1. Background and context
Over the past decade, UTS has developed and revised its Research Strength Policies to reflect our growing research capacity and achievements as well as the changing external context. The overall, ongoing objective is to develop and sustain quality research in key areas in a complex, volatile and highly competitive funding environment.

The Research Strengths Policy approved by Academic Board in 1996 designated a three-tiered structure for UTS research concentrations. These were Flagship Research Institutes, Key University Research Strengths (KURS) and Faculty/Unit Designated Research Strengths.

The revised Research Strengths Policy, approved by Council in 2002, significantly increased strategic funding to support research concentrations and established four new research institutes. Under the revised Policy, the three-tiered structure was retained. The tiers were Research Institutes, Key University Research Centres (KURCs) and University Research Groups (URGs). A primary objective of the Research Strengths Policy (2002) was to position UTS for success in the competitive allocation of funding under block funding programs introduced in 2000 as reforms initiated in the Australian Government’s 1999 policy, Knowledge and Innovation: A policy statement on research and research training: Institutional Grants Scheme (IGS), Research Training Scheme (RTS) and Research Infrastructure Block Grants (RIBG). Under the Policy, the performance of Institutes, KURCs and URGs would be assessed against the productivity-based indicators used by DEST to distribute the block research grants.

The Research Strengths Policy (2006) was designed to position UTS to fare well in a changing and uncertain funding environment following the Government’s announcement in 2004 of its intention to establish a Research Quality Framework (RQF) that would have radically shifted the policy drivers, performance measures and funding mechanisms. The 2006 Policy removed formal hierarchy of Research Strengths, introducing instead normative criteria for the establishment (and disestablishment) of Research Strengths. It allowed for flexibility and strategic initiative in the formation of the University’s research profile, promoted performance, and fostered a partnership approach between the faculties and the Research Division. The Policy was complemented by the 2008 Research Investment Plan that provided for significant investment in research. Hence the Research Strengths Policy and its Operational Guidelines support and promote performance across all of the designated UTS Research Strengths, the 2008 Research Investment Plan facilitates strategic, targeted investment in Priority Investment Research Programs (PIRP) and promotes alignment of research resources and funding with Research Strengths.

In 2009 the Policy was revised to reflect the Government’s metrics-based research assessment framework, Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA), which replaced the previous Government’s proposed RQF. The revisions also streamlined the review requirements and leverage the University’s improved data capacity.

2. Purpose and scope
This Policy establishes a framework for the development of UTS research through the identification and support of UTS Research Strengths. Its purpose is to:
• build UTS research capacity in, and reputation for, excellent research in UTS Research Strengths
• attract and retain excellent researchers in areas of UTS Research Strengths
• encourage research teams and research collaborations to undertake focused and sustained investigations addressing the most challenging and important problems
• promote interdisciplinary, collaborative approaches to address challenging and significant research problems
• attract high-achieving, promising research students and provide high-quality postgraduate training environments
• provide access to research infrastructure, equipment and research technologies, particularly for research undertaken in UTS Research Strengths
• develop relationships with major Australian and international research programs in areas of UTS Research Strengths
• strengthen UTS external engagement with industry, business, government and the community, particularly in areas of UTS Research Strengths, and
• provide a flexible ‘life-cycle’ framework for approving, establishing, funding, promoting and, where necessary, disestablishing institutes, centres or other organisational units in areas of UTS Research Strengths.

3. Definitions

Research means creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, and the use of this knowledge to devise new applications.

UTS Research Strength means a University research grouping that is formally recognised for meeting international standards of excellence and making a significant contribution to research in the University; that facilitates, extends and enables the promotion and conduct of research, development and related activities in specific fields of study; and advances the achievement of the University’s purpose, vision and strategic objectives.

4. Policy provisions

 Approving and establishing UTS Research Strengths
To be designated a UTS Research Strength, a research grouping must demonstrate that it has, or has the capacity to develop, the characteristics of a UTS Research Strength. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) will issue Operational Guidelines to support the implementation of the Policy. At a minimum, proposed UTS Research Strengths will be expected to demonstrate their research and organisational maturity as demonstrated by:

1. Research program
• an identity that marks internal cohesion around a research focus and a corresponding attractive external ‘signature’
• positioning in relation to the external environment, opportunities and constraints
• strategic ‘fit’ with the University’s Strategic Plan and Research Investment Plan, and
• a coherent, sustainable program of research, addressing significant research problems and/or major issues of importance to the local, national or global community.

