



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

Part of the Sydney in
2032
Strategy



Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Strategic Plan 2024-25

Acknowledgement of Country

The University of Sydney's campuses and facilities sit on the ancestral lands of many of Australia's First Peoples, who have for thousands of generations exchanged knowledge for the benefit of all. These include the Gadigal, Gamaraygal, Dharug, Wangal, Tharawal, Deerabbin, Darkinyung, Guringgai, Gamilaraay, Barkindji, Bundjalung, Wiradjuri, Wiljali, Ngunawal, Gureng Gureng and Gagudju Peoples.

Respectfully acknowledging the ancient learning cultures and traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the University of Sydney declares its commitment to the continuation of this sharing through the agency of our work. There is no part of Australia where we work that has not been loved, nourished and cared for since the beginning of time.

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Leadership foreword

Now more than ever, societies need the humanities, arts and social sciences (HASS) disciplines. These disciplines play a critical role in navigating the complexities of our past and present. They are also vital to building the societies of the future as we navigate challenges such as artificial intelligence, the climate crisis, widening inequalities, new and emerging global health threats, economic and political instability, escalating conflicts, and increasing division and polarisation.

The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences is the oldest and most diverse of its kind in Australia. It was the founding faculty of the University of Sydney – and it will play a critical role in implementing the University's 10-year strategy, *Sydney in 2032*, as we strive for positive social, cultural and economic transformation.

Sydney in 2032 will enable our faculty to extend the role we play in delivering the University's aspirations for the next decade. Our education will be transformational, and we will shape future thinkers, leaders, and change agents. Our exceptional research will contribute to the common good. We will work with our external community and industry partners to deliver impact for societal benefit. In all of our endeavours, we will foster staff and student diversity: this will be critical to our success.

Our faculty excels across our many disciplines, nationally and internationally, with creativity and interdisciplinarity at the forefront of our practice. The richness of our disciplinary expertise enhances our capacity to focus on the future, and our unique mix ensures we can deliver 21st-century education and research that tackles the world's most pressing problems and challenges.

Following the launch of the University's 2032 strategy, our faculty leaders have engaged extensively with colleagues across all our disciplines and with external stakeholders

to collaboratively shape how we will contribute to the University's aspirations for the next 10 years.

We have agreed to collectively hold that commitment – working together to deliver on our ambitions, celebrating the central role of the humanities, arts and social sciences at the University of Sydney, and extending the profile and reputation of our faculty nationally and internationally. This strategic plan for 2024–25 identifies the early actions we will pursue within FASS, while also contributing to the broader University-wide efforts under *Sydney in 2032*.



Professor Lisa Adkins
Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences



OUR ASPIRATIONS

Building on the First Nations knowledge of these lands, we are Australia's first university, Sydney's university and a great global university

Our student-focused education is transformational

- FASS 2024–25 initiatives**
- In-classroom experience
 - Increased flexibility in delivery
 - Activation of the Arts Precinct



Our community thrives through diversity

- FASS 2024–25 initiatives**
- Supporting of diverse students
 - Recruiting diverse staff



Our research is excellent, tackles the greatest challenges and contributes to the common good

- FASS 2024–25 initiatives**
- Expanding and strengthening our research ecosystem
 - Broadening of our HDR career options



A better place to work, and a place that works better

- FASS 2024–25 initiatives**
- Improving our ability to partner with impact
 - Ensuring an 'us-us' culture

Our aspirations for 2032:
the role of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) was the first faculty of Australia's first university. Building on its 170-year history, FASS will be at the heart of ensuring the University of Sydney is ready to succeed in the decades ahead.

In 2032, our research in the humanities, arts and social sciences is recognised globally for its response both to enduring scholarly questions and to pressing societal, cultural and economic problems. Our depth of scholarship provides unique points of leverage to address the multidisciplinary challenges of the 21st century.

We build impact and engagement into our approach to research, delivering outcomes that benefit national and international communities. We celebrate that the best research happens when we work collaboratively across disciplines, modelling sustainability, ethics and inclusivity at every stage, and valuing diverse epistemologies and perspectives. External partners appreciate and want to collaborate with us, and we attract funding from multiple and diverse sources because our research is distinct in its approach, its breadth, and its disciplinary depth.

