

University Council Minutes

The University Council met at the Sandy Bay Campus in the Council Room and by video conference (via Zoom) on Friday 24 February 2023 from 8.30am to undertake a facilitated workshop on Stakeholder Engagement.

The formal University Council meeting commenced at 12.50pm.

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, Ms Ariane Moore, Associate Professor Ashley Townsend and Ms Sheree Vertigan AM.

In attendance: Mr Craig Barling (Vice President Strategy, Finance and Marketing), Ms Kristen Derbyshire (Chief People Officer), Ms Kate Huntington (Executive Director, Strategic Communications) and Professor Martin Grimmer (acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic) 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 Anthony Koutoulis (Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research)
Professor Mitch Parsell (Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education)

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 present. Members discussed the success of the Stakeholder Engagement Survey held earlier in the day and confirmed the priorities for consideration at this meeting, noting the shorter meeting time.

Vice-Chancellor Rufus Black joined the meeting at 1.03pm

1.2 *University Council Workplan

Council confirmed the suggested list of strategic focus topics for meetings in 2023 and agreed to add distinctiveness of the University and how this is appropriately reflected across learning and teaching and research; future trends and impacts for the University and the First Nations Voice to Parliament to the Council workplan for 2023.

Resolution 24-02-2023-UC-1.2

University Council **confirmed** the proposed strategic themes for consideration in 2023.

1.3 Report from the Remuneration and Nominations Committee

University Council approved the nominations to Council committees and the Tasmanian University Union Board of Management.

Resolutions references:

Resolution 24-02-2023-UC-1.3(1)

Resolution 24-02-2023-UC-1.3(2)

Resolution 24-02-2023-UC-1.3(3)

Resolution 24-02-2023-UC-1.3(4)

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

Professor Natalie Brown declared an interest in item 1.3 in relation to her proposed reappointment to the Audit and Risk Committee. Karina Groenewoud confirmed that her role as Acting Company Secretary for UTAS Holdings Pty Ltd had now finished and the Register of Interest for Council members would be updated accordingly.

Minutes

Resolution 24-02-2023-UC-2.1(1)

University Council **approved** the minutes of the meetings held on 8 December 2022 and via Circular on 19 December 2022 as true and accurate records.

Actions

Council noted the update on action items and agreed to ensure that future lists of current actions include appropriate timeframes for reference.

Resolution 24-02-2023-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

Items 7.1 TEQSA Decision – Revocation of Registration Conditions and 7.2 Philip Smith Centre Construction Contract were both starred for discussion.

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

- Item 1.3 Report from the Remuneration and Nominations Committee
- Item 5.2 University Properties Pty Ltd Minutes
- Item 5.3 UTAS Holdings Minutes

Craig Barling, Kristen Derbyshire, Kate Huntington and Professor Grimmer joined the meeting at 1.15pm

3. STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE

3.1 * Vice-Chancellor's Update

The Vice-Chancellor updated Council on student recruitment and the impacts nationally for the sector, noting that overcapacity in the market has resulted in a downturn in student numbers for most regional universities with Group of Eight (Go8) universities taking their regular market share due to shifts in ATAR entry requirements attracting a greater number of regional students. Members discussed the importance of distinctiveness in a competitive nation-wide market and the University's current offerings. Council requested that management provide more information including potential options and timeframes around pursuing greater course distinctiveness.

Council discussed campus transformation in Hobart City and Sandy Bay and various approaches to meeting the overall strategic mission to ensure the location and development of University's campuses provide the greatest educational outcomes and offer the best experience for students.

Resolution 24-02-2023-UC-3.1

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

Alicia Leis joined the meeting at 1.50pm

3.2 * Engagement Framework 2023

The Chief People Officer outlined the University's Engagement Framework, based on feedback received through the Engagement Survey, the Framework would focus on three key streams; Fixing systems, processes and structures to support our people and academic mission; Building greater connection to our mission and strategy to motivate and engage, and Enabling supportive and accountable leadership and decision-making which places people at the centre. Members discussed the importance of removing barriers to create positive cultural change for staff which in turn enabled deeper engagement and trust. Council supported the Framework noting the importance of the timing, communication, and coordination of its roll out.

Resolution 24-02-2023-UC-3.2

University Council **endorsed** the proposed engagement framework for 2023.

