

University Council Minutes

The University Council met at the Newnham Campus in the AMC Board Room and by video conference (via Zoom) on Thursday 27th April 2023 from 10.00am.

Members: The Chancellor (Ms Alison Watkins AM) as Chair, Vice-Chancellor (Professor Rufus Black), Professor Natalie Brown, Ms Karina Groenewoud, Mr James Groom, Ms Sarah-Jayne Hall, Ms Tara Howell, Ms Alicia Leis, Ariane Moore, Associate Professor Ashley Townsend, and Ms Sheree Vertigan AM.

In attendance: Professor Ian Anderson (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic), Mr Craig Barling (Vice President Strategy, Finance and Marketing) 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: Mr Chris Arnold (Acting Chief People Officer)
Ms Jane Beaumont (General Counsel / Executive Director Legal and Risk)
Ms Kym Goodes (Consultant, 3P Advisory Pty Ltd)
Professor Anthony Koutoulis (Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research)
Professor Mitch Parsell (Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education)
Mr Ben Rose (Chief Financial Officer)

Apologies: Emeritus Professor Peter Dawkins AO has been granted a leave of absence.

1 MEMBERS ONLY

1.1 * Members Only

University Council met in closed session without the Vice-Chancellor in attendance and discussed the feedback received from the Chancellor during her recent one-to-one meetings with members on the overall performance of Council, with members also encouraged to complete the formal Council questionnaire in *Diligent*. Members shared initial thoughts on the Vice-Chancellor's performance in 2022, noting the Vice-Chancellor's important commitment to prioritise the University's academic mission, access for students and management of the University's transition out of COVID.

Vice-Chancellor Rufus Black joined the meeting at 10.38am

1.2 *Report from Remuneration and Nominations Committee

1.2.1 *Performance and Objectives 2023

The Chancellor advised that she had undertaken the annual performance assessment of the Vice-Chancellor based on detailed reflection on performance against agreed objectives. Feedback on the Vice-Chancellor's performance had also been sought from Council members and based on the information provided, the Chancellor had prepared a report for Council's consideration.

Council discussed the Vice-Chancellor's performance in 2022, noting the challenges experienced from the response to the campus relocation to Hobart CBD, the ongoing Legislative Council Inquiry into the University Act and the slower than anticipated return of international students. Members agreed that a focus for 2023 remained on creating more opportunities for the Vice-Chancellor and Council members to engage with students, staff, and the community to reinforce the University's mission for and from Tasmania and to establish a personal profile in the community, beyond the roles of Vice-Chancellor and Council member.

The Vice-Chancellor provided an overview of his priorities for 2023 including responding to the Staff Engagement Survey, re-balancing academic leadership, building student experience and teaching quality and implementing long term financial sustainability to enable the University to meet its strategic mission.

Resolution 24-04-2023-UC-1.2.1

University Council considered the Vice-Chancellor's 2022 Performance Feedback and endorsed the 2023 Priorities.

1.2.2 *University Council Membership Skills Matrix

Council considered an alternative approach to the University Council skills matrix which in addition to

skills and capabilities, had been revised to highlight the connections and context of members and balance of regional, cultural and gender diversity.

During discussion, members made suggested amendments to the list of skills and capabilities including adding references to strategic communication and /or marketing, corporate governance experience and accountable decision making and commercialisation and/or entrepreneurship. Members emphasised the importance of including a balance of members with appropriate connections and networks of communities for the purposes of stakeholder engagement including for the purposes of communicating the University's strategic mission and of monitoring a balance of diversity including regional, cultural, and gender representation. It was agreed that the Skills Matrix should reference Council not having all desired skills and capabilities represented at all times.

Members resolved to amend the skills matrix as agreed and to circulate the revised version for final endorsement. Once finalised the *University Council Membership Procedure* would be updated to reflect the new matrix and members would be asked to undertake a self-assessment to determine the current balance of skills and capabilities.

Resolution 24-04-2023-UC-1.2.2

Subject to final confirmation of the proposed amendments, University Council approved a revised University Council Skills Matrix and supported the proposal for a self-assessment by current members against the agreed skills and capabilities.

