTS Staff Agreement)

Section 47 of the *WHS Act* mandates that workers must be consulted when:

- identifying hazards and assessing risks to health and safety;
- making decisions about ways to eliminate or minimise those risks.

Clause 52.13(d) of the *UTS Staff Agreement 2021* further requires that, in the case of major workplace change, UTS must:

"Provide an assessment of the psychosocial health and safety impact of proposed changes on staff and proposed mitigation strategies."

The draft presentation:

- Provides no evidence of independent assessment of psychosocial harm.
- Provides no evidence of mitigation strategies *already implemented* (only an intention to develop them).
- Treats the consultation as a future-forward exercise rather than responding to the current and ongoing psychological distress that has been clearly documented by staff, unions, and in internal reporting.

Moreover, "consultation" under the Act requires that affected workers be given a *genuine opportunity* to influence the outcome—not simply to contribute anonymous commentary via Menti with no assurance of follow-up or change. Staff were asked to reflect "respectfully" and were advised to "focus on content not personal opinions," a directive that effectively polices emotional expression and delegitimises trauma-informed responses to lived harm.

3. Use of Corporate Mental Health Language as Harm Minimisation

It is deeply concerning that the most repeated phrase in the UTS' presentations about OSI and its impacts was: "*If at any time you need to step out for a break due to content of today's session, please feel free.*"

This empty gesture is repeated no fewer than **seven times** throughout the slides, displacing any real attempt to engage with staff distress. It represents a paternalistic and tokenistic attempt to appear trauma-informed without making meaningful institutional change.

It also functions as a *shield against liability*—suggesting that UTS acknowledges that the session may be psychologically distressing while simultaneously disclaiming responsibility for the sources of that distress, which arise from the restructuring process itself.

To be clear: the harm is not in the session content. The harm is the ongoing erosion of job security, professional identity, collegial trust, and epistemic respect that has marked the OSI process since its inception. Asking us to “take a break” from that is insulting.

4. Lack of Structural Recognition of Power Imbalances and Moral Injury

The presentation repeatedly asks participants to provide “examples of what is working” and to contribute with “respectful language.” In the context of mass job losses, organisational gaslighting, and a climate of fear, this is an unreasonable request.

It fails to acknowledge:

- That consultation cannot be free and fair when jobs are on the line.
- That many staff are experiencing what is increasingly referred to in workplace psychology literature as **moral injury**: the sense of betrayal and institutional abandonment when core values are violated by leadership.
- That psychosocial harm is cumulative and contextual—not a series of discrete “hazards” to be checked off a list, but a *pattern of institutional conduct*.

The presentation’s tone—cheerful, vague, impersonal—conveys a *profound disrespect* for the lived experience of staff who have experienced months (and in some cases, years) of burnout, despair, and structural disenfranchisement.

5. Failure to Meet SafeWork NSW’s Code of Practice: Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work

Under the *Code of Practice* issued by SafeWork NSW, employers must:

- Actively involve workers in identifying hazards.
- Provide workers with accessible information and support.
- Take into account organisational change as a *known high-risk hazard*.

UTS has failed to:

- Offer transparent reporting on complaints or staff turnover.
- Provide evidence-based supports or follow-up actions based on prior rounds of feedback.
- Clarify *how* staff contributions will be recorded, analysed, and reported back in a way that ensures accountability.

The use of digital polling in real time during emotionally charged sessions—without an agenda provided beforehand, or even a transcript or summary provided after the fact—means staff have no record of what was said, what was promised, or what will change. This is not consistent with psychological safety nor procedural fairness.

The sessions as delivered are not only inadequate but exacerbates the very psychosocial risks it purports to address. UTS must acknowledge that harm has already occurred and is ongoing. It must move beyond token consultation and toward:

- A transparent, expert-led psychosocial risk assessment.
- Immediate implementation of interim mitigation strategies.

- Open channels for both anonymous and non-anonymous feedback and dissent.
- Formal follow-up reporting with staff and union oversight.

In fact, the HSRs have been subjected to additional stress and anxiety and an increased intensity of work, whilst also being handicapped by lack of access to staff lists in their units to consult, communicate, and get feedback from staff about how they can affirm and protect their rights regarding UTS' SafeWork NSW obligations.

