

University Council Minutes

The University Council met at the West Park Campus in Room 126 and by video conference (via Zoom) on Tuesday 17 October 2023 from 8.30am.

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

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

By invitation: Ms Jane Beaumont (General Counsel and Executive Director Legal and Risk)
Professor Melanie Bryant (Head, International School)
Professor Stuart Crispin (Executive Dean, College of Business and Economics)
Mr Phil Leersen (Executive Director, Campus Services)
Professor Mitch Parsell (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Education)
Mr Ben Rose (Chief Financial Officer)
Ms Michelle Weir (Chief Marketing Officer)
Mr Rob Wilson (Executive Director Recruitment).

Apologies: None.

1 MEMBERS ONLY

1.1 * Members Only

University Council met in closed session without the Vice-Chancellor in attendance and discussed the challenges facing the higher education sector broadly as well as the opportunities presented through the work of the Australian Universities Accord. Members noted the importance of understanding this context as they work through the presentations from colleges and divisions at the annual Council strategy day.

Vice-Chancellor Rufus Black joined the meeting at 8.51am

Members welcomed Emeritus Professor Peter Dawkins back to his first Council meeting after returning from nine months extended leave to take up an appointment to the role of Interim Director of Jobs and Skills Australia. Professor Dawkins' original term on University Council was due to end on 30 June 2024 but with the addition of an extra nine months, will now conclude on 31 March 2025.

Resolution 17-10-2023-UC-1.1

University Council **noted** Emeritus Professor Peter Dawkins' new term of office would conclude on 31 March 2025.

1.2 * Items to be starred / Motions on Unstarred Items

Members starred items 5.4 and 5.5.

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

- Item 6.3 External Review of Academic Senate.

Resolution 17-10-2023-UC-1.2

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

1.3 * Report from Extended Nominations Committee

The Chancellor advised members that in addition to the recent appointment of Professor Emerita Maggie

Walter to Council in August 2023, the Extended Nominations Committee was recommending the appointment of Dr Tania Price to fill the final vacancy. Members noted Dr Price's impressive experience in strategic communications and in areas of people and culture and risk management in large and complex organisations and in working with senior leadership teams in managing challenging subject areas of significant public interest, referencing her experience with BHP and Jeff Kennett (while Victorian Opposition Leader). The Chancellor reflected on Dr Price's passion for education and for the University and her collaborative and collegial approach to governance which aligned well with the style of the current Council.

Resolution 17-10-2023-UC-1.3

University Council **approved** the appointment of Dr Tania Price to the University Council for a 3-year term ending 1 November 2026.

1.4 * Report from Remuneration and Nominations Committee

1.4.1 Audit and Risk Committee

University Council member Sheree Vertigan abstained from voting on this motion due to the identified conflict of interest.

Resolution 17-10-2023-UC-1.4.1

University Council **appointed** Sheree Vertigan AM to membership of the Audit and Risk Committee for a term ending February 2025.

1.4.2 Extension of Appointment for Student Member of University Council

This item was deferred for consideration at the University Council meeting on 4 December 2023.

1.4.3 University Council Member Induction Material

Council noted the updated University Council member induction material. During discussion members agreed that the revised approach to induction provided a more focused, intensive experience for new members, supported by a mix of comprehensive pre-read reference material, in-person meetings with senior executive and internal and external training. It was further noted that as induction content would be stored in Diligent new members would be able to access relevant information at their own convenience and for reference throughout their time on Council.

Resolution 17-10-2023-UC-1.4.3

University Council **noted** the updated University Council Member induction material.

2. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

Ian Anderson, Craig Barling, Kristen Derbyshire, Kate Huntington and Anthony Koutoulis joined the meeting at 9.10am

2.1 * Introductory Items

Welcome and Apologies

The Chancellor welcomed members and congratulated Craig Barling on his appointment as Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Student Services and Operations.

Declarations of interest

Emeritus Professor Peter Dawkins declared a potential conflict in relation to agenda item 5.2 *Third Party Managed Campus*, noting his work with Education Centre of Australia as former Vice-Chancellor at Victoria University.

Minutes

Resolution 17-10-2023-UC-2.1(1)

University Council **confirmed** the minutes of the meeting held on 30 August 2023 as a true and accurate record.

Actions

Council noted the update on action items.