Action: University Secretary to update the proposed Skills Matrix as agreed and circulate to members for final confirmation.

1.2.1 *University Council Membership Update 2023

Council noted the membership update, in particular the upcoming meeting between the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, and Minister Jaensch to discuss the two vacancies in the Council appointed category and succession planning for the two Ministerial appointee positions. It was noted that the Chancellor would be meeting with Council member Professor Peter Dawkins to confirm his return from an approved leave of absence.

Resolution 24-04-2023-UC-1.2.3

University Council noted the approach and timeframe for filling current University Council member vacancies for 2023.

Due to a conflict of interest with this agenda item Associate Professor Ashley Townsend left the meeting at 11.18am

1.2.2 *Audit and Risk Committee Membership

Resolution 24-04-2023-UC-1.2.4

University Council appointed Associate Professor Ashley Townsend to membership of the Audit and Risk Committee for a term ending February 2025.

Associate Professor Ashley Townsend joined the meeting at 11.21am

1.2.3 *Director, Tasmanian Law Reform Institute

Resolution 24-04-2023-UC-1.2.5

University Council appointed Dr Yvette Maker to replace Professor Jeremy Prichard as the Council appointee to the Board of the Tasmania Law Reform Institute.

1.3 Report from the Ceremonial and Honorary Degree Committee

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-1.3

University Council approved conferral of the title of Professor Emeritus to Professor Jim Cavaye.

Ian Anderson, Craig Barling, Kym Goodes and Kate Huntington joined the meeting at 11.20am

1.4 *Stakeholder Engagement

University Council considered the proposed Engagement Framework and rationale and confirmed the

proposed themes for planned strategic engagements supported through an annual calendar. Members noted that an appropriate tool or template for capturing feedback from conversations with stakeholders would be sought and that there would be a standing item on Stakeholder Engagement and Feedback added to each Council meeting agenda. Further consideration will be given to how best to capture and utilise the feedback received following each engagement opportunity and how to report back to key stakeholders on what the University is doing in response to it.

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-1.4(1)

University Council approved the Stakeholder Framework and associated background rationale/approach.

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-1.4(2)

University Council approves the establishment of an annual engagement calendar for Council and individual Council members.

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-1.4(3)

University Council endorsed the establishment of an online engagement platform linked from the University's website to enhance engagement and transparency.

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-1.4(4)

University Council adopted a standing agenda item of stakeholder and community engagement feedback for discussion at Council meetings.

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-1.4(5)

University Council endorsed the use of the University's CRM to track networks, relationships, and record engagement activities.

Kym Goodes left the meeting at 11.59am

2. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

2.1 * Introductory Items

Welcome and Apologies

The Chancellor welcomed members and noted one apology from Emeritus Professor Peter Dawkins.

Declarations of interest

The Vice-Chancellor declared that he had been invited to membership of the Advisory Committee for the Australian Law Reform Commission's Inquiry into Anti-Discrimination Laws. The additional declaration would be added to the Register of Interest.

Minutes

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-2.1(1)

University Council **confirmed** the minutes of the meetings held on 24th February 2023, 2nd March 2023 and via circular on 13th April 2023 as true and accurate records.

Actions

Council noted the update on action items.

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-2.1(2)

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

2.2 *Items to be starred / Motions on unstarred items

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

- Item 1.3 Report from the Ceremonial and Honorary Degree Committee
- Item 8.1 Modern Slavery Statement
- Item 8.2 IMOS Contract

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-2.2

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

Chris Arnold, Anthony Koutoulis and Ben Rose joined the meeting at 12.20pm

3. STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE

3.1 *Vice-Chancellor's Update

The Vice-Chancellor's update was included as part of discussions under agenda item 3.4.

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-3.1

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

3.2 *Chair, Academic Senate Report

The Chair, Academic Senate updated members on the major items discussed at the meeting on 3 March 2023 as set out in the Report presented. Council noted that these included the finalisation of the nomination and appointment of inaugural members to the Monitoring and Assurance Committee (MAC), with five academic staff members and one student being appointed; these academic staff and student are now additional members of Academic Senate; and that the newly appointed chairs for University Research Committee, University Learning and Teaching Committee and the Student Experience Committee had all commenced in their roles.

