

University Council Minutes

University Council met in the Council Room, Admin Building, Sandy Bay Campus and by Zoom on Friday 6th December 2024 from 9.30am.

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

In attendance: Mr Craig Barling (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Student Services and Operations), Ms Kristen Derbyshire (Chief People Officer), Professor Martin Grimmer (Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic) 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 Jane Beaumont (General Counsel / Executive Director Legal and Risk)
Professor Luke Bereznicki (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Education)
Dr James Brann (Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Equity * & Success)
Mr Rhys Edwards (Chair, UTAS Holdings)
Ms Poppy Fay (Director Campus Futures)
Mr Brett Harris (CEO, UTAS Holdings)
Associate Professor Saide Heckenberg (Pro Vice-Chancellor Aboriginal Leadership)
Mr Rick Inglis (Executive Director Strategy)
Ms Jill Ribbons (Director Risk)
Mr Jarrod Shaw (Director, Financial Planning & Analysis)
Ms Michelle Weir (Chief Marketing Officer)
Mr Rob Wilson (Executive Director Recruitment)
Ms Susannah Windsor (General Counsel / Executive Director Legal and Risk)

Apologies: Professor Emeritus Peter Dawkins

1 MEMBERS ONLY

1.1 * Members Only

The Chancellor welcomed members and congratulated professional staff member Karina Groenewoud on her re-election and noted the election of academic staff member Associate Professor Aidan Davison. Members recognised that it would be the last meeting for current academic staff member Ashley Townsend and student member Ariane Moore and noted that there would be appropriate acknowledgment of their contribution at the end of the meeting.

Members discussed feedback from the Council Review regarding the attendance of Senior Executive members at Council for the duration of the meetings (other than for the members only section) and whether this was a good use of their time, with members agreeing that the benefits of having the Senior Executive attend included building trust and greater transparency and that there was value in their contributions and that this helped build sustained alignment and improve governance. Council considered and agreed to trial a suggestion to reserve 15 minutes at the end of the meeting, in camera, without the Senior Executive to reflect on the decisions and outcomes, noting that the Chancellor could nominate a different member at each meeting to provide the summary.

The Vice-Chancellor joined the meeting at 9.47am

In response to a question raised regarding the reasons why there was only one of six meetings of Council scheduled to be held in Launceston, it was noted that the location for the Strategic Planning Day was different each year and that for 2025 it was scheduled to be held in Hobart and as a result had increased the overall number of meetings held in the south. The University Secretary advised that this would be reviewed to ensure that there were at least two meetings held in Launceston across the year.

1.2 * Items to be starred / Motions on Unstarred Items

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

- Item 1.5 Report from the Ceremonial and Honorary Degrees Committee
- Item 1.6 University Council Workplan for 2025
- Item 5.4 Internal Audit and Risk Management Plan 2025 - 2027
- Item 7.4 Healthy, Sustainable and Equitable Food Strategic Plan Update
- Item 9.4 Audit and Risk Committee Report
- Item 9.5 Strategic Resourcing Committee Report
- Item 9.6 University Foundation Committee Report
- Item 9.7 UTas Properties Pty Ltd (UPPL) Minutes
- Item 10.1 General Delegations Ordinance Review
- Item 10.2 Amendments to the Entities and Affiliated Organisation Policy
- Item 10.3 University Foundation Ordinance Amendments

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-1.2

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

1.3 * Report from Extended Nominations Committee

Noting the conflict of interest, Council members Alicia Leis, James Groom and Sheree Vertigan abstained from voting on the following resolutions.

University Council considered the proposed reappointments and new appointments as presented and unanimously supported them.

Resolution 16-12-2024-UC-1.3(1)

University Council **re-appointed** Ms Alicia Leis to the role of Chair Audit and Risk Committee for a term ending 31 December 2027.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-1.3(2)

University Council **re-appointed** Mr James Groom to the role of Chair Strategic Resourcing Committee for a term ending 30 June 2026.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-1.3(3)

University Council **re-appointed** Mr Kane Ingham to the Audit and Risk Committee as an external member for a term ending 31 December 2027.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-1.3(4)

University Council re-appointed Mr Leigh Franklin to the Audit and Risk Committee as an external member for a term ending 28 February 2027.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-1.3(5)

University Council **re-appointed** Ms Sheree Vertigan AM to the Audit and Risk Committee for a term ending 1 April 2027

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-1.3(6)

University Council **appointed** Ms Lailani Mirkazemi to the University Foundation Committee for a term ending 31 December 2026

1.4 * Report from the Student Member Selection Panel

University Council considered the recommendation from the Student Member Selection Panel and confirmed their support for the appointment of Mr Garreth Dent.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-1.4

University Council **approved** the appointment of Garreth Dent as Student Member of the University Council for a one-year term commencing 1 January 2025 and concluding on 31 December 2025.

