



24 **Keywords:** UHPC; Grounded blast furnace slag (GBFS); Rice husk ash (RHA); Embodied  
25 carbon dioxide (e-CO<sub>2</sub>); Dynamic compressive performance.

## 26 **1. Introduction**

27 Ultra-high performance concrete (UHPC) has attracted great attention from civil engineering  
28 society due to its excellent mechanical and durability properties, less associated materials and  
29 lower installation and labour costs. An UHPC mixture commonly consists of cement, silica  
30 fume (SF), quartz powder, sand, superplasticizer (SP), water and steel fibre. In UHPC, fine  
31 aggregates like quartz sand were used instead of the coarse aggregates to reduce the weaknesses  
32 of the interfacial transition zone (ITZ) between the cementitious matrix and aggregates and  
33 more uniform stress flow. Meanwhile, SF with a finer particle size and spherical shape was  
34 added to UHPC to improve its performance by filling voids between coarser particles. Chan  
35 and Chu [1] recommended SF dosages of 20–30% of the total binders to achieve optimal  
36 strength properties of UHPC. Besides, an UHPC mixture also requires a very low water/binder  
37 ratio (*w/b*) with an optimal value of 0.13–0.20 as suggested by previous studies [2-4]. Wille, et  
38 al. [5] reported that UHPC can achieve a compressive strength higher than 150 MPa with the  
39 *w/b* ratio of 0.25. In addition, steel fibres are commonly added to ensure high ductility of UHPC  
40 and increase the energy absorption of the concrete [6, 7]. For an economical and workable  
41 UHPC mixture design, 2 % volume fraction of steel fibres was recommended [4]. Similar to  
42 normal concrete (NC) and high-performance concrete (HPC), cement plays a key role in the  
43 binding ability and performance of UHPC. UHPC uses a relatively high proportion of cement  
44 content as compared to NC and HPC [8]. It was observed that the compressive strength of  
45 UHPC increased first with the cement content, but decreased when the cement content was  
46 over the optimal content around 1,700 kg/m<sup>3</sup>, due to limited participation of finer aggregates  
47 [9]. The UHPC

48 Although UHPC exhibits many excellent characteristics, its wider use in the construction  
49 industry is limited due to the relatively high initial cost. Due to incorporating many components  
50 as mentioned above, the manufacturing cost of UHPC is much higher than that of NC [10].  
51 However, ongoing research and investigations are filling knowledge gaps to produce  
52 innovative UHPC with lower initial costs. Another concern of UHPC is that it used a large  
53 portion of cement that is a virgin ingredient that requires intensive energy for production. It  
54 therefore has bad impact to the environment. Abdulkareem, et al. [11] found that the common  
55 amount of ordinary Portland cement (OPC) per cubic metre for the majority of UHPC mixes  
56 was generally around 1,100 kg/m<sup>3</sup>, which is nearly triple the amount in ordinary concrete [11].  
57 It is well-known that the OPC contributed to nearly 8% of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions [12].  
58 Therefore, to reduce the negative environmental impact of CO<sub>2</sub> caused by producing UHPC,  
59 appropriate alternative cementitious constituents are sought to replace OPC without scarifying  
60 the UHPC's performance. Rice husk ash (RHA) and grounded blast furnace slag (GBFS) as  
61 the cementitious material representing industrial by-product sources and recycled waste  
62 sources were used in the concrete production process [10, 13]. GBFS is a granular powder  
63 material, predominantly made from silica, alumina, and oxides; directly obtained from the iron  
64 ore and limestone used in furnaces [14]. GBFS was used to improve the overall workability of  
65 concrete pastes and increase their durability and it was also extensively utilised in UHPC [15].  
66 GBFS can be used as a partial or full cement replacement, partial or full sand replacement, or  
67 as an additional admixture to improve the followability and performance of concrete. One of  
68 the early comprehensive study on the use of GBFS in UHPC mixes as an OPC substitute  
69 material was reported by Yazıcı, et al. [16]. It was found that the compressive and flexural  
70 strengths of UHPC were improved with only a certain percentage of GBFS in replacement of  
71 OPC. When the GBFS content was greater than 40%, the compressive strength of UHPC  
72 decreased. The finding from Yazıcı, et al. [16] was in contrast with the study by Kim, et al.

73 [17], in which the replacement of GBFS did not produce remarkable improvements in the  
74 compressive strength, even decreased the compressive strength of UHPC [17].

75 Besides GBFS, RHA is also an alternative cementitious material that is created through burning  
76 of recycled direct waste of the rice production; specifically, husks of rice grains which are  
77 discarded in the process of production [18]. According to Kang, et al. [19], approximately 150  
78 million metric tonnes of husks are produced per year and it accounts for 21.5% on average per  
79 total weight of a rice paddy. However, RHA that is suitable for usage as an alternative  
80 cementitious material makes up only one-fifth of the total husk produced by the rice paddies  
81 [20]. Proper combustion at no more than 700°C is required for producing the husks and the  
82 produced material is powder-like ash which generally contains over 90% amorphous silica,  
83 providing excellent pozzolanic reactivity with cementitious constituents in concrete [18, 19,  
84 21]. The use of RHA not only increases the compressive strength of concrete but also enhances  
85 the concrete's water absorbability by filling pores and voids in concrete matrices [18, 19, 21].  
86 However, RHA was found to negatively impact the paste workability if the percentage  
87 replacement is higher than 20%, along with the increased brittleness of concrete mixes [18, 19,  
88 21]. Giaccio, et al. [22] replaced 10% OPC with RHA in four concrete mixes with different  
89 *w/b* ratios. It was found that the mixture with the RHA exhibited higher compressive strengths  
90 compared to the control mix without RHA [22]. In a different study, He, et al. [23] investigated  
91 the effect of replacement percentages of OPC with RHA and found that the compressive  
92 strength slightly increased with the replacement percentages of OPC with the maximum  
93 increment of 15%. Meanwhile, Van Tuan, et al. [24] evaluated the possibility of using RHA to  
94 replace SF in UHPC mixtures. In their study, 40% OPC was replaced by the combination of  
95 SF and RHA. They indicated that the mixture with a ternary blend of 80% OPC, 10% RHA  
96 and 10% SF, showed a higher compressive strength than the control sample with only OPC.  
97 Van, et al. [25] also investigated the effects of RHA on the compressive strength, portlandite

98 content, autogenous shrinkage and internal relative humidity of UHPC with/without GBFS  
99 under different treatment methods. They revealed that the incorporation of RHA and GBFS  
100 improved workability, compressive strength and autogenous shrinkage of UHPC.

101 From the aforementioned studies, it is clear that the replacement of the OPC with RHA and  
102 GBFS affected the compressive strength of the UHPC under quasi-static condition. However,  
103 the influence of the mentioned alternative cementitious constituents on the dynamic  
104 compressive strength of the UHPC has not been reported yet. Therefore, this study aims to  
105 investigate the quasi-static and particularly dynamic compressive properties of the UHPC with  
106 the incorporation of RHA and GBFS. To evaluate the influence of RHA and GBFS on the  
107 compressive strength of the UHPC, 30% GBFS or a combination of 15% GBFS and 15% RHA  
108 were used to replace 30% OPC (by volume) in the UHPC mixture. The dynamic compressive  
109 properties at different strain rates were investigated using a Split-Hopkinson Pressure Bar  
110 (SHPB). The dynamic compressive strength, energy absorption, and DIF were then analysed  
111 and discussed.

## 112 **2. Materials and Methods**

### 113 **2.1 UHPC Mix Design**

114 In this study, the effect of using alternative cementitious constituents RHA and GBFS for the  
115 OPC in UHPC was investigated. Therefore, only the amount of OPC was changed and other  
116 components in the UHPC mix, such as SP, SF, silica sand, and water, were kept constant.  
117 According to the previous study [15], the percentage of OPC replacement with RHA and GBFS  
118 was recommended in the range of 15% to 50%. Therefore, two UHPC mixes including 30%  
119 GBFS (UHPC-AC1) and 15% GBFS and 15% RHA (UHPC-AC2) were considered. To  
120 evaluate the performance of these mixes, the original UHPC mix with 80% of OPC and 20%  
121 of SF (UHPC-R1) was used as the reference mix (see Table 1).

122 Cementitious materials used in this study were OPC and SF from SIMCOA Operations Pty Ltd  
 123 [26]. For alternative cementitious constituents, white powder slag GBFS from BGC Cement  
 124 [27] and black RHA in the form of Microsilica [28] were chosen. In addition, superplasticiser  
 125 (SP) from Sika [29] was used for the mixes. The chemical compositions of the cementitious  
 126 materials are given in Table 2. To increase the strength of UHPC, steel fibres [30] with 13 mm  
 127 in length and 2% by volume fraction were adopted for three mixes. The chemical, physical and  
 128 mechanical properties of steel fibres are given in Table 3 [31]. Finally, silica sand with the  
 129 maximum particle size of 0.3 mm [32] was used for the mixes.

