# iYarn COVID-19 TechVoucher program:
## Research overview

January – July 2022

# Your requirements

iyarn is a digital platform for 'check ins', intended primarily for use in schools and workplaces, as a powerful tool for monitoring and managing issues around stress, anxiety, isolation and depression and improving mental health wellbeing. The tool is already being used in schools to promote and support young people's mental health and wellbeing, and is now being adopted throughout schools across NSW.

The NSW Government's COVID TechVouchers Program is an opportunity to leverage government co-funding to invest in enhancing iyarn's product, in particular to augment the effectiveness of the tool in supporting young people to manage the significant impacts of COVID-19 on mental health and wellbeing.

**The focus of this proposed research is to develop a suite of 'support resources' products** focused on critical aspects of mental health and wellbeing, which can later be integrated into the iyarn tool for use by students and teachers.

These resources are ultimately intended to support and enhance wider benefits around:

- reducing stress, anxiety and mental health risk in young people

- improving wellbeing and social cohesion outcomes for young people

- improving performance of students in school (including reducing absenteeism and presenteeism)

- enhancing the iyarn product/tool to form a 'wrap around whole school wellbeing solution'

- further commercialisation, scale and market share of the iyarn product within Australia and in overseas markets

# About us

## Centre for Research on Education in a Digital Society

- Explores the dynamic relationship between technology and learning – across formal, informal, and professional education contexts throughout the lifespan

- Adopts sociocultural and human-centred approaches to understanding technology in practice to investigate learning technologies, the role of technology and data in learning and the changing learning needs of a digital society

## Institute for Public Policy & Governance

- A leading policy and research institute dedicated to shaping public policy outcomes and decision-making, focused on work that furthers the public good across the broader public, private and community sectors

- Combines senior executive-level experience of working within the public sector with excellent policy and research skills to deliver practical, actionable and evidence-informed options, insights and solutions to all tiers of government, not-for-profits and industry
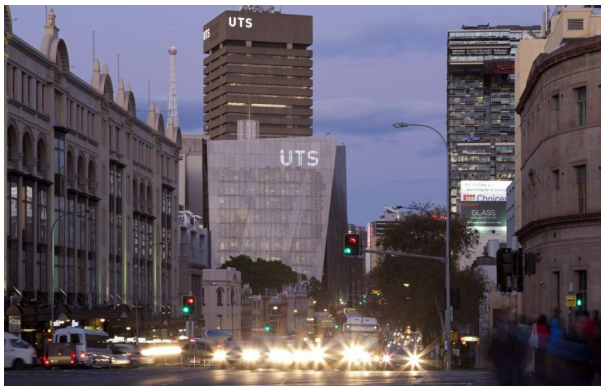
# Research team

**Dr Simon Knight**
Research Lead

Simon is Director of the Centre for Research on Education in a Digital Society, and leads the Transformative Learning research theme in the UTS Transdisciplinary School.

He is a recognised researcher in learning and technology and a UTS award winning teacher. He holds a PhD in learning analytics, and education Masters from both Cambridge and UCL Institute of Education, where he also did his high-school teacher training

**Peter Lee**
Project Manager

Peter is Senior Manager, Advisory at the UTS Institute for Public Policy & Governance (IPPG) and a highly experienced public policy expert, strategist, research consultant and project manager.

He has extensive experience leading and managing complex policy, social and technical research projects and programs, both within government agencies in the UK and Australia and as a consultant for federal and state government agencies, local councils, private industry and not-for-profits.

**Monique Potts**
Researcher

Monique Potts is a PhD Candidate in the UTS Transdisciplinary School undertaking research on resilience and experiential learning for secondary school students.

Her professional background is in online learning, innovation, and strategy having held senior program management roles at ABC, UTS and TAFE. Monique has developed and delivered a range of interactive online learning programs including ABC Splash and suite of award-winning interactive learning games and tools.

**Clara Mills**
Researcher

Clara is an emerging social researcher at IPPG with experience across a diverse range of research and consultancy projects for local, state and federal government and NGOs, including in areas such as mental health.

