



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

Faculty of Medicine and Health

Digital Health 2030 Strategy



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We recognise and pay respect to the Elders and communities – past, present, and emerging – of the lands that the University of Sydney's campuses stand on. For thousands of years they have shared and exchanged knowledges across innumerable generations for the benefit of all.

Faculty of Medicine and Health

Digital Health 2030 Strategy

Contents page to be updated

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Executive summary

Strategic Vision

By 2030, the Faculty of Medicine and Health (FMH) will be recognised in Australia and internationally as the engine room where digital innovation measurably improves people's lives. Building on Sydney's unique reputation for biomedical science, clinical excellence, data science and deep partnerships with the health sector and community, we will set the pace of change rather than chase it. Our bold ambition is to ensure that every discovery we make, every learner we graduate, and every alliance we forge will shorten the distance between breakthrough and bedside, lighten administrative load for clinicians, and contribute to healthier, more equitable outcomes for the populations we serve.

We focus on four connected strategic pillars that define what success looks like in a digitised health ecosystem:

- (1) **Research:** Research with a genuine focus on real-world impact and equity
- (2) **Education:** Graduates that thrive in digitally enabled care sectors
- (3) **Integration:** A transformative integration of research and healthcare data
- (4) **Engagement:** Engagement that matches our national leadership in digital health.

These pillars guide how we will attract and align investment, weave education with frontline practice, and co-create solutions with patients, clinicians, technologists and policy makers. Together they ensure that FMH not only keeps pace with rapid technological change but actively shapes the standards, evidence and workforce that will define digital health for the next decade and beyond.

The digital transformation of healthcare is accelerating globally. From artificial intelligence and telemedicine to wearable sensors and personalized digital therapeutics, digital health technologies are reshaping how care is delivered, accessed, and experienced. The COVID-19 pandemic catalysed rapid adoption, and now governments, health systems, and technology companies are investing heavily to embed digital solutions into mainstream care.

In Australia, national strategies are advancing digital health infrastructure and interoperability. In NSW, the government is implementing the world's largest instance of a Single Digital Patient Record and has launched the Single Digital Front Door that is transforming the way patients access and navigate both face to face and virtual care. Despite these and other innovations, there remains a gap in academic leadership, workforce capability, and translational research.

This presents a unique and urgent opportunity for the Faculty of Medicine and Health to take a lead role by training the next generation of digitally fluent health professionals, producing research that reaches communities in need, and influencing policy and innovation. As disruption challenges traditional models of care, FMH can become a national hub for digital health excellence and a trusted partner in shaping an equitable, evidence-based digital future.

We are uniquely positioned to take this opportunity. We have a strong foundation in biomedical science, public health, health technology, biomedical informatics, clinical medicine and translational research. FMH has deep partnerships with major public and private health services, government, and community-based care providers — including primary care, indigenous service providers, and urban and regional hospitals. Internal networks and centres in digital health, virtual care and health services research are well established, providing a platform for interdisciplinary collaboration and rapid mobilisation.

Our Master of Digital Health and Data Science and our growing suite of micro credentials in digital health provide a strong platform to grow our ability to impact support the next generation of digital health professionals, managers and policy leaders.

This strategy also supports a critical shift in how we work — from a collection of strong individual research groups to a cohesive, collaborative digital health community. It creates structures and incentives for researchers, educators, and clinicians to work together across Schools, Centres, and Faculties. Interdisciplinary teams will be nurtured to co-create solutions with health professionals and the communities they serve, share infrastructure, and jointly pursue research, education, and translation opportunities.

As healthcare digitises, this strategy ensures that FMH is not just adapting to disruption—but actively leading it, shaping the future of healthcare in Australia and beyond.