1.5 Report from the Ceremonial and Honorary Degrees Committee

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-1.5

University Council **conferred** the title of Professor Emerita to Professor Denise Fassett.

1.6 University Council Annual Planner / Work plan for 2025

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-1.6

University Council **noted** the University Council Annual Planner for 2025.

Craig Barling, Kristen Derbyshire, Professor Martin Grimmer, Kate Huntington and Anthony Koutoulis joined the meeting at 9.57am

2. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

2.1 * Introductory Items

Declarations of interest

No additional interests were declared.

Minutes

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-2.1(1)

University Council **confirmed** the minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2024 as a true and accurate record.

Actions

University Council noted the status of all action items.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-2.1(2)

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

3. CURRENT OPERATING POSITION

3.1 * Vice-Chancellor's Update

The Chancellor invited Council member Dr Tania Price to provide an update on their recent attendance at the 2024 National Conference on University Governance, noting topics discussed had included the prevention of gender-based violence, payment of university employees and senior executive salaries. Members discussed other emerging themes including teaching and learning in response to Artificial Intelligence (AI), the predicted requirement for tertiary education in the workforce of the near future and the current trend away from tertiary education, particularly in relation to young males and the low political and community perceptions of the sector. Members noted the work required to reposition universities in terms of what they do in the national interest and for the public good.

The Vice-Chancellor led a discussion on the challenges facing multiple levels of governance and leadership in the sector and considered the work ongoing to bring people together to tackle these challenges through adaptive change. Members considered the ways in which university councils will be required to balance the equity and excellence agendas driven by the Universities Accord and their role in promoting and building confidence in what universities do in support of their communities.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-3.1

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

3.2 * University Performance Report

University Council noted the Report and congratulated management on the finalisation of the Newnham and Inveresk Campus Grant Deeds with the State Government.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-3.2

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

Jane Beaumont and Michelle Weir joined the meeting at 10.33am

3.3 * International Student Update

University Council was provided with an update on International Student recruitment noting that whilst the University had achieved a reclassification to evidence level 2 (EL2) in November, thanks to strong governmental relationships, the University continued to face challenges due to unresolved policies and visa processing issues. Members discussed the extended uncertainty around student recruitment including the delayed passage of the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Bill 2024. Management advised that recent efforts to address the challenges included resuming selective Confirmation of Enrolments (CoEs) for high-risk markets and aligning recruitment windows with the EL2 status.

Council discussed the efforts from the University's admission teams and in country agents and the ongoing work between the University and the Department of Home Affairs and the Department of Education, Children, and Young People which was crucial to preventing further complications from backlog issues or decision-making timeframes and to maintain a stable path back to a sustainable number of high-quality international students.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-3.3

University Council **noted** the update on the international student recruitment situation

University Council agreed to consider the University Budget Item out of agenda order:

6. UNIVERSITY BUDGET

Jarrod Shaw joined the meeting at 10.50am

6.1 * 2025 Budget

University Council considered the 2025 Budget including the University's Total Result, Business as Usual Capital Envelope and Cashflow Budget. Members noted that following the uncertainty around international revenue and the *Education Services for Overseas Students Amendment (Quality and Integrity) Bill 2024* not proceeding, 2025 international revenue was expected to be lower than predicted and following feedback from then Strategic Resourcing Committee, it was recommended that the EBITDA target be reduced by \$10m to allow time to plan for long-term cost reductions if international numbers do not return. Management advised that a savings plan and timeline, including detail on relevant trade-offs and risks would be presented to Council in May 2025, which would be informed by student, sector and Government responses.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-6.1

University Council **approved** the 2025 University budget as presented including the:

- University Total Result
- Business as Usual (BAU) Capital Envelope
- Cashflow Budget.