The Chair advised Council that Academic Senate would be holding a special meeting on 3 May to consider the upcoming Voice to Parliament Referendum and that a University delegation would attend the Shanghai Ocean University graduation ceremonies in China for the first time since 2019.

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-3.2

University Council **received and noted** the report from the Academic Senate meeting held on 3 March 2023.

3.3 *University Performance Report

The University Performance Report was taken as read, with the Vice-Chancellor and the Senior Executive inviting questions from members. Council considered the detailed 2023 financial forecast included in the performance report as part of discussions under agenda item 3.4.

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-3.3

University Council **received and noted** the University Performance Report for April 2023

3.4 *2023 Financial Forecast and Strategic Questions

University Council discussed the challenging conditions facing the University in 2023 including a decline in student numbers, the removal of the CGS Guarantee in 2024 and intense competitive pressures in the economy and the sector and the resulting financial consequences for the 2024 – 2026 period. Members considered a range of potential options and actions consistent with the agreed right-sized modelling for the University in order to generate a positive EBITDA in the coming years.

In considering the proposed actions to address the funding challenges, the following aspects were raised in discussion:

- Members encouraged exploring untapped opportunities for the University to partner with industry, government, and community to plan for future Tasmania.
- Noting the trends in growth and decline across a variety of degree offerings over time, the question of size, scale and what right-size might mean for the University was considered.
- Council noted that the results of the national student experience survey data indicated that the University of Tasmania had higher score in overall student satisfaction than any Group of Eight university.
- Members discussed options for the University to take advantage of its distinctiveness to compete against strong sector competition, through promoting distinctive course offerings and experiences for students.
- Consideration of options to address the funding challenges would remain a priority for Council, to be agreed before the strategic planning process in October.

Council noted that management would be preparing a paper on financial modelling including proposed funding options for consideration at the June Council meeting.

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-3.4(1)

University Council **noted** the challenging conditions facing the University in 2023 and the financial consequences for the 2024 – 2026 period.

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-3.4(1)

University Council **endorsed** the proposed actions being taken to address the funding challenges in line with the right-size modelling.

Due to time constraints University Council agreed to consider the following items out of order as follows:

4 FOR DISCUSSION

4.1 *Voice to Parliament – Approach / Process

University Council discussed the establishment of an Indigenous Voice to Parliament and National Referendum and the University's proposed approach and actions to support and promote an informed, respectful, and inclusive conversation to support the vote. Members noted that the University Executive planned to issue a leadership statement in support of the Voice in May 2023, and had drafted a statement for consideration and feedback from Council.

During discussion members proposed amendments to the Draft Statement including more specific reference to Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech and a link to the University's policy and specific reference to what support would be provided to both staff and students should they need to access it.

Members noted that management would be seeking to discuss the Draft Statement from Academic Senate at a special meeting to be held on 3 May 2023 and subsequently to seek approval for the Statement at a scheduled meeting on 12 May 2023.

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC- 4.1(1)

University Council **noted** the University approach to the referendum.

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC- 4.1(2)

University Council **endorsed** the statement, subject to suggested amendments, in respect of Council leadership position.

*The Deputy Chancellor, James Groom assumed the role of Chair at 2.40pm until the conclusion of the meeting.
The Chancellor, Alison Watkins left the meeting at 3.05pm*

3. STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE

3.6 *Strategic Narrative – Focus on Southern Transformation

Council discussed the challenges to date in pursuing the campus transformation agenda in Hobart and the opportunities that this presented for the University to reframe its thinking toward a strategically evolving approach for its southern campuses. Members reaffirmed their commitment to the objectives of the transformation to enable as many Tasmanians as possible to access university education, to create the best possible learning and research environments for students and staff and to provide well utilised spaces that enhance the quality and values of the City and that demonstrate the University's commitment to its world leading sustainability agenda.