Faculty of Medicine and Health

Digital Health 2030 Strategy

Research



- 1. Research with a genuine focus on real world impact and equity**
 - 1.1. Growth in funding from sources that support genuinely collaborative research with healthcare services and digital health industry partners
 - 1.2. Impactful research outputs that advance knowledge and improve healthcare and health outcomes in ways that enhance equity and community inclusion
 - 1.3. Improved engagement with Government on leading research that future-proofs key digital health initiatives

Education



- 3. A transformative integration of research and healthcare data**
 - 3.1. Robust governance and infrastructure supporting connectivity with patient data to support quality and safety improvements with our healthcare organisation partners
 - 3.2. A strong community of connected digital health roles spanning FMH and our healthcare service partners
 - 3.3. FMH makes full use of University research data and compute infrastructure, supporting the development and evaluation of AI and other digital health technologies

Integration

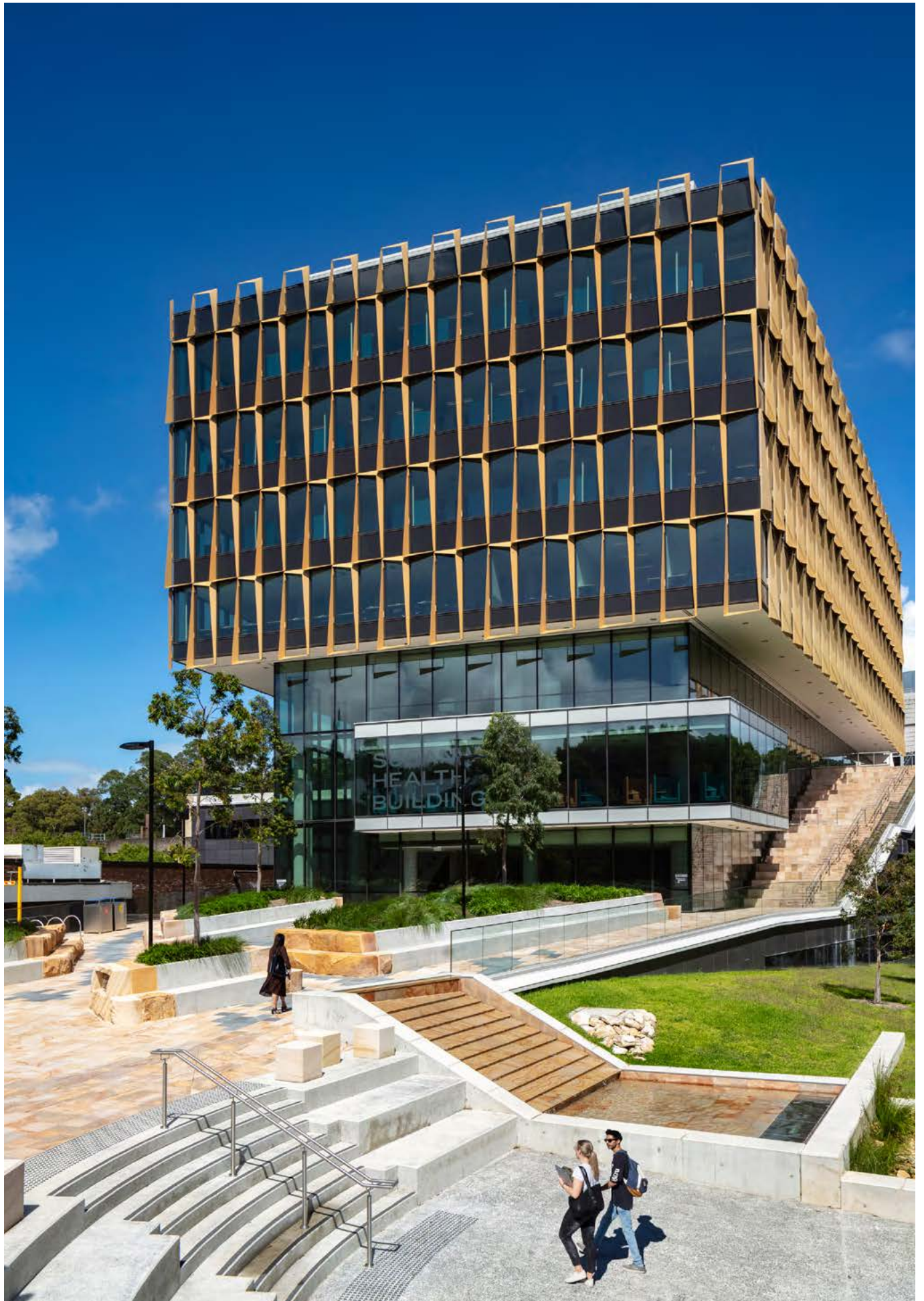


- 2. Graduates that thrive in the digitally enabled care sector**
 - 2.1. Students taught in FMH graduate with the capacity and experience to work comfortably with digital health technologies and lead innovation
 - 2.2. A diverse set of new offerings to enhance digital health skills for healthcare service organisations, consistently updated to align with emerging accreditation
 - 2.3. An innovative approach to teaching that supports students learning in interprofessional and industry environments

Engagement



- 4. Engagement that matches our national leadership in digital health**
 - 4.1. External partners recognise FMH as national leaders in digital health research and education
 - 4.2. FMH digital health researchers can efficiently track and collate their research outputs and impact
 - 4.3. FMH academics are represented on key digital health related decision-making committees and programs nationally and internationally



Context

New technologies affect all aspects of healthcare and health in the community. This creates both opportunities and challenges for the Faculty of Medicine and Health (FMH) to contribute new knowledge in a highly dynamic research landscape and equip our graduates to thrive in a rapidly changing healthcare sector. This strategy builds on the digital health achievements from the last 5 years in FMH and considers the way technology is changing the health landscape.

Building on our success

Since 2020, FMH has strengthened its position as a leader in digital health research and teaching, expanding expertise and driving national impact.

Key achievements include:

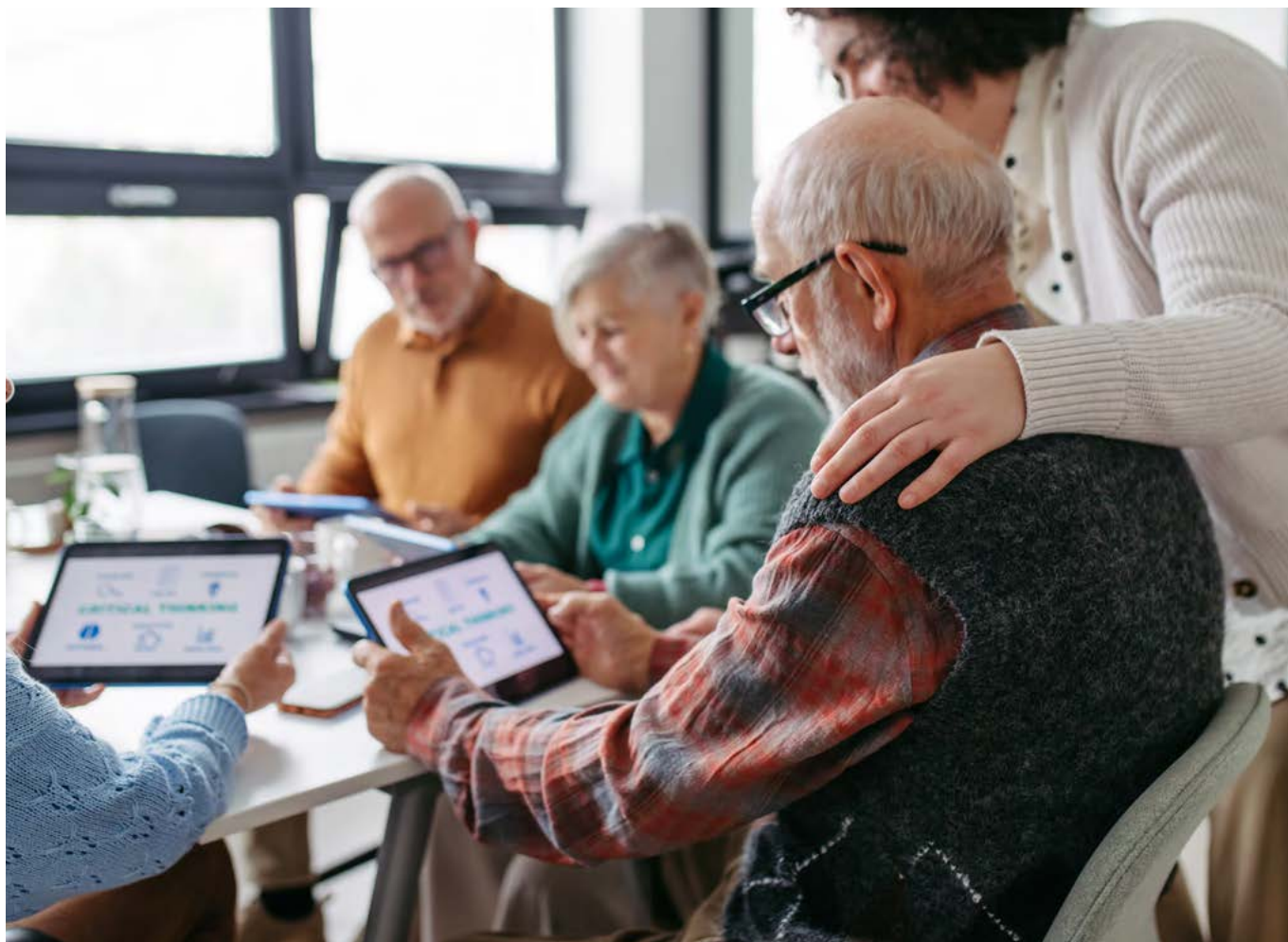
- Establishing a team of teaching and research academics in digital health by creating and growing the Discipline of Biomedical Informatics and Digital Health.
- Growing the Digital Health and Informatics Network to over 1,200 members, fostering collaboration across the sector.
- Maintaining national leadership in digital health research outputs, despite increasing competition and substantial strategic investment at other Australian universities.
- Securing significant funding from the Cooperative Research Centres (CRC) and Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) for translational research and partnerships with care sectors.
- Launching the Master of Digital Health and Data Science, a cross-faculty postgraduate program.
- Developing micro-credentials in digital health and AI, aimed at upskilling healthcare professionals.
- Attracting key digital health leaders to the University as adjunct faculty, strengthening our industry connections.
- Piloting a simulated electronic medical record to enhance teaching for health professional students.

The need for a new strategy

FMH and the University have recently refined their strategic priorities to reflect the evolving digital health landscape. In 2024, the University released its Digital Sydney strategy [1] in 2024, building on the Sydney in 2032 strategy [2] with a focus on enhancing teaching, research, and operational excellence through digital transformation. (Mapping of the FMH Digital Health 2030 Strategy to the Sydney in 2032 strategy is found in Appendix 2.) FMH has also embedded digital health priorities into its Strategic Plan 2025 [3], emphasising co-designed research projects with healthcare providers and consumers.

Meanwhile, major investments in data infrastructure and AI-driven healthcare are transforming the sector, including NSW Health's Single Digital Patient Record (SDPR) [4]. We need strong academic-industry partnerships to support implementation, evaluation, governance, and regulation. Additionally, the workforce must be equipped with digital health specialists and AI-literate health professionals to meet future demands.





An expanding digital health and AI funding landscape

Investment in digital health and AI is accelerating globally. AI funding alone is projected to reach \$200 billion by 2025 [5], with the recent \$500 billion Stargate Project expected to dramatically increase AI infrastructure development [6]. In Australia, the MRFF has identified digital health and AI as key funding priorities for 2024 – 2026, with a focus on research infrastructure, capability building, and innovation [7]. Other Australian universities have expanded digital health and AI research efforts, launching new research centres and leadership roles.