Conclusion

UTS academics, professional staff, and students have always been very proud to be part of one of Australia's youngest universities which foregrounded social justice and widening participation through its teaching, and emphasised a social impact focus in its research, all through embracing a range of disciplines that included STEM, Health, HASS and Creative Practice. However, the simultaneous operationalising of several system-wide restructures since October 2023 has meant an intensification of work for all staff, even as UTS was growing again in student numbers since the Covid-19 pandemic, after losing a huge number of staff as a result of a voluntary separation programme (VSP) in 2020. This was in an environment where there were hiring freezes in several units already, alongside major leadership changes in the past two years, with roles staying vacant, even as many left UTS.

For the whole of 2025, UTS has had more Acting Heads of School and Acting Deans than ever before, many who have simply been in a holding pattern without the ability or willingness to take any positive action or meaningful consultation with their staff. There has also been a leadership gap at the university-level with several DVCs and PVCs, and even the Provost resigning, all during the continuing OSI. For staff, who are unaware of the reasons for several such abrupt departures of leadership from UTS in 2024-2025, these movements only speak to a larger issue with governance processes that stays unaddressed by the Vice Chancellor, the University Leadership Team (ULT), or the University Council, even as UTS has created brand new PVC positions during a time when staff are told to expect 400 job cuts.

In addition, a faculty merger between two faculty previously known as Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) and Design Architecture Building (DAB) was announced in 2024 under the banner of a Creative Industries Strategy and was launched in March 2025. This change was pushed through a 'minor change' process, on the basis that the only staff to experience a major change were those on senior staff group contracts (contracts that are not covered under the staff enterprise agreement), thus reducing requirements for consultation. For months, the faculty formally existed under the name New Faculty, with the role of Dean advertised to lead the Faculty of TBC. To date, at September 2025, the new faculty, the Faculty of Design and Society (FDS) does not even

have a web presence anywhere on the UTS website, for there was also a centralisation of IT in 2025 along with major IT system upgrades and process overhauls, and nobody has taken carriage of this considerable integration of disparate resources and information from the two faculties involved, leaving staff and students in the faculty with confusion and extra work, leading to major changes to job demands, reporting lines, and workload intensity. It is clear that this was not a 'minor change' for staff.

Even as staff are coping with one big faculty merger alongside the OSI and the resultant job cuts, they are being sent new information in August 2025 about an upcoming merger between the Business School, the Law School, and the Transdisciplinary School, and another between the School of Architecture and the School of Build Environment. There is simultaneously also an HDR Review that is proposing a centralisation of all HDR processes at UTS wherein over 2200 HDR students across the university will lose the local support system and pastoral care in place within schools and Faculties, even as over 10% of them will also lose one or both HDR supervisors as part of the 150 academic job cuts envisioned.

Although organisational restructures and major change initiatives as described above are all considered foreseeable psychosocial hazards under WHS law, there was no systematic risk assessment at UTS nor any planned and scaffolded risk mitigation. Staff do not oppose all change but there is a need for phasing out the change in a manageable timeline and not impose all changes all at once, causing an unprecedented amount of cognitive overload for all staff.

Staff at UTS have been on a permanent state of anxiety since the OSI was announced, and have been disillusioned by the continual, almost weekly announcements of changes to courses, programmes, roles, reporting lines, and leadership, all with no consultation in staff's own areas of expertise and responsibility, even as they find they have no safe avenues for expressing their views without fear of repercussions, or losing their jobs. This in turn affects teaching quality and research productivity, leading to a huge opportunity cost for UTS and the higher education sector, not to mention the negative impact on the learning experience of all UTS students.

In short, UTS has lost its institutional credibility as a responsible and respectable Higher Education Provider, not only with its own staff, but also in the public sphere, where it has suffered a lot of reputational damage due to the Operational Sustainability Initiative. UTS staff who are still dedicated to their teaching, their research, and their service, and care about their students, are not being heard by their own institution, and hence are reaching out to lawmakers and regulatory agencies in an effort to be heard, enforce our existing rights under university governance arrangements, and call for greater scrutiny of governance. This submission provides evidence in one such attempt.