

# UTS Council meeting report

13 April 2022

This report covers some of the non-confidential matters considered by UTS Council at its 13 April 2022 meeting.

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

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## Strategic items of business

### Report from 2022 UTS Council Retreat

Over the two days of the Retreat, consideration was given to the consequence of the refinement of the UTS 2027 strategy and what the areas of focus should be thematically for Council, and the University more broadly, over the second three-year phase of the Strategy.

The following key themes emerged as areas of focus for Council as the University embarks upon the next phase of UTS 2027:

- **Identity:** Understanding what makes our identity distinctive, and the elements that contribute to the UTS brand attributes.
- **Digital capability:** Technology is a critical enabler of the University's strategy and operations. For UTS it is vital that we have clarity of understanding in relation to what being a university of technology means and how this relates to our identity and brand. Our digital platforms will provide the key interface with our people including staff, students and partners;
- **People and Culture:** The Pandemic has caused a major disruption for staff and students. We need to have clarity in understanding the impact of the Pandemic and what lessons, both positive and negative, we take from the past two years. As we fully reactivate the University Campus and we embark on the second three-year phase of the Strategy, the positive attributes of our culture need to be sustained, and further shaped to enable our Strategy;
- **Risk:** We anticipate that the University will operate at a higher risk tempo over the short to medium term in order to deliver our strategic initiatives. As a consequence, Council will need to test the impact of this on the University's risk appetite at regular intervals.
- **Enduring Research Partnerships:** As the University's Research Strategy continues to evolve, it will become increasingly critical to develop deep and enduring partnerships to support the translation of our research into impact. Communicating both the excellence and impact of our research will be crucial to leveraging funding from government, other non-government agencies and industry more broadly.
- **Student Experience:** As the University continues to evolve its Teaching and Learning Strategy to enable our commitment to "Lifetime of Learning", the University must ensure a positive experience for all students/learners based upon all levels of engagement they have with the University, including with our people and our digital platforms. Our approach has to be reflected through the mix of students at UTS.,

The themes, referenced above, are interconnected and will require the University to take an integrative approach as it progresses the implementation of our Strategy.

Each of the above areas will be scheduled into the annual forward plan of meetings to enable Council to monitor progress. Furthermore, some refinements to the current terms of reference of Council committees to accommodate these areas of strategic focus and to support more detailed analysis will be required.

### **Precincts and Partnerships**

The “Sustainable Partnerships” and “Distinctive Identity” strategic initiatives, part of our UTS 2027 strategy, clearly articulate the importance of precincts and deep industry and community engagement to our University.

Council discussed the Precincts of significance to UTS, the organic nature of precinct development and the Government priorities for precincts. The relationships between UTS and industry partners that have strengthened local precincts and elements that can be replicated to further strengthen and give rise to precincts, were also discussed.

The creative industries and health industries are areas of significant strength for UTS. The precincts surrounding the UTS city footprint are both forming organically and being purposely developed by the NSW Government. Consideration will be given to the strategic use of UTS buildings in the context of both creative and tech precincts.

Consideration will also be given to the appropriate Council oversight of the precinct strategies.

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## **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 National Student Safety Survey Results were discussed. The findings, whilst still showing there is room for improvement, reaffirmed UTS strong leadership and communications in this area. The working group will continue to look for opportunities for improvement.

The Vice-Chancellor briefly discussed the student load with reference to specific cohorts. The international student cohort increased marginally noting that many remain offshore. It is pleasing to see the increasing activation of the Campus with students engaging in Campus life.

### **Work Health and Safety Annual Report 2021**

*Council monitors the University performance throughout the year. The Annual Work Health and Safety report provides valuable oversight on how well the University has performed.*

Council discussed the Report, acknowledging the good work of the University in supporting the delivery of the safety performance in 2021. Council further noted that the lost time incidents frequency is lower than the sector average and noted that while the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) usage had slightly increased it was still lower than sector averages. The Safety Manager and the team are to be congratulated for their diligence and determination, through training and communications, to achieve these results.

Council thanked the team for providing reports throughout the year that enable Council to exercise due diligence and allow for interrogation of data to support the University's commitment to health and safety.

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## 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.*

### **Report from Audit and Risk Committee**

*The primary responsibility of the Audit and Risk Committee is to assist Council in overseeing the activities undertaken by the UTS body corporate and, from time to time, other related entities as requested by Council.*

The role of Council and its Committees in the approval process for the annual UTS Financial Statements is prescribed in section 41C of the Public Finance and Audit Act 2083 as well as Council's Delegations and the Terms of Reference and Charters for its Committees.

The UTS 2021 Financial Statements were discussed and Council agreed that based on the information contained in the Financial Statements, the Annual Engagement Plan and corresponding Annual Engagement Closing Report, and inquiries made of management and representatives of the Audit Office, the Audit and Risk Committee was satisfied that there were no apparent issues with the audit and reporting processes or the financial control environment with respect to the production of the Financial Statements. Council approved the Financial Statements. The Financial Statements will be submitted to the Audit Office of New South Wales and included in the UTS Annual Report for 2021.

### **Report from Academic Board**

Proposed updates have been made to the Admissions and Recognition of Prior Learning Policy to clarify approval authority for special admissions schemes.

Currently, only Academic Board can approve and change special admissions schemes. The Provost however has a number of delegations and responsibilities with regard to admissions standards, including variation to the minimum ATAR required for admission into specific courses.

Council approved changes to the UTS Delegations providing the Provost with the authority to approve changes to *approved* admissions schemes to mirror authorities related to admissions standards.

### **Report from Student/Council Liaison Group**

Council noted the importance of the Student/Council Liaison Group in enhancing the student “voice” to Council. The group has been invigorated through broad student membership and maintains a strategic rather than operational focus.

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### **Items for approval**

None

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### **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
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### **Items of General Business**

None

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### **Other reports**

- Student Load Report
- Work Health and Safety Report
- Student Ombud Report
- Commercial Activities Committee Report