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**University of New England**  
Council (5:2025)  
Armidale and Zoom Video Conference  
Friday 26 Sep 2025

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**Present:**

Dr Sarah Pearson, Chancellor  
Jan McClelland AM, Deputy Chancellor (Zoom)  
Prof Chris Moran, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer  
Dr Onoriode Coast, Council Member  
Ian Gillespie, Council Member  
Phil Hess, Council Member  
Chanel Hopkinson, Council Member  
Col Murray, Council Member  
Kristy Sillman, Council Member  
David van Aanholt, Council Member  
Prof Adrian Walsh, Chair Academic Board

**In attendance:**

Karma Auden, Chief Financial Officer  
Prof Simon Evans, Deputy Vice-Chancellor  
Meredith Parry, Chief Operating Officer  
Radha Thomas, Director Governance and University Secretary  
Prof Chris Armstrong, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)  
Rebecca Cawood, Director Office Strategy Management  
Kus Pandey, Strategic Project Lead (Zoom)

**Apologies:**

Megan Aitken, Council Member

**IN-CAMERA SESSION**

**OPEN SESSION**

**1. Procedural Matters**

**1.1. Welcome**

The Chair opened the meeting at 9.50am declared it quorate and welcomed members to the meeting.

The Chair emphasised that despite discussing difficult matters, the University remained an exceptional institution undertaking excellent work. Staff demonstrated remarkable commitment and pride in their teaching, students' achievements, and community research impact. The Chair noted that while challenging issues required attention, it was important to recognise the University's outstanding qualities.

Attendees were reminded the meeting was being recorded. The Chair thanked all Council members for completing their mandatory code of conduct training.

**1.2. \* Acknowledgement of Country**

The Chair undertook an Acknowledgement of Country.

### 1.3. \* Apologies and Quorum

Megan Aitken’s apology was received.

### 1.4. \* Conflicts 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). Council members were asked to update their Disclosed Register of Interest with the Secretariat as required.

The Vice-Chancellor and CEO, Professor Moran advised that his brother works for Hudson Australia (Recruitment Agency).

The Vice-Chancellor and CEO, Professor Moran declared an interest in item 8.1.\* UNE Partnerships Presentation, as he Chairs the UNE Partnerships Board.

### 1.5. \* Order of Business

**Resolution:** Council ACCEPTED the order of business and ADOPTED non-starred items.  
 OC/25/05/01

Re Item 4.4: Staff Giving Program

Members noted that the report was unstarred, however requested that the action for the staff giving program be completed by 30 June 2026.

**Action:** That the Staff Giving Program be completed by 30 June 2026.  
 AOC/25/05/01

The Chair suggested that the Council meeting Agendas could be altered to ensure sufficient time for face-to-face discussion of strategic issues. Renewed Agendas for face-to-face meetings would include reports focusing on:

1. major risks & opportunities
2. strategic priorities
3. budget
4. staff wellbeing
5. education quality
6. research connectivity; and
7. highlighted regulatory requirements.

It was also suggested by members that UNE Council should hold shorter online meetings to address routine governance and compliance items, with provision for any Council member to request specific items be elevated to face-to-face meetings for fuller discussion.

**Action:** The Director Governance and University Secretary, the Vice-Chancellor and the Chancellor review and restructure Council meeting agendas.  
 AOC/25/05/02

## 1.6. \* Safety Concerns and Risk Management

Council acknowledged the Executive's concerns about staff fatigue. While Council would maintain its governance accountability role, they expressed understanding of the challenging higher education environment, concern for staff wellbeing, and offered support, aiming for an authentic working relationship.

Standing Orders were suspended at 10 am.

Members attended the Reporting to and Engaging with the Independent Commission Against Corruption Presentation provided by the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

Standing Orders resumed at 11.30am.

## 2. \* Celebrating Success

Professor Myfanwy Maple, Director of Manna Institute attended the meeting at 11.30 am. The Chair welcomed a presentation about the Manna Institute, emphasising the University's excellence despite current challenges. After introductions, the presenter outlined the Manna Institute's achievements as a collaborative mental health research initiative across the Regional University Network (RUN), led by UNE.