130 **Table 1.** Summary of UHPC mixes

	Material	OPC	GBFS	RHA	SF	Silica sand	SP	Water	Steel fiber
UHPC-R1	Amount (kg/m <sup>3</sup> )	1,000	-	-	250	1,100	70	170	156
	Binder (%)	80	-	-	20	-	-	-	-
UHPC-AC1	Amount (kg/m <sup>3</sup> )	625	375	-	250	1,100	70	170	156
	Binder (%)	50	30	-	20	-	-	-	-
UHPC-AC2	Amount (kg/m <sup>3</sup> )	625	187.5	187.5	250	1,100	70	170	156
	Binder (%)	50	15	15	20	-	-	-	-

131

132 **Table 2.** Chemical compositions of cementitious materials, (wt.%) [33, 34]

Material	SiO <sub>2</sub>	Fe <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	CaO	Na <sub>2</sub> O	K <sub>2</sub> O	MgO	Ti <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub>	P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub>	SO <sub>3</sub>	LOI <sup>a</sup>
RHA	86.20	0.43	0.46	1.10	-	4.60	0.77	-	2.43	-	4.60
GBFS	32.50	0.90	13.60	41.20	0.30	0.35	5.10	0.50	0.03	3.20	1.10

<sup>a</sup>LOI: Loss on ignition



133

134

**Fig. 1** Steel fibre

135

**Table 3.** Properties of steel fibre [31]

Steel Fibre	
<b>Chemical Properties</b>	
Diisobutyl phthalate	< 0.28%
Steel	Remainder
<b>Physical Properties</b>	
Density	7,800 kg/m <sup>3</sup>
Diameter	0.22 mm
Length	13 mm
Aspect ratio ( <i>L/D</i> )	59
Shape	Straight fibre
<b>Mechanical Properties</b>	
Tensile strength	> 2,300 MPa
Elastic modulus	200 GPa

136 **2.2 Sample Preparation**

137 UHPC was mixed in a Hobart mixer (10L) at 140 rounds per minute. The procedure for  
 138 preparing the UHPC mixes was similar to the previous study [25]. Firstly, silica sand, cement  
 139 and silica sand were added to the mixer and mixed for 1 minute. Next, 85% water and 50% of  
 140 SP were added while mixing simultaneously for 3 minutes. The remaining water was then

141 mixed with SP before being added to the mix. Lastly, steel fibres were added in small quantities  
142 and mixed in intervals while observing for any bundling of fibres and ensuring even  
143 distribution. To ensure uniform spread of fibres within each sample, the input of fibres into the  
144 mix will be done intermittently during the mixing process. The UHPC mixes were then used  
145 for casting in 100 mm × 200 mm (diameter × length) cylindrical moulds. All cylindrical  
146 samples were compacted using a vibration table to eliminate the air trapped in the samples. The  
147 specimens were then cured in the moulds for 24 hours before they were demoulded and placed  
148 in a steam room. The steam-curing was conducted at 70°C for 72 hours and the specimens were  
149 removed and left to cool at room temperature.

150 Before the quasi-static testing, the samples were ground on each end using a concrete grinder  
151 to ensure the required smoothness of the tested specimens. For dynamic compression tests, the  
152 specimens had a diameter equal to that of the bar in the SHPB and an aspect ratio ( $L/D$ ) of 0.5  
153 to achieve the stress equilibrium condition under impact tests. According to Hao's study [35],  
154 the SHPB specimen with the aspect ratio of 0.5 could eliminate the lateral and axial inertia  
155 effects in high-speed impact tests, thus, the stress equilibrium condition can be achieved. The  
156 test specimens for dynamic tests had the size of  $\text{Ø}100 \text{ mm} \times 50 \text{ mm}$  which were cut from  $\text{Ø}100$   
157  $\text{mm} \times 200 \text{ mm}$  cylindrical samples using a brick saw. In total, 9 specimens for the static tests  
158 and 27 specimens for the dynamic tests were prepared.

## 159 **2.3 Experimental Procedure**

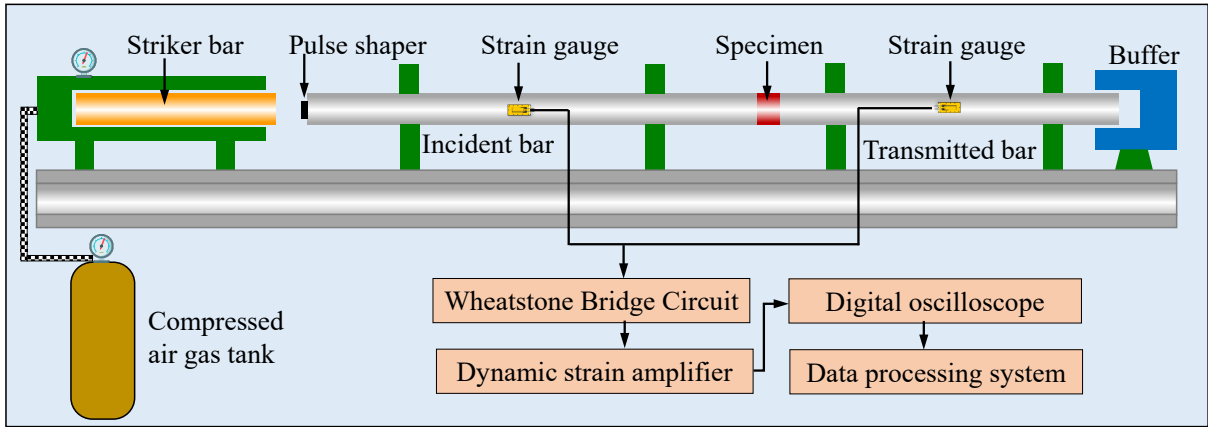
### 160 **2.3.1 Quasi-static Test**

161 MCC-8 compression testing machine (CONTROLS S.p.A, Liscate, Italy) was used to examine  
162 the quasi-static compressive strength of UHPC following AS1012.9 [36]. Identical cylindrical  
163 samples with the size of 100 mm × 200 mm and 100 mm × 50 mm were tested to determine  
164 the average quasi-static and dynamic compressive strength of each UHPC mix, respectively.



165 **2.3.2 Dynamic Testing Using Split Hopkinson Pressure Bar**

166 The dynamic compressive strength was examined using the SHPB, as shown in Fig. 2. To  
 167 investigate the strain rate effects, different levels of impact loading was applied to the  
 168 specimens, which correspond to the chamber pressures of 300 kPa, 400 kPa and 450 kPa.  
 169 Petroleum jelly was used on both tested surfaces of each sample to minimize friction at the  
 170 interfaces. According to Pham, et al. [37], the abundance of the friction forces at the specimen  
 171 ends may result in overestimating the dynamic strength of tested samples.



172

173 **Fig. 2.** Schematic diagram of an SHPB system with a pulse-shaper

174 The Ø100 mm SHPB system consists of a 5,500 mm incident bar and a 3,000 mm transmitted  
 175 bar. Strain gauges were installed on incident bar and transmitted bar to monitor strain of each  
 176 bar. The bars are made of stainless steel with a density of 7,800 kg/m<sup>3</sup> and Young's modulus  
 177 of 210 GPa. A high-speed camera with a sampling rate of 40,000 frames per second was used  
 178 to capture the progressive failure of the tested specimens.

179 According to one-dimensional stress wave propagation, the stress ( $\sigma$ ), strain rate ( $\dot{\epsilon}$ ), and strain  
 180 ( $\epsilon$ ) of the specimen can be determined from the following equations [38]:

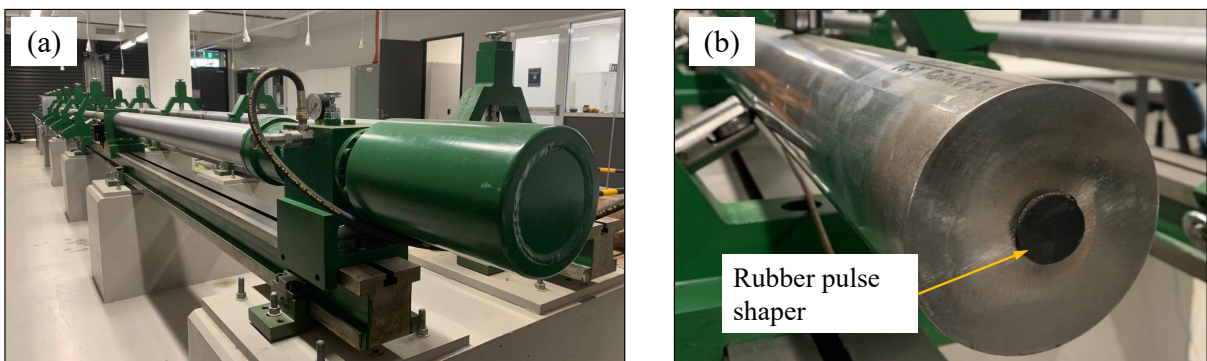
181 
$$\sigma(t) = E \left( \frac{A}{A_s} \right) \epsilon_T(t) \tag{1}$$

182 
$$\dot{\varepsilon}(t) = -\frac{2C_0}{L} \varepsilon_R \quad (2)$$

183 
$$\varepsilon(t) = \int_0^T \dot{\varepsilon}(t) dt \quad (3)$$

184 where  $A$ ,  $E$ , and  $C_0$  are the cross-sectional area, Young's modulus, and elastic wave velocity of  
 185 the bars;  $A_s$  and  $L$  are the cross-sectional area and length of the tested specimen, and  $\varepsilon_T$  and  $\varepsilon_R$   
 186 are the measured transmitted and reflected strain, respectively.

