

University Council Minutes

The University Council met at the Sandy Bay Campus in the Council Room and by video conference (via Zoom) on Friday 1st March 2024 from 9.30am.

Members: The Chancellor (Ms Alison Watkins AM) as Chair, Vice-Chancellor (Professor Rufus Black), Professor Natalie Brown, Professor Emeritus Peter Dawkins AO, Ms Karina Groenewoud, Mr James Groom, Ms Sarah-Jayne Hall, Ms Tara Howell, Ms Alicia Leis, Ms Ariane Moore, Dr Tania Price, Associate Professor Ashley Townsend, Ms Sheree Vertigan AM, and Distinguished Professor Emerita Maggie Walter.

In attendance: Professor Ian Anderson AO (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic), Mr Craig Barling (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Student Services and Operations), Ms Kristen Derbyshire (Chief People Officer), Professor Anthony Koutoulis (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research) and Ms Kate Huntington (Executive Director, Strategic Communications) attended for all items other than members only.
Ms Sally Paynter attended as University Secretary.

By invitation: Ms Emma Bates (Acting Associate Director – External Reporting and Compliance)
Ms Jane Beaumont (General Counsel / Executive Director Legal and Risk)
Professor Luke Bereznicki (Associate Dean Learning and Teaching Performance, CoHM)
Mr Leigh Burrill (Senior Lead - Financial Reporting)
Professor Swee-Hoon Chuah (Professor in Economics)
Professor Stuart Crispin (Executive Dean, College of Business and Economics)
Professor Richard Eccleston (Director, Tasmanian Policy Exchange)
Mr Brodie Emery (Associate Director, Strategic Improvements)
Ms Poppy Fay (Director, Campus Futures)
Mr Paul Gregg (Chair, University Properties Pty Ltd)
Ms Prue Horne (Director, College Transformation, CoBE)
Mr Rick Inglis (Executive Director Strategy)
Professor Elizabeth Leane (Professor of Antarctic Studies)
Mr Phil Leersen (Executive Director, Campus Services)
Mr Ben Rose (Chief Financial Officer)
Ms Michelle Weir (Chief Marketing Officer)

Apologies: No apologies were received.

1 MEMBERS ONLY

1.1 * Members Only

The Chancellor opened the meeting, welcoming members and congratulated the two ministerial appointees, Tara Howell and Shree Vertigan AM on their recent appointment by the Minister for Education for second terms on University Council.

University Council met in closed session without the Vice-Chancellor and discussed the following:

Work Health and Safety

Members reflected on the Officers Briefing on Work Health and Safety due diligence held the previous day, and discussed the importance of understanding and being assured that as officers they are exercising due diligence to ensure the University complies with its duties and obligations under the *Work Health and Safety Act (Cth) 2011*

Members discussed the role of the Audit and Risk Committee in monitoring compliance against the WHS Act and requested that the Committee bring to Council a framework that clearly sets out for Council the University's WHS performance against the mandatory requirements and includes clear accountabilities and consequences for actions. Such a framework would be used to inform WHS decisions for the institution and provide an appropriate standard of due diligence required for officers to discharge their WHS duty. Members agree that compliance reporting must meet the six defined areas of due diligence as referenced under the WHS Act.

Action: *Audit and Risk Committee to provide Council with a draft Framework that clearly sets out for Council the University's WHS performance against the mandatory requirements and includes clear accountabilities and consequences for actions.*

Australian Universities Accord

Following the release of the Australian Universities Accord Final Report, members agreed that it would be useful to understand and map the University's current performance against the specific recommendations outlined in the Accord Report. Members considered the linkages between student retention and equity and agreed that this was important data to understand the current context for the University. Discussion also focused on the potential for the development of a 'Tasmanian Accord' that worked across all levels of education to capture how the State would respond and collaborate to achieve the aims of the Accord. The Chancellor noted the upcoming one-to-one meetings scheduled between herself and members of Council and that it was her intention to use these to seek feedback on the performance of Council and the Vice-Chancellor as part of the agreed annual process but that it would be a useful opportunity to better understand expectations and priorities for 2024, with the Universities Accord and the University's strategic direction as key drivers.