3.3 * Simplification of our Professional Model in Response to the Engagement Survey

Council discussed the context for the decision to simplify the professional leadership structures and considered the proposed program of work focussed on changing the elements of professional leadership model that were identified through the Engagement Survey as not working. Council discussed the consultation, codesign and timing of the proposed changes and noted the importance of effective communication and change management.

Council confirmed their support for the overall changes proposed and noted that management would continue to consider options around timing and staging to best ensure that all impacts had been thoroughly considered. Council confirmed the requirement for approval of budget cost associated with a program of redundancies and that this would likely need to be considered before the next scheduled Council meeting on 27 April 2023.

Resolution 24-02-2023-UC-3.3

University Council **noted** the context around the simplification of the University's professional leadership structures.

3.4 * University Strategy Refresh

Council discussed the University's Strategic Refresh document, reflecting on the shifting focus of aspects of the Universities strategy more broadly and agreed to consider the latest version of the document a work in progress. Members were invited to provide any further feedback directly to the Vice-Chancellor.

Resolution 24-02-2023-UC-3.4

University Council **noted** the updated version of the 2023 Strategic Direction Document.

3.5 * University Performance Report

The University Performance Report was taken as read with no additional questions raised by members.

Resolution 24-02-2023-UC-3.5

University Council **received and noted** the University Performance Report for February 2023.

3.6 * 2023 Recruitment Update

Council was provided with an update on current trends in both the domestic and international recruitment pipelines as the University prepares to commence Semester 1, 2023. Noting that domestic interest in the University remains strong despite the challenging conditions including very low unemployment, high cost of living and a nationally competitive market which were all contributing to difficulty converting this strong domestic interest into enrolments. Internationally, with borders now re-opened, it was noted that 2023 is an important year to grow student numbers to rebuild the international pipeline with the aim of meeting the long-term financially sustainable trajectory.

Members discussed the financial impacts of student recruitment numbers, noting that to date international student numbers for semester one remained in line with expectations and with the Commonwealth Grant Scheme (CSG) Guarantee remaining in place in 2023. Following census date, the first revenue forecast will be prepared and will form part of the financial forecast to be presented to Council at the April meeting.

Resolution 24-02-2023-UC-3.6

University Council **noted** the recruitment update.

3.7 * Latest Development to Improve Learning and Teaching Quality

Council discussed the latest developments to improve learning and teaching quality noting that following the release of data from student experience surveys in January 2023, the University's overall teaching quality rating has improved to 81%, the highest level since 2017. To meet the teaching quality rating target of 85% by 2026 a range of interventions are being deployed including implementation of teaching transformation plans, building more opportunities to engage students as partners and sessions hosted by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Education where detailed student experience survey (SES) results are discussed with every School to identify opportunities for continuous improvement. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Education highlighted substantial movement for several courses/schools involved in the Transformation Pilot in the 2022 SES data, and the demonstrated impact of the pilots for the overall and commencing student cohorts for 2021 and 2022. Council noted that those teaching teams involved had been open and supportive of the approach and were responsive and engaged throughout the process.

Council was provided with a demonstration of the artificial intelligence chatbot Chat GPT and discussed the productivity gain it could potentially provide to staff and students. Members noted discussions were ongoing about how ChatGPT might be used as a learning tool for students and what implications this may have for assessment practices.

Resolution 24-02-2023-UC-3.7

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

4 FOR DISCUSSION

4.1 * Discussion of Legislative Council Inquiry into the UTAS Act

Council discussed the ongoing Legislative Council Inquiry into the University of Tasmania Act, noting that the University has been invited to attend a public hearing to respond to Committee questions relating to the terms of reference of the Inquiry on 1 and 2 March, 2023. Council considered a proposed approach to the upcoming public hearings, including responses to lines of inquiry that consider amendments to the Act, specifically in relation to options to affirm the University's mission more clearly in the Act and to potentially define its commitment to Academic Freedom. Council discussed its current size and composition and the balance of expertise and skills of current members. Council noted that it was important to ensure that the appropriate voices were heard including those of academic staff and that two-way communication through Academic Senate was an important systematic way of meeting this objective.

Resolution 24-02-2023-UC-4.1

University Council **noted** the strategic approach to the preparation for the upcoming Legislative Committee hearing and **endorsed** the proposed response to lines of inquiry that consider amendments to the *University of Tasmania Act 1992*.