Our visibility

The FMH Digital Health 2030 Strategy is designed to solidify FMH's position as a national leader in digital health education and research. Despite being national leaders in many aspects of digital health, our strengths are under-recognised across the care sector. We must capitalise on our strengths, enhance coordination, and strengthen industry and policy engagement.

How we developed the 2030 Faculty of Medicine and Health Digital Health Strategy

The strategy was developed with extensive consultation in FMH and with key external partners. We held a workshop with the Digital Health and Informatics Network and early career researchers and an open workshop with the Faculty of Medicine and Health in November 2024. In early 2025, we held a series of key interviews with Australian digital health leaders and a virtual workshop for feedback on this draft strategy. We welcome EDC's endorsement to further develop the Strategy before it is finalised in Q2 2025. In establishing the 2030 FMH Digital Health Strategy, we followed Boyer's model of scholarship across its four pillars: advancing knowledge through robust research, testing innovations in teaching to meet the evolving needs of students, applying knowledge to real world problems by engaging directly with the community, and integrating knowledge within and across fields and supporting interdisciplinary teaching [8].

1. Research with a genuine focus on real world impact and equity

Digital health research highlights 2020-2025



Digital health research was a substantial contribution to University of Sydney success in Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) projects (\$377M 2018-2024; second ranked in Australia).



Research partnerships with our Local Health District (LHD) partners, including the Sydney Health Partners Clinical Academic Group in Virtual Care (leveraged over \$1.5M of research funding).

Strategic objectives:

- 1.1. Growth in funding from sources that support genuinely collaborative research with healthcare services and digital health industry partners
- 1.2. Impactful research outputs that advance knowledge and improve healthcare and health outcomes in ways that enhance equity and community inclusion
- 1.3. Improved engagement with Government on leading research that future-proofs key digital health initiatives



Above: Dr Anna Singleton is NHMRC Emerging Leader Fellow at the Daffodil Centre, investigating co-design digital health for people living with cancer.



Above: Dr Julie Ayre is NHMRC Emerging Leader Fellow with the Health Literacy Lab, investigating digital health for health literacy initiatives to improve health equity.

Context

FMH academics are world leaders in research that examines the implementation, evaluation, and ongoing use of digital health technologies used in healthcare delivery and the community. FMH has had major success with CRC, NHMRC Partnership Projects and MRFF funding applications where implementation and evaluation of digital health has been a focus. For example, a key expectation for MRFF projects is partnerships with the care sector, related industry partners, and consumers. The University of Sydney has been especially successful with MRFF research projects, receiving grants totalling \$377M for the period 2018–2024, and is second in the country for MRFF funding (2022–2024) [9]. The MRFF named digital health and AI as priorities for 2024 to 2026 [10].

The FMH Strategic Plan promotes research partnerships with health care providers that impact on health practice and policy, through which “our researchers and HDR students will embrace opportunities to engage with the community in research design leading to better uptake of research outcomes” [11].

Strategy

By improving how we collaborate with government, industry, care sectors, and the people in our communities we can better align with funding opportunities, produce more impactful research outputs, and ultimately have a more direct impact on the health of Australians. Our goals in digital health research are to lead in the development and evaluation of innovative technologies that can transform healthcare delivery and health outcomes in our communities.

FMH would benefit from *coordinated support for digital health funding applications* led by FMH investigators to strengthen the quality of applications, filling a gap in focus for relevant schemes such as targeted MRFF, NHMRC Partnership, Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) and other industry-connected funding opportunities. This could include specialised technical peer review of funding applications, development of collaboration with investigators and partners in other Faculties the health

sector (see the Digital Science Initiative [12]); targeted support for producing preliminary data; and streamlining of recruitment and retention of technical professional staff (e.g. software engineers, design, and data scientists) who are available to work across funded projects.