2. Researchers
• high level of productivity of the researchers involved
• achievements of the researchers in relation to discipline-appropriate indicators of quality and peer esteem
• achievements against relevant indicators of impact, at the level of the research group and/or individual researchers.

3. Organisational framework
• an organisational framework which is self-sustaining in terms of leadership, management and governance, and
• developmental and oversight practices that reinforce the University’s compliance with Australian Government reporting requirements and policies for the responsible conduct of research and management of intellectual property created in the conduct of publicly-funded research.

4. External engagement
• research links with external researchers and/or end-users, which could include industry partnerships, and/or Australian or international research links, and
• reputation and influence (peer esteem and standing; leadership in research; influential relationships with government, industry, business and community; international standing and links).

5. Faculty support and cross-faculty links
• the endorsement of supporting faculty(ies), and
• cross-faculty links that support research and external engagement.

Proposals to establish or disestablish UTS Research Strengths will normally be considered by the Research and Research Training Committee and, on its recommendation, by Academic Board. Academic Board will assess proposals and advise the Vice-Chancellor on the academic quality of the proposed Research Strength and the extent to which it contributes, or is likely to contribute, to the University’s academic goals, objectives, principles, directions, priorities and profile.

UTS Research Strengths are established and disestablished by the Vice-Chancellor.

Naming UTS Research Strengths
‘UTS Research Strengths’ refers to all research units, groupings or clusters that have been established under this Policy. This designation is formal and will not normally be used in the title of the organisational unit itself.

UTS Research Centres
Research Strengths established under this Policy normally will be known as ‘UTS Research Centres’. The title ‘UTS Research Centre’ may be used only by UTS Research Strengths established under this Policy. (Pre-existing Key University Research Centres (KURCs) were confirmed as UTS Research Strengths in 2006.)

The Vice-Chancellor’s Directive on UTS Centres sets out the governance requirements for UTS Research Centres.

UTS Research Institutes
New Research Institutes established under this Policy will:
• undertake sustained research to address the most challenging and important research problems
• make, or have the potential to make, significant beneficial contributions to economic, social, cultural and/or environmental wellbeing
• involve researchers who have achieved peer recognition for national leadership and international standing on the basis of research excellence, and
• contribute significantly to the University’s achievement of its purpose, vision and strategic objectives.
New Research Institutes normally will have the scale and cross-faculty engagement that is implied by these commitments. As a corollary, their establishment will be contingent on effective governance and management arrangements being in place.

The title ‘UTS Research Institute’ may be used only by existing Research Institutes or new UTS Research Strengths established as Research Institutes under this Policy.

The governance requirements for a UTS Research Institute will be determined on its establishment. It may be expected that such governance requirements would be broadly consistent with the requirements set out in the Vice-Chancellor’s Directive on UTS Centres, commensurate with the scope and scale of the Institute’s activities.

**Funding and other support for UTS Research Strengths**

The University recognises the need to support Research Strengths to ensure their sustainability and assist them to achieve their full potential. Funding is provided from the Central Research Budget and the relevant faculty(ies). Within the constraints of UTS research budget, funding from the Central Research Budget to Research Strengths includes:

- performance-based funding to reward strong performance and assist UTS to increase its ability to attract external, competitive, performance-based research funds
- organisational support to assist UTS Research Strengths to achieve effective management practices and build sustainable organisational units within the University (eg meet the planning, reporting and other obligations imposed by the University and external agencies, apply for research funding, administer external advisory bodies and maintain external relationships; run seminars, conferences and workshops)
- internal competitive grants, postdoctoral fellowships and scholarships to build UTS research capacity in areas of Research Strength, attract talented postgraduate research students and postdoctoral researchers, and integrate research and research training. Internal grants, fellowships and scholarships assist researchers to become competitive in major external schemes
- infrastructure support to secure access to necessary research infrastructure in areas of Research Strength (eg equipment & facilities, e-research capacity, enabling expertise).

