
University of New England
OPEN Council Meeting
Zoom Video Conference
Friday, 30 July 2021

Present:

Mr James Harris, <i>Chancellor & Chair</i>	Mr Phil Hess
Ms Jan McClelland AM, <i>Deputy Chancellor</i>	Mrs Jane Schmude
Prof Brigid Heywood, <i>Vice-Chancellor & CEO</i>	Ms Meredith Symons
A/Prof Robyn Bartel, <i>Chair of Academic Board</i>	Ms Emma Wellham
Mr Russell Evans	Mr David van Aanholt
Dr Melanie Fillios	

In attendance:

Prof Peter Creamer, <i>Chief Operating Officer</i>	Mrs Anita Taylor, <i>Chief Financial Officer</i>
Prof Heiko Daniel, <i>Deputy VC (Research)</i>	Prof Michael Wilmore, <i>Interim Deputy VC</i>
Mrs Gabrielle Price, <i>Director Governance and University Secretary</i>	

Observers

Ms Sally Connah, *P&C Business Partner*
Ms Suzanne Crew, *Strategy Management Specialist, Office of Strategy Management*
Mr Bryn Griffiths, *Associate Director, Communications and Events*
Ms Donna McLennan, *P&C Business Partner*
Ms Fiona Murphy, *Director People & Culture*
Ms Amy O'Toole, *Specialist (Governance Liaison)*
Ms Maryke Peet, *P&C Business Partner*
Ms Melanie Rumble, *Senior Manager, Workplace Relations (joined during the meeting)*
Ms Erin Smidt, *Acting Senior Manager, Workforce Strategy & Development*
Ms Elizabeth Taylor, *Chief of Staff*

1 MEETING OPENING

The Chair and Chancellor Mr James Harris, welcomed everyone to the third Council meeting for 2021, acknowledging that as a result of COVID-19 restrictions the meeting is being held via Zoom / videoconference rather than in person. The Chancellor acknowledged and welcomed the observers for the meeting, and in particular thanking the *Director of People & Culture – Fiona Murphy* and her team for their contribution to today's agenda discussion on People and Culture and for their tireless work particularly this year and last year.

The Director Governance & University Secretary, Ms Gabrielle Price, noted there had been a number of observers who were unable to attend the meeting including Lee Atkinson-Barrett, and Diana Chambers.

1.1 * Acknowledgement of Country

The University of New England respects and acknowledges that its people, programs and facilities are built on land, and surrounded by a sense of belonging, both ancient and contemporary, of the world's oldest living culture. In doing so, UNE values and respects Indigenous knowledge systems as

a vital part of the knowledge capital of Australia. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land we call New England and pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which this meeting takes place.

1.2 * Apologies

The Chancellor confirmed were no apologies from Council members.

1.3 * Conflict of Interest Declaration and Disclosed Register of Interest

Council members were asked to disclose any material interest, consistent with Schedule 2A Clause 5 of the University of New England 1993 Act (NSW). There were no conflicts declared.

Council members were asked to update their Disclosed Register of Interest with the Secretariat as required.

1.4 * Order of Business

The Chancellor requested the policy update be starred.

Council ACCEPTED the revised order of business and ADOPTED non-starred items.

2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1 Confirmation of Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2021 were approved as a true and correct record via email on 29 June 2021. These minutes are available for viewing in the Convene Document Library.

2.2 * Action Items

The Chair noted the action items and proposed that both be closed. The induction item would be discussed today as part of the Chancellor’s report and a policy update has been provided including timelines. This matter will be continued as business as usual.

	Meeting/Item #	Action	Status
1	Open Council Meeting 31 July 2020; item 5.4 Council Member Induction & Development Plan 2020 #20117	Mr Harris as well as Council members Mr Evans, Ms Myers and Ms McClelland have agreed to trial the program in addition to the newly elected and appointed Council members, who will use the program upon their commencement.	Closed. Presentation on induction framework to be provided to July meeting with demonstration for feedback. Key induction modules will then be developed and the content reviewed by ExT (UNE information) and Chancellor (Council specific content) as part of sign-off process.

	Meeting/Item #	Action	Status
2	Open Council Meeting 21 May 2021; item 4.2 Council Policies #21073	The Director Governance and University Secretary is asked to arrange a working party for the express intent of addressing Council policies.	Closed. While scheduling a special Governance Working Party meeting on Council Committee days has not been possible, Policies status updates are being provided to Committee and Council meetings and early drafts have now been made available in a Convene Reading Room.