187 For the data derived from these equations to be valid, the stress equilibrium in the longitudinal  
 188 direction of the specimen must be achieved. For brittle materials, such as concrete, specimen  
 189 failure may occur before axial stress equilibrium. This is due to failure strain being relatively  
 190 small in brittle materials and the rise-time of the incident pulse being short in a conventional  
 191 SHPB test [39]. To extend the rise time so that the axial stress equilibrium can be achieved in  
 192 a specimen, a pulse-shaper may be attached to the free end of the incident bar to increase the  
 193 rise time of the incident pulse. Therefore, the rubber pulse-shaper suggested in previous studies  
 194 [40] was adopted in this study (see Fig. 3b).

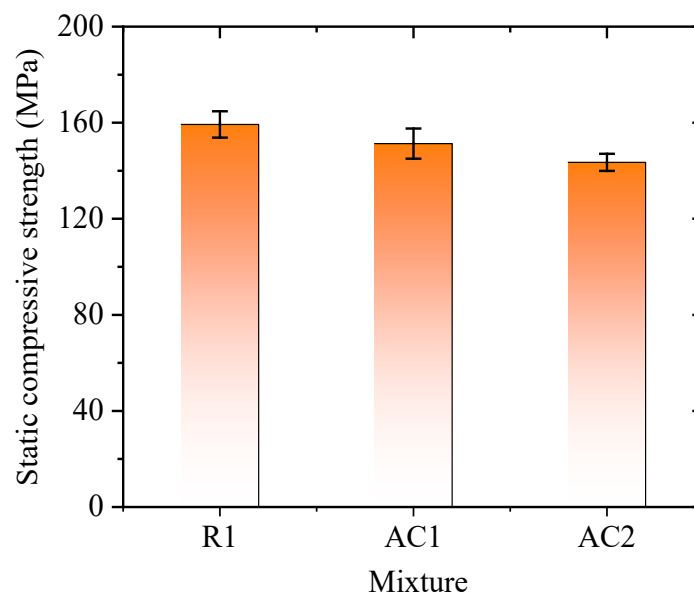


**Fig. 3.** (a) SHPB system and (b) rubber pulse-shaper

### 197 3. Experimental Results

#### 198 3.1 Quasi-static Compressive Testing Results

199 Fig. 4 shows the static compressive strength of the three mixes. It is obvious that the UHPC-  
200 R1 mix achieved the highest average static compressive strength of 159.3 MPa. Meanwhile,  
201 the two alternative cementitious mixes (UHPC-AC1 and UHPC-AC2) performed favourably  
202 in comparison to the reference mix UHPC-R1. Particularly, Mix UHPC-AC1 with 30% GBFS  
203 achieved an average static compressive strength of 151.3 MPa while Mix UHPC-AC2 with  
204 15% GBFS and 15% RHA achieved an average strength of 143.5 MPa. As a result, the  
205 compressive strength of UHPC decreased by about 5% and 10% when replacing OPC with  
206 30% GBFS and 15% GBFS + 15% RHA in UHPC. It can be seen that the compressive strength  
207 of the UHPC incorporating GBFS and RHA was comparable with that of the reference mix.  
208 Therefore, the use of alternative cementitious constituents GBFS and RHA to partially replace  
209 OPC is a promising solution to produce environmentally friendly UHPC, minimizing the  
210 impact of CO<sub>2</sub> emission into the environment.

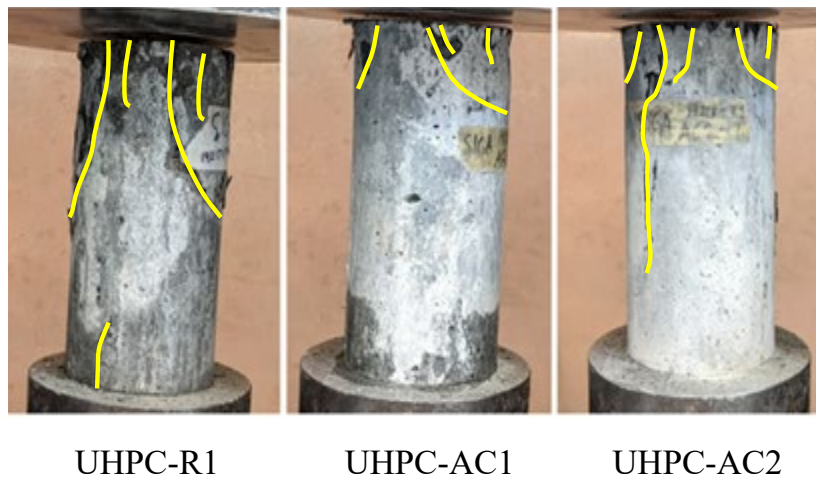


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212

**Fig. 4.** Quasi-static compressive strength of UHPC of the three mixes

213 Fig. 5 shows the fracture pattern of the UHPC specimens of the three mixes after the quasi-  
214 static compression testing. It can be seen that all the specimens displayed similar modes of  
215 failure. Particularly, many small cracks occurred at the specimen end, following by a major  
216 crack breaking down in the specimens (UHPC-AC2). Meanwhile, the cracks propagated from  
217 the top to the middle of the specimen (UHPC-R1) or one-third of the specimen (UHPC-AC1)  
218 in an inclined direction.



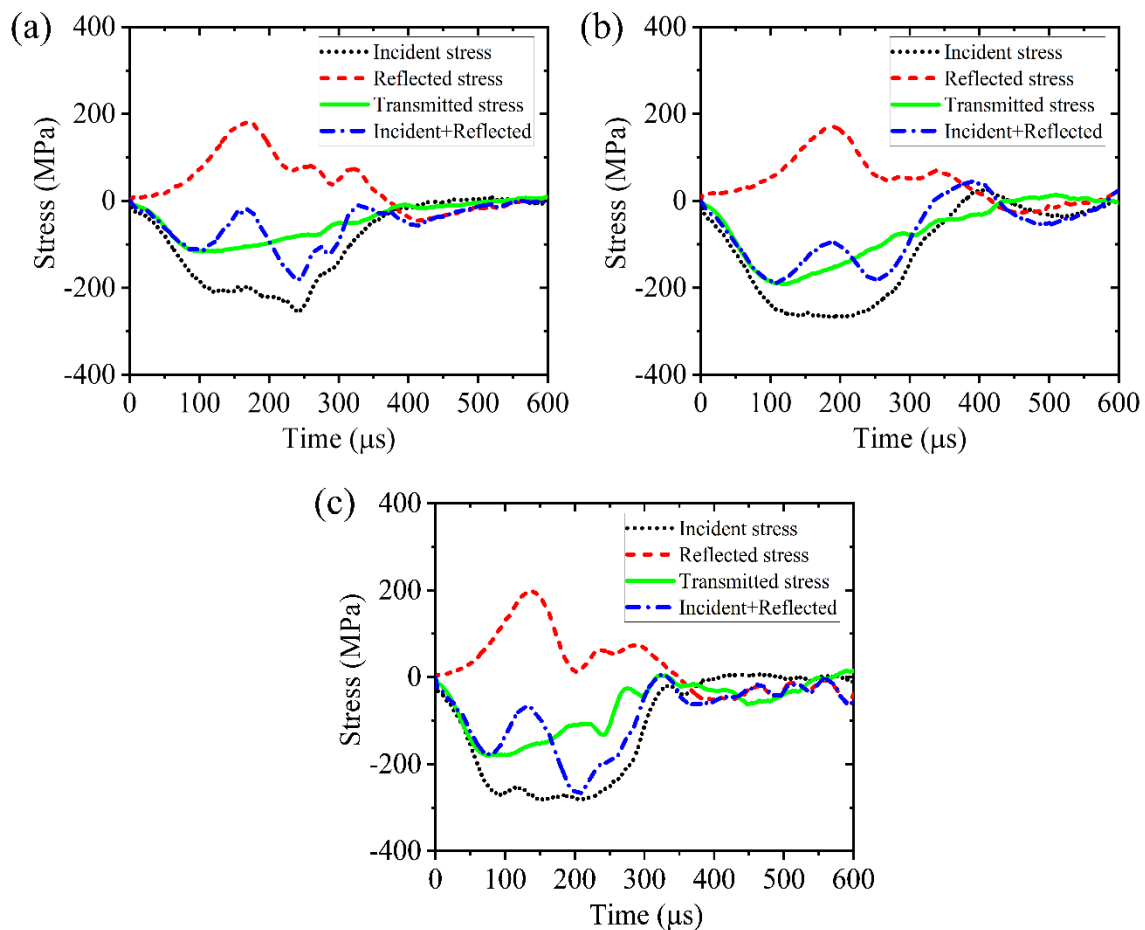
220 **Fig. 5.** Quasi-static failure modes of three UHPC specimens

