

University Council Minutes

The University Council met at the Sandy Bay Campus in the Council Room and by video conference (via Zoom) on Monday 4th December 2023 from 11.00am.

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 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: Mr Chris Arnold (Director, Safety and Wellbeing)
Mr Terry Bailey (Executive Dean, College of Science and Engineering)
Mr Geoff Cohen (Flagstaff Partners)
Mr Rhys Edwards (Chair, UTAS InVent)
Ms Poppy Fay (Director, Campus Futures)
Mr Brett Harris (CEO, UTAS InVent)
Mr Bob Herbert (Flagstaff Partners)
Mr Rick Inglis (Executive Director Strategy)
Mr Phil Leersen (Executive Director, Campus Services)
Mr Ben Rose (Chief Financial Officer)

Apologies: Ms Tara Howell has been granted a leave of absence for this meeting.

1 MEMBERS ONLY

1.1 * Members Only

University Council met in closed session without the Vice-Chancellor in attendance and discussed the importance of several of the agenda items listed for consideration and the interconnectedness between them. Members noted that this applied to the updated funding model, the working discussion focused on the southern campus analysis, and the 2024 Budget approval.

Members also considered the importance of the ongoing analysis of the University's online learning trends (agenda item 6.4) and the importance of monitoring enrolments and cohorts across various courses and how this work helped to inform the University's strategic planning. The Chancellor encouraged members to consider any questions they may have regarding agenda item 6.4, noting that management were on notice to provide further analysis of online learning trends at an early meeting of Council in 2024. A query was also raised regarding the proposed governance arrangements as outlined in the proposal for an Indigenous Commission (agenda item 4.4) noting further clarification was required on what arrangements would be in place for the reporting of outcomes to Council and whether this required formal arrangements as per other committees of Council.

Vice-Chancellor Rufus Black joined the meeting at 11.16am.

1.2 * Items to be starred / Motions on Unstarred Items

Members starred items 1.4, 4.7, 4.8 and 6.4.

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

- Item 1.3 Ceremonial and Honorary Degree Committee
- Item 4.5 Sandy Bay Campus Update
- Item 4.6 Newnham Masterplan
- Item 6.3 Delivering on our Mission for Tasmania – Workforce Focus

- Item 6.5 Transparency Update
- Item 6.6 Rental Rates 2024 Update
- Item 7.5 UPPL Board Minutes from 2023.

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-1.2

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

1.3 Report from Ceremonial and Honorary Degree Committee

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-1.3.1

University Council **conferred** the title of Professor Emeritus to Adjunct Professor Keith Jacobs.

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-1.3.2

University Council **conferred** the title of Professor Emeritus to Adjunct Professor Bruce Tranter.

1.4 * Extension of Appointment for Student Member of University Council

University Council member Ariane Moore abstained from voting on this motion and left the Council meeting during discussion of this item due to the identified conflict of interest.

Ariane Moore left the meeting at 11.27am.

Members noted that following initial discussions at the October meeting of Council regarding the extension of Ariane Moore as Student Member of Council, the Tasmania University Student Association (TUSA) State President, Liam McClaren had confirmed TUSA's support for Ariane's extension and communicated this to the Chancellor directly. The Chancellor advised that Ariane had attended the TUSA 2024 State Council onboarding in November and has been invited to attend a State Council meeting at the start of each semester (February and August) to discuss the issues the student representatives are focusing on at that time and that Ariane had committed to checking in with the TUSA State President regularly.

University Council unanimously approved the extension of the student member of Council for a further one-year term.

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-1.4

University Council **extended** the term of office for student member Ariane Moore for a further one-year term ending on 31 December 2024.

Ariane Moore re-joined the meeting at 11.27am.

2. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

Ian Anderson, Craig Barling, Kristen Derbyshire, Kate Huntington and Anthony Koutoulis joined the meeting at 11.29am

2.1 * Introductory Items

Declarations of interest

There was no additional declaration of interest provided by Council members.

Minutes

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-2.1(1)

University Council **confirmed** the minutes of the meetings held on 17th October 2023 and via circular on 9th November 2023 as true and accurate records.

Actions

University Council noted the action items circulated and were provided with an update from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic regarding the outcomes of the co-design work with TUSA on options for students experiencing accommodation and food insecurity. Members noted that there had been a different approach taken at each of the University's campuses to addressing this issue, with each accessing various supports to ensure student had access to what they needed. Further updates would be provided to Council in the new year including information on the extent of the challenge and the number of students impacted.

The Vice-Chancellor advised that the University Executive Team had recently approved the Healthy, Sustainable, and Equitable Food Strategic Plan 2023-2028 and that the Sustainability Team would be coordinating support to ensure there are opportunities for collaboration and maintenance of a holistic focus for

the University and partners to respond to the food insecurity for students and staff. The Plan would be circulated to University Council for their information.