The University of Sydney is positioned to *lead research into the impact of major NSW initiatives* underway such as the implementation of the Single Digital Patient Record and Digital Front Door in NSW. We have actively engaged in these programs and are well placed to expand our research in partnership with services through vehicles such as the SHP Clinical Academic Group in Virtual Care which has already leveraged over 1.5M of research in partnership with our local LHDs.

There are relevant initiatives and activities already underway in FMH, but more is needed specific to digital health research. The Community and Primary Healthcare groups are key participants in a broader Memorandum of Understanding with Health Consumers NSW (HCNSW) and the University of Sydney [13]; driving initiatives in the FMH Community and Primary Health Care Network [14]; and are developing a Consumer Engagement Framework to *guide our ways of working in partnership with consumers and the community* across research and education, aligned with the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Framework for effective consumer and community engagement in research [15].

The benefits of expanding on the work we already do in this area would include stronger applications for funding where evidence of prior impact is important, and ultimately a clearer focus on solving problems that matter to people in the community and the healthcare services that support them.

2. Graduates that thrive in digitally enabled care sectors

Digital health education highlights 2020-2025



Established and grew the Master of Digital Health and Data Science in collaboration with Engineering, enrolling over 100 students within the first three years of operation.



Pilot testing of a simulated electronic health record for teaching.



Development of the first credit bearing micro-credentials, and over 25,000 people engaged with the FMH Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) in Digital Health Programs.

Strategic objectives:

- 2.1. Students taught in FMH graduate with the capacity and experience to work with digital health technologies
- 2.2. A diverse set of new offerings to enhance digital health skills for people working in healthcare service organisations, consistently updated to align with emerging accreditation
- 2.3. An innovative approach to teaching that supports students learning in interprofessional environments

Context

The University of Sydney stands out from other higher education providers in the depth of expertise in digital health. Members of FMH were responsible for establishing digital health capabilities for health professionals, years earlier than most other Universities in Australia [16]. FMH established the Master of Digital Health and Data Science in collaboration with the Faculty of Engineering, developed short courses for people working in health professions and the care sector, and tested a simulated EMR for teaching. Over 25,000 individuals have also engaged with the FMH Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) in Digital Health Programs.

Training on data privacy and the ethics and fairness of AI remains as an unmet need for health professions Australia [17]. FMH launched a Health AI microcredential in FMH in 2024 [18], but much more is needed. Major gaps remain in the workforce for specialised roles in digital health [19].

For many students, their exposure to patient information systems, including EMR systems, typically occurs for the first time on placements, without an adequate prior understanding of how patient information is recorded, assessed and managed in real-life settings. There is clear scope for improving how we teach digital health skills to future health professionals.

Strategy

To achieve the strategic objectives, we plan to capitalise on the close partnerships we have with the care sector to teach the right skills at the right times and in consultation with healthcare organisations to understand current needs. This includes expanding on the success of the Master of Digital Health and Data Science and other postgraduate and professional specialisations in digital health, as well as development of digital capabilities broadly across all courses taught in FMH.

These strategic objectives are aligned with the FMH Strategic Plan [20], to support accredited offerings that improve learning, teaching and assessment through new technologies, create a more authentic learning environment for students, and equip students with the skills required for accessing, navigating, managing, and communicating patient data.

Our goals in education include the *expansion of pathways towards postgraduate specialisation in digital health*, expanding on professional education offerings for digital health, and ensuring that all students in FMH can work safely together in workplaces where digital health technologies are commonplace.

Formalised *academic leadership of the Digital Health Education Working Group* would support sharing of resources and teaching across all digital health teaching in FMH, including processes for sharing resources, coordination, and teaching delivery across Schools, avoiding fragmentation and duplication of effort that is common for very large faculties.

FMH has progressed with the testing of a simulated EMR for teaching. We envision within the next 5 years, students in courses across FMH will have *more opportunities to engage with patient information systems* in forms that authentically simulate those used in healthcare settings. FMH-wide implementation of a simulated EMR for teaching and opportunities to work with NSW Health's Single Digital Patient Record (SDPR) would support opportunities for developing graduate skills that align with a digitally enabled care sector.