She is a capable researcher with skills in research design, primary and secondary data collection and analysis. Clara holds a BA in History & Psychology from the University of Sydney and is currently completing a Master of Public Policy at USyd.
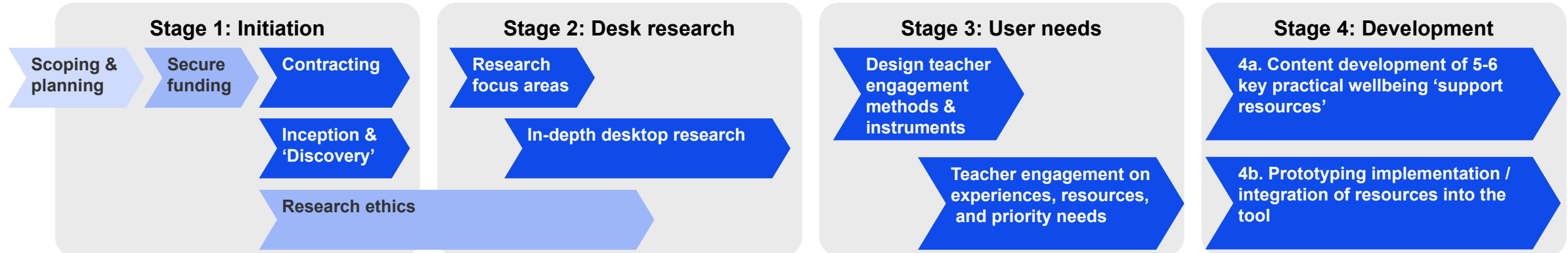
# Project description
## Overview

As a university committed to practical innovation and the development of impact-driven research that benefits the broader community, UTS is a key partner to industry in helping shape the world we live in. This is built on our culture of collaboration, creativity, use of agile and transdisciplinary approaches, and our industry and community connections to create real-world solutions to complex problems.

UTS has assembled a team of skilled researchers for this project, led by Dr Simon Knight, Director of the Centre for Research on Education in a Digital Society, with expertise in participatory approaches, including for educational technologies and schools-based wellbeing strategies.

We will take a participatory approach to the design and delivery of the iyarn research project, across four stages of work outlined below. This will involve desk research around scholarly and practitioner resources, identification of key needs and user expectations, the development of both practical wellbeing resources and initial prototyping with iyarn for implementation of these resources into the tool.

| Stage 1: Initiation | Stage 2: Desk research | Stage 3: User needs | Stage 4: Development |
|---|---|---|---|
| Scoping & planning → Secure funding → Contracting | Research focus areas | Design teacher engagement methods & instruments | 4a. Content development of 5-6 key practical wellbeing 'support resources' |
| Inception & 'Discovery' | In-depth desktop research | Teacher engagement on experiences, resources, and priority needs | 4b. Prototyping implementation / integration of resources into the tool |
| Research ethics | | | |