In 2032, our academic community supports our higher degree research (HDR) students to embark on multiple career pathways. By having trained as researchers in a variety of contexts with community, public sector and industry partners, our HDR graduates are better equipped to respond to an ever-increasing list of societal challenges.

We work with our students at all levels to embrace this solutions-oriented approach. They graduate ready and able to contribute to a changing world; employers value their initiative, inclusive leadership and collaborative and ethical approach to work. Our students value both being taught by disciplinary experts and gaining an education relevant to their lifelong goals. They feel empowered to work with us to codesign excellent classroom practices, cohort environments and assessment. Our peer universities look to us as innovators in education.

Our alumni regularly return to the University to continue their studies and collaborate in networks enabled by FASS's strong discipline-focused communities. They advocate for us across their global connections, and we value learning from their experiences and knowledge.

In 2032 FASS has a stronger and more accountable partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, understanding that our responsibilities extend to the communities surrounding us.

FASS is bolstered and strengthened by the diversity of the backgrounds, perspectives and voices of our students, staff and stakeholders. We value pluralism.

We attract the very best academic and professional staff from around the world, who bring new ideas, perspectives and experiences. All our staff value an inspiring and innovative environment where collaboration is cultivated by addressing research and educational challenges within and across our disciplines. We recognise the contributions of our people and help them develop their careers.

In 2032, the anchoring partnerships we have established with high-profile community, government and business organisations are contributing positive changes to society through new research and teaching collaborations. This collaboration is enabled by our vibrant new Arts Precinct, which brings together staff, students, our partners and our neighbours to exchange ideas and celebrate the humanities, arts and social sciences.

The precinct exemplifies how the FASS disciplines and our partners are mutually enriched as a consequence of our multilateral local, national and international relationships: we contribute more together than we could separately.



Our student-focused education is *transformational*

As the University's largest teaching faculty, we will play a leading part in Sydney's transformational journey as a learning organisation, continuously contributing to our shared aspiration to be the best Australian university for teaching and learning by 2032.

Several faculty-specific initiatives will start to address questions of 'how, when and where' we teach in the early years of implementing the *Sydney in 2032 Strategy*, focusing on FASS students' in-classroom experience, professional development support for our staff and increased flexibility in study pathways. We will also be at the forefront of University-wide strategic initiatives such as the Sydney Curriculum Program.

FASS 2024–25 initiatives

In-classroom experience

In 2024–25 FASS will continue or start work that will give our students one of the highest-quality classroom experiences in Australia – a key driver for students' overall perception of the quality of their education. We will transform the structure, design, and delivery of critical areas of our curriculum, develop an assessment model informed by external best practice, and work closely with our Industry Advisory Board to embed industry linkages across our curriculum.

To improve our students' in-classroom experience, we will also create professional development programs and pathways for teaching colleagues. We will expand our new Tutor Development Program to accommodate all commencing casual tutors, supporting these essential colleagues to develop specific, contextualised classroom skills. We will encourage greater focus in professional development conversations across the faculty on enrolling in Modular Professional Learning Framework (MPLF) modules or applying for Higher Education Academy (HEA) fellowships. Through participating in the University's Academic Excellence Framework, we will ensure that our students' in-classroom experience is benchmarked against the highest quality standards.

Increased flexibility in delivery

In an increasingly competitive market, we must offer more delivery options to remain attractive to our prospective and current students, who balance many responsibilities. Dovetailing with broader work under *Sydney in 2032*, over the next decade we will transform our degrees to meet students' growing need for flexibility in accommodating

study in their lives. We will offer some courses in flexible, hybrid or block delivery mode, allowing students to move seamlessly between physical and digital modes as they require.

We will begin in 2024–25 by piloting sequential block mode units for the Master of Economics, followed by a pilot in the Master of Public Policy. Insights from these pilots will inform further initiatives under *Sydney in 2032*.

Activation of the Arts Precinct

Currently, the faculty is spread across several buildings, and teaching and common spaces vary considerably in quality and use. Several disciplines are experiencing increases in demand, and are in particular need of infrastructure investment.