Resolution 17-10-2023-UC-2.1(2)

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

3. COUNCIL EXECUTIVE WORKING DISCUSSION

3.1 *Context for Higher Education in Tasmania

University Council held a working discussion to consider the context for higher education in Tasmania and the broad adaptive challenges that face the sector and the University of Tasmania in particular. Members noted the impact of the policy changes that have shaped higher education in Australia in the post war era, as set out in Michael Wesley's book *Mind of the Nation* and discussed how broader economic, technological, and social forces have changed the sector and the University of Tasmania. Recognising that these adaptive challenges will increase for Tasmania and the University, members noted the importance of focusing on increasing the adaptive capacity of the University and in supporting Tasmanian communities to understand the sort of universities that have evolved to serve their futures and the future of the State.

3.2 *Delivering on our Mission for Tasmania

University Council held a working discussion to consider how the University is delivering on its mission for Tasmania including how well it prepares the graduates that the Tasmanian community needs, and how it is addressing the specific requirements of our regions. Members reflected on feedback received from key stakeholders and identified major challenges and opportunities for the University as it navigates the adaptive challenges facing the sector.

Members provided detailed feedback on two proposed frameworks; the first assesses how well specific offerings (particularly professional ones) and disciplines or schools are meeting the needs of the Tasmanian workforce, in terms of providing enough graduates with the right capabilities that are needed in Tasmania. The second framework provides data to assess how the University delivers in our regions in relation to student enrolments and graduations, research performance, community engagement and staff numbers. Members sought to clarify references to data provided, including defining the terms 'school leavers' and 'adult learners' and requested more information be provided for the next meeting of Council to better understand online learning trends at the University compared to the national experience.

4. STANDING ITEMS

4.1 * Stakeholder Engagement Update

Discussion on this topic was included under items 3.1 and 3.2 above.

4.2 * Chair Academic Senate Update and Report

The Chair, Academic Senate updated members on the major items considered by Academic Senate at its meeting on 1 September 2023, noting discussions held on embedding sustainability into our academic endeavours that focused on the University's approach to sustainability, including through curricular offerings and sustainability focused degrees, and the ongoing national conversation on universities and sexual assault and sexual harassment (SASH). Senate had been advised that the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic had commissioned an independent audit on University processes in relation to investigations, the response of Social Services, and governance around SASH, with audit outcomes to be submitted to Senate for consideration. Senate had considered the proposal for an additional Third-Party Managed Campus in Sydney (*reference item 5.2 on this agenda*) and were focused on ensuring that providers continued to meet the standards for teaching and course delivery.

University Council noted the proposal for the External Review of Academic Senate scheduled for 2024 (*reference item 6.3. on this agenda*) and the obvious intersection between this review and the external review of University Council, also scheduled for 2024. Members were advised on a series of governance workshops offered to academic staff which would be held in the coming weeks across Tasmania and in Sydney.

Resolution 17-10-2023-UC-4.2

University Council **received and noted** the report from the Academic Senate meeting held on 1 September 2023.

4.3 * Vice-Chancellor's Update

The Vice-Chancellor provided an update as part of discussions detailed under item 4.4 below.

Mitch Parsell joined the meeting at 11.45am

4.4 * University Performance Report

The Vice-Chancellor and the Senior Executive invited questions and comments from members on the University Performance Report and the following was noted during discussion:

- Members discussed the impact of the Australian Universities Accord report in relation to its focus on

equity and regions and how this would inform potential funding models in the future. Members agreed that the Accord recommendations propose major long-term changes to the sector and were unlikely to provide any short-term fix for the present challenges facing in the higher education sector.

- Members noted the uplift in the main 2023 Tasmanian and Interstate recruitment cycles for Semester 2 and an increased interest in the domestic market for 2024 with record attendances at both the recent Hobart and Launceston Open Days and the strongest start to a recruitment cycle in the past 6 years with significantly increased applications. The Schools Recommendation Program (SRP) has driven an increase of 161 Tasmanian and 270 interstate applications compared to the same time last year.
- International student numbers were tracking well and to budget for 2024, noting that the Australian government has tightened rules around non-genuine students/institutions including the removal of concurrent Confirmation of Enrolments in the first six months and increased English requirements. Members noted that the impact of these changes both positive and negative will be closely monitored, particularly towards the South Asia student cohort where these changes are targeted.
- Members note that the University was one of 38 Australian based universities that held the Education Australia Limited issued shares, and, along with the other Universities, submitted a claim to the Australian Tax Office (ATO) for the franking credits in 2021. The ATO had formally advised that it rejects the claim for the franking credit refund related to the sale of the University's investment in Education Australia and along with other universities are considering options, including whether to pursue litigation, and is due to provide instructions to the solicitors representing the sector imminently.