Above: Dr Krestina Amon, award-winning mentor, digital health educator, researching how people use social media for health.

3. A transformative integration of research and healthcare data

Digital health integration highlights 2020-2025



FMH academics hold key positions in the Single Digital Patient Record (SDPR) implementation plan and the SDPR Working Groups.



FMH appointed a range of senior digital health industry leaders as Adjunct Faculty in FMH, increasing the connection with digital health initiatives in NSW Health and industry.



The University of Sydney joined the Care Economy CRC (\$129M total budget) for industry-based research in partnership with a broad range of healthcare delivery organisations and digital health technology companies.

Strategic objectives:

- 3.1. Robust governance and infrastructure supporting connectivity with patient data to support quality and safety improvements with our healthcare organisation partners
- 3.2. A strong community of connected digital health roles spanning FMH and our healthcare service partners
- 3.3. FMH makes full use of University research data and compute infrastructure that supports the development and evaluation of AI and other digital health technologies

Context

Current constraints around the use of health data often mean that researchers in universities are using old, static datasets that do not reflect the realistic scenarios, but we have new opportunities to change this. The Single Digital Patient Record (SDPR) will integrate data from various healthcare sources [21] and could provide FMH researchers with real-time access to patient data. eHealth NSW is undertaking a very large project to transform care but is also working closely with universities to ensure changes can enable new research [22].

AI is rapidly transforming all aspects of health. The primary aim of the NSW Government AI Assurance Framework [23] is to ensure that AI solutions are

designed, built and operated with a strict adherence to the State Government's mandatory AI Ethics Principles [24]. AI tools developed for use in healthcare and the community are moving from off the shelf, commercial AI models to localised AI models that are purpose built to meet requirements for quality, safety, and fairness in health applications [25]. The University of Sydney has also released guidelines on appropriate use of AI in research [26]. The Australian government has released guidelines on the ethical use of AI [27], and The Commonwealth released a framework for Implementing the AI Ethics Principles in Government [28].

2025 represents a turning point in connected care for patients in NSW Health and where AI tools are being deployed at scale across the care sector. Given FMH has such strong connections to healthcare services and is home to national leaders in digital

Strategy

By *strengthening how we support and develop positions spanning FMH and NSW Health*, FMH will be better positioned to take advantage of new initiatives such as the SDPR and undertake projects that make use of data pipelines with NSW Health. This is aligned with the strengths of the Arabanoo precinct and the Kolling Institute [29], and the development of the SDPR [30].

Given the value of emerging and senior digital health leaders in the care sector, *support for existing and new Adjunct Faculty from the digital health community* will help FMH better engage with the care sector, support commercialisation activities, and create new opportunities to connect to patient data from NSW Health and the broader care sector. We expect this will include better coordination of opportunities for Adjunct Faculty to participate in research and teaching and improving visibility of our Adjunct Faculty in profiles on the FMH website.



Above: Dr Matthew Ahmadi is Senior Research Fellow and National Heart Foundation Research Fellow, designing and applying wearables for population-based cohorts.

health implementation and evaluation research, we are uniquely positioned to transform health research through seamless integration between FMH research and health data of the NSW population.

Through *stronger engagement with new research data and computing infrastructure initiatives*, FMH can ensure the solutions are best suited to digital health research that involves highly sensitive patient data and the forms of AI solutions that underpin digital health technologies. The University of Sydney is currently initiating a project to uplift and modernise its research computing and high performance (HPC) capacity via the Sydney Research Cloud (SRC) program. A key aspect of the vision for the SRC is a Trusted Research Environment (TRE) capability, alongside research cloud computing and on-premises Edge computing infrastructure, including development of new AI models (inference and learning) that use highly sensitive data from our healthcare delivery partners; to be ready in 2025 [31].