The development of a new Arts Precinct as a distinctive district within the Camperdown Campus will provide greater physical connectedness and coherence to the faculty and our activities. To bring this precinct to life, we will invest in teaching, social and collaborative areas, staff workspaces, creative enterprise and placemaking.

Our first focus, in 2024–25, will be to address the current shortage of media production facilities, giving our media and communications students access to our state-of-the-art facilities that will improve their learning experience and better prepare them for work. We will also redesign the education buildings to create well-supported, high-quality spaces where researchers, students and industry can interact and collaborate.



We plan to expand media production facilities such as our broadcast studio, which are in high demand and short supply.

Our community thrives *through diversity*

Respect and support for pluralism is at the heart of our work in FASS. Ensuring we play our part in realising the University's aspiration for diversity is critical to our success as an academic community in shaping a positive future for all.

By 2032, FASS will be diverse in all its forms, and our students and staff will bring a wealth of backgrounds, perspectives and voices to our faculty. We will be bolstered and strengthened by this diversity. This is an enduring commitment that will take time to realise, but our action will begin now.

FASS 2024–25 initiatives

Supporting diverse students

In 2024–25 FASS will design and implement approaches to shift the student experience inside and outside the classroom, creating and sustaining an environment where all students, from all backgrounds, are set up to succeed.

In 2023, we were proud to welcome a new cohort of students from underrepresented low-socioeconomic status backgrounds as part of the University's MySydney scholarship scheme. In 2024–25, we will work with all our students from this cohort to understand more fully how we can support them to succeed in their studies, then draw on the insights from this discovery work to develop a series of support mechanisms. We will pilot these mechanisms in some of our schools, learning as we go, and adapting or scaling them to other parts of FASS in time. We will share our learnings with the broader University.