Resolution 17-10-2023-UC-4.4

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

Mitch Parsell left the meeting at 11.54am

Jane Beaumont joined the meeting at 11.55am

5. FOR DECISION

5.1. *University Council Members Deed of Access and Indemnity

Confidential and subject to legal professional privilege.

Resolution 17-10-2023-UC-5.1

University Council **noted** the relevant legal advice provided and confirmed support for the execution of a Deed of Access and Indemnity for University Council Members.

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

Michelle Weir and Rob Wilson joined the meeting at 12.08pm

6.1 *International Student Update

The Executive Director Recruitment provided University Council with an International Student update, advising that the International Strategy had guided the University successfully through the changing environment with both successes and challenges, noting that as predicted, the proportion of onshore students had reduced whilst the pivot towards offshore recruitment had proven successful. Members noted the identified era of strategic competition playing out with China fundamentally changed as a market, trends in Higher Education shifting and the national landscape shaped by the Universities Accord and migration review. University Council discussed shifting trends in Higher Education with anecdotal evidence suggesting the surge in enrolment in the UK, USA and Canada post-covid is starting to slow with the UK reducing dependents visas in 2023 and a negative shift in Canada-India relations putting Australia in a strong position for 2024. Members noted the intersection between international students and migration with many students wanting to migrate rather than to study and the importance of strengthening opportunities for graduates to secure employment through work placements and industry connections.

Members discussed the proposed approach to continue to adapt to the changing environment, while consistently growing revenue to a sustainable level, noting that this would include creating a recruitment model based on the cost per acquisition (CPA) that better reflected the profile and strategy of each country and aligning resource around markets through a Global Engagement model and continue to monitor the Universities Accord and migration review outcomes to identify opportunities and risks.

Resolution 17-10-2023-UC-6.1

University Council **noted** the international student update and the approach to market for 2024.

Michelle Weir left the meeting at 1.40pm

Stuart Crispin and Melanie Bryant joined the meeting at 12.40pm

5.2 *Third Party Managed Campus

University Council discussed third party managed campus opportunities.

Ref: Resolution 17-10-2023-UC-5.2(1)

Ref: Resolution 17-10-2023-UC-5.2(2)

Stuart Crispin, Melanie Bryant and Rob Wilson left the meeting at 1.04pm

5.3 *Leasehold on the Theatre Royal Hotel

University Council considered a proposal to lease the Theatre Royal Hotel, acquired in 2016 by the University for student accommodation overflow, to be development as a Tasmanian Cancer Wellbeing Centre. The centre would provide psychosocial support, information, education and systems navigation and physical wellbeing services to patients. The development of a Cancer Wellbeing Centre is an objective of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Tasmanian Department of Health, the University of Tasmania, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, and Support, Hope, and Education Gynaecological Cancer Group (S.H.E). Members noted the suitability of the location and its proximity to the Royal Hobart Hospital, private health care and the Medical Sciences Precinct and the alignment with the University's mission to improve health outcomes for Tasmanians.

Resolution 17-10-2023-UC-5.3(1)

University Council **approved** leasing the Theatre Royal Hotel to be used as a Cancer Wellness Centre.

Resolution 17-10-2023-UC-5.3(2)

University Council **authorised** the Vice-Chancellor to negotiate and approve an agreement that reflects the strategic value of the arrangement in the commercial outcomes, for a period of up to 20 years, subject to appropriate legal and financial advice.

Phil Leersen and Jane Beaumont joined the meeting at 1.44pm

6.2 *Newnham Development Update

University Council discussed the update on the Newnham Development, noting that as the University continues to transition to its Inveresk campus in Launceston, the Newnham site will be re-developed as a mixed-use precinct. Potential development options and processes have been presented to the State Government and to the University Council and work continues to navigate the current constraints of the development process.

Resolution 17-10-2023-UC-6.2

University Council **noted** the update to the Newnham Campus development process.

Phil Leersen and Jane Beaumont left the meeting at 2.09pm

5.4 Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA) Agreement

Members discussed the motion presented, specifically the request to delegate authority to the Vice-Chancellor to extend the agreement for a further five years and what appropriate advice and consultation from the quoted areas would need to be included to support the Vice-Chancellor's decision to extend. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that if he was not satisfied with the advice received that he would have the proposal to extend the agreement brought back to University Council for further consideration. Member noted this advice and agreed to amend the resolution to ensure that an extension to the agreement could be made subject to 'appropriate and supportive advice.'

Resolution 17-10-2023-UC-5.4(1)

University Council **noted** the letter received from the Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania regarding the extension and variation of the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture Joint Venture Agreement.

