

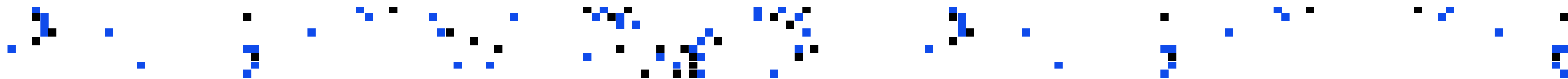
**Student engagement = better graduates?**

**Understanding the value proposition of  
extracurricular programs for students &  
universities**

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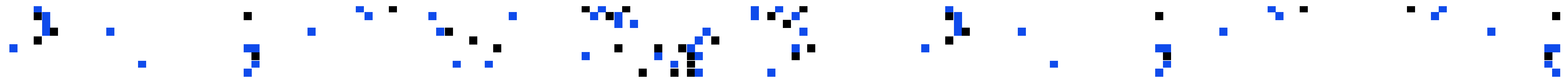
Centre for Business and  
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*“Becoming involved [with an ActivateUTS club] was one of the best decisions I have made in my university life. I have made so many incredible friends and learnt so many skills that have had a hugely positive impact. I have also had a massive increase in confidence through my work in the club. It is an experience I would recommend to everyone” (Student leader, online survey)*



# Project Aim

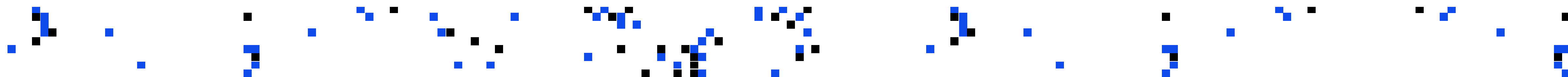
To investigate the relationship between student involvement in extracurricular activities provided by ActivateUTS and the development of graduate attributes



## Graduate Attributes

Qualities, skills and abilities that a university determines its students should develop during their time with the institution and which will ultimately shape the contribution their graduates are able to make in their profession and to society.

“They are qualities that also prepare graduates as agents of social good in an unknown future” (Bowden *et al* cited in Barrie, 2004 p.262)



# Methodology

- 52 semi-structured interviews with student leaders
- Online questionnaire survey of ActivateUTS club members (n=844)
- Analysis supported by SPSS and NVivo





## Questionnaire survey respondent characteristics

81% of respondents were domestic students.

89% of respondents were undergraduate students.

Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology (29%), UTS Business School (27%), Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (20%) and Faculty of Science (17%).

Average age 21 years and there was an even distribution between female and male students.

One quarter of respondents held leadership positions in ActivateUTS clubs

# Benefits of Club Engagement

**Personal enjoyment, friendships and sense of belonging** were the most significant benefits gained from club involvement





## A 'sense of belonging'

Personal benefits such as confidence, friendship, personal enjoyment, community engagement and 'sense of belonging' influence the students participation and engagement in learning at University.

*"Society events are a great place to feel a sense of belonging especially if you're an international student like me. My favourite part about UTS is all the cultural societies. I am also a part of the Indian Society so lets me be close to my people, culture and festivals even in a foreign country". (International student club member)*

*"Because it has made me feel so much more confident and comfortable with my future ahead, I know I'm not alone and have many shoulders to lean on. Joining the club has been one of the best things I've done." (Club member)*

*"Joining ActivateUTS clubs was one of the best decisions that I have ever made, besides choosing to study at UTS. It has enabled me to meet many new people, develop my interpersonal skills and become a more well-rounded person. I always look forward to coming to Uni and seeing my friends – it has even helped me in class – especially when doing group assignments." (Student leader)*



# Benefits of Club Engagement

**Stress reduction** was rated highly as a benefit by club members

*“It's a great way to blow off some steam and just escape from the stress of Uni assignments and to develop a more active social life.” (Club member, online survey)*

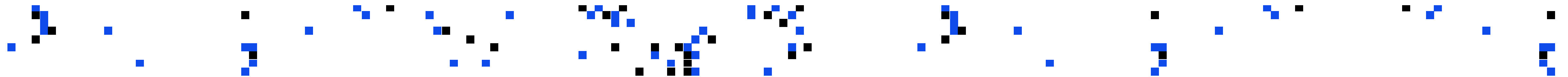


# Benefits of Club Engagement

**Skills/experiences for work**

**CV enhancement**

**Contribution to community/positive difference**





# Top attributes for *members* by club type

Social club members	Sports club members
1 Interpersonal and communication skills (3.23)	1 Teamwork skills (3.64)
2 Teamwork skills (3.05)	2 Interpersonal and communication skills (3.48)
3 Creativity / Ability to innovate (2.99)	3 Time management (3.26)
4 Professional competence (2.81)	4 Research skills (3.11)
5 Time management (2.76)	5 Leadership skills (3.11)
6 Research skills (2.72)	6 Professional competence (3.01)
7 Leadership skills (2.72)	7 Creativity / Ability to innovate (2.76)