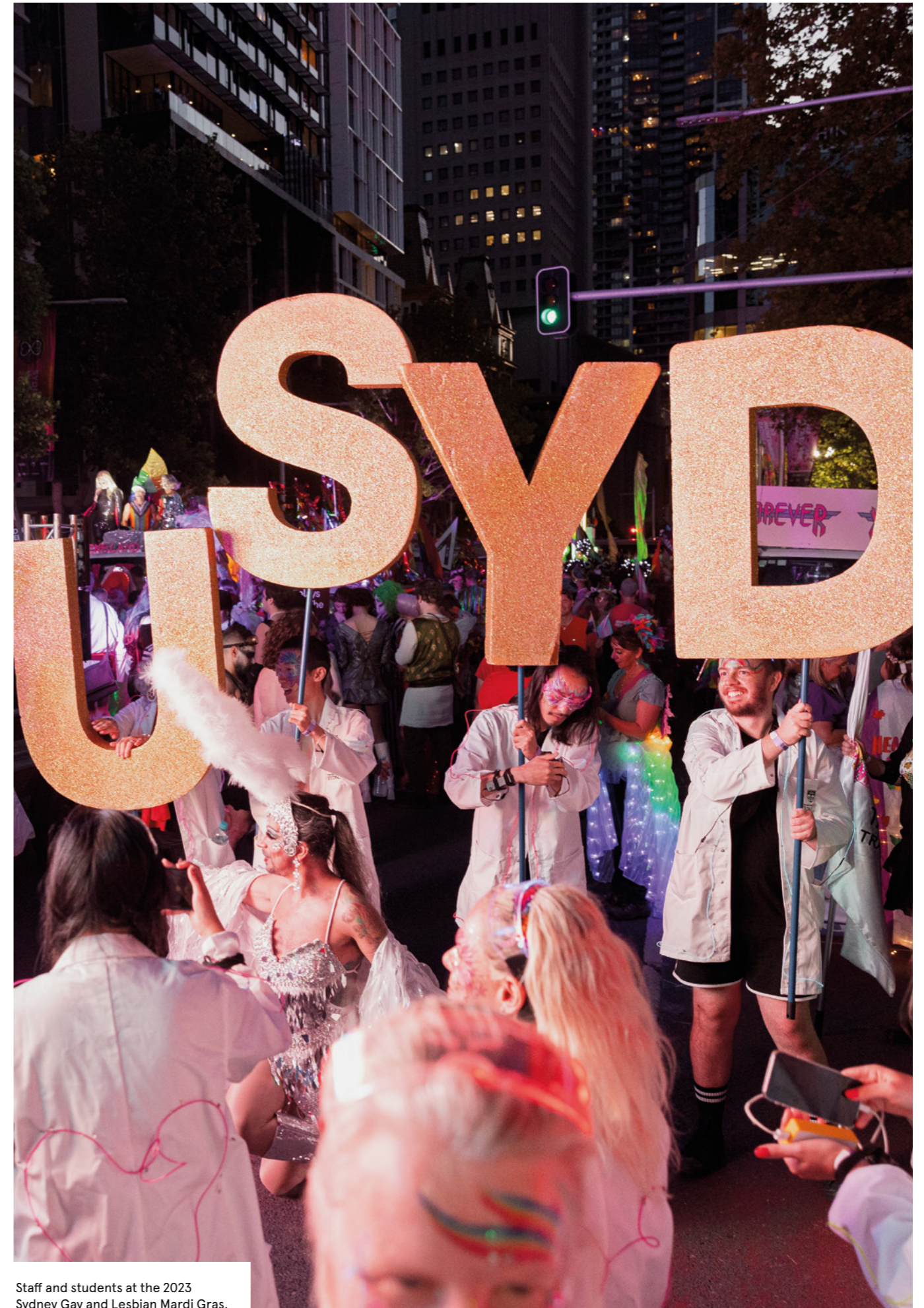
Recruiting diverse staff

Our staff community does not represent the diversity of the communities we serve. Under *Sydney in 2032*, we will move towards becoming a staff body that more accurately reflects those communities.

We will start in 2024–25 by increasing efforts to ensure recruitment panels, in particular panel chairs, have the knowledge, tools and confidence to be transparent about the decisions they make and to be aware of unconscious bias. We will create a series of connected networks to support diversity among our staff and students, purposefully giving colleagues the confidence that they will be welcomed, appreciated and supported to successfully establish and advance their careers as members of FASS.

We will use available data and open discussion to identify the types of diversity that requires better representation in different parts of the faculty, as the diversity challenge varies between our schools. Through these discussions, FASS colleagues will gain a shared appreciation of how staff diversity improves all that we do.

With a clear picture of the diversity across the faculty and the improvements that need to be made, FASS will be equipped to take more confident steps towards becoming a staff community that will make better decisions, offer a wider variety of perspectives to our approach to education, research and engagement, and engender a stronger sense of belonging.



Staff and students at the 2023
Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras.

Our research is excellent, tackles the greatest challenges and *contributes to the common good*

In 2024–25, FASS will contribute to the University’s research aspirations by establishing priority themes that strengthen our research collaborations within the faculty, across the University and beyond and by better preparing our doctoral researchers for an impactful career.

These strategic actions will enable FASS researchers to produce even higher-quality fundamental, applied and multidisciplinary research by incorporating new approaches to the research process, participating in large, diverse research teams across faculties, and developing partnership opportunities to increase the diversity in their research funding. We will also start work to ensure that by 2032 we have fostered multiple cohorts of outstanding and innovative higher degree by research (HDR) students, equipping them for an impactful career, whether in industry, the public sector or academia.

FASS 2024–25 initiatives

Expanding and strengthening our research ecosystem

In 2024–25 FASS will begin to expand the scope of our existing flagship, theme-aligned centres as a key contributor to the aspirations in *Sydney in 2032*.

This work will begin with mapping and constructing cross-institutional connections to the flagship centres to ensure alignment between FASS priority themes and the University’s broader research ecosystem. The priority themes will continue to evolve over time – just as the challenges facing society will change.

This flagship centre initiative will build the foundations required for the next implementation phase of *Sydney in 2032* by enabling more academics to develop leadership experience and skills through shadowing and mentoring opportunities. The flagship centres will showcase and enable new ways of approaching research, expand our multidisciplinary approaches to global issues, and significantly increase partnership interest from government and industry to work with FASS researchers on critical societal and community challenges.

Broadening of our HDR career options

FASS will remodel its approach to training researchers in the humanities, arts and social sciences disciplines, recognising that Australia’s economy will require higher-order skills to remain competitive in coming decades.