## 221 3.2 Dynamic Compressive Testing Results

### 222 3.2.1 Stress Equilibrium

223 Dynamic compressive testing at various strain rates was carried out using the SHPB. The  
224 crucial importance of SHPB testing and analysis is ensuring that the dynamic stress equilibrium  
225 is achieved for the tested samples. Therefore, the stress equilibrium was checked for all the  
226 tested specimens by assessing the matching of the transmitted stress and the sum of the incident  
227 and reflected stresses. Fig. 6 shows an example of a stress equilibrium check for a tested  
228 sample. It is clear that the Incident + Reflected waves are comparable with the transmitted  
229 wave for the first phase, reaching the same level of the first peak as the Transmitted wave.

230 After the peak stress, the mismatch in transmitted and incident + reflected waves was observed  
 231 in the later stage in UHPC. This phenomenon often occurs when investigating the dynamic  
 232 behaviour of UHPC, but it is hardly found in normal concrete. This can be explained that the  
 233 post-peak behaviour of UHPC is ductile, where the compressive stress slightly reduces after  
 234 the peak. Therefore, it is difficult to achieve the stress equilibrium at a later stage since the  
 235 dynamic stress wave equilibrium is usually achieved in a short period. Meanwhile, the normal  
 236 strength concrete without fibres is brittle and then the compressive stress reduces significantly  
 237 after peaks.



238

239 **Fig. 6.** Stress histories of the tested specimens: (a) UHPC-R1, (b) UHPC-AC1 and (c)

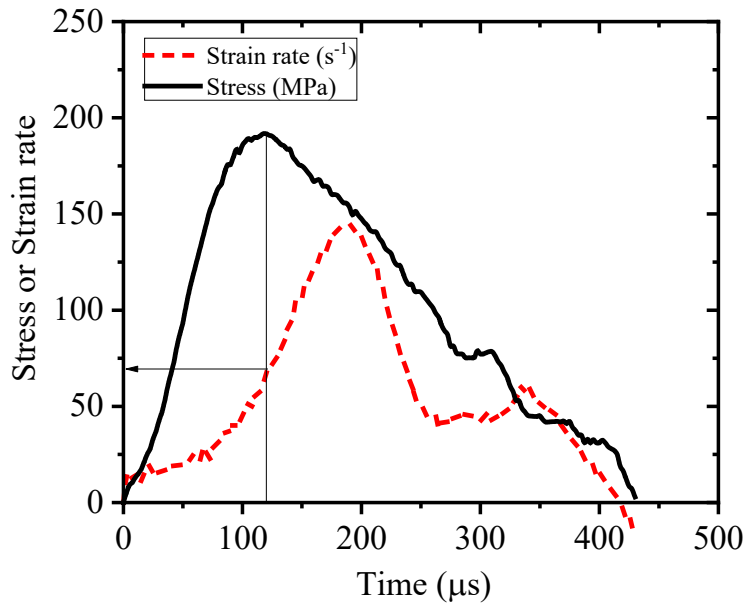
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UHPC-AC2

241 It is noted that, in this study, rubber pulse shapers were also used to increase the rise time and  
242 achieve the stress equilibrium based on the suggestion of the previous study on the dynamic  
243 compressive strength of UHPC [41] and rubberised concrete [37]. According to Hassan and  
244 Wille [41], the pulse shaper thickness affected the rise time of the incident wave, while the  
245 diameter of the pulse shaper affected the slope of the ascent and the descent of the incident  
246 wave form. Although with the same material (rubber) and shape of the pulse shapers, the rise  
247 time of UHPC in this study was different from rubberised concrete reported in the previous  
248 study [37]. This indicated that the rise time was also affected by the strength of the test  
249 specimen as well as other factors such as intensity of the impact and surface-to-surface contact  
250 between the bars and specimen. The surface-to-surface contact between the specimen and the  
251 incident bar affected the rise time that was reported by Guo, et al. [42]. Ideally, both ends of  
252 the tested specimens should also be perfectly parallel and flat to achieve full surface contact  
253 with the bars in the SHPB system. In addition, steel fibres tended to stick out of the surfaces of  
254 the specimens caused the surface roughness, even after grinding. As a consequence, the  
255 distribution of stress during loading was not completely uniform, thus, it was difficult to  
256 achieve a perfect stress equilibrium condition for the UHPC. Considering those difficulties,  
257 only specimens achieving the stress equilibrium condition were reported and the presented data  
258 in this study show the reasonable stress equilibrium condition.

### 259 **3.2.2 Strain rate determination**

260 The strain rate of the three UHPC mixtures was time-dependent and there are various methods  
261 for strain rate determination. The strain rate was determined by taking the mean strain rate over  
262 the loading period [43] or considering the strain rate at peak stress [37]. In this study, the strain  
263 rate was determined for each sample using the strain rate at the peak stress as also adopted in  
264 the previous studies [37], see Fig. 7.



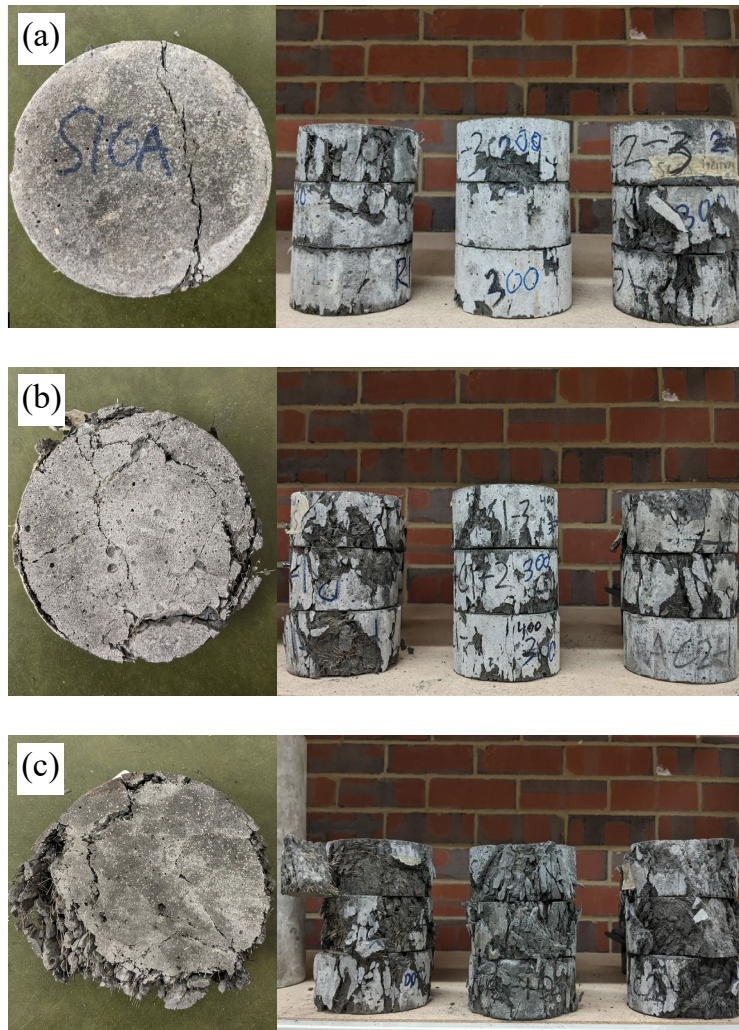
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266

**Fig. 7.** Strain rate determination

267 **3.3 Failure Processes and Failure Modes**

268 Fig. 8 shows the final failure modes of the tested specimens, in which Figs. 8a, 8b, and 8c  
 269 illustrate the failure mode of UHPC-R1, UHPC-AC1 and UHPC-AC2, respectively. It was  
 270 observed that the failure mode of Mix UHPC-R1 shows a major crack across the sample section  
 271 and many spalling failures were also observed around the perimeter. Meanwhile, the failure  
 272 mode of UHPC-AC1 consisted of several small cracks on the cross-section of the sample.  
 273 Similar to Mix UHPC-R1, many spalling failures were observed around the perimeter of the  
 274 specimens of Mix UHPC-AC1. The failure mode of UHPC-AC2 contained severe spalling  
 275 damage compared to Mixes UHPC-R1 and UHPC-AC1. In general, the failure modes of these  
 276 mixes were similar.