Jarrod Shaw joined the meeting at 11.12am

7. MONITORING

7.3 * University Workplace Relations Strategy and Industrial Activity

The Chief People Officer provided an update to University Council on the University's performance against the 2024 Workplace Relations Strategy which was developed to respond to the complex industrial environment in which the University is operating, due to high-profile legislative reforms to the *Fair Work Act 2009* and a period of unprecedented transition in the Higher Education Sector. Members noted that the Strategy provides a proactive and strategic approach to workplace relations, focusing on fostering a direct relationship with staff and a constructive relationship with unions. Council also considered and discussed the proposed approach to bargaining for the University of Tasmania Staff Agreement, due for renegotiation in July 2025.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-7.3

University Council **noted** the performance update against the University's 2024 Workplace Relations Strategy, and the overview of approach to bargaining for the next round of staff agreement negotiations.

4. COUNCIL WORKING DISCUSSION

University Council held a working discussion to consider the following items:

Poppy Fay joined the meeting at 11.13am

4.1 * STEM Update

The Vice-Chancellor led a working discussion on options for the future direction of Southern Campus including design, indicative timeline, sequencing and delivery stages for the Sandy Bay STEM precinct and on potential funding pathways to support its development.

Reference: Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-4.1(1)
Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-4.1(2)

4.2 * Aboriginal Land Hand Back Update

University Council were updated on the plans for the Aboriginal land handback at the Sandy Bay Campus.

Jane Beaumont and Poppy Fay left the meeting at 12.38pm

4.3 * Evolving our Academic Structures Progress Update

University Council was provided with a progress update on the College of Arts, Law and Education (CALE) change process and implementation and held a working discussion on evolving academic structures for consideration in 2025.

Professor Luke Bereznicki and Rob Wilson joined the meeting at 12.38pm

4.4 * Evolving our Academic System

The Vice-Chancellor provided an update on the progress of initiatives underway to reduce complexity in a range of areas to improve the student and staff experience including the course and unit simplification project, the work to rationalise study periods, timetabling improvements, and sustainable workload models. Members noted that a project team had been established to work on integrating and accelerating progress of these initiatives through an 'Academic System' and that this work would be led by the Vice-Chancellor.

Professor Luke Bereznicki and Rob Wilson left the meeting at 1.00pm

5. UNIVERSITY STRATEGY

Rick Inglis joined the meeting at 1.26pm

5.1 * Refreshed University of Tasmania Strategic Plan

University Council considered the refreshed University of Tasmania Strategic Plan, noting the additional refinement undertaken following feedback received from Council in October. Members also considered an internal and external communications and engagement plan that outlined a phased approach throughout 2025 to engage community, and following a request by Council for its development, a Strategic Planning Framework to illustrate how the refreshed Strategic Plan interacts with other institutional plans, divisional and academic unit plans, and how these cascade to individual work plans.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-5.1

University Council **approved** the refreshed University of Tasmania Strategic Plan and **noted** the proposed Communications and Engagement Plan to be implemented from January 2025.

5.2 * Refreshed Strategic Plan – Performance Monitoring

Council considered a refreshed suite of measures and targets to support the range of strategic themes and aspirational goals for Tasmania and the University as outlined in the Strategic Plan. Members noted that the refreshed set of indicative measures would track the University's performance against the KPIs relevant to the Tasmanian transitions, strategic themes and ways of working detailed in the refreshed strategy and that these measures would be reported to Council in detail via a quarterly performance report, supplemented by a monthly operational dashboard. During discussion members queried whether quarterly reporting remained too frequent and suggested that the cycle of performance reporting was every six months instead. Members also requested that further consideration be given to reporting on student excellence and success.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-5.2

University Council **approved** the proposed approach for overseeing KPIs aligned with the refreshed Strategic Plan, including a cycle of performance reporting every six months and confirmed the proposed list of areas to be included in a monthly cadence of operational reporting.

Rick Inglis left the meeting at 2.12pm

Susannah Windsor and Jillian Ribbons joined the meeting at 2.12pm

5.3 * Institutional Risk Profile

University Council considered the proposed amendments to the revised Institutional Risk Profile, noting that it had undergone a refresh as part of a periodic review cycle undertaken in tandem with the Strategy refresh process to ensure alignment. The University Executive Team and Audit and Risk Committee had endorsed the proposed changes to the Risk Profile to include a thematic and portfolio risk approach and a summary of the top institution wide risks formed using the highest rated residual risks within the Risk Portfolios, along with a summary of the top risk events that were being prepared for. Members supported the inclusion of cyber security breach as a risk event. Council approved the proposed changes as presented and noted that a risk workshop would be held with Council in mid-2025.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-5.3

University Council **approved** the refreshed Institutional Risk Profile.