Funding decisions will be made by the relevant budget authorities. The Research and Innovation Office will work with UTS Research Strengths to provide access to research support and professional services (eg expert advice and assistance in applying for funding, negotiating contracts, legal and commercial services; commercialisation management).

The Policy is complemented by the Research Investment Plan (2008) which reinforces the nexus between resourcing and UTS’ strategic priorities to foster a dynamic investment culture for research and to establish outstanding research programs in strategically important areas where UTS has existing strength.

**Partnership between Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) and Faculties**

Research Strengths are hosted within a faculty or faculties and provision of research support, including management of researchers funded from a faculty’s operating budget, is part of the faculties’ ongoing responsibility. Consequently, faculties play a key role in the development, resourcing, management and review of areas of research strength.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) and the Faculties are partners in identifying strategic opportunities for incubating and promoting research in specific areas where UTS has research capability, and in establishing, supporting and promoting UTS Research Strengths. Some key elements in this partnership are:
• appointment of Directors jointly by Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) and the Dean(s) of relevant faculty(ies)
• joint responsibility of Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) and Dean(s) for performance management and strategic development of Research Strengths
• involvement of Directors in faculty strategic planning and resource allocation
• involvement of Directors in work-planning and performance management of academic staff who are core members of the Research Strength
• significant involvement of UTS Research Strengths in postgraduate research training, and
• resourcing to secure access to research infrastructure and appropriate physical resources (e.g., space allocation), within the limits of the University’s overall capacity to meet conflicting demands.

Planning, quality management and reporting

Planning and quality management
The UTS Planning and Improvement Framework (incorporating the PLAN, DO, REVIEW, IMPROVE cycle) supports ongoing continuous improvement. A key component of this continuous improvement is the annual planning and Key Performance Indicator target-setting process that guides the implementation of the UTS Strategic Plan. UTS Research Strengths are an important element in the University’s achievement of its research objectives. In consultation with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) and the relevant faculty(ies), UTS Research Strengths are expected to participate in the planning cycle by:

• submitting annual action plans and budgets that are aligned with the University’s strategic plan and supporting elements of the Planning and Improvement Framework, including multi-year priorities in research
• submitting annual financial reports, including acquittal of funding from the Central Research Budget, and
• reporting achievements against objectives and targets set out in the university’s annual action plan and Key Performance Indicators.

Support for these activities is provided through the ‘Research Performance and Standing’ domain of the UTS: Business Intelligence system.

Research Reports required by the Australian Government
The University competes for its allocation of block research grants from the Australian Government. Whilst information on research income, and HDR load and completions is collected by the Research and Innovation Office, we depend on researchers to report research outputs accurately and comprehensively.

The introduction of the Australian Government’s Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) imposes further reporting requirements on the University.

UTS Research Strengths have responsibility for promoting responsible reporting amongst our most productive researchers.

Strategic Consultations
Strategic consultations between the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), Deans and Associate Deans (Research) will overview the performance and strategic directions of ResearchStrengths hosted by the Faculty and the Faculty’s contribution to Research Strengths hosted by other Faculties.

In preparation, Faculties may review their Research Strengths, individually and/or collectively, in relation to performance, strategic directions and profile ‘fit’. In consultation with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), the Research and Innovation Office and the University Graduate School will prepare reports to inform the Strategic Consultations.
Strategic Consultations will normally take place annually.

**Research Strength reviews**
The University may review any of its UTS Research Strengths at any time, and particularly in special circumstances such as a change of Director or research program leaders.

Reviews will examine the extent to which the Research Strength has met its aims and objectives, progress against its performance targets, the quality of outcomes to date, the management and governance of the Centre. Satisfactory progress in these areas is a condition for the centre, institute or other unit to retain its status as a UTS Research Strength.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), in consultation with the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Director and relevant Deans, will determine the form and process that a review will take. Terms of Reference will be agreed to prior to commencement of the review, a written report of the review will be considered by the Research and Research Training Committee which will make recommendations to Academic Board. Academic Board will advise the Vice-Chancellor on academic matters arising from the review and may recommend that the status of UTS Research Strength be confirmed or rescinded.

If a review of a Research Institute leads to the recommendation that it no longer retain the title of ‘UTS Research Institute’, the option of retaining the status as a UTS Research Strength with the title ‘UTS Research Centre’ will be considered, along with the options of confirming or rescinding its Research Strength status.