277

278

**Fig. 8.** Failure modes of a) UHPC-R1, (b) UHPC-AC1 and (c) UHPC-AC2

279

280

Fig. 9 shows the progressive failure of the tested specimens using a high-speed camera at a rate

281

of 40,000 frames per second. It can be seen that the cracks initiated from both sides of the

282

specimens and developed into the mid-region, demonstrating the stress equilibrium condition.

283

The number of cracks was not significantly different between the three mixes. When the

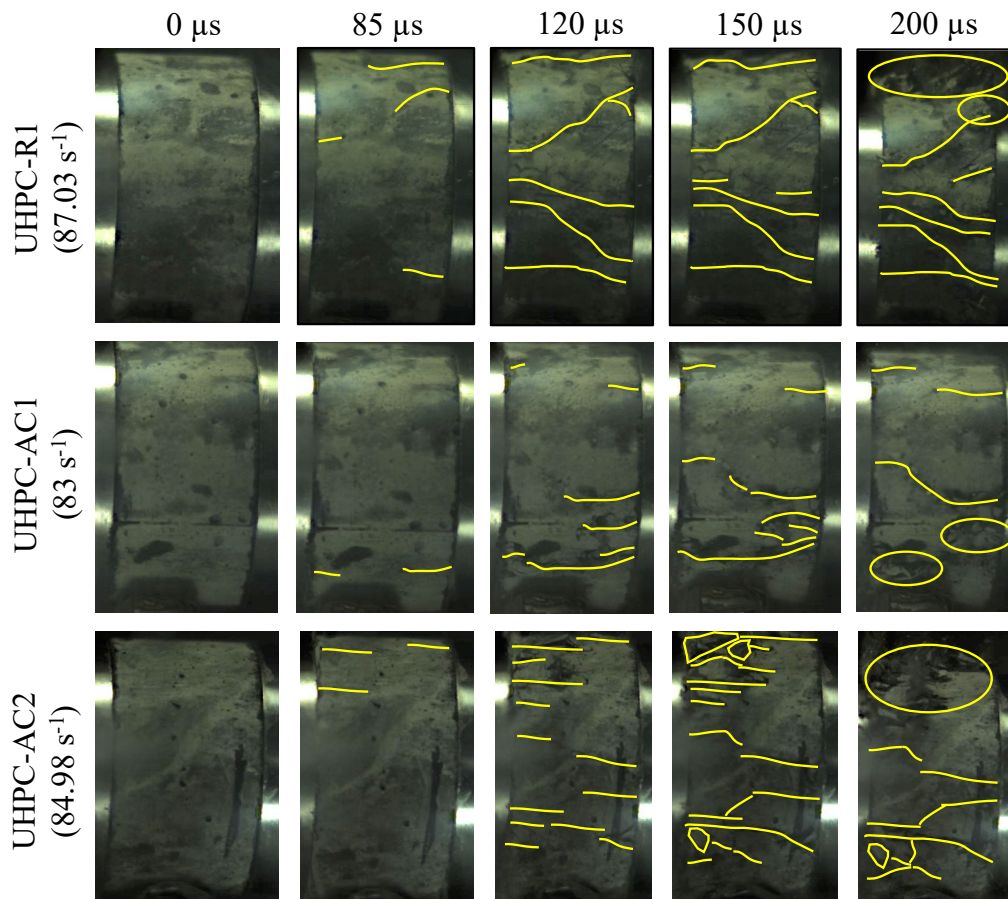
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specimen was further loaded, initial cracks developed. The bridging effect of steel fibres

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prominently slowed down the crack development and crack propagation.





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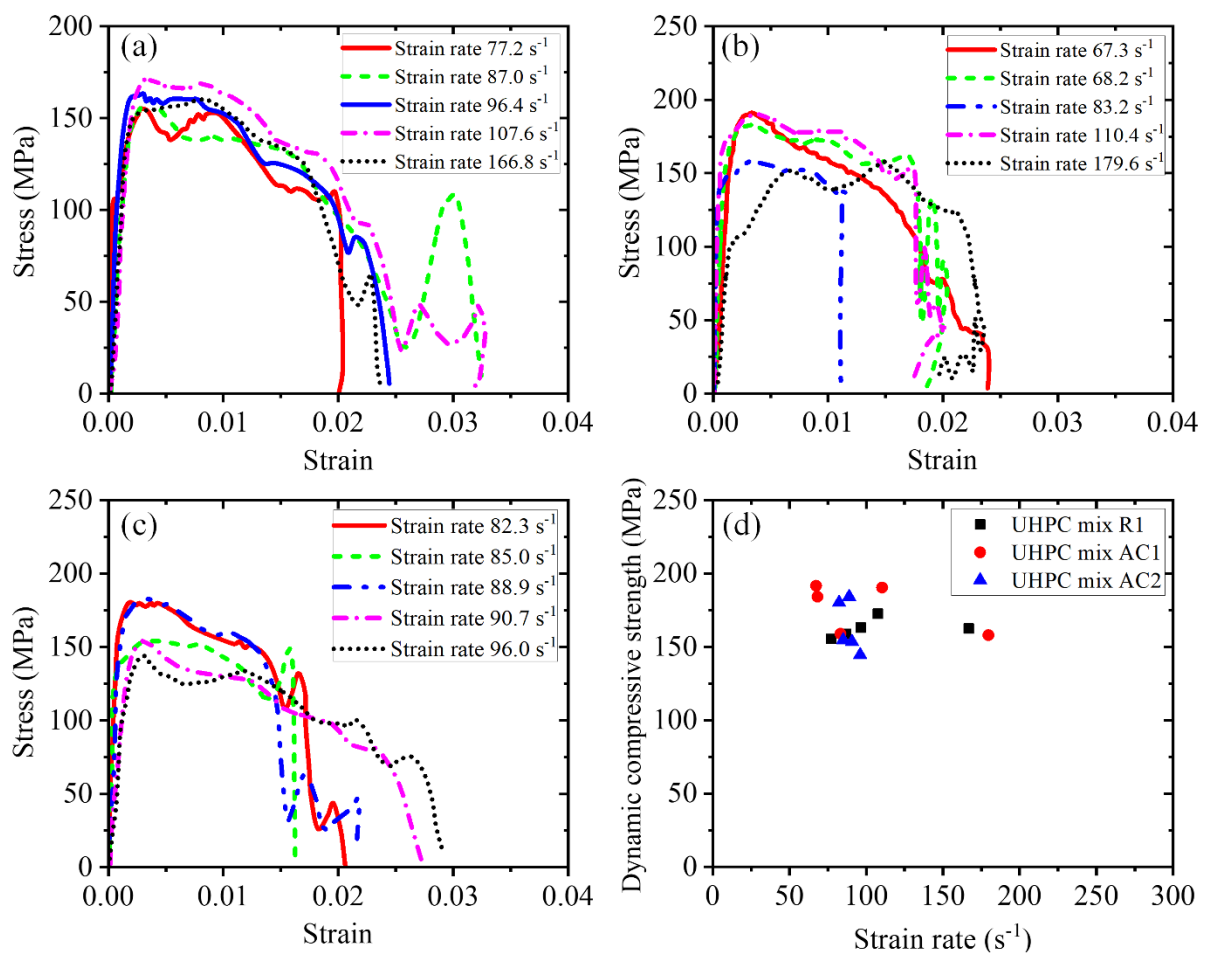
287 **Fig. 9.** Progressive failure pattern of three UHPC mixes (oval shape shows the spalling).

288

### 289 3.4 Stress-Strain Curves and Energy Absorption

290 The stress-strain curves of UHPC and the corresponding strain rates were obtained from the  
 291 test data and are shown in Fig. 10. Generally, the initial stage of the stress-strain curves  
 292 followed a linear trend, indicating elastic deformation, before gradually curving towards the  
 293 peak stress. The compressive stress then began a post-peak descending branch due to its ductile  
 294 behaviour as reported in the previous studies due to the bridging effect of steel fibres. When  
 295 incorporating the alternative cementitious constituents GBFS and RHA, the stress-strain curves  
 296 of the alternative mixes UHPC-AC1 and UHPC-AC2 were similar to that of Mix UHPC-R1  
 297 with OPC cement, as shown in Figs. 10a, 10b and 10c.