The key points presented included:

- Manna Institute addresses regional mental health needs through collaborative research across seven universities;
- achievements include 183 publications, 43 capacity-building events, 27 PhD students, and \$2.29 return per dollar invested;
- examples of success include school-based social work programs and HDR student communities of practice;
- embedding of students into community;
- the University bears administrative burden as lead institution, affecting immediate financial returns; and
- the Institute is approaching the end of initial funding, creating vulnerability.

**Resolution:** Council NOTED Professor Myfanwy Maple, Director of Manna Institute's presentation.  
OC/25/05/02

Professor Myfanwy Maple, Director of Manna Institute was thanked by members and left the meeting at 11.49 am.

### 3. Chancellor's Reports

#### 3.1. \* Chancellor's Report to Council

The Chair thanked Council members for their various contributions, including Megan Aitken and Onoriode Coast for attending The Armidale School events, Jan McClelland for risk management work, and David van Aanholt and Ian Gillespie for budget rectification efforts.

Discussion covered the NTEU Bell Curve Report and actions suggested after discussion with staff and student Council members. Actions include the importance of actively engaging student and staff Council members during meetings, professional development opportunities, and information for potential candidates so that they are aware of the commitment. Whole of Council is also engaging in professional development, with AI training identified as a priority. The Council agreed to develop a more strategic framework for Honorary Doctorate nominations, linking them to University strategy, influence, and research priorities.

The Chair presented the Senate's report on quality governance in Australian Higher Education Providers, outlining 12 recommendations. Council noted that the University already meets several requirements, with others in progress. Key recommendations discussed included transparency and accountability practices, consultation for major changes, minimum proportions of members with specific expertise, elected representatives, and enhanced induction and professional development. Particular attention was given to Recommendation 7 regarding the fiduciary responsibility of elected members. Professional development initiatives were confirmed, including shorter AICD courses (\$750) for elected members and exploration of a potential 12-month apprenticeship program for future Council members, similar to the University of Aberdeen model.

**Resolution:** Council NOTED the Chancellor's Report to Council [D25/167309]  
 OC/25/05/03

**Action:** The Director Governance and University Secretary to prepare response to all 'Quality of Governance at Australian Higher Education Providers' Recommendations by 16 January 2026.  
 AOC/25/05/03

### 4. Vice-Chancellor's Business

#### 4.1. \* Vice-Chancellor and CEO's Report to Council

The Chair invited the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Moran to speak to this report.

The Vice-Chancellor reported that no response had been received from the Minister's office regarding 'inner to outer' region classification. TEQSA had been informed of the financial rectification plan and offered assistance, with the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Financial Officer to meet with them in Melbourne. T3 commencing student numbers were up approximately 16%. Council commended the positive trends in student intake and continuation, and the Tamworth planning progress, confirming funding was allocated from the approved business plan. The Chancellor formally thanked the Chief Operating Officer and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for their exceptional management of the unexpected snowfall event, which enabled all intensive courses to continue as scheduled.

**Resolution:** The Council NOTED the Vice-Chancellor & CEO's Management Report. [D25/170930].  
 OC/25/05/04

#### 4.2. \* Financial Rectification Plan Update (Verbal Report)

The Chair invited the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Moran and the Chief Financial Officer, Karma Auden to speak to this item.

It was reported that all required notifications had been completed, including meetings with unions and Health and Safety Representatives, TEQSA had been notified, and SafeWork contacted. Communication videos from the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Vice-Chancellor had received 150-200 views each (fewer than 10% of staff), with incomplete viewing. The Slido feedback platform had received 77 comments from 33 people, with 518 votes from 79 participants. Feedback themes showed concerns about the professional/academic staff divide and lower-level professional staff feeling disproportionately affected. Management proposed adjusting the operating payroll target to include both academic and professional staff. The total target would remain unchanged in \$ terms, but could now be split between academic and professional staff ( ) to restore balance in the academic/professional split without increasing total expenditure reduction.

Council discussed the low engagement rates, with suggestions that accessing Slido may have been difficult for some staff. An all-staff meeting was scheduled for the following Thursday to address themes from feedback. Council members commended the professional quality of the communication videos and acknowledged this is good progress in the early days of the plan. The Chief Financial Officer confirmed that detailed reporting against the Financial Rectification Plan targets would be provided at future meetings, tracking achievements against original targets with variance explanations.