Vice-Chancellor Rufus Black joined the meeting at 9.45am.

University Council Workplan

The University Council Workplan would continue to be updated to reflect the ongoing conversations on the Universities Accord and its impact on the development of the Universities Strategic Direction. Members requested that the Workplan be utilised to map out and plan for timing of key discussions and decisions that University Council would need to consider in 2024.

1.2 * Items to be starred / Motions on Unstarred Items

Members starred item 8.4 Tasmanian School of Business and Economics for discussion.

The motions relating to the remaining unstarred items were passed in a block:

- Item 1.5 University Council Annual Planner / Workplan
- Item 6.4 University Foundation Committee Report
- Item 6.5 UTAS Holdings Board Minutes
- Item 8.5 Work Health and Safety Officers Responsibility

Resolution 01-03-2024-UC-1.2

University Council **adopted** the recommendations and reports presented as unstarred items without discussion.

1.3 * Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Members discussed their reflections on the Community and Stakeholder Engagement workshop held the previous day and noted the successful implementation of whole of Council regular stakeholder engagement opportunities now embedded as part of the regular schedule of University Council events. It was agreed that it was time for individual members to focus on pursuing engagement opportunities within their local communities and networks. To support this work, members discussed helpful resources that could be made available to them such as relevant data snapshots relating to teaching, research, and community impact. Members requested that the University Secretary recommend an appropriate way to capture and share insights and feedback from these engagement opportunities to allow Council to identify emerging areas of concern or interest from across stakeholder groups.

Action: *University Secretary to advise on the use of an appropriate process/tools for capturing and sharing feedback from all community and stakeholder engagement opportunities.*

1.4 * Update on 2024 External Reviews of University Council and Academic Senate

University Council noted the proposed change to the plans for undertaking the external reviews of University Council and Academic Senate and supported the new plan to engage an independent expert to conduct both reviews concurrently in 2024. Members noted that the benefits of engaging a single expert for both reviews included a holistic view of all aspects of the University's governance (both academic and corporate) and that receiving a single set of recommendations would be advantageous. It was further noted that the scope for the external review of University Council would not be impacted by the proposal and that the relationship between Council and Academic Senate was always intended to be examined. The process of identification of a suitable independent expert had begun and once an external provider was identified, there would be opportunity to further refine and negotiate the scope of the project and specific areas of focus for the review.

Resolution 01-03-2024-UC-1.4

University Council **noted** the update on the 2024 external review of University Council and Academic Senate.

1.5 University Council Annual Planner / Workplan for 2024

This item was unstarred for discussion but is referenced under agenda item 1.1.

Resolution 01-03-2024-UC-1.5

University Council **noted** the University Council Annual Planner for 2024.

2. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

Ian Anderson, Craig Barling, Kristen Derbyshire, Kate Huntington and Anthony Koutoulis joined the meeting at 10.00am

2.1 * Introductory Items

Declarations of interest

University Council member Sarah-Jayne Hall declared a conflict in relation to agenda item 8.3. There were no additional declaration of interests provided by Council members.

Minutes

University Council considered the minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2023 and resolved to accept the proposed minor wording amendments to item 4.1.

Resolution 01-03-2024-UC-2.1(1)

University Council approved the minutes of the meetings held on 4th December 2023 subject to the proposed amendments to item 4.1 and via circular on 18th December 2023 and 20th December 2023 as true and accurate records.

Actions

University Council noted the action items circulated and were provided with an update from Deputy Chancellor, James Groom in relation to University Council Members Deed of Access and Indemnity. Members noted that this was now finalised, and that the new version of the Deed would be included in the Induction materials provided to new members.

