

# UTS Council report

27 November 2024

This report covers some of the non-confidential matters considered by UTS Council at its 27 November 2024 meeting.

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

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## Strategic items of business

### **Update on the Employee Value Proposition (EVP)**

Council noted the further refinements that had been made since the draft Employee Value Proposition (EVP), as a component of the overall People Strategy, was first discussed at its meeting in April this year.

Given the current challenging environment for the University, the importance of integrating the EVP with operational efficiency programs was emphasised including the requirement to maximise the use of resources. As well as being accessible by staff, Council noted that the EVP needed to be promulgated by all levels of leadership across the University.

### **2024 Staff Pulse Survey Results**

Council discussed the 2024 Staff Pulse Survey Results and the action priorities that had been developed by the University in response. The aggregate results and significant themes that emerged through the results were discussed with particular focus given to communication with staff, trust in leadership and capability for managing change.

The development of a UTS Leadership Academy to enhance leadership training was identified as an important initiative to communicate expectations in relation to management roles, and to support leaders in an increasingly complex and changing environment. Council will continue to monitor progress with executing the People Strategy, including the implementation of actions in response to the Pulse Survey Results.

### **Foundations for 2030**

Council discussed the evolution of the Strategy since the Council Retreat. Given the disruption caused through both the Pandemic and the changing external environment, there was an emerging consensus that the Strategy be reframed as the UTS 2030 Strategy.

The 2030 Strategy articulates seven strategic pillars that either builds and refines the priority areas articulated under the UTS 2027 Strategy and provides new areas of emphasis that support both areas of priority and operational sustainability objectives.

The 2030 Strategy will provide a framework to enable sharper investment decisions and to support strategic and operational sustainability objectives.

Council affirmed the importance of the operational sustainability program supporting a return to operating within risk appetite (ie achieving an operating surplus). The criticality of operational sustainability being better articulated in the Business Enablers and Improvement strategic pillar was also noted.

Council was advised that given the uncertain external environment that was impacting the University's revenue projections, the 2025 Budget, Annual Plan and Finance Plan being developed in the context of the UTS 2030 Strategy would be presented at a Council meeting to be scheduled at the time of the 2025 Retreat in March.

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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 Vice-Chancellor updated Council on developments since the Report was written, including noting relevant legislation under consideration by the Australian Parliament. Despite the relevant legislation to cap international student enrolments not being passed, there were a number of strategies available to the Government that could enable the delivery of its objectives. Furthermore, there are preliminary indications that suggest that demand from international students in particular markets is softening as a consequence of the Government signalling a policy objective to reduce the number of places available in Australian higher education institutions.

Council was also advised that the Government has determined that universities will have responsibility for managing practicum payments for students in designated disciplines. This will be a significant challenge for the sector, and its implementation will be closely monitored.

### Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) 2024 Reporting Requirements

Council discussed the improvements in data collection for the Benchmarking Report. The data indicates that UTS has improved in many areas, but further work will be undertaken to analyse the results and determine actions to be prioritised for implementation and reported to Council.

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## Reports from committees

*Council has a number of sub 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.*

Since the advice provided to the October meeting of Council, the focus of the Operational Sustainability Initiative has been on engagement and on considering methods to address the need to sustainably reduce expenditure in 2026. The Finance Plan will make provision for the Operational Sustainability program.

Council noted that a discussion paper titled *Operational Sustainability Initiative: Initial Consultation* had been circulated to all staff in early November with staff invited to provide feedback.

### **Academic Board**

The Chair of Academic Board reported to Council on the recent Academic Board Forum that identified the ongoing opportunities and challenges arising from artificial intelligence. Council requested that it receive an update in 2025 as to how the University is ensuring academic integrity in response to artificial intelligence.

Council noted that a number of research policies had also been reviewed and updated, and approved by Academic Board, to support the implementation of the proposed revisions to the Commercial Activities Policy as proposed by the Governance Committee. Further to this, Council approved amendments to the Research Delegations.

Council also approved amendments to a number of Student Rules on the recommendation of Academic Board.

### **Honorary Awards Committee**

*The Honorary Awards Committee recommends to Council, nominations for honorary awards according to the policy and procedures adopted by Council.*

Council approved a number of honorary awards, including emeritus professorships; honorary doctorates; fellows of the University; and distinguished service awards.

### **Governance Committee**

*To fulfil a strategic governance role, the Governance Committee undertakes specific functions in regard to policy and general governance matters and advises Council on a number of matters.*

Council noted that under the new National Code in relation to Gender Based Violence, it is expected that the governance, management and reporting requirements will fall

under the remit of university governing bodies. The Governance Committee will continue to monitor this area, and report to Council as appropriate.

Council approved amendments to the Commercial Activities Policy that refocused the oversight of a various research activities following benchmarking and internal review during 2024.

Council also approved a new Power of Attorney as part of the normal review cycle.

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## Items for approval

UTS Council regularly approves appointments to boards of Directors, committee membership changes and minor changes to governance instruments.

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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

## Other reports

- Work Health and Safety Standing Report
- Preliminary Student Admission and Enrolment Report
- Finance Committee
- Audit and Risk Committee