If a research grouping does not retain its designation as a UTS Research Strength, the option of designation as a UTS Centre will be considered.

**UTS Research Reviews**
The University must respond to changed contexts and challenges for research, while retaining its commitment to excellence in research programs.

Research Reviews will encompass broad fields of research and cover research undertaken by researchers and research groupings in one or more Faculties and Research Strengths. They will include consideration of cross-faculty and cross-institutional research programs, relationships with industry, government and community organisations, and international links.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), in consultation with the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and relevant Directors and Deans, will determine the form that reviews will take. Terms of Reference will be agreed to prior to commencement of the review. Normally, however, Review Panels will be invited to evaluate and make recommendations in relation to:

- current research strengths in the broad field, benchmarked nationally and internationally
- current strengths in cross-disciplinary research, and strategies to develop and maximise the benefits of such research
- optimal organisational arrangements and resourcing to enable the University to realise these opportunities and minimise internal impediments, and
- opportunities and strategies for the University to achieve strong, sustainable research performance.

In response to the report of the Review Panel, an Implementation Report will be prepared by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), in consultation with Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and relevant Deans and Directors. Any consequent recommendations to change the status of a UTS Research Strength will be considered by the Research and Research Training Committee which will make recommendations to Academic Board. Academic Board will advise the Vice-Chancellor on academic matters arising from the review and may recommend that the status of UTS Research Strength be confirmed or rescinded.
If a review of a Research Institute leads to the recommendation that it no longer retains the title of ‘UTS Research Institute’, the option of retaining the status as a UTS Research Strength with the title ‘UTS Research Centre’ will be considered, along with the options of confirming or rescinding its Research Strength status.

If a research grouping does not retain its designation as a UTS Research Strength, the option of designation as a UTS Centre will be considered.

Strategic reviews of the university’s research performance or approach to managing research will be carried out in accordance with the UTS Review Framework as specified in the associated Vice Chancellor’s Directive.

5. Authorities and accountabilities

Academic Board has delegated authority to advise the Vice-Chancellor on the academic quality of the proposed Research Strength and the extent to which it contributes, or is likely to contribute, to the University’s academic goals, objectives, principles, directions, priorities and profile.

The Vice-Chancellor has the authority to establish and disestablish UTS Research Strengths.

Consistent with this Policy and UTS delegations of authority:

- The Vice-Chancellor may issue Operational Directives for the governance and management arrangements of UTS Research Strengths.
- The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) is responsible for the implementation of the Policy, including:
  - providing education to the University community about the operation of the policy
  - issuing Operational Guidelines
  - authorising corrective action to rectify breaches of the policy, and
  - reporting any activities that may involve corrupt conduct, maladministration or serious and substantial waste of public funds to the Vice-Chancellor or the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Corporate Services) as appropriate.

Breaches of the policy will be dealt with in accordance with the relevant Enterprise Agreement, the Rules of the University relating to staff discipline and the Code of Conduct.

6. Specification of related UTS and other relevant documentation

UTS Strategic Plan and associated documentation regarding the University’s Planning and Improvement Framework

Research Investment Plan (2008) and Operational Guidelines

UTS Intellectual Property Policy and Vice-Chancellor’s Directive

UTS Centres Vice-Chancellor’s Directive (2009 pending approval)

National Principles for the Management of Publicly-Funded Research Intellectual Property

Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2008)

National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)

Australian code of practice for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes (2004)
### 7. Approval and revisions tables

#### Approval

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approved by Academic Board</th>
<th>Meeting number and date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>06/3 (9 August 2006)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resolution number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AB/06/47.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective date</th>
<th>Review date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 October 2006</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Accountable Officer

Vice-Chancellor

#### Implementation Officer

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)

#### Current incumbent

Professor Sue Rowley

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact number</th>
<th>Official file no.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9514 1257</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Revision/modification history

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Current title</th>
<th>Summary of changes</th>
<th>Approved/ rejected</th>
<th>Approval authority</th>
<th>Resolution or file number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27 May 2009</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td></td>
<td>Review</td>
<td></td>
<td>Academic Board</td>
<td>AB 09/25.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>