Resolution 01-03-2024-UC-2.1(2)

University Council **received** the report showing progress on all outstanding items from previous Council meetings.

3. COUNCIL EXECUTIVE WORKING DISCUSSION

Rick Inglis, Phil Leersen, and Poppy Fay joined the meeting at 10.25am

3.1 * Universities Accord Update

University Council held a working discussion to consider the recent release of the Australian Universities Accord Final Report, noting the primary objective of the Accord was to see a universal higher education system that provides all Australians with the opportunity to obtain higher education. Discussion focused on the four key strategies set out in the Accord to meet this challenge, including the expansion of pathways education, removal of equity barriers, strengthening regional education and the creation of more flexible course structures.

Members noted that overall, the direction set by the Accord was supportive of the strategic direction of the University and that whilst there was no detail on budget and funding model for the vision of the high-quality system, the report's recommendation for the creation of an Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) to coordinate and manage the overall objectives may also be utilised as a pricing authority and the entity that negotiates university compacts that set domestic student numbers. Whilst the Government's response would likely not be released for some months, it was recognised that the Accord provided a new policy context for the sector, and the University would be reflecting carefully on the opportunities and challenges presented, the results of which would inform the University's work to refresh its strategic direction.

3.2 * Refreshing our Strategic Plan – Synthesis of Staff Strategy Session Contributions

University Council held a working discussion to consider feedback from staff strategy sessions held as part of the refresh of the institutional Strategic Plan. More than 80 local-level staff strategy workshops had been undertaken to discuss what the future University could look like in response to the University's global and local

context. Over 1,000 individual contributions had been provided across five themes including the University's approach to sustainability, learning and teaching, research, community engagement and how the University could best organise to deliver on its mission. It was noted that the results indicated that there was a high degree of alignment between staff and the University's key strategic themes, including focussing on impact in all we do, continuing to build on the University's role as a sustainability leader, lifting the student experience and continuing to evolve teaching approaches to meet the diverse needs of student cohorts.

Members noted that the synthesis of the staff contributions at the strategy sessions would shortly be shared with all staff for further consideration and feedback.

Rick Inglis, Phil Leersen, and Poppy Fay left the meeting at 12.10pm

4. FOR DECISION

Ben Rose, Emma Bates and Legh Burrill joined the meeting at 12.30pm

4.1 * 2023 Annual Financial Statements

The Chair, Audit and Risk Committee advised Council that the 2023 Annual Financial Statement had been considered and endorsed by the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting on 26 February 2024 with key issues flagged with management. Council noted that based on the feedback from Audit and Risk Committee amendments had been made to the 2023 Financial Statements including additional wording at Note 6 to more clearly explain how the University aligned with other universities in the sector in their handling of the franking credit refund, and additional wording included at Notes 18 and 24 regarding changes in the provisioning for Project Aurora to ensure clear alignment with internal reporting.

Management provided an additional overview of the financial statements for Council and confirmed the University Representation Letter and Management Certificates had been prepared and indicated that the 2023 Annual Financial Statements were complete, accurate and compliant.

University Council acknowledged the work of the Chief Financial Officer and his team including Acting Associate Director – External Reporting and Compliance (Emma Bates) and Senior Leader, Financial Reporting (Leigh Burrill) and thanked them for their efforts in preparing the annual statements.

Resolution 01-03-2024-UC-4.1

University Council **approved** the 2023 Annual Financial Statements for the University and its consolidated entities and recommended that the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor sign the Financial Statements on behalf of the University.

Ben Rose, Emma Bates and Legh Burrill left the meeting at 12.40pm

Jane Beaumont joined the meeting at 12.41pm

4.2 * Newnham Campus Land Title

Confidential and subject to legal professional privilege.

Reference: Resolution 01-03-UC-4.2

Jane Beaumont left the meeting at 1.10pm

5. GRADUATIONS

5.1 * Graduations to be Presented for re-issue and Conferral of Awards

University Council conferred awards to the students listed in the agenda.