Council discussed how these objectives could be met through the development of the Forestry Building and the refurbishment of the Domain campus to provide infrastructure that created an outstanding and distinctive student experience to retain Tasmanian students and attract interstate and international students. Other key areas of discussion included the recent changes in the Hobart City Council's (HCC) planning processes, how the University would be working with the HCC and the anticipated release of the discussion paper on the Sandy Bay Neighbourhood Plan by the HCC, due later in the year.

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-3.6

University Council **noted** the update on the strategic direction for the Southern Campuses.

Jane Beaumont joined the meeting at 3.10pm

3.9 * Update on Project Aurora

University Council noted that the Audit and Risk Committee had convened a Special Meeting on 20 April 2023 to receive a detailed briefing on Project Aurora developments and had been satisfied that system configuration issues relating to the historical underpayments had been addressed and that further advice regarding the identified superannuation underpayments would be reported through to the Committee when received. The

Committee had endorsed recommendations made by the Internal Audit function including immediate actions taken by management to ensure that identified risks were mitigated effectively. Members noted that the first tranche of remediation payments to affected staff had been made successfully on 24 April 2023.

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-3.9

University Council **noted** the update on Project Aurora.

4 FOR DISCUSSION

4.2 *Improving Transparency

University Council noted the update on improving transparency of reporting and decision making and confirmed its support for the proposed approach to stakeholder consultation and for the revised format of Council minutes. Members noted that going forward, once Council minutes had been confirmed for accuracy at the next regular meeting of Council, these would be published to the University Council website and become publicly accessible.

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-4.2

University Council **noted** the update in relation to the University's commitment to transparency and the approach to consultation of key stakeholders.

Jane Beaumont left the meeting at 3.20pm

5. FOR DECISION

5.1 *Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA) Newnham Campus

University Council approved the Stage 1 development of the proposed Tasmanian Agricultural Precinct in Launceston at the University's Newnham Campus noting that the Precinct will collocate TIA with the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania. Members noted that the development was an important juncture for TIA and acknowledged that progressing the infrastructure requirements was a key enabler which would allow staff to move as planned and remove uncertainty for the TIA team.

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-5.1(1)

University Council **approved** the Stage 1 development and total project budget of \$18.8m.

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-5.1(2)

University Council **delegated** authority to the Vice-Chancellor to negotiate and execute a construction contract of up to \$18.8m for Stage 1 of the development of the TIA Newnham collocation, subject to appropriate financial and legal advice.

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-5.1(3)

University Council **noted** that a Stage 2 development may be required that is expected to cost more than \$10m, which will form part of the updated funding profile to be shared with Council at the August meeting.

Mitch Parsell joined the meeting at 3.21pm

3. STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE

3.7 *Learning and Teaching Quality

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Education provided an update to Council on the progress to date on developing a system to support the continuous improvement of teaching quality, student satisfaction and student outcomes across all courses at both unit and course levels. Members noted that the plan included a rapid response (within a semester) based on quick interventions to address identified lagging student success or satisfaction success, an (annual) teaching transformation plan focusing on curriculum review, staff development and student engagement and major course review (every five-years) with a focus on student outcomes using survey results from the Course Evaluation Questionnaire and the Employer satisfaction survey.

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-3.7

University Council **noted** the presentation on the ongoing work to improve learning and teaching quality at the University.

*Tara Howell left the meeting at 3.26pm
Mitch Parsell left the meeting at 3.30pm*

3.8 *Systems and Process Improvement

University Council noted that fixing systems, processes, and structures had emerged as one of the key focus areas within the University's Engagement Framework, and that the approach to addressing this priority area would focus initially on two elements; understanding the importance of institutional values as essential to the success of all process improvement and the need to differentiate from transactional versus transformational change.

Members discussed institutional values and noted that these could be summarise into four areas; moving from low trust assumption of ill-will to an assumption of good will and accountability; from one-size-fits all standardisation to standardise where effective; from control process inputs to monitoring process outcomes and from eliminating risk to considering a proportionate approach to risk. Council noted that there were some areas identified for improvement that may require transformational change which included working to shift mindset and behaviour so that future state solutions could be welcomed and successfully implemented. During discussion members agreed that the Audit and Risk Committee would continue to play an important role in ensuring the right critical controls and monitoring remained in place.