3 STRATEGIC ITEMS

3.1 * Chancellor's Open Report #21044

The Chancellor, Mr James Harris, took the report as read and as there were no questions requested that Ms Amy O'Toole, Specialist (Governance Liaison) provide a brief update regarding the Induction program.

Ms O'Toole provided an update regarding the progress of an interactive Governance induction and reference site to be available for Council Members as part of their induction and ongoing professional development and backgrounding about UNE operations and sector relevant information. The site format was in development and content was being prepared for review and then approval. Ms O'Toole confirmed that the induction would:

- not be content heavy;
- support reflection for example – relevant of information to the Council member role;
- allow that feedback/suggestions for additions/changes/improvements be logged; and
- be available at any time – so members can progress at their own pace and use the site as an easy reference/or refresher.

A Council member suggested that it would be helpful to have some governance case studies available as well as updates on relevant sector news and announcements, and Ms O'Toole confirmed this could be included.

The Chancellor thanked Ms O'Toole for the update.
 Council NOTED the Chancellor's Open report to Council, report #21044.

3.2 * Vice-Chancellor's Open Report #21049

The Vice-Chancellor and CEO, Professor Brigid Heywood, highlighted from the report a number of key matters.

- Potential changes were being discussed to the board structure of Universities Australia (UA) including that the Chief Executive Officer role may be independent rather than drawn from the Vice-Chancellors co-hort. There was also talk regarding the functions of UA and how it

will work in the future. There remains a risk in the discussions that the voice and needs of regional universities is not heard, and whether a separate Regional Universities Network (RUN) inadvertently exacerbates or helps mitigate this risk.

- The possibility of early Federal elections had been discussed and the Sector was actively engaging with Ministers and Shadow Ministers regarding sector relevant policies;
- Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic continues to present more challenges at this point in time that UNE had hoped or expected, including further limited working mode and supporting actions to manage student attendance and movement, as well as impediments to research progress in some cases and the impact on students and their study decisions evident in continued downward pressure on student load.
- UNE was looking for ways to support and engage with community, noting opportunities for students to stay in Armidale and study online and that UNE's support for a contingent of workers from Tonga (leveraging the experience gained from accommodating volunteer firefighters during the bushfire crisis) were some examples.
- Load was below budget forecasting, reflecting in part student financial pressures. While applications had been tracking well, conversions in T1 – T2 had declined suggesting UNE was second or third choice for students who were being accepted by their Institution of first choice. While additional and directed marketing had been undertaken early this has not been able to fully recover the position. While some trends experienced by UNE mimic the sector there are signs that UNE's cohort is more impacted.

Regarding the People+ pillar within Future Fit Strategy the Vice-Chancellor outlined the activities in progress highlighting in particular that UNE was:

- creating a framework for workforce design aligned to the ambitions of Future Fit to build work force capability, including investing in digital and technology skills for application in both new curriculum development and operations and supporting teaching and research excellence and delivery outcomes. This framework is supported by the embedding of PPDR processes;
- leveraging data to support decision making regarding investment and to track performance and outcomes. UNE's check in survey responses have been positive and help indicate what is working and areas for improvement and 70% of staff have completed part 1 on the Professional Performance and Development Review (PPDR) process which would soon move into the 2nd round;
- working to support leave and well-being and opportunities for development:
 - introducing 'business lite' weeks which were "light" in terms of significant governance and management meetings and provided staff an opportunity to take leave if they wished to;
 - confirming a new employer assistance program which provided a broader opportunity for staff in terms of support; and
 - renewing the arrangement for staff access to Udemy following positive feedback and usage;
- progressing under the leadership of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Wilmore, the academic workload model; and

- continuing to promote teams based working with recognition of success, sharing of information and involvement in decision making.

The Vice-Chancellor also spoke of a very positive example of engagement by the academy following a call for response regarding Excellence in Research Australia (ERA) 2023. In preparation for the upcoming ERA, staff were responding positively in high numbers to link their research outputs to an ORCID number and this would become normal practice going forward.

The Chair thanked the Vice-Chancellor for their report.

Council NOTED the Vice-Chancellor's Open report to Council, report #21049.