Susannah Windsor and Jillian Ribbons left the meeting at 2.20pm

5.4 Internal Audit and Risk Management Plan 2025 – 2027

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-5.4

University Council **approved** the Internal Audit and Risk Management Plan 2025 – 2027.

7. MONITORING

Sadie Heckenberg joined the meeting at 2.21pm

7.1 * Strategic Plan for Aboriginal Engagement (SPAЕ)2021 – 2024 Final Report

The Pro Vice-Chancellor Aboriginal Leadership, Sadie Heckenberg presented the final report on the *Strategic Plan for Aboriginal Engagement (SPAЕ) 2021–2024* which outlined the University's strategic efforts to enhance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement, participation, and representation through 71 targeted actions across seven key domains. University Council considered the achievement to date including enhancements to the Murina Enabling Program, culturally safe spaces at Riawunna, and targeted engagement initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, progress in integrating Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into course curricula, and the establishment of the Institute of Indigenous Knowledges. Council discussed the ongoing targeted staff recruitment efforts including growing the cadetship programs, cultural competency training for staff and On Country experiences for students and recognised the importance of enhanced Indigenous participation in decision-making.

During discussion, members noted the importance of building on the foundation laid by the SPAЕ, identifying gaps, and refining the approach to meet evolving needs. The new Aboriginal Engagement Strategy would clearly outline a comprehensive approach through initiatives that aimed to advance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student success, expand Indigenous employment opportunities, supporting Indigenous research, and strengthening community engagement. Members discussed the good will and engagement from staff who were eager to engage with the Strategy but noted that many were unsure of how to get involved. It was agreed that continuing to target recruitment of talented Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and supporting the development of junior academic and research staff towards more senior positions would reduce the cultural load carried by a small number of staff. Members supported the suggestion that cultural competence training should be included in the Essentials Training and form part of induction for all new staff.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-7.1

University Council **noted** the progress and achievements outlined in the final report of the Strategic Plan for Aboriginal Engagement 2021-2024 (SPAЕ) and **noted** the recommendations presented for the development of the new Aboriginal Engagement Strategy, which will serve as a strategic framework for future initiatives.

*Sadie Heckenberg left the meeting at 2.47pm
James Brann joined the meeting at 2.48pm*

7.2 * Gender Based Violence Action Plan

University Council was updated on the progress of the implementation of the Walker Review recommendations noting that an Executive Oversight Group had been established in August 2024 and had now finalised an action plan to meet the recommendations of the Review. *The University of Tasmania Gender- Based Violence Action Plan 2024-2026* had recently been released following consultation with more than 300 staff and students. Council discussed the importance of its role in monitoring the implementation of the agreed recommendations and associate actions and ensuring appropriate accountability for the success of the plan. In response to a question raised about how the University would know that the action plan was working to prevent incidences of GBV, members noted that it was likely that there would be an initial increase in reporting GBV, as visibility of the issue grew and that this would in turn help to identify areas of concern where targeted support was required.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-7.2

University Council **noted** the UTAS Gender-Based Violence Action Plan 2025- 2026 and the formation of The Gender-Based Violence Executive Oversight Group.

James Brann left the meeting at 3.00pm

7.4 Healthy, Sustainable, and Equitable Food Strategic Plan Update

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-7.4

University Council **noted** the update on implementation of the Healthy, Sustainable, and Equitable Food Strategic Plan 2023-2028.

8. UNIVERSITY COUNCIL INDEPENDENT REVIEW

8.1 * Final Council Review Report and Action Plan

Following discussion of the findings of the BoardsGlobal independent review of University Council at the October meeting, members noted that a sub-committee of Council, convened by the Chancellor had met to consider the Review recommendations and suggest potential actions for implementing them. Using the six performance themes a summary of actions was prepared for Council's consideration, and the following was highlighted during discussion:

- The process had led to useful reflections on the focus for Council, noting that the Review had highlighted a strong desire from members to focus time on important strategic discussions around core business.
- Utilising the University Council Workplan to ensure that there was appropriate focus given to understanding what drives the dynamics of academic units.
- Members supported the suggested addition of a 5 year whole of institution summary strategy to provide Council with an integrated set of agreed priorities.
- Consideration was given to the volume of information shared through agenda papers and how to strike a balance between providing enough quality information to inform decision making whilst not over burdening Council and management. It was agreed that the 2+5 page limit for agenda papers would be explored along with other options for reducing the length of Council agenda papers.
- Council confirmed that ongoing updates against agreed actions from the Review Report would be provided to Council throughout 2025 and the Final Review Report once confirmed with BoardsGloabl would be published on the University's website.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-8.1

University Council **considered** the proposed actions based on the University Council Review Report recommendations, **approved** the actions and **noted** that updates on the implementation of these actions will be provided to Council throughout 2025.