4.2 *Improving Transparency

Council noted that the current Legislative Council Inquiry into the *University of Tasmania Act* had highlighted confusion from some stakeholders about the transparency of decisions made by the University and that while significant amounts of information is currently made available to the University's internal and external community, there is an opportunity to improve and make more consistent, the approach to transparency and accountability.

Members discussed potential approaches including amendments to existing policy in relation to communication and the creation of a dedicated procedure that set out a consistent approach to transparency and accountability and a change of approach to the style and content of Council minutes which could be made publicly available. Council agreed that a strategic approach that created more conversation around how decisions were made was needed and that this might be aided by making more information publicly available but would not be achieved by this approach alone. Building on the initial discussions and outcomes from the Stakeholder Engagement Workshop held earlier in the day, Council supported the proposal to begin consultation first with staff and students and then with the external community on the proposed approach before any changes to policy and procedure are undertaken.

Resolution 24-02-2023-UC-4.2(1)

University Council **approved** the proposed approach for consultation for improving transparency and accountability, including the proposal to amend the existing Communications and Brand Policy and establish a new Transparency and Accountability Procedure.

Resolution 24-02-2023-UC-4.2(2)

University Council **endorsed** consultation being undertaken with staff, students and community representatives prior to a formal proposal being provided to Council to amend the existing policy to embed an improved approach to transparency and accountability.

5. MONITORING – COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS

5.1 * 2022 Academic Senate Annual Report

The Chair, Academic Senate spoke to the 2022 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 the Teaching Improvement Program, focused on planning and engagement around online learning and teaching; the conclusion of the

course and curriculum transformation program and move towards a process of continued improvement; student engagement and inclusion, specifically the Students as Partners model and research culture and monitoring of the experience of Higher Degree by Research candidates including engagement, experience and support.

Council agreed to reorder the current Council agenda to ensure that the report from the Chair, Academic Senate is considered directly after the Vice-Chancellor's update on all future meeting agendas. Council also requested that the calendar invitations for the 2023 Academic Senate meetings be forwarded to all Council members for their reference and attendance as convenient.

Action: *University Secretary to amend the order of items for Council agendas ongoing to ensure the report from the Chair, Academic Senate is considered directly after the Vice-Chancellor's update.*

Action: *University Secretary to forward to Council members calendar invitations for all Academic Senate meetings for 2023.*

Resolution 24-02-2023-UC-5.1

University Council **received and noted** the 2022 Academic Senate Annual Report.

5.2 *University Properties Pty Ltd Minutes

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 24-02-2023-UC-5.2

University Council **noted** the minutes of the University Properties Pty Ltd (UPPL) meeting held on 21 November 2022.

5.3 * UTAS Holding Minutes

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 24-02-2023-UC-5.3

University Council **noted** the minutes of the UTAS Holdings Board meeting held on 24 October 2022 and 12 December 2022.

6. GRADUATIONS

6.1 * Conferral / Reissue of Awards

University Council conferred and reissued awards to the students as detailed in the agenda.

Resolutions references:

Resolution 24-02-2023-UC-6.1(1)

Resolution 24-02-2023-UC-6.1(2)

Resolution 24-02-2023-UC-6.1(3)

Resolution 24-02-2023-UC-6.1(4)

Resolution 24-02-2023-UC-6.1(5)

Resolution 24-02-2023-UC-6.1(6)

7. UNSTARRED ITEMS

7.1 TEQSA Decision – Revocation of Registration Conditions

Council expressed its appreciation for the collective efforts of dedicated teams across the University who had worked to ensure that the conditions imposed by TEQSA on the University's registration had been lifted. The revocation of the conditions represents a significant milestone for the institution, and one that has not been simple to achieve.

Resolution 24-02-2023-UC-7.1

University Council **noted** that both conditions placed on the registration of the University of Tasmania in late 2019 have been fully revoked by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency.

7.2 Philip Smith Centre Construction Contract

Members confirmed that the total budget for the capital works of the Philip Smith Centre required approval by Council as per the *General Delegations Ordinance*.

Resolutions references:

Resolution 24-02-2023-UC-7.2(1)

Resolution 24-02-2023-UC-7.2(2)

8. OTHER BUSINESS

8.1 Other Business, Confidential Items and Future Meetings

There were no items of other business discussed.