# Graduate attribute development for student leaders – top 8



Rank	Graduate Attribute
1	Teamwork/Collaboration (3.83)
2	Leadership/People Management Skills (3.8)
3	Organising/Coordinating Skills (3.7)
4	Interpersonal Skills (3.63)
5	Verbal Communication (3.6)
6	Responsibility & Ethics (3.6)
7	Problem Solving (3.57)
8	Self Management/Time Management (3.51)

## Graduate attribute development for student leaders – mid range



Rank	Graduate Attribute
9	Professional Competence (3.47)
10	Resilience (3.46)
11	Cross-cultural Skills (3.45)
12	Agility (3.42)
13	Creativity/Ability to Innovate (3.4)
14	Mentoring Skills (3.38)
15	Administrative Skills (3.37)
16	Management & Marketing Skills (3.37)
17	Critical/Independent/Analytical & Reflective Thinking (3.36)
18	Written Communication Skills (3.31)



# Graduate Attribute development for ActivateUTS Leaders - Survey



Rank	Graduate Attribute
19	Financial Skills (2.81)
20	Research Skills (2.73)
21	IT Skills (2.59)



# Benefits of Extracurricular Activities for Graduate Attributes - Interviews

*“I previously considered that I was really a bit of a natural leader but I definitely found that I have improved significantly in my leadership skills. I was constantly surprised by how difficult it can be to lead people and get the best out of them”.*

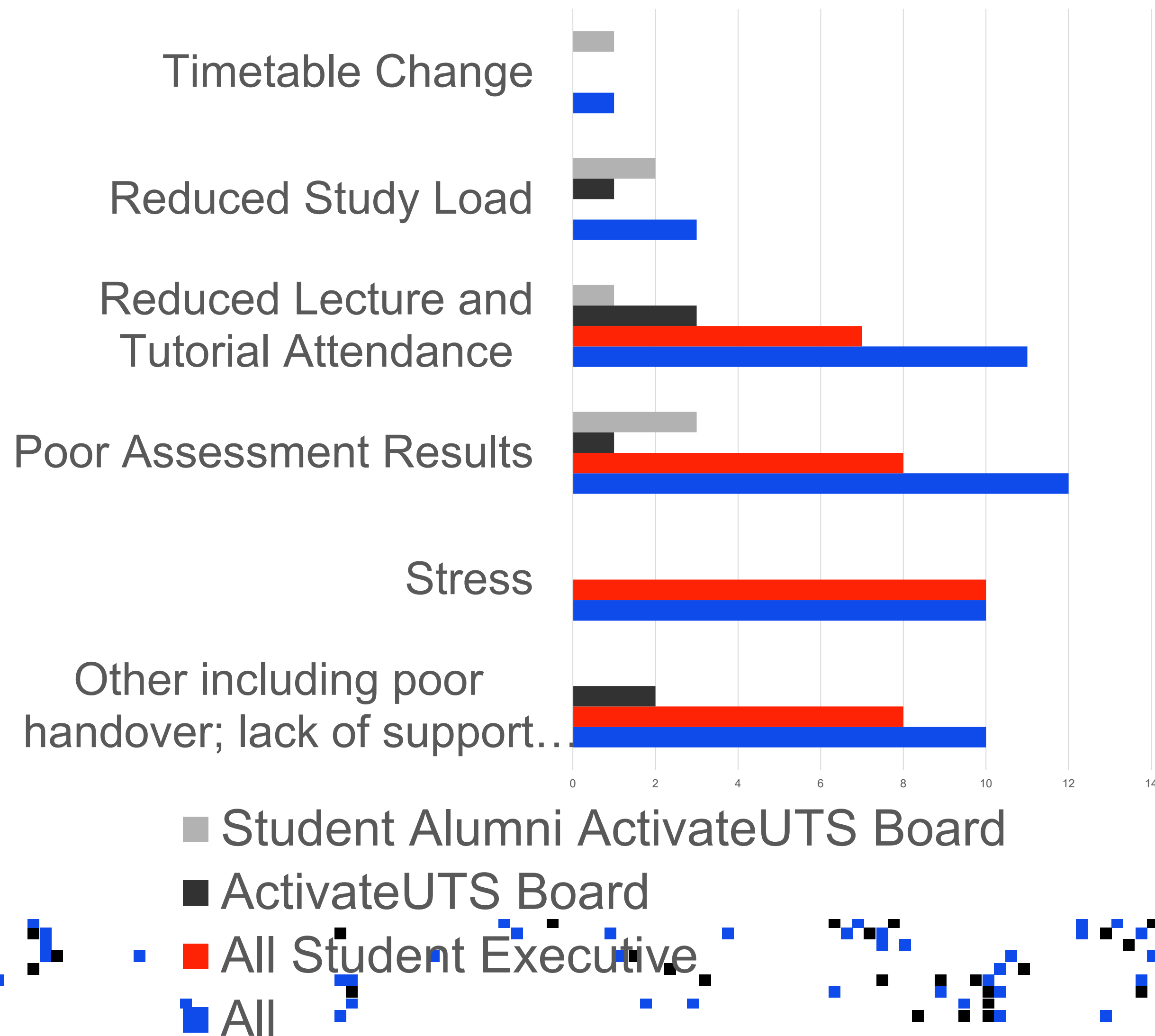
*“self-management is definitely improving, I am having to balance work, uni, the Club and whatever social life is available”*