298 Fig. 10d illustrates the dynamic compressive strengths of UHPC with three different mixes R1,  
 299 AC1 and AC2. It can be seen that the dynamic compressive strength of UHPC with the three  
 300 different mixes R1, AC1 and AC2 was not significantly different when the strain rate increased.  
 301 This means that the proposed mixes of UHPC in this study exhibit marginal strain rate  
 302 sensitivity. Fig. 10d also indicates that the dynamic compressive strength of the three mixes  
 303 was similar within the range of studied strain rates. In another word, the OPC in the UHPC mix  
 304 can be alternated with the recycled cementitious constituents such as GBFS and RHA without  
 305 scarifying the dynamic compressive strength.



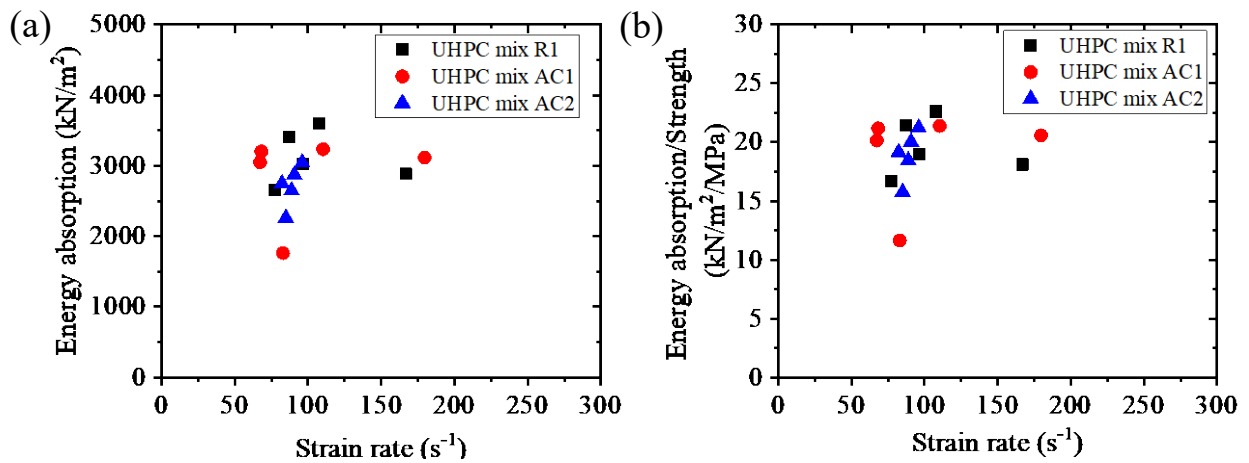
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307 **Fig. 10.** Stress-strain curves of (a) UHPC-R1, (b) UHPC-AC1 and (c) UHPC-AC2; and (d)

308

dynamic compressive strength

309 Fig. 11 illustrates the energy absorption of three different mixes at various strain rates. In this  
 310 figure, the energy absorption was determined from the enclosed area under the stress-strain  
 311 curves in Figs 10a-10c. For each mix, the energy absorption slightly increases with strain rate,  
 312 which has also been reported in the previous studies [44]. Meanwhile, the present results also  
 313 display a considerable variation. These variations due to the fluctuation of the stress-strain  
 314 curves which caused by the different response of the specimens under different strain rates. In  
 315 addition, results from SHPB tests usually fluctuate due to the complexity of the tests and the  
 316 nature of the dynamic testing as observed in previous studies [45].



317

318 **Fig. 11.** (a) Energy absorption and (b) normalised energy absorption of three UHPC mixtures

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**Table 4.** Dynamic Testing Results

UHP C Mix	Sample ID	Strain Rate (1/s)	Static Compressive Strength (MPa)	Dynamic Compressive Strength (MPa)	Dynamic Increase Factor (DIF)	Energy Absorption (kJ/m <sup>2</sup> )
R1	R1-300-1	77	159.3	155.4	0.98	2654
	R1-450-1	87		158.8	1.00	3409
	R1-450-2	96		163.2	1.02	3021
	R1-450-3	108		172.5	1.08	3601
	R1-400-1	167		162.6	1.02	2884
AC1	AC1-400-1	67	151.3	191.7	1.27	3048
	AC1-400-2	68		184.2	1.22	3202
	AC1-300-1	83		159.0	1.05	1762
	AC1-400-3	110		190.4	1.26	3232
	AC1-300-2	180		158.0	1.04	3113
AC2	AC2-400-1	82	143.5	180.2	1.26	2746
	AC2-300-1	85		154.7	1.08	2261
	AC2-400-2	89		184.2	1.28	2648
	AC2-450-1	91		153.6	1.07	2871
	AC2-450-2	96		144.6	1.01	3042

325

## 326 4. Discussions

### 327 4.1 Quasi-Static Performance of UHPC

328 As stated in the previous section, the quasi-static compressive strength for all the UHPC mixes  
329 was in the range of 143.5-159.3 MPa, which is far higher than 120 MPa for classifying the  
330 UHPC category under ASTM C1856 [46]. However, according to the ACI standard [47], the  
331 compressive strength of UHPC should be greater than 150 MPa, leading to only two mixtures  
332 including UHPC-R1 and UHPC-AC1 satisfy this criteria. The compressive strength of Mix  
333 UHPC-AC2 was 143.5 MPa that is 4.5% less than the required minimum compressive strength  
334 of UHPC according to ACI standard [47]. Therefore, with the incorporation of the alternative  
335 cementitious constituents GBFS and RHA, the alternative mix did not meet the minimum  
336 requirement of UHPC according to ACI standard.

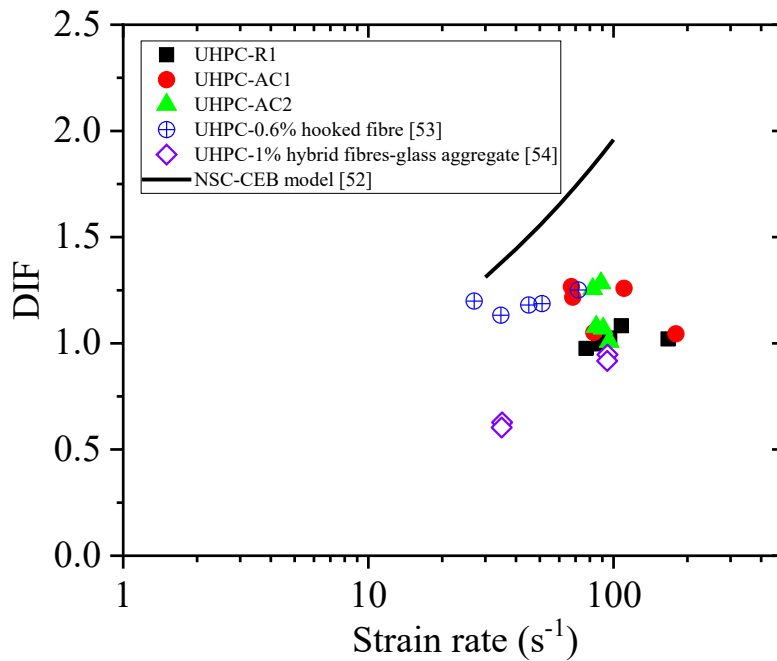
337 As mentioned above, when incorporating the alternative cementitious constituents, the  
338 compressive strength of the UHPC mixes slightly decreased. This observation can be explained  
339 that GBFS slowed down the hydration process and setting time, which caused low early  
340 strength. According to Lee and Lee [48], the development of the compressive strength of GBFS  
341 based concrete depended on the GBFS replacement ratio and concrete curing age. The GBFS  
342 glassy compounds reacted slowly with water, and it took time to obtain hydroxyl ions to break  
343 the glassy slag parcels from the hydration products of OPC at an early age [49]. These findings  
344 were also consistent with previous studies [15, 49]. Most of the studies reported that the  
345 compressive strength of the UHPC mix at an early age decreased with the percentage of the  
346 GBFS replacement. The compressive strengths at 3 days of the UHPCs with slag decreased by  
347 around 4.8–18.1% regarding the reference specimens [49]. Meanwhile, Pyo and Kim [15]  
348 revealed that the incorporation of GBFS caused a decrease of the compressive strength at 1 day  
349 and 3 days by 39% and 18%, respectively. It can be seen that GBFS tended to decrease the  
350 early compressive strength of UHPC due to its low hydration activity as well as retarding effect  
351 on the cement hydration.