Formalised academic leadership of the Digital Health Education Working Group would support sharing of resources and teaching across all digital health teaching in FMH, including processes for sharing resources, coordination, and teaching delivery across Schools, avoiding fragmentation and duplication of effort that is common for very large faculties.

FMH has progressed with the testing of a simulated EMR for teaching. We envision within the next 5 years, students in courses across FMH will have more opportunities to engage with patient information systems in forms that authentically simulate those used in healthcare settings. FMH-wide implementation of a simulated EMR for teaching and opportunities to work with NSW Health's Single Digital Patient Record (SDPR) would support opportunities for developing graduate skills that align with a digitally enabled care sector.

4. Engagement that matches our national leadership in digital health

Digital health engagement highlights 2020-2025



The Digital Health and Informatics Network grew to over 1,200 members



Digital Health Week was expanded to include collaborative satellite events with multiple external partners



FMH represented in the Academic Translational Research in Digital Health Network and the Australian Council of Senior Academic Leaders in Digital Health

Strategic objectives:

- 4.1. External partners recognise FMH as national leaders in digital health research and education
- 4.2. FMH digital health researchers can efficiently track and collate their research outputs and impact
- 4.3. FMH academics are represented on key digital health related decision-making committees and programs in Australia

Context

Academics and other researchers from across FMH contribute to digital health research and external engagement in important ways. This diversity makes it a challenge to track and promote the full scope and impact of the digital health research we do, and to provide the targeted support to maximise its efficiency and quality. This is coupled with challenges in maintaining academic profiles that fully capture research outputs, impact stories, and our strong postgraduate community. The University of Sydney leads Australia in research outputs in digital health but there is room for The University of Sydney to improve how academics and postgraduates are presented on public-facing webpages and positioned for national roles in policy and practice.

The Digital Health and Informatics Network (DHIN) has grown to over 1,200 members and has been an important vehicle for promoting digital health in FMH with industry partners (through highly successful industry breakfasts), other universities (through Digital Health Week), and the broader community. Along with other FMH Networks, the DHIN has shifted focus on EMCR development and away from external engagement, creating a gap that could be filled with new engagement initiatives for senior faculty members.

Strategy

Our vision for engagement is to improve how digital health academics are presented and promoted with our external partners and the broader community, so that FMH is recognised for its national leadership in digital health research and innovative teaching. Other academics, external partners, and the broader community will have a more complete understanding of what we do and how we create positive impact in health.

A specific goal relates to ***fully capturing research outputs and reporting on research output impact***. Careful tracking of research outputs and their impact is useful for showing the full performance of researchers to external audiences, supporting researchers for preparing funding applications, and guiding the publishing decisions of academics by maintaining better lists of reputable journals.

To promote digital health in FMH to external partners, FMH can ensure that processes and governance make it possible to create and maintain ***a public-facing website for academics who do digital health research***. While the DHIN was originally established to support engagement with external partners and supported a very successful set of industry breakfasts, FMH Networks have shifted focus to supporting early career researchers and away from external engagement with the industry and community. A public-facing digital health website could also sit alongside the Faculty's Research Impact Assessment Framework (RIAF), designed to measure the environment, alignment and influence of research beyond strict scientific parameters, in the wider community and economy, in alignment with Government strategic priorities and in health service settings [32].

While University of Sydney academics are well represented in many areas, FMH can improve its influence on digital health policy and practice by providing ***new support mechanisms for academic representation on key decision-making committees and programs nationally***. In much the same way as new Category 2 and Category 3 funding opportunities are identified and circulated to relevant academics, the same could be done for opportunities for representation on decision-making committees and programs in NSW and nationally. Support for representation through nominations and submission would also support other enablers related to ensuring the SDPR is research-ready (Strategic Objective 3.1), commercialisation opportunities, and increasing funding for collaborative research with the care sector and community (Strategic Objective 1.1)



Above: Dr Kristian Stanceski is a medical practitioner and FMH research affiliate, developing and testing AI tools in clinical practice.

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