

UTS Council meeting report

17 February 2021

This report covers some of the non-confidential matters considered by UTS Council at its 17 February 2021 meeting. The meeting was held at the UTS HR Training Rooms in Building 1.

**The Report structure replicates the flow of the agenda.*

Strategic items of business

Fit for UTS2027 Blueprint Update

UTS Council oversees the UTS Strategic Plan and the University's implementation of the Strategy. The Fit for UTS2027 Blueprint project is a major element contributing to UTS achieving its strategic goals.

The Fit for UTS2027 update was discussed in conjunction with 4.2 Corporate Plan 2020 end of year results.

Council discussed the Blueprint and was provided advice on the feedback received from across the University community. Council was encouraged by the strong engagement and constructive nature of the feedback received, noting that no significant alternatives to what has been proposed was put forward. Council was advised that planning for implementation is progressing.

Council was also advised that the University's financial position is unlikely to improve significantly until 2023 based upon the compounding impacts of reduced international student load as a consequence of international border restrictions. The University continues to implement strategies to enhance operational efficiency to reduce expenditure, and is also focused on developing new revenue streams from new business lines.

The *New Ways of Working* project stream was discussed, and in particular, the management of workload, and will take into account activities that should cease in order to support efficiency objectives. The health and safety of staff will be a key focus as change processes are developed and implemented, and the impact will be monitored. Council will be updated on the New Ways of Working project stream in August.

Operations and performance

Report from the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor provides a report to each Council meeting containing updates on key developments and events that have occurred since Council's last meeting. Updates include; the implementation progress of the UTS 2027 Strategy, State and Federal Government issues, updates regarding the university sector and internal matters, particularly achievements and awards.

The Vice-Chancellor gave a brief outline of the final outcome for 2020, and particularly highlighted the hard work of staff and teams to pivot to new ways of working and laying the foundations for a better than expected financial result in 2020.

The Vice-Chancellor emphasised the imperative of maintaining UTS culture as the University progresses its strategic objectives and continues to respond to the challenges of the pandemic. He highlighted the criticality of the role of UTS culture in supporting the University pivoting its operations in 2020 in response to COVID 19.

Council discussed the rapidly changing political environment, particularly regarding the ongoing impact of international border controls on international student load. Management continues to be encouraged by the statements coming from the State Government in relation to this issue.

The Foreign Relations Act became law on 10 December 2020. UTS has actively put in place measures to support our new obligations and has initiated a variety of activities to ensure compliance with the new regulatory requirements. A principles-based approach has been developed to manage compliance in international engagements as well as aligning with our strategy to deliver benefit for Australia. The project is focused on both increasing awareness of the new geopolitical perspectives and their implications for University activities, combined with a related culture change program, whilst attempting to minimize additional bureaucracy for academic staff.

The Academic Freedom of Expression Policy was also discussed in the context of former Minister Tehan's introduction of a bill to insert a definition of academic freedom into university funding related legislation. The University has made some changes to our policy and policy language to address the issues raised in the Walker report, better demonstrating adoption and alignment with the Model Code.

The Teaching and Research awards were highlighted. Congratulations were extended to all successful recipients of the 2020 UTS Learning and Teaching Awards and Citations, which were announced late last year. The awards recognise the importance of learning and teaching for both undergraduate and postgraduate students within the framework of the UTS model of global practice-oriented education.

UTS Corporate Plan 2020 - End of Year Performance Report

Council monitors the University performance throughout the year. The end of year performance report provides valuable oversight on how well the University has performed against the targets set.

In November 2019 Council approved the UTS Corporate Plan 2020, which outlines our strategic priorities for 2020 and the associated performance indicator targets to track progress against these priorities. The plan also outlined a range of initiatives demonstrating a commitment to achieving our institutional goals consistent with the UTS2027 Strategic Plan.

The COVID-19 pandemic which started in early 2020 and the subsequent economic and social constraints had a profound effect on the entire education sector. As expected our overall performance in 2020, measured by the Council KPIs, has been below

expectations. Targets for 2021 performance indicators have been adjusted to reflect the continued impacts of the pandemic in 2021.

Despite the major disruptions in 2020, based on the current end-of-year results/forecasts the performance, several indicators have achieved positive results.

The progress against the initiatives in UTS 2027 has been impacted by COVID-19 but overall initiatives performed well, though amendments were made to some initiatives to respond our changed environment.

In addition to planned activities, the Fit for 2027 project was initiated to ensure UTS continues to operate sustainably and is better positioned to deliver our strategic objectives over the coming years.

UTS Advancement

Council received a briefing on UTS Advancement and discussed the maturity of donor relationships and the challenges presented through COVID. The activities undertaken to encourage participation and connection with UTS were outlined. Council will continue to monitor the governance arrangements and further improvements in UTS Advancement.

Reports from committees

Council has a number of committees, whose membership have particular expertise, to provide assistance and advice to Council on matters for Council consideration. These committees report back to Council.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee advises Council on matters relating to the distribution and supervision of university finances, and acts on behalf of Council in areas of delegated authority.

Council discussed the end of year results as presented to the Audit and Risk Committee in conjunction with the Finance Committee, through the draft parent accounts. Whilst 2020 was a tough year, the final result was better than anticipated due to the actions taken to restrain expenditure and improve revenue streams from new business lines, and to enhance opportunities to commence courses in the Summer session.

The Chancellor expressed, on behalf of Council, appreciation to the Finance team in keeping Council well informed throughout the year in spite of a high degree of uncertainty and ambiguity in the operating environment.

Physical Infrastructure Committee

The Physical Infrastructure Committee provides advice to Council regarding matters concerning UTS Buildings and the built environment surrounding UTS.

Council discussed the use of UTS Buildings and sites that form part of the State Government's Pyrmont and Haymarket precincts, to feed into a submission to the Department of Industry and Environment.

Items for approval

None.

Items for noting

Council are provided papers for noting and include activity that has occurred between Council meetings.

- Chancellor's Report
 - Use of Power of Attorney, University Seal and Executive Action
 - Annual Declarations of Interest
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Items of General Business

Dean's Presentation

Council discussed the Faculty of Arts and Social Science's (FASS) plans for shaping the future of the Faculty, primarily focused on Industry engagement, co-design and co-delivery.

The Dean, Professor Alan Davison, outlined the transition the Faculty is undergoing towards a future state which is driving increased integration of science and technology with arts and social science disciplines. This will be achieved through targeted cross faculty collaborations and unique FASS contributions, including leveraging strengths in Indigenous research.

The tools and approach were discussed. The Faculty has recognised the shortfall of soft skills in workplaces and a genuine need to embed these skills for individuals and organisations to enhance their professional skills and capacity. The Faculty is well placed to add value to filling these skill gaps, particularly in the areas of resilience, critical thinking, transcultural communication and creative skills.

The external environment and opportunities were discussed as well as the strategic priorities and risks for the Faculty.

Other reports

- Interim Student Admission and Enrolment Report 2021
- Work Health and Safety Report
- Audit and Risk Committee Report