*“everything from really basic things like how to chair a meeting, how to conduct a meeting and then also looking at budgets, finances. That was all new to me, so that was really good”*

*“I communicated with the university, with sponsors, I had to find sponsors. I communicated with other clubs – we have several joint events with other universities and UTS clubs. So, I definitely improved my social and communication skills”*

*“it opened me up to just collaboration on scales that I don't get out of my specific degree”*

# Negative Impacts of Involvement



*“I've missed lectures because finding meeting times with other members is near impossible (we have all skipped classes and possibly not done as great as we could have on assignments because of time).”*

*“Sometimes I prioritised the club over my studies, leading to poorer assessment results.”*

*“That being said, I believe in the long-term, the impacts on my academic performance will be compensated by my real life-skills & better understanding of marketing concepts through actually managing the social media presence and working through problems.”*

*“I have made lasting friendships that I wouldn’t have made if not involved. I feel much more involved in the UTS community, and feel as if I make more of a difference now than I did before, as I am an international student. (International student member)*

*“Making new friends in Uni was hard but attending UKA [UTS Korean Association] events helped me to relieve stress and expand my social skills” (International student member)*

*“I can get to know how to communicate others who I meet for the first time. I am more confident. In addition, I learn about other cultures through the activities, because I am from Japan, and this is my first time abroad” (International student member)*

*“I recommend all international students to join this club especially those who are weak in English and suffering from homesickness because we improve our communication skills here and make friends from different countries” (International student member)*

*“As a Muslim, it is very important for me to have a space where I can pray in peace. The UTS Muslim Society provides this fundamental need, and it gives me a sense of belonging to UTS for catering for this need” (International student member)*



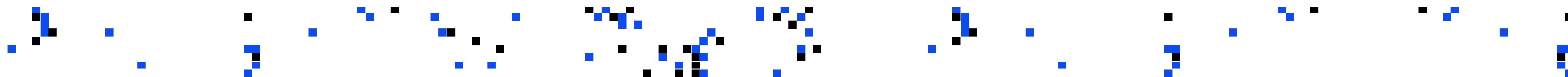
# In conclusion

Clearly articulates the value of club membership to students

- Skills and attributes that value add to the “classroom” skill set
- Employability skills

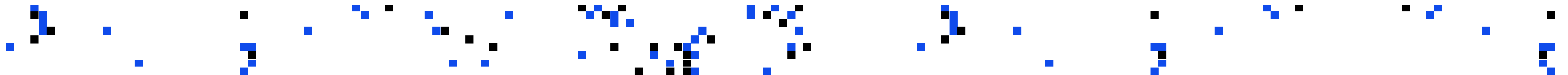
Recognition of the full value of the partnership between ActivateUTS and UTS

Better leverage to contribute to the UTS mission, goals and strategy.

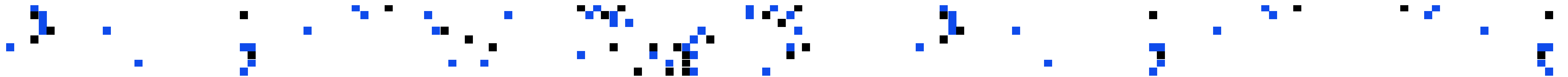


## Further research opportunities

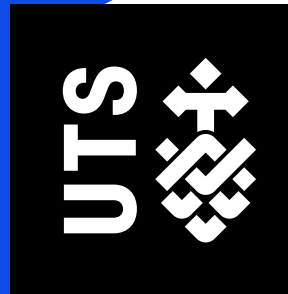
- Expand research to the Australian university sector to widen the practice of university-based extracurricular activity, empower education, inspire new research, and develop economic and social value.



*“I don’t think there has been a moment where I have regretted [joining ActivateUTS]. I think that every step of the way has been really rewarding. I feel like I have been part of something important.”*







**Sincere thanks to Liz Brett and her teams for all the support provided to the project.**