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-3.8

University Council **noted** the considerations emerging from the most recent systems and process survey data, and status of the systems and process stream of the engagement framework for 2023.

5.2 *2022 University Annual Report

University Council were advised that further to the draft of the 2022 Annual Report provided with the agenda papers, additional feedback had been received suggesting that a more detailed narrative on the financial statements be included to better explain some important financial line items. This section would be drafted to sit between the Governance and Financial Statement sections of the Report. Members supported the suggestion that an unnecessary and outdated paragraph relating to the University Foundation Committee be removed from the Governance section of the Report.

Subject to the finalisation of the agreed amendments, University Council approved the 2022 Annual Report and requested that the final version of the Report be circulated to members.

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-5.2

Subject to suggested amendments, University Council approved the 2022 University Annual Report.

***Action:** University Secretary to circulate an amended final version of the 2022 Annual Report to University Council.*

6. MONITORING – COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS

6.1 *Audit and Risk Committee

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee noted that in addition to the report provided on the outcomes of the meeting on 27 February, the Committee had held a special meeting on 20 April to consider an update on Project Aurora (*reference item 3.9 on this agenda*).

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-6.1

University Council **received and noted** the report from the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 27 February 2023.

6.2 *Compliance Report

University Council considered the Compliance Report noting the key themes and issues arising in relation to compliance with the University's internal and external regulatory and legislative requirements. The Chair, Audit and Risk Committee advised that the Audit and Risk Committee considered the level of reporting to be excellent, including the approach to capturing staff and student complaints reported through both the Safe and Fair Community Unit and People and Wellbeing and organising these thematically rather than individually to appropriately monitor and report against trends, impacts, and outcomes.

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-6.2

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

3.5 *Australian Universities Accord

University Council discussed the submission to the Australian Universities Accord Panel and its impact, noting that Pro Vice-Chancellor (Cradle Coast) Professor Sonya Stanford had recently represented the University at

the Accord round tables and that the 120 public submissions received would play a critical role in the deliberations of the Panel with the interim report due to be presented to Government by the end of June 2023.

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-3.5

University Council noted the University of Tasmania's submission to the Australian Universities Accord Panel.

7. GRADUATIONS

7.1 *Conferral / Reissue of Awards

University Council reissued the award as detailed in the agenda.

Reference: Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-7.1

8. UNSTARRED ITEMS

8.1 Modern Slavery Statement

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-8.1

University Council approved the Modern Slavery Statement 2022.

8.2 IMOS Contract

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-8.2(1)

University Council, as per clause 1.2 of the General Delegations Ordinance, delegated authority to the Vice-Chancellor, subject to appropriate Legal, Financial, Audit & Risk and UTAS Innovation Ventures (UTAS InVent) advice, to sign the overarching IMOS grant agreements between the University of Tasmania (UTAS) and Commonwealth of Australia, represented by the Department of Education (DoE).

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-8.2(2)

University Council delegated the execution of a variation to the overarching IMOS grant agreement, if needed, for any increase of funding awarded as a result of the IMOS Step Change proposal in accordance with section 6.2 of the General Delegations Ordinance to the Vice-Chancellor.

Resolution 27-04-2023-UC-8.2(3)

University Council delegated the execution of immaterial variations to this IMOS grant agreement in accordance with section 6.2 of the General Delegations Ordinance to the Vice-Chancellor.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

8.1 Other Business, Confidential Items and Future Meetings

Tasmania University Student Association (TUSA)

University Council discussed the advice received from TUSA that it had shifted position on the University's move into the city and now believed there should be no change to physical locations in the South unless the University demonstrates improved communication, engagement, and transparency with students, shows that a change would not adversely affect students, and that facilities are accessible and affordable to all students.

Members noted that management has advised TUSA that the University agrees that these should all happen and have indicated to TUSA leadership that the University will work with them to achieve this outcome.

The meeting concluded at 3.50pm