**Resolution:** Council NOTED the Financial Rectification Plan Update (Verbal Report).  
OC/25/05/05

#### 4.3. \* Business Plan and Key Performance Indicators

The Chair invited the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Moran to speak to this item.

The Vice-Chancellor presented the business plan and KPIs, which were taken as read. Council acknowledged the red indicators had been discussed in the previous reporting period and noted that interventions were being implemented to improve retention outcomes for the following year. Members thanked the Vice-Chancellor and staff for the informative presentation on retention management strategies delivered the previous day, commending the quality of data gathering and the succinct presentation format.

**Resolution:** Council NOTED the Business Plan Key Performance Indicators – September 2025 update [D25/169436].  
OC/25/05/06

#### 4.4. Staff Giving Program

**Resolution:** Council NOTED the Staff Giving Program establishment update [D25/168135].  
OC/25/05/07

**Action:** That the Staff Giving Program be completed by 30 June 2026.

## 5. \* Student Member Report (Verbal Report)

The Chair invited Kristy Sillman to speak to this item.

Members were advised of the significant progress on establishing the Student-Led Organisation following legislative changes allowing student control of 40% of Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF) funding. The constitution had been rewritten over the year and was in its final stages, with completion expected within 3-4 weeks. The organisation would initially be unincorporated with provision to incorporate later. Foundation work was underway for new auditing and reporting requirements, with budget allocation increasing substantially in 2026.

Student representation had expanded with ex-officio positions on four Committees (Academic Board, Teaching and Learning, Curriculum, and Research). Six scholarships of \$6,000 each were renewed to assist students with IT and other purchases. The Council successfully ran its first forum on ProctorU online exams in partnership with UNE. With 12 months remaining in current positions and 90% of representatives not continuing, the team was focusing on legacy initiatives. It was suggested that the Student Council act as an intermediary for University consultation, particularly on Artificial Intelligence (AI) implementation feedback. The Chancellor suggested recognising student representatives' contributions, potentially through a campus event.

**Resolution:** Council NOTED the Student Member Verbal Report. [D25/168135].

OC/25/05/08

## 6. Chair of Academic Board

### 6.1. \* Chair of Academic Board Report

The Chair invited the Chair of the Academic Board, Professor Walsh to speak to his report.

The Chair of Academic Board presented the annual report and updates on key initiatives. The successful AI Summit in July generated important themes and questions, with a working group (including Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Professor Simon Evans), Deputy Executive Principal Education Futures (Professor Leopold Bayerlein), and Executive Director, Future Students, Engagement and Technologies (Dr Neil Durrant) developing a consolidated AI report for December. The main strategic challenge identified was ensuring all units are "AI secure" by T1 2026 as anticipated from TEQSA requirements. The assessment architecture proposed a two-lane model (formative and summative) at course level, representing a radical shift from the University's traditional unit-focused pedagogy. However, immediate priority was for all units to meet AI security requirements, likely requiring more examinations in some disciplines.

Council requested that future Academic Board reports provide strategic insights and clear prioritisation of critical issues facing the University's academic mission. A request to provide highlights of key strategic challenges and opportunities at the front of the report was also made.

The importance of integrating academic governance with line management for AI implementation was noted, with the Education Futures framework serving as the established approach. Council appreciated the "risk-aware, not risk-averse" culture being fostered.

**Resolution:** Council NOTED the Chair of Academic Board's the period from 16 July 2025 to 25 September 2025. [D25/169264]  
 OC/25/05/09

**6.2. \* Academic Board Annual Report 2024**

The Chair invited the Chair of the Academic Board, Professor Walsh to speak to his report.

This report was taken as read.

**Resolution:** Council:

1. APPROVED the Annual Report for 2024, report;
2. ADVISED on areas of improvement for 2025; and
3. CONFIRMED that the current practices allow effective oversight of academic governance, in accordance with the Committee's Terms of Reference. [D25/166817]


OC/25/05/10

**6.3. \* University Medals and Prizes Spring Graduation 2025**

The Chair invited the Chair of the Academic Board, Professor Walsh to speak to this item.

The University Medal recipients were approved with Council expressing admiration for the students' achievements.

**Resolution:** Council is asked to:

1. APPROVED the following graduates be awarded a University Medal at a 2025 Spring Graduation Ceremony:  

2. NOTED the report on the process undertaken to select candidates for University Medals.

OC/25/05/11

**CLOSED SESSION**