Action: University Secretary to arrange circulation of the Healthy, Sustainable, and Equitable Food Strategic Plan 2023-2028 to University Council.

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-2.1(2)

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

3. COUNCIL EXECUTIVE WORKING DISCUSSION

Rick Inglis, Ben Rose, Phil Leersen, Terry Bailey and Poppy Fay joined the meeting at 11.41am

3.1 * Southern Campus Analysis

Following initial discussions at the October meeting, University Council held a working discussion to further consider the future direction for the Southern Campus.

Rick Inglis and Terry Bailey left the meeting at 1.56pm

4. FOR DECISION

Bob Herbert and Geoff Coehn from Flagstaff partners joined the meeting at 1.59pm

4.1 * Updated Funding Model

University Council considered agenda items 4.2 and 4.3 below as part of this item.

The University Council discussed the funding model for committed capital projects and potential options for future developments.

Ref: Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-4.1(1)

Ref: Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-4.1(2)

Ref: Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-4.1(3)

4.2 * Major Capital Works Update

This item was considered as part of agenda item 4.1 above.

Ref: Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-4.2(1)

Ref: Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-4.2(2)

Ref: Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-4.2(3)

4.3 * IMAS Taroona Development

This item was considered as part of agenda item 4.1 above.

Ref: Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-4.3(1)

Ref: Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-4.3(2)

Ref: Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-4.3(3)

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

4.7 * 2024 Budget

Following the detailed discussions under agenda items 4.1 and including 4.2 and 4.3, University Council considered the University's 2024 Budget including the University Total Result, Business as Usual Capital Envelope and Cashflow Budget and 2024-25 projections. Members noted that the 2024 Budget and 2025 targets had been shaped to set the University up for the post Commonwealth Grant Scheme guarantee environment, scheduled to begin in 2026 and that whilst the outcome of the Australian Universities Accord process is uncertain, it was important to continue to achieve a sustainable cost base aligned to current student numbers. In response to a question raised about whether the budget provided appropriate contingency funding should the University need to urgently fund an unplanned and unbudgeted expense such as from cyber breach or similar, management advised that there was appropriate funding budgeted should it be required.

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-4.7

University Council **approved** the 2024 University budget including the:

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

Ben Rose, Phil Leersen, Poppy Fay, Bob Herbert, Geoff Cohen left the meeting at 2.50pm.

6.4 * Online Learning Trends

University Council noted the information provided on online learning trends and that the findings indicated that the University increase in online enrolments in recent years across both core and special interest/B2B courses was comparable to larger national trends for online learning. Members noted that domestic load in core online courses had increased for the University by 61% over 2018 to 2023 and discussed the high levels of satisfaction reported from students studying online and that this confirmed the University's continuing commitment to on-campus learning and ensuring student had the appropriate learning and digital resource supports for however they chose to study.

During discussion the following key insights were noted:

- Understanding the impact of the changing online landscape is critical to ensuring the University meet the needs of current and future students.
- It is critical that insights gained from online learning trends are reflected in strategies for the University, such as investment in Digital Futures to support the delivery high-quality material online, as well as a growing partnership with Open Universities Australia (OUA).
- For on-campus students, ensuring that they have appropriate access to digital resources to support their campus learning.
- Members requested further consideration on how the University reports institutionally on the outcomes of the online cohort.

Members sought further analysis of the commercial risks and opportunities from the growth of online offerings and more information on why the online courses are so popular and where the demand is coming from. Further analysis of the performance of the University's offerings through OUA and of the success of the existing course offerings will be provided for consideration at a future meeting of the University Council.

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-6.4

University Council **noted** the update on Online learning trends: Enrolments, revenue, and student experience.

Emeritus Professor Peter Dawkins left the meeting at 3.30pm.

4.4 * Indigenous Commission

University Council considered the proposal to establish an Indigenous Commission in 2024 to lead the University of Tasmania's response to sector wide changes in line with the Australian Universities Accord that seeks to establish First Nations at the heart of Australia's higher education system and to position the University as a national and international leader. In discussion, members considered the governance arrangements for the Indigenous Commission noting that it was intended to sit across both management and governance to ensure appropriate responsibilities for supporting the transformation. It was also recommended that the proposed timeframe for completing the co-design process be extended beyond Easter 2024 and that an Indigenous teaching academic from the University and a member of the Sculthorpe family be added to the proposed Committee supporting the Indigenous Commission.

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-4.4

University Council **approved** the creation of a time-limited University of Tasmania Indigenous Commission to co-design an Indigenous transformation vision.