Resolution 01-03-2024-UC-5.1

University Council **conferred** and **reissued** the awards listed in the agenda.

6. MONITORING – COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS

6.1 * Academic Senate Annual Report 2023

The Chair, Academic Senate spoke to the 2023 Academic Senate Annual Report confirming for Council that that Academic Senate had met its obligations as described in the *Academic Senate Ordinance* and as per the Higher Education Standards Framework. Specific items highlighted included Academic Senate's monitoring of

academic standards including course approval and oversight of quality of teaching, learning and research and research training; planning for and monitoring of relevant academic issues impacting higher education such as the use of Artificial Intelligence in learning and teaching; monitoring the University's third party arrangements; tracking student retention to ensure that the appropriate remediation activities and supports are in place for student success; and the active engagement of student representative on Academic Senate.

The Chair also took the opportunity to highlight areas of interest for Council from the Academic Senate meeting held on 7 December 2023 which included planning for the University's response to the recent Government requirements for all higher education providers to have, and comply with, a policy that addresses the support that will be provided to their students to assist them to successfully complete the units of study in which they were enrolled; a presentation on the newly established Academic Capability Framework to guide academic staff and managers on the capabilities and outcomes for success across core areas of academic activity and the completion of the annual Academic Senate self-review for 2023.

Members also noted that as per previous years, the calendar invitations for the 2024 Academic Senate meetings would be forwarded to all Council members for their reference and attendance as convenient.

Action: *University Secretary to forward to Council members calendar invitations for all Academic Senate meetings for 2024.*

Resolution 01-03-2024-UC-6.1

University Council **received and noted** the 2023 Academic Senate Annual Report.

6.2 * Audit and Risk Committee

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee advised that at its February meeting the Committee had considered an Executive Risk Presentation from People and Wellbeing (PWB) Division and highlighted the important work ongoing to improve operational safety risks and the focus on two new more targeted risks, for suicide or serious mental health concern and the other for sexual assault or systemic culture of sexual harassment, each with specific risk factors and programs for mitigation. Members noted that the Research Division had provided a Process Risk Presentation and that a separate update on the completion of Project Aurora Phase 1 and risk assessments for Phase 2 of the Project would be prepared for University Council's consideration at its June 2024 meeting.

Resolution 01-03-2024-UC-6.2

University Council **received and noted** the report from the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 26th February 2024.

6.3 * Compliance Report

University Council discussed the importance of the Compliance Report to continue to be informed with accurate and timely information regarding Work Health and Safety risks, mitigants and compliance to carry out responsibilities as officers under the Work Health and Safety Act. Members reflected on the timeliness of the recent Officers briefing on Work Health and Safety and the importance of ensuring that as Officers every member understood their obligations and were kept updated on Work Health and Safety matters to support them to discharge their responsibilities.

The Chair Audit and Risk Committee highlighted the following areas of interest from the Compliance Report:

- The University was liaising with the Tasmanian Department of Justice in relation to draft regulations to widen the scope of registration requirements for working with vulnerable people.
- The Audit and Risk Committee continued to work with management to ensure that the level and type of information included in the Compliance Report in relation to incidence of sexual assault and sexual harassment (SASH) was sufficient, specifically in relation to trend data analysis.
- The Audit and Risk Committee would work with management on ensuring the right framework for Work Health and Safety risk reporting and monitoring through the Compliance Report, noting the importance of separating the psychosocial risk reporting from SASH.

Members discussed the focus on student access and safety through the Australian Universities Accord Final Report and the impacts of the *National Action Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2023*, noting that the findings of the recently completed review of the University's activity in responding to and preventing gender-based violence, undertaken by Lynn Walker would be provided to University Council imminently. Members recognised the responsibility University Council had in ensuring that the University supported and promoted a best practice approach to responding to and preventing gender-based violence.

Resolution 01-03-2024-UC-6.3

University Council **received and noted** the Compliance Report.