An early focus will be on starting to change our culture of research supervision so that our academics enable their HDR students to be open and ready for industry-based career pathways. We will encourage our students to take up internships and include an industry or public sector expert on their supervisory panel, allowing questions and challenges facing industry, the public and the not-for-profit sectors to be addressed.

Our aim is not simply to train academics but to train researchers. As we grow this new approach to HDR researcher development and training, our whole research community will benefit. It will enable and embed new types of research partnerships and ensure the relevance of FASS research in facing societal problems and challenges.



Sydney College of the Arts graduation show 2022.

A better place to work, *and a place that works better*

We will build a shared understanding among FASS colleagues of how to collaborate well, so we can collectively nurture strong, enduring internal and external partnerships, and build a culture that values shared objectives and ambition.

The depth and breadth of FASS research and education provides a unique proposition for external partners, providing opportunities for them to collaborate with us to tackle the challenges we face on a local, national and global scale.

In order to respond as effectively as possible to new partnership opportunities and to deliver on our existing partnership promises, we must also focus on how we collaborate within FASS. We will contribute to the University's aspiration to lead with high trust and high accountability by coming together as members of a single faculty with shared objectives and ambitions that are realised by the creation of deep internal, respectful collaboration: an 'us-us' ethos.

A shared understanding of what excellent collaboration looks like internally will underpin a refreshed approach to external partnering, with excellent levels of service and support. Our partners will enjoy a single point of entry, simple and clear processes to enable working together, and access to a broader range of opportunities with our staff and students.

FASS 2024–25 initiatives

Improving our ability to partner with impact

In 2024–25 FASS will establish a select number of anchoring partnerships with external organisations across all sectors. These partners will align with our strategic objectives in research and education, be recognised and valued by our internal and external communities, and enable mutual benefit to FASS and our partners through engagement with our students and staff. These 'anchoring partners' will be leaders in their respective sectors and will value how our educational and research objectives can support their own work.

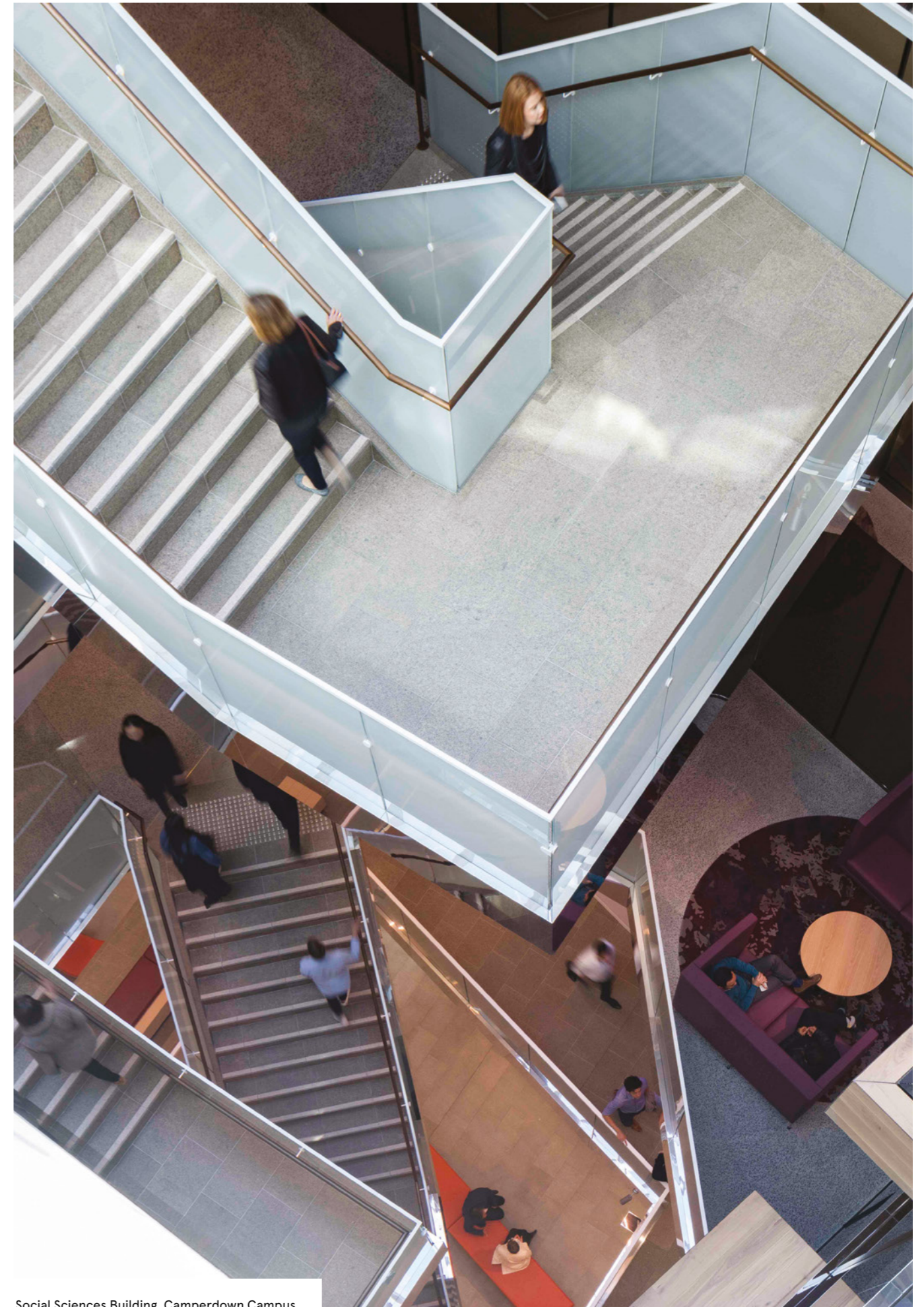
We will also identify priority regions for international institutional partnerships, focusing in the first horizon on mobility opportunities for both students and staff.