5.1. * Community and Stakeholder Engagement

University Council were provided with an update on the internal and external communications and opportunities to engage with key stakeholder groups, planned for the end of 2023 and 2024. Members discussed the importance of their role in providing clarity around the University's mission, the challenges facing the higher education sector and the opportunities presented through the Australian Universities Accord as the University enters the next phase of strategic planning in 2024. Members recognised the impact of continuous feedback and reflection through engagement with stakeholders and discussed some of the outcomes and areas for improvement identified through the renewed approach to engagement with community undertaken in 2023. University Council agreed to convene in February 2024 to work through in greater detail these impacts and improvements which would then inform Council's community and stakeholder engagement strategy for 2024.

Action: University Secretary to arrange for University Council to convene in February 2024 to discuss Community and Stakeholder Engagement planning for 2024.

Rhys Edwards and Brett Harris joined the meeting at 4.35pm

7.1 * 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 that after three years of operating as a company the focus for this stage of development was to build sustainable contributions to support overhead costs and to focus on a return on investments.

Members were advised that the enhanced model was working well, supported through an excellent working relationship between the InVent Board and management and that a pipeline of leads and projects indicated a healthy level of activity with opportunities identified in 2022 now at the stage of negotiating significant external investment. Members discussed three key areas of support from the University including growing levels of research in areas with high potential for commercialisation, maintaining open and supportive culture for innovation in the Colleges and the importance of retaining key researchers despite the impacts of budget and other pressures.

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-7.1

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

Sarah-Jayne Hall left the meeting at 4.56pm

Rhys Edwards and Brett Harris left the meeting at 4.58pm

Chris Arnold joined the meeting at 5.00pm

6.1 * Response to the Work Health and Safety Compliance Internal Audit Report

University Council were updated on the findings of an internal audit report by KPMG to assess how effectively Colleges were operationalising the University's Safety and Wellbeing Procedures and the risk-based assurance activity currently underway to improve the safety performance reporting framework and structure. Risk protocols were being enhanced in response to the report and appropriate metrics were being developed to facilitate support at the local level monitored through a cycle of compliance checking and centralised reporting through the University Executive Team and Council.

The Vice-Chancellor advised that he was leading the management response and that implementation of key recommendations had been given the highest priority from all senior leaders. Members noted that Colleges and Divisions were being supported by People and Wellbeing to further embed an institutional culture that viewed safety as a key performance expectation.

University Council noted its responsibilities and key obligations under the Work Health and Safety Act and confirmed support for further training on due diligence and risk assessment regarding compliance with the legislation. Members noted that this would be supported by improved and separate compliance reporting through to Council against the agreed risk-based assurance activity underway and reinforced the University's zero appetite for non-compliance with this tier of legislation under the University Risk Appetite Statement.

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-6.1(1)

University Council **noted** the risk-based assurance activity currently underway in response to the recent Work Health and Safety Compliance Internal Audit Report.

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-6.1(2)

University Council **approved** the updated Safety and Wellbeing Strategy informed by a detailed review of the recent Work Health and Safety Compliance Internal Audit Report.

Chris Arnold left the meeting at 5.09pm

6.2 * 2024 External Review of University Council

University Council considered the proposal and scope for the 2024 external review of University Council noting that as part of the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 the University is required to undertake periodic independent reviews of the effectiveness of its governing body and academic governance processes every seven years. Council discussed its commitment to good governance practice and to a continual cycle of review to ensure that it is meeting these expectations and agreed that periodic independent reviews allow Council to appropriately test its compliance against legislated governance obligations which complemented the process of self-review and reflection undertaken annually by the Chancellor with members of Council.

Members supported the proposed scope of the review noting that it will focus on assessing Council's effectiveness and operational practice against the relevant governance obligations in three key legislative instruments: The University's enabling legislation, the *University of Tasmania Act 1992*; the TEQSA *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021* used to monitor the quality and integrity of higher education providers in Australia; and the *Australia Universities Accord Report*, specifically the Minister's final recommendations regarding institutional and collaborative governance.

The Chancellor invited members to provide any additional feedback directly to the University Secretary.

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-6.2

University Council **noted** the proposal and scope for the 2024 external review of University Council.

4.5 Sandy Bay Campus Update

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-4.5(1)

University Council **noted** that the City of Hobart has released a Mount Nelson & Sandy Bay Neighborhood Plan discussion paper.

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-4.5(2)

University Council **approved** University management to make a submission in support of the City of Hobart (CoH) Neighbourhood Plan process in early January 2024 (with the assumption that all submissions will be made public) after consultation with the CoH.