9. STANDING REPORTS TO COUNCIL

Rhys Edwards and Brett Harris joined the meeting at 3.50pm

9.2 * UTas InVent Annual Report

The Chair and Chief Operating Officer of the UTAS Innovation Ventures (InVent) joined University Council to present the annual report, noting the success of the current projects and the continued focus on building sustainable networks and contributions to support overhead costs and a focus on a return on investments. Members discussed the significance of the Research Showcase held in Launceston in October which had provided an opportunity for Council to gain greater appreciation for the ongoing projects supported through UTas InVent. Members were advised of the ongoing challenges of licencing versus spin out for research and noted that whilst there was genuine enthusiasm from many researchers for the commercialisation of their work, more effort was needed to pursue significant external investment. Council acknowledged the success of the ongoing InVent model of support for projects which was working well and that there remained a healthy level of activity and opportunities identified for 2025.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-9.2

University Council **noted** the UTAS Holdings Pty Ltd, t/a UTAS Innovation Ventures (InVent) Annual Report.

Rhys Edwards and Brett Harris left the meeting at 4.04pm

9.1 * Chair Academic Senate Report

The Chair, Academic Senate provided a verbal report on the recent Academic Senate meeting held on 22 November, highlighting for members Senate's consideration of the Gender Based Violence Action Plan, results of the Student Safety Survey and Disability Action Plan, the Revised Strategic Plan for Aboriginal Engagement and ongoing discussions on the use of Artificial Intelligence. Highlights from the Academic Senate planning day held on 5 December included two strategic sessions, one to consider Work Integrated Learning and Professional Placements and a second to reflect on the recommendations from the External Review of Academic Senate. Members noted that discussion had focused on the appropriate size and composition of Senate and its committees, with further work to be undertaken in the new year to ensure that any proposed changes best fulfilled the obligations of the Higher Education Standards Framework.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-9.1

University Council **received and noted** the report from the Academic Senate meeting held on 3 October 2024 and the verbal updates from the meeting held on 22 November 2024 and Planning Day held on 5 December 2024.

9.3 * Compliance Report

The Report was taken as read with no further questions raised by members.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-9.3

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

9.4 Audit and Risk Committee Report

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-9.4

University Council **received and noted** the report from the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 8 November 2024

9.5 Report from the Strategic Resourcing Committee

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-9.5

University Council **received and noted** the report from the Strategic Resourcing Committee meeting held on 15 November 2024.

9.6 University Foundation Committee Report

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-9.6

University Council **received and noted** the report from the University Foundation Committee meeting held on 14 November 2024.

9.7 University Properties Pty Ltd Minutes

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-9.7

University Council **noted** the minutes of the University Properties Pty Ltd (UPPL) meeting held on 15 October 2024.

10. GOVERNANCE INSTRUMENTS

10.1 General Delegations Ordinance Review

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-10.1

University Council **approved** the proposed amendments to the General Delegations Ordinance for commencement on 3 February 2025

10.2 Amendments to the Entities and Affiliated Organisations Policy

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-10.2

University Council **approved** the proposed amendments to the University's Entities and Affiliated Organisations Policy V5.

10.3 University Foundation Ordinance

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-10.3

University Council **approved**:

- the amendments to the University Foundation Committee terms of reference to reflect the Committee's new vision; and
- the appropriate amendments to the University Foundation Ordinance to reflect the revised terms of reference for the University Foundation Committee

11. GRADUATIONS

11.1 * Graduations to be presented for Conferral of Awards

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

Reference: Resolution 6-12-2024-UC-11.1

9. OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 Other Business

Farewell to outgoing Council members

The Chancellor led members in farewelling Associate Professor Ashley Townsend and Arianne Moore, thanking both for their collegiality, diligence and dedication to their roles on Council. Members acknowledged the significant contribution of both Associate Professor Townsend and Ms Moore and thanked both for their efforts in sharing the staff and student perspectives to better informed Council decision making.

The meeting concluded at 4.25pm