Ensuring an 'us-us' culture

Our work to develop this faculty strategy revealed that our overall strategic agenda needs to be underpinned and enabled by efforts to change our culture. Sometimes, an 'us-them' mindset is all too evident, whereby some perceive that those outside a particular group in the faculty are different from those inside a trusted group. This makes joint responsibility and accountability challenging.

To move constructively toward an 'us-us' culture, in 2024–25 FASS colleagues will work together to develop a collaboration framework with a series of protocols that can be scaled and supported by strong engagement to clearly communicate the benefits of this approach.

Our work here will be foundational for our broader success under *Sydney in 2032*. The collaboration framework will enable colleagues at all levels to work together to the mutual benefit of the faculty – approaching different perspectives with curiosity and interest and taking collective responsibility for decisions we make.



Social Sciences Building, Camperdown Campus.



Graffiti tunnel, at the heart of the area to be developed as the Arts Precinct.



Developing the plan.

How this FASS strategic plan 2024-25 was developed

We developed this strategic plan through a highly collaborative and consultative process across 2023. As we progressed, faculty colleagues had multiple opportunities to provide feedback and contribute ideas. Their insights informed the development of the plan as described below.

The Faculty Leadership Group

The Faculty Leadership Group (FLG) came together for a series of workshops in 2023 to reflect on the current state of the faculty before using the ideas offered by FASS colleagues to develop a preliminary vision for FASS in 2032. The group also identified potential barriers to achieving the vision and developed initiatives for 2024–25 to provide the foundation for achieving the aspirational vision of FASS in 2032.

Broad engagement

Faculty staff were invited to offer their ideas for the FASS vision by providing their aspirations for what FASS might look like in 2032. A survey received 217 responses across seven key questions and informed the first FLG strategy workshop.

A dedicated digital engagement platform provided a means for staff to contribute ideas, insights and feedback to inform this plan through surveys and discussion forums. A document repository was used to provide transparency regarding the FLG workshops.

Staff were also kept informed of the strategic development process through the Dean's regular town hall meetings.