# Project description
## Approach and key deliverables

| Stage | Proposed approach | Key deliverables |
|---|---|---|
| **1. Project initiation** | • Once funding is confirmed, and initial contracting is complete, UTS will hold a project inception meeting with iyarn to confirm project scope, objectives, approach and delivery schedule – early January<br>• UTS will also initiate the research ethics application and approval process Feb/March HREC cycle<br>• UTS will run a short 'discovery' workshop with iyarn and any other relevant iyarn stakeholders (such as representatives from the positive psychology institute) to establish the key issues of interest for the research, develop a set of desired focus areas for the research and examine what resources or other relevant sources of evidence may already exist to draw on in stage 2  - **Feb 25th** | • Defined list of focus topics / areas for the desk research<br>• Initial list of potential resources/sources and other inputs to the research<br>• Research ethics approval |
| **2. Desk research** | • Following some further scoping work on the key focus areas for the research, UTS will refine and expand the initial list of resources/sources, including with input from UTS subject matter experts and the iyarn advisory panel<br>• The UTS research team will then conduct in-depth desktop research to review, capture and synthesise relevant resources and information in each of the key focus areas  - **commencing December through end of May** | • Individual documents to capture and synthesise relevant information and resources on each focus area of interest |
| **3. User needs** | • This stage will focus on engaging with teachers that currently use the iyarn tool to gather perspectives on: current experiences of the tool; resources they may already be using/referring to; priority issues or topics for support resources to be incorporated into the tool – **early April-June**<br>• UTS, in discussion with iyarn and the advisory panel, will identify a target cohort of teachers to engage in the research, determine an appropriate research method (e.g., online survey, engagement platform, semi-structured interviews, or focus groups/participatory workshops) and agree the best approach to communications and recruitment with this group<br>• Once the target group has been identified and preferred research method determined, UTS will work with iyarn to design research instruments and manage logistics to launch and run the engagement process, and analyse the results to determine key findings | • Research method and instruments<br>• Research findings and analysis – including 5-6 priority areas for the development of support resources |
| **4. Development** | The final stage of work will incorporate two linked streams of activity:<br>• *4a. Content Development:* This will involve working with iyarn to scope the format/design requirements and constraints for any support resources to ensure the parameters are clear. Based on this, UTS will use the content captured in stage 2 of the research to develop detailed content for 'support resources' in the 5-6 priority areas emerging from stage 3 of the research.<br>• *4b. Content Integration:* This will involve UTS conducting a participatory design process for user experience mapping to work through, with input from iyarn, how user access to resources can be integrated into the tool (e.g., where should they go, how should they be accessed, what are the 'triggers', how are specific resources linked to specific actions or states, etc). | • 5-6 'support resources' for use by teachers or students, for integration into the tool<br>• Recommendations for and initial prototyping of integration of 'support resources' into the tool |

# Project schedule
## Timeline and key milestones

The project initiated on the basis of a December start and May end, with tolerance for later start resulting in a July completion.

Key milestones were:

1. Inception meeting (and HREC application arising) –
   January-February with full team virtual meeting late Feb

2. Mid-research check-in for resources developed and approach adopted
   – March 15th full team meeting (with HREC approved)

3. Review and iteration of produced materials for final delivery –
   May 30th full team meeting

4. End of project report and project close –
   July report

# iYarn COVID-19 TechVoucher program:
## Project commencement

January – July 2022

# Research approach & scope

"What we wish to research and develop is additional supporting resources for students and teachers which will further equip them in developing the resilience needed to persevere and develop the language for better communication around mental health and wellbeing."

**Key inputs:**

1. Proposal text + initial literature survey

2. Existing tool & resources

3. Co-design and iteration of our approach together

**Considerations:**

1. Current UX and articulating the evidence base

2. Evidence for most impactful new resources

3. Evidence & user input re: how to integrate those into evolving UX

Mapping approach

1. **Developing an iyarn logic model through a feature:outcome matrix:**
   1. **Why?** Allows us to map Qs & evidence to claims you may make around impact & narrow scope
   2. **How?** Review by iyarn team, and mapping to literature

2. **Desk research to situate iyarn in the evidence:**
   1. **Why?** Provide existing grounding of tool; Suggest new avenues & critical areas of focus
   2. **How?** Use the model to guide literature survey & create scenarios identifying potential critical incidents & literature around these

3. **User research to identify resource needs and integration:**
   1. **Why?** Understand what users currently draw on, triangulate with literature & test piloting (split phase)
   2. **How?** Use scenarios with screenshots of tool journeys to identify existing resources to integrate, & identify where these are needed

4. **Resource development grounded in evidence for iyarn's outcomes:**
   1. **Why?** Stages 1:3 identify needs & ground how to address these, phase 4 builds (in a way iyarn can adapt in future)
   2. **How?** Create a resource template for items & their integration, create/curate resources addressing key needs and segments



**Stage 1: Initiation**

Scoping & planning

Secure funding

Contracting

Inception & 'Discovery'

Research ethics

**Stage 2: Desk research**

Research focus areas

In-depth desktop research

**Stage 3: User needs**

Design teacher engagement methods & instruments

Teacher engagement on experiences, resources, and priority needs

**Stage 4: Development**

4a. Content development of 5-6 key practical wellbeing 'support resources'

4b. Prototyping implementation / integration of resources into the tool

**UTS**

Institute for Public Policy and Governance / Centre for Research on Education in a Digital Society