Resolution 17-10-2023-UC-5.4(2)

University Council **noted** that the letter will extend the Joint Venture Agreement for a 5-year period until 30 June 2029 and will amend various clauses within the agreement as per schedule 1 of the letter of correspondence.

Resolution 17-10-2023-UC-5.4(3)

University Council **delegated** authority to the Vice-Chancellor to sign the letter of correspondence, which would extend the agreement for 5 years and amend the clauses listed as per attachment 2 subject to appropriate and supportive Legal, Financial, UTAS InVent advice, and advice from any other such area of the institution as identified as necessary during consultation.

5.5 Academic Senate Ordinance Amendments

In response to an incorrect reference in the paper for this item, it was confirmed that the *University of Tasmania*

Act 1992 does provide for sub delegation through Ordinance and University Council may provide for this as set out in the motions presented.

Resolution 17-10-2023-UC-5.5

University Council **approved** the following changes to the Academic Senate Ordinance:

- that the *Academic Senate Ordinance* is amended to make it explicit that any business undertaken by Standing Academic Committee (or any other committee of Senate) which constitutes a function or power delegated to Senate from University Council, is allowed to be further delegated from Senate to that committee.
- that the academic membership positions for two members elected by the University College be removed due to the University College now being fully embedded in the College of Business and Economics (CoBE).

6. FOR NOTING

6.3 External Review of Academic Senate

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 17-10-2023-UC-6.3

University Council noted and provided feedback on the proposal for the 2024 External Review of Academic Senate.

7. MONITORING – COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS

7.1 * Audit and Risk Committee

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee advised that at its meeting held on 8 September the Committee had considered several items including the draft Financial Audit Strategy prepared by the Tasmanian Audit Office as part of its planning for the 2023 year-end audit, the University's internal audit plan 2024-2026 and the process risk presentation from the College of Arts, Law and Education. In addition to the regular series of risk presentation considered by the Committee, key strategic risks that spanned multiple Colleges and Divisions were discussed including: the impact of generative artificial intelligence (AI) technology; ongoing competition for domestic students; research infrastructure planning and prioritisation and cyber security. It was noted that these discussions would help inform discussions at the annual Council Strategy Day on 18 October 2023.

Resolution 17-10-2023-UC-7.1

University Council **received and noted** the report from the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 8 October 2023.

7.2 * Project Aurora

University Council noted the update on progress on Project Aurora Phase 1 and confirmed support for the ongoing management of this important work. Further reporting on the risk assessment for obligations was scheduled to be brought to University Council once Phase 2 of the Project had commenced.

Resolution 17-10-2023-UC-7.2

University Council **noted** the update on the progress of Phase 1 remediation payments to affected staff; and the proposed resourcing model for Phase 2 of the project.

7.3 * Compliance Report

University Council considered the Compliance Report and noted the importance of this reporting. Members considered the latest update on transparency, noting that University Council minutes had been publicly available through the Governance website since February 2023 and that the Public Reporting webpage was being regularly updated to reflect the University's latest public submissions and statements and annual reports. A transparency procedure was in development following consultation with various stakeholders including students and staff.

Resolution 17-10-2023-UC-7.3

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

7.4 * Strategic Resourcing Committee

The Chair of the Strategic Resourcing Committee (SRC) highlighted key items considered at the Committee's

most recent meeting including the annual review of the University's credit rating by Moody's Investor Service, released in early September 2023, which had affirmed the existing Aa2 credit rating with a stable outlook; and the external review of the University's investment function. Members noted that the Investment Portfolio Review was focused on governance, operating model, policy and performance and would be led by an external Chair. SRC had also recommended that the Chancellor join the Panel and Council noted that insight and experience of Professor Peter Dawkins would add to the work of the Review Panel following his return to membership of SRC after extended leave.

Resolution 17-10-2023-UC-7.4

University Council **received and noted** the report from the Strategic Resourcing Committee meeting held on 8 September 2023.

8. GRADUATIONS

8.1 * Conferral / Reissue of Awards

University Council conferred awards to the student/s listed in the agenda.

Resolution 17-10-2023-UC-8.1

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

9. OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 Other Business, Confidential Items and Future Meetings Committee for Greater Hobart

University Council was advised of the launch of the Committee for Greater Hobart, a community-funded think tank working with the Greater Hobart community. The Committee is funded and supported by organisations and individuals from across the community focusing on community driven outcomes that have lasting impact for Hobart and the State. Members noted that the inaugural Chief Executive Officer is Danny Sutton and that founding members of the Committee include the Vice-Chancellor and current University of Tasmania student Jacqueline Saward.

The meeting concluded at 2.33pm.