352 The compressive strength of UHPC with GBFS can be improved by increasing the curing  
353 process. When the curing time is long enough, normally more than 28 days, the secondary  
354 pozzolanic reaction between GBFS and  $\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2$  in the pore solution produces additional C-S-  
355 H gel (Calcium Silicate Hydrate), which increases the packing density of UHPC, leading to the  
356 increased compressive strength of UHPC [45]. Besides, Liu et al. [13] found that the  
357 compressive strength increased up to 9% when the GBFS content increased to 40% of the  
358 binder due to the secondary pozzolanic reaction of GBFS. Meanwhile, Shi, et al. [50] indicated  
359 that the compressive strength of UHPC with GBFS can be improved by using the autoclave  
360 curing with a temperature of 180°C for 8h as compared to the steam curing with a temperature  
361 of 80°C for 48h.

362 For Mix UHPC-AC2 with GBFS and RHA, the RHA absorb water. Meanwhile, GBFS required  
363 a higher amount of water to attain proper hydration for achieving higher compressive strength  
364 as discussed above [15-17]. As a result, Mix UHPC-AC2 which incorporated both GBFS and  
365 RHA required more water and superplasticiser in comparison to reference mix UHPC-R1 to  
366 maintain similar workability. However, in this study, water was constrained to be the same in  
367 three mixes. Therefore, Mix UHPC-AC2 with GBFS and RHA had less water for GBFS to  
368 attain proper hydration compared to the mix UHPC-AC1, leading to the compressive strength  
369 of the mix UHPC-AC2 slightly lower than that of the mix UHPC-AC1.

#### 370 **4.2 Dynamic Performance of UHPC**

371 To investigate the dynamic performance of three UHPC mixes, the dynamic increase factors  
372 (DIF) defined by the ratio between dynamic compressive strength and static compressive  
373 strength for all the specimens are calculated and shown in Fig. 12. It is obvious that all the  
374 specimens displayed less strength enhancement at high strain rate as compared to normal  
375 concrete (see black line in Fig. 12). In fact, when the strain rate increased, the DIF did not  
376 change significantly, especially those of the mix UHPC-R1. This findings also agreed well with  
377 previous studies [44, 51] where UHPC showed marginal sensitivity to strain rate as shown in  
378 Fig. 12.



379

380

**Fig. 12.** Comparison of DIF with different UHPC mixes

381

To further investigate the sensitivity of UHPC to strain rate, the relationship between the DIF

382

and strain rate of the previous studies and CEB model [52] is compared and shown in Fig. 12.

383

As shown, the DIF of Mix UHPC-R1 is almost constant when increasing strain rate from 77.2

384

$\text{s}^{-1}$  to  $107.6 \text{ s}^{-1}$ , demonstrating marginal strain rate sensitivity. Meanwhile, the DIF of UHPC-

385

AC1 and UHPC-AC2 do not show an obvious increase with the strain rate but oscillate slightly

386

in the strain rate range achieved in the tests in this study. These oscillations can be attributed

387

to the testing errors. It can be seen that the DIF of Mixes UHPC-AC1 and UHPC-AC2 were in

388

the range from 1.044 to 1.267 and 1.008 to 1.284, which were slightly higher than that of the

389

UHPC-R1, respectively. These results indicate that the compressive strength of UHPC-AC1

390

and UHPC-AC2 are not as sensitive as normal concrete to strain rate in the narrow strain rate

391

range obtained in this study. Further tests are needed to investigate the strain rate effects on the

392

compressive strength of UHPC-AC1 and UHPC-AC2 in a wide range of strain rates.

393 The DIF of the UHPC mixes in this study was also compared to that of another UHPC in the  
 394 previous studies [53, 54] and normal strength concrete( NSC) [52]. According to Malvar and  
 395 Crawford [52], the DIFs for NSC ( $f_{cs} = 52.5$  MPa) can be obtained from empirical formulae as  
 396 below:

$$397 \quad DIF = \frac{f_c}{f_{cs}} = \begin{cases} \left( \frac{\dot{\epsilon}}{\dot{\epsilon}_s} \right)^{1.026\alpha} & \text{for } \dot{\epsilon} \leq 30\text{s}^{-1} \\ \gamma_s \left( \frac{\dot{\epsilon}}{\dot{\epsilon}_s} \right)^{1/3} & \text{for } \dot{\epsilon} > 30\text{s}^{-1} \end{cases} \quad (4)$$

398 where  $f_c$  is the dynamic compressive strength at  $\dot{\epsilon}$ ,  $f_{cs}$  is the static compressive strength at  $\dot{\epsilon}_s$ ,  
 399  $\dot{\epsilon}$  is the strain rate in the range of  $30 \times 10^{-6}$  to  $300 \text{ s}^{-1}$ ,  $\dot{\epsilon}_s$  is the static strain rate  $30 \times 10^{-6}$ ,  $\log \gamma_s$   
 400  $= 6.156\alpha - 2$ ,  $\alpha = 1/(5 + 9f_{cs}/f_{co})$  and  $f_{co} = 10$  MPa.

401 It is clear that the DIFs of the three UHPC mixes in this study were similar to those of the  
 402 typical UHPC [53] and slightly higher than those of eco-friendly UHPC with recycled glass  
 403 aggregate [54], demonstrating the potential use of recycled cementitious materials such as  
 404 GFBS and RHA for the development of new UHPC subjected to impact loading. However,  
 405 when comparing to NSC [52], the DIFs of the proposed UHPC were much lower than those of  
 406 NSC [52]. This observation confirms that UHPC is less sensitive to strain rate than NSC, which  
 407 can be attributed to several reasons: (1) existence of coarse aggregates in NSC, (2) viscosity  
 408 caused by air and water trapped in voids of the matrix and (3) effect of crack velocity in  
 409 concrete material with strain rate. Firstly, under quasi-static loading, cracks initiate and  
 410 propagate through weak interfacial transition zones between coarse aggregates and the matrix.  
 411 Under a high loading rate, NSC underwent damage cutting through coarse aggregates which  
 412 were much stronger than the matrix, leading to higher dynamic compressive strength and DIF.  
 413 UHPC usually does not contain coarse aggregates, thus, this effect can be eliminated for UHPC



414 under a high loading rate. Secondly, the porosity with entrapped air and water also affects the  
415 dynamic properties of concrete. UHPC has a very low void content as compared to that of NSC.  
416 Therefore, the influence of viscosity on the dynamic properties of UHPC is thus also nominal.  
417 Finally, it is known that the crack velocity in concrete material increased with strain rate. Under  
418 similar strain rate loading, UHPC had a slower crack expansion due to the fibre-bridging effect  
419 compared to NSC, resulting in a lower strength enhancement. These phenomena explain why  
420 UHPC is less sensitive to strain rate as compared to NSC, which was experimentally confirmed  
421 by the results of this study and previous studies [53, 55].

422 Fig. 11 illustrates the energy absorption of the three mixes of UHPC at various strain rates. In  
423 this figure, the energy absorption of the UHPC was determined from the enclosed area under  
424 the stress-strain curves in Figs. 10a-10c. For each mix, the energy absorption slightly increases  
425 with strain rate, which has also been reported in the previous studies [44]. It is also evident  
426 from Fig. 11 that Mixes UHPC-AC1 and UHPC-AC2 exhibited comparable energy absorption  
427 capacities to Mix UHPC-R1 at same strain rates. This is because three mixes displayed a similar  
428 dynamic compressive strength, residual strain and stress-strain relation characteristics as  
429 shown in Fig. 10. Regarding the energy absorption capacity of Mixes UHPC-AC1 and UHPC-  
430 AC2, it can be concluded that the alternative cementitious constituents such as GBFS and RHA  
431 can be used for manufacturing the UHPC for dynamic loading conditions.

### 432 **4.3 Environmental Evaluation**

433 As mentioned previously, the aims of using GBFS and RHA are mainly to reduce  
434 environmental impact and reduce the material costs. This study only focused on the  
435 environmental impact because comparing the material costs were impractical owing to the  
436 varying costs among different countries/providers. Nowadays, the most critical environmental  
437 impact is carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emission. Therefore, to evaluate the environmental friendly

438 performance of the alternative mixes UHPC-AC1 and UHPC-AC2, their embedded CO<sub>2</sub>  
439 emission (e-CO<sub>2</sub>) were estimated and compared to that of the reference UHPC-R1. Table 5  
440 provides the e-CO<sub>2</sub> data of the raw materials used in the UHPC mixes. The e-CO<sub>2</sub> of the three  
441 mixes of UHPC in this study was calculated as the sum of the values obtained by multiplying  
442 the carbon footprint values (Table 5) with the volume percentage of materials in each UHPC  
443 mixture. In addition, in this study, the UHPC mixes were cured using a steam room at 70°C for  
444 72 h. Therefore, the CO<sub>2</sub> emission during the curing process was also taken into account. The  
445 CO<sub>2</sub> emission of steam curing was about 2.49 kg/m<sup>3</sup>/h CO<sub>2</sub> based on the investigation in the  
446 previous study [56]. As mentioned previously, the constant temperature time was 72 h and the  
447 time for gradual heating was approximately 2.5 h [50], leading to a total of 74.5 h for  
448 estimations. Consequently, the CO<sub>2</sub> emission of steam curing was calculated to be 74.5 h ×  
449 2.49 kg/m<sup>3</sup>/h = 185.5 kg/m<sup>3</sup>. The total CO<sub>2</sub> emission for each UHPC mix is shown in Table 6.