3.2.1 * Academic Calendar Update #21221

The Vice-Chancellor spoke to this item, explaining the academic calendar:

- was a critical component of UNE's operational model, impacting academic and professional support functions alike, as well as the UNE community;
- created complexity in financial reporting and given the lack of a 'break' or down time between major periods that would encourage leave taking (i.e. the current calendar spanned across part of two calendar years);
- a high level of efficiency from an operational perspective, did not allow for a break between major periods and a lack of a break, with the between period impacting accumulation of leave; financial reporting;
- was not meeting student needs, with long trimesters and a short time between them impacting the ability for staff to provide academic feedback to students before they enrolled in the next period; and
- required contemporary review including of the number of hours of study expected by students with UNE tracking for many programs at around 150 hours of study compared to the 100 or 120 hours of student work load at other institutions.

The Vice-Chancellor further explained:

- the Academic Calendar program hoped to reduce 'over teaching' and 'over delivering' of content when students could only achieve an equivalence in credit;
- the program had undergone stage one analysis and would now move to consultation. Feedback would be considered and incorporated in the calendar and then would go to back Academic Board and then out to the broader community;
- that this report aimed to inform Council of the intention to progress this change, and that steps would be taken to help reduce the cost of the implementation, but that it was not trivial given the need for corresponding consideration of pedagogy review including of learning outcomes. Further efficiencies and reduction in overall cost were possible by aligning the calendar update with the upgrade of Learning Management System (LMS) which included a learning content renewal component; and
- consultation in 2021 will support work in 2022 to implement agreed calendar changes for the beginning of 2023.

Comments from Council members included:

- The student member of Council noted that the Student Consultative Committee (SCC) had been involved in data gathering and modelling and that SCC target stakeholder groups would be involved in further consultation (via Zoom conversations given COVID – and also via survey). Also student representatives on Academic Board were contributing to academic quality assurance aspects via those governance meetings;
- Staff members of Council were supportive noting that the issues with the current calendar impacted student support issues and also made it difficult for staff to take leave; and
- External members commented on the opportunity to materially address some outstanding staff and student engagement issues and that the communication of the plan, potential changes and responses to feedback was very important.

Council members also commented on the potential format of the new calendar, i.e. semesters or options for a two spread out periods and an intensive trimester, and the Vice-Chancellor noted that the consultation would inform the approach with the focus being supporting learning, supporting research time, but also providing opportunity for students to progress across the year.

The Chair thanked the Vice-Chancellor for the report.

Council NOTED the update on the Academic Calendar, report #21221.

4 RELATED BUSINESS REPORTS

4.1 * Council Policies #21074

Council members asked for additional information regarding the terminology and overall framework, noting this would support understanding of the different instruments by Council and also other parties. Also queried the engagement with the Legal Office regarding rules and principles and guidelines.

It was noted that the basis for the framework had been discussed previously with Council and that the Legal team had advised on the use of ‘principle’ documents such as in our Code of Conduct as effective instruments with the status of a Rule.

A member noted that the Academic Board had a good degree of visibility of the policy suite and principles and guidelines and had noted the contemporary governance practice of providing principles supported by guidelines to support good processes. A question was also asked about a recent consultation period and feedback time allowed on the policy bulletin board.

The Council agreed a revised resolution to note the report and requested that the overview of the framework be provided to the Council to support their decisions on these matters.

Council NOTED the report on Council Policies, report #21074.

5 BUSINESS AS USUAL REPORTS

5.1 * Chair Academic Board Report #21024

Associate Professor Robyn Bartel spoke to the report highlighting that all roles on the Academic Board Executive were now filled and a number of positions listed as vacant including member roles on Academic Board Standing Committee and faculty representative positions on the Curriculum Committee were now filled. This was very positive and supported full and diverse conversations and input into academic government matters.

The Chair of Academic Board also noted that the report for July:

- outlines the key takeout's from the Universities Australia Conference discussed by Academic Board;
- outlines the response by the Academic Board Standing Committee and the reconvened COVID-19 academic response team (CART) in response to increasing impact of health orders on students and academic program delivery (terms of reference for CART provided within the report);
- updates on academic freedom and self-reviews; and
- provided summary tables of the matters considered by the Academic Board, with feedback invited on the format of these summaries.

The Chair thanked Associate Professor Bartel for their report.

Council NOTED the Chair of Academic Board's report to Council, report #21024.

5.2 UNE Council WHS - Due Diligence Obligations #21079

Council NOTED the UNE Council WHS - Due Diligence Obligations report, #21079.

6 * GENERAL BUSINESS & MEETING FINALISATION

The Chair noted that the next OPEN meeting is scheduled for Friday, 24 September 2021. With there being no general business matters raised, the Chancellor thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions to today's meeting and declared the open session to be closed at 10.14am.

Signed by Chair:



Mr James Harris, Chancellor

13/10/2021

Date