Targeted engagement

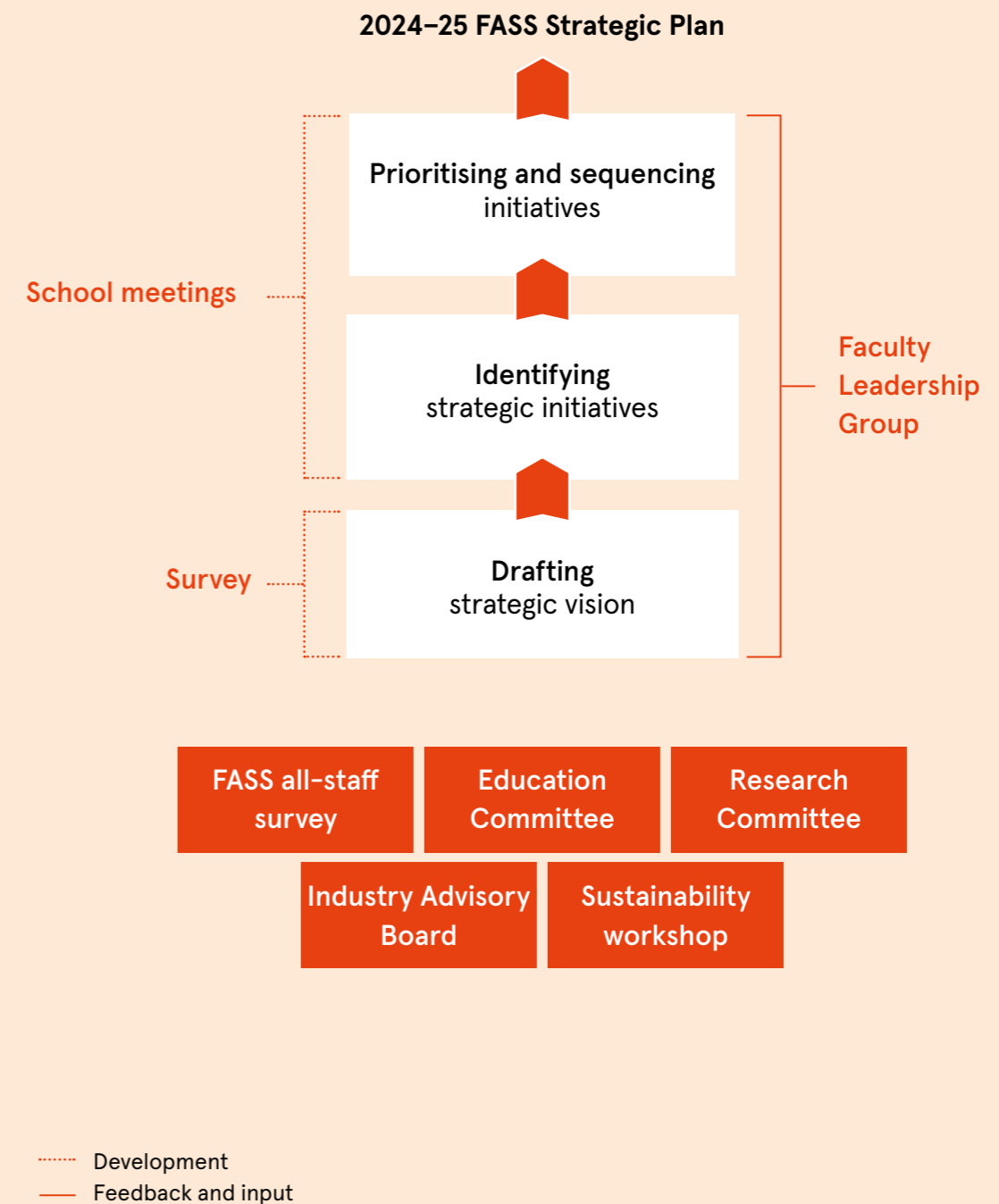
Various groups were engaged at different points throughout the process.

The FASS Education and Research committees and the Industry Advisory Board provided input into the draft strategic narratives during committee meetings.

Heads of School engaged with their schools on draft strategic narratives through face-to-face meetings to ensure that all staff had further opportunity to contribute to the plan. This feedback was synthesised and informed revisions to the strategic narrative.

FASS colleagues also volunteered to participate in a collaborative session to answer the question “How might FASS progress significantly in terms of achieving one (or more) of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2032?”, providing further ideas and insights for the FLG.

How your contributions in terms of ideas and feedback were critical to the creation of this strategic plan



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and we will shape future thinkers, leaders,
and change agents. Our exceptional research
will contribute to the common good.*



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