450 The optimal UHPC mix should have high strength and low environmental impact. Therefore,  
451 e-CO<sub>2</sub> index (*CI*) defined by the ratio between e-CO<sub>2</sub> and the static compressive strength ( $\sigma$ )  
452 were introduced in Eq. 5.

$$453 \quad CI = \frac{e - CO_2 (\text{kg/m}^3)}{\sigma (\text{MPa})} \quad (5)$$

454 **Table 5.** The e- CO<sub>2</sub> of the raw materials

Items	e-CO <sub>2</sub>	Reference
Cement	0.8300	[50]
RHA	0.1032	[57]
GBFS	0.0190	[50]
SF	0.0140	[58]
Quartz sand	0.0100	[50]
SP	0.7200	[50]
Water	0.0003	[50]
Steel fiber	1.4965	[50]

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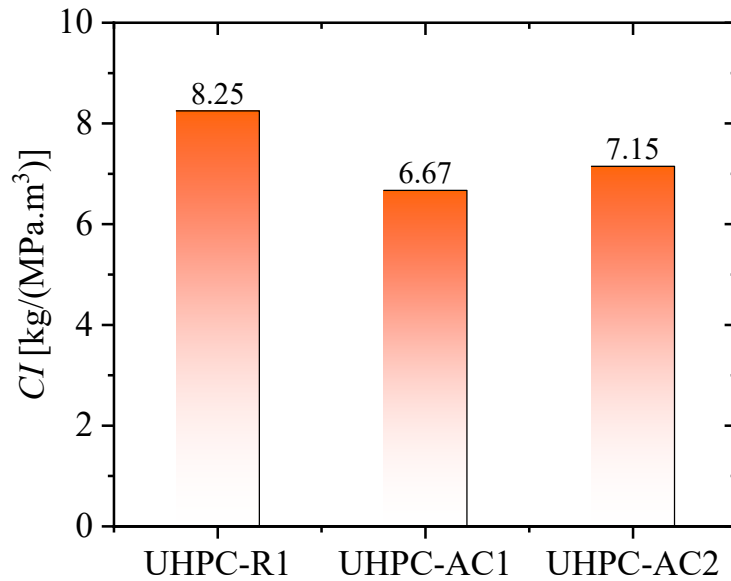
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**Table 6.** The embodied carbon dioxide and energy consumption of the raw materials

Mixture	Compositions (kg/m <sup>3</sup> )								e-CO <sub>2</sub> curing process (kg/m <sup>3</sup> )	Total e-CO <sub>2</sub> (kg/m <sup>3</sup> )
	Cement	SF	GBFS	RHA	Sand	Water	SP	Steel fiber		
UHPC-R1	1000	250	-	-	1100	170	70	156	185.5	1313.9
UHPC-AC1	625	250	375	-	1100	170	70	156	185.5	1009.8
UHPC-AC2	625	250	187.5	187.5	1100	170	70	156	185.5	1025.6

457

458 Fig. 13 illustrates the comparison of the *CI* index of the three UHPC mixtures investigated in  
459 this study. It is obvious from the figure that the alternative mixes UHPC-AC1 and UHPC-AC2  
460 have a lower *CI* index compared to the reference mix UHPC-R1. This finding demonstrates  
461 the merit of using GBFS and RHA as a binder component in making UHPC with an attempt to  
462 reduce the environmental impact. When comparing the two newly developed mixes UHPC-  
463 AC1 and UHPC-AC2, it is clear that the *CI* index of Mix UHPC-AC1 with GBFS is lower than  
464 that of Mix UHPC-AC2 with GBFS+RHA. Therefore, Mix UHPC-AC1 with GBFS is more  
465 efficient in terms of high compressive strength and low environmental impact. However, in  
466 this study, only one mixture with a volume fraction of the RHA was considered, thus, further  
467 testing would be required to investigate the compressive performance of the UHPC with  
468 different volume fractions of the GBFS and RHA to conclude the effects of these components  
469 on *CI* index.



470

471

**Fig. 13.** Comparison of e-CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of the three mixtures UHPC

472

To demonstrate the developed UHPC with the GBFS and RHA are efficient and eco-friendly

473

materials, the e-CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of Mixes UHPC-AC1 and UHPC-AC2 were compared to other

474

UHPCs in the literature, as shown in Fig. 14. Yu, et al. [49] summarized the e-CO<sub>2</sub> emissions

475

of a number of studies on UHPC and found a linear relationship between e-CO<sub>2</sub> and

476

compressive strength as illustrated in the trendline (see Fig. 14). Therefore, UHPC with the

477

data points on or below the trend line have a lower environmental impact than the average

478

value. It is clear that the compressive strength of Mixes UHPC-AC1 and UHPC-AC2

479

developed in this study are higher than that of most of UHPC developed in the previous studies.

480

Moreover, it is important to notice that the data points representing the UHPC-AC1 on the

481

trendline, demonstrating the UHPC-AC1 mix is in the common region of the UHPC

482

investigated in previous studies. So far, it can be seen that the compressive strength and e-CO<sub>2</sub>

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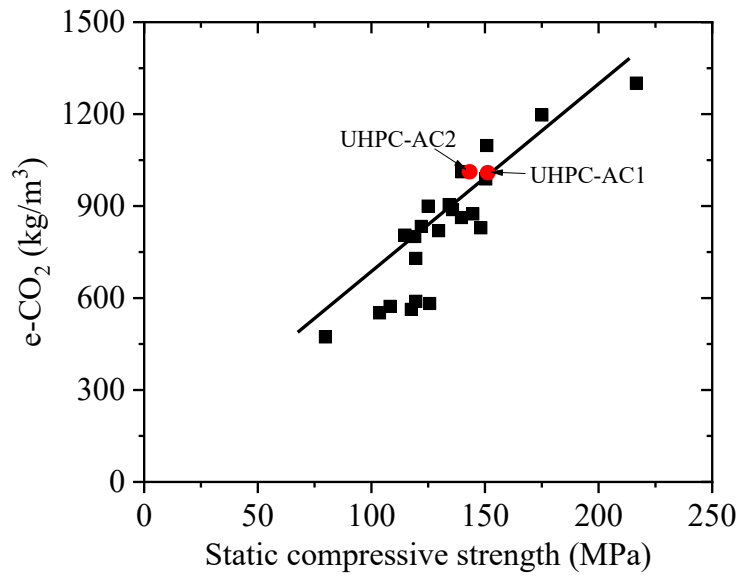
are dependent on the volume fractions of OPC, GBFS and RHA. Therefore, UHPC can be

484

designed with less environmental impact and reasonable compressive strength by optimizing

485

the binder material components and curing conditions.



486

487 **Fig. 14.** Comparison of e-CO<sub>2</sub> emission of the developed UHPC-AC1 and UHPC-AC2 in  
 488 this study and other UHPC summarised in reference [49]

489 **5. Conclusion**

490 This study successfully investigated the effect of alternative cementitious constituents on the  
 491 compressive performance of UHPC. The static and dynamic compressive properties of the  
 492 newly developed UHPC were then experimentally investigated. The following findings have  
 493 been drawn based on the results presented in this paper:

- 494 1. The findings have indicated that 30% replacement of OPC with GBFS or GBFS and  
 495 RHA in a predetermined UHPC mixture still produced concrete with high static and  
 496 dynamic compressive strength. Particularly, the static compressive strength of the mix  
 497 UHPC-AC1 with 30% GBFS and the mix UHPC-AC2 with 15% GBFS and 15% RHA  
 498 replacement of OPC were 151.3 MPa and 143.5 MPa, respectively.
- 499 2. The impact testing indicated that the dynamic compressive strength of the UHPC with  
 500 three different mixes UHPC-R1, UHPC-AC1 and UHPC-AC2 are not as sensitive to  
 501 strain rate as normal concrete.

502 3. The alternative mixes UHPC-AC1 and UHPC-AC2 had a lower CI index compared to  
503 the reference UHPC-R1, demonstrating the merit of using GBFS and RHA as a binder  
504 component in making the UHPC with an attempt to reduce the environmental impact  
505 while not greatly reducing the UHPC strength.

506 The experimental results showed that RHA and GBFS are potential cementitious constituents  
507 to partially replace OPC in UHPC to produce efficient UHPC with high strength and low  
508 environmental impact.

### 509 **Acknowledgements**

510 The financial support from the Australian Research Council Laureate Fellowships  
511 FL180100196 is acknowledged. The financial support from Small Grant, Curtin University is  
512 also acknowledged.

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