6.4 University Foundation Committee Report

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 01-03-2024-UC-6.4

University Council **received and noted** the report from the University Foundation Committee meeting held on 24 November 2023.

6.5 UTAS Holdings Board Minutes

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 01-03-2024-UC-6.5

University Council **noted** the minutes of the UTAS Holdings Board meeting held on 16 October 2023, 14 November 2023 and 5 December 2023.

7. STANDING ITEMS

Professor Luke Bereznicki, Professor Swee-Hoon Chuah, Professor Richard Eccleston and Professor Elizabeth Leane joined the meeting at 2.00pm

7.1 * Community and Stakeholder Engagement – Celebration of Collaborative Achievements in 2023

University Council was joined by academics from four different disciplines; Professor Luke Bereznicki (College of Health and Medicine), Professor Swee-Hoon Chuah (College of Business and Economics), Professor Richard Eccleston (Tasmanian Policy Exchange) and Professor Elizabeth Leane (College of Arts, Law and Education) who shared their experiences of co-design and collaboration in their work with colleagues across the University in 2023. Discussion focused on key themes around new forms of collaboration and its impacts, and the importance of cultivating and supporting partner relationships both internally and with key partners outside of the University. Members also discussed potential institutional barriers such as traditional organisational structures that may inhibit the innovative and impactful ways academic colleagues' partner and engage with one another. University Council thanked Professors Bereznicki, Chuah, Eccleston and Leane and their respective teams for sharing their outstanding programs of work and recognised not only the success of their collaborative achievements but the impacts that the work is having both in Tasmanian and to the world.

Resolution 01-03-2024-UC-7.1

University Council **noted** the presentation on the celebration of collaborative achievements in 2023.

Professor Luke Bereznicki, Professor Swee-Hoon Chuah, Professor Richard Eccleston and Professor Elizabeth Leane and left the meeting at 2.42pm

7.2 * Chair, Academic Senate Update and Report

Discussion on this item was included as part of item 6.1 above.

Resolution 01-03-2024-UC-7.2

University Council **received and noted** the report from the Academic Senate meeting held on 7 December 2023.

7.3 * Vice-Chancellor's Update

This item was included as part of item 8.1 below.

Resolution 01-03-2024-UC-7.3

University Council **noted** the update from the Vice-Chancellor.

7.4 *University Performance Report

The University Performance Report was taken as read with members seeking clarification on the following aspects of the Report:

- In relation to reporting against budget for Capital Program management was requested to include more granular reporting for each of the projects and to include risks to milestones reporting to complement the information showing how the projects were tracking to overall budget.
- Data on Higher Degree by Research students was reported through to the University's Research Committee but was not currently shared as part of the University Performance Report. Members supported the

suggestion that a link to that report be included in future University Performance Reports.

- Members noted that there had been some refinements made to the marketing efforts including a renewed engagement in schools around the Schools Recommendation Program (SRP) based on consultation with school principals. The SRP student cohort were being closely monitored and their success tracked to determine the overall success of the program. It was further noted that the Universities Accord Final Report had mandated that early offers for students would not be made until after 1 September, which was a decision welcomed by the University and resulted in only a slight adjustment of four days to the current schedule of early offers.

Resolution 01-03-2024-UC-7.4

University Council **received and noted** the University Performance Report for March 2024.

8. FOR NOTING

Ben Rose and Michelle Weir joined the meeting at 2.43pm

8.1 * 2024 Recruitment Update

University Council was provided with an update on current load in both domestic and international student markets noting the strong domestic interest in the University in 2024. Members noted that the Australian Government's migration policies had impacted the University's recruitment for 2024 and had altered the recruitment landscape for universities like UTAS. Council discussed the financial impacts of these policy changes on international revenue projections and the University's ongoing international strategy and noted that once the recruitment cycle for semester 1 was completed, there would be opportunity to review the approach to international recruitment to better reflect the significant shifts in the policy environment and market and to consider the financial impacts of these shifts in the short, medium, and long-term outlooks. University Council noted that the Strategic Resourcing Committee would be considering the outcome of this analysis at its meeting on 10 April 2024.