4.6 Newnham Masterplan

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-4.6(1)

University Council **noted** that the final two instalments of \$15M each (\$30M total) to be paid for the Inveresk campus by the State are at risk due to the Crown's significant delay (over 14 months) in removing its education use covenant on Newnham title.

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-4.6(2)

University Council **noted** that PwC has determined that the development and use in accordance with the Newnham masterplan needs to be reconsidered based on the current cost plan and revenue assumptions and that UPPL are providing oversight to University management on options for alternate approaches to development.

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-4.6(3)

University Council **approved** University management progressing the actions as agreed by the UPPL board meeting held on 14 November 2023.

5. STANIDNG ITEMS

5.2 * Chair Academic Senate Update and Report

The Chair of Academic Senate provided University Council with an update on the Academic Senate meeting held on 3 November, noting the excellent discussion following the strategic session on setting sessional staff up for success. The session had provided detail on the breakdown of casual academic staff by headcount and full-time-equivalent (FTE) by school and by activity, with Senate working together to identify areas of academic risk in relation to the domains of the Higher Education Standards. Members noted that the University of Tasmania had one of the lowest rates of casualisation in the sector but that a coordinated and strategic approach was required to set sessional staff up for success, noting the diverse cohorts that would need to be considered.

The Chair also provided an update on the 2023 Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) Conference *Reshaping Higher Education*, which had highlighted areas of focus for universities to consider in preparation for re-registration. These areas included a well-developed and embedded quality assurance process, risk management and mitigation strategies that referenced sector-wide risks such as generative Artificial Intelligence, appropriate oversight and management of governing bodies, underpayment of wages, sexual assault and sexual harassment and quality assured third party arrangements. Members noted that the University of Tasmania was currently scheduled to undertake the TEQSA re-registration process in 2026.

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-5.2

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

5.3 * Vice-Chancellor's Update

The Vice-Chancellor provided University Council with a confidential update on two separate incidents involving University students.

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-5.3

University Council noted the update from the Vice-Chancellor.

5.4 * University Performance Report

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

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-5.4

University Council received and noted the University Performance Report for December 2023.

6. FOR NOTING

6.3 Delivering on our Mission for Tasmania – Workforce Focus

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-6.3

University Council noted the pilot rubric on the workforce needs of Tasmania.

6.5 Transparency Update

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-6.5

University Council noted the update on the University's approach to transparency.

6.6 Rental Rates 2024 Update

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-6.6

University Council noted the update on the 2024 Residential Rental Rates and support for students.

7. MONITORING – COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS

7.2 * Audit and Risk Committee

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee advised that at its November meeting the Committee had sought more information about how the University was preparing for implementation of the *Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023 (Tas)* from 1 January 2024 and had been advised that a review of all Legal Compliance Plans was under way, and that Risk Appetite Statements would be updated as a priority to ensure that they explicitly referenced safety of children and young people where appropriate. University Council noted the progress against Phase 1 and Phase 2 of Project Aurora and that the work was continuing to be closely monitored by the Audit and Risk Committee, and that a separate paper on the outcomes of Phase 2 would be provided to University Council in 2024.

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-7.2

University Council received and noted the report from the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 2 November 2023.

7.3 * Compliance Report

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee noted that the Compliance Report captured the University's compliance obligations thoroughly and that the Audit and Risk Committee were confident in the level of monitoring and reporting provided. University Council noted that the Audit and Risk Committee had also discussed in detail the outcomes and actions associated with the Work Health and Safety Compliance Internal

Audit Report (as referenced at agenda item 6.1).

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-7.3

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

7.4 * Strategic Resourcing Committee

In addition to the report provided from the Strategic Resourcing Committee (SRC) meeting held on 17 November 2023, the Chair SRC noted that Phase 1 of the Review of the Investment Portfolio Function had been completed with the timing and approach to Phase 2 of the Project endorsed by SRC. Members noted that a final Review Report would be delivered in 2024.

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-7.4

University Council **received and noted** the report from the Strategic Resourcing Committee meeting held on 17 November 2023.

4.8 * Internal Audit Plan

University Council noted that the Director Risk would continue to monitor the Internal Audit and Risk Management Plan 2024 – 2026 to ensure it aligns with the strategic risks as identified through the development of the next University Strategic Plan.

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-4.8

University Council **approved** the Internal Audit and Risk Management Plan 2024 – 2026.

7.5 UPPL Board Minutes from 2023

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 04-12-2023-UC-7.5

University Council **noted** the minutes of the University Properties Pty Ltd (UPPL) meetings held on 15 February 2023, 3 April 2023, 6 June 2023, 31 July 2023, 28 September 2023, and 14 November 2023.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

8.1 Other Business, Confidential Items and Future Meetings

There were no items of other business raised for discussion.

The meeting concluded at 5.29pm.