Resolution 01-03-2024-UC-8.1

University Council **noted** the recruitment update.

Ben Rose and Michelle Weir left the meeting at 3.36pm

University Council agreed to consider agenda items out of order as follows:

Paul Gregg joined the meeting at 3.37pm

8.3 * University Properties Pty Ltd Board Composition

University Council member Sarah-Jayne Hall left the Council meeting during discussion of this item due to the identified conflict of interest.

Sarah-Jayne Hall left the meeting at 3.37pm

Professor Peter Dawkins left the meeting at 3.40pm

The Chair, University Properties Pty Ltd (UPPL) joined University Council to discuss plans for the ongoing composition of the UPPL Board, including the activity planned for the next 12-18 months and the proposal to implement a more minimalist board structure.

Paul Gregg left the meeting at 3.49pm

University Council unanimously supported the recommendation to simplify the composition of the UPPL Board as proposed and to continue to adopt a lighter resource model for UPPL into 2024.

Resolution 01-03-2024-UC-8.3

University Council approved the continuation of the UPPL subsidiary, with a simplified board composition until future plans are better understood.

Sarah-Jayne Hall re-joined the meeting at 3.56pm

Brodie Emery joined the meeting at 3.56pm

8.2 * Workplace Gender Equality Agency Reporting

University Council noted that following the passing of the *Workplace Gender Equality Amendment (Closing the Gender Pay Gap)* Bill 2023, the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) had publicly reported employer pay gaps in median earnings for the first time in 2024, including gender composition by pay quartiles, and will report gaps in average earnings from late 2024/early 2025. The results of the recently released Industry Benchmarking Report indicated that the University had made progress towards eliminating the gender pay gap from 8.4% in 2020-22 to 6.9% in 2022-23, and that these results placed UTAS second only to the University of New South Wales for the higher education sector.

Members noted the results of the analysis undertaken to understand the key drivers of the gender pay gap at the University, specifically that whilst women and men were represented relatively evenly in the academic workforce, women were more represented in the professional workforce and as academic positions are on average higher paying than professional support roles, and that this was a significant contributor to the difference between women's and men's average earnings at the University. Other contributing factors noted included more women participating in part time work across all levels of academic and professional workforce and a lower representation of women at senior leadership roles relative to our overall workforce. Members noted that whilst women currently comprise around 60% of the University's workforce, women occupy 53% of senior leadership roles, and 40% of senior academic roles.

University Council discussed the proposed suite of initiatives being considered and prioritised to eliminate the University's gender pay gap including the implementation of academic career development programs in 2024, continuing to develop and enable new approaches toward workplace flexibility and improving the academic promotions process to reduce barriers to career progression for women and increase the proportion of women applying for promotion. Members also recognised the recent changes to the provision of Parental and Carer's leave which supported men to take up flexible work options should they wish to.

Resolution 01-03-2024-UC-8.2

University Council **noted** the WGEA Executive Summary and Industry Benchmarking Reports and **noted** the University's gender pay gap analysis outlined in the Understanding our Gender Pay Gap report.

*Brodie Emery left the meeting at 4.07pm
Professor Stuart Crispin and Prue Horne joined the meeting at 4.07pm*

8.4 * Tasmanian School of Business and Economics

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Reference - Resolution 01-03-2024-UC-8.4

Professor Stuart Crispin and Prue Horne left the meeting at 4.24pm

8.5 Officer Briefing on Work Health and Safety

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 01-03-2024-UC-8.5

University Council **noted** the briefing on Officer Due Diligence obligations.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 Other Business, Confidential Items and Future Meetings

There were no items of other business raised for discussion.

The meeting concluded at 4.29pm