University of New England
Council (2:2026)
Council Room, Booloominbah, Armidale and Zoom Video Conference
Friday 10 Apr 2026

Present:
Dr Sarah Pearson, Chancellor
David van Aanholt, Deputy Chancellor, Chair of Finance and Infrastructure Committee, and Council Member
Prof Chris Moran, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer
Prof Adrian Walsh, Chair of Academic Board
Megan Aitken, Council Member
A/Prof Onoriode Coast, Council Member
Ian Gillespie, Council Member
Phil Hess, Council Member
Chanel Hopkinson, Council Member
Col Murray, Council Member
Kristy Sillman, Council Member

In attendance:
Prof Chris Armstrong, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)
Karma Auden, Chief Financial Officer
Dr Neil Durrant, Executive Director, Future Students Engagement & Technologies
Prof Simon Evans, Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Tim Hume, Assistant Vice-Chancellor
Kus Pandey, Acting Director Governance and University Secretary
Meredith Parry, Chief Operating Officer
Rebecca Cawood, Director, Office of Strategy Management

Apologies:
Nil.

University of New England Values:
1. Be Bold
2. Be Accountable
3. Be Connected
4. Be Kind

IN-CAMERA SESSION

[redacted]

OPEN SESSION

1. Procedural Matters

The Chair advised that the Secretariat would make a recording of this meeting solely to assist with the preparation of minutes. The recording is stored securely and erased once the minutes have been confirmed.

1.1. Welcome

The Chair opened the meeting at 9.01am and declare it quorate. The Chair welcomed Assistant Vice-Chancellor, Tim Hume. In the opening message the Chair reminded members of the importance of managing core Council elements, which included strategic planning, financial matters and risk. The Chair noted that the minutes would in future be circulated to all Council members following endorsement by the Chair.

1.2. * Acknowledgement of Country

The Chair provided an Acknowledgement of Country.

1.3. * Apologies

Nil.

1.4. * Conflicts of Interest

David van Aanholt declared a Conflict of Interest in Item 8.4 Nominations Committee Chair Report.

1.5. * Order of Business

Members agreed to star Item 5.5 Financial Management Report YTD February 2026

Resolution: Council ACCEPTED the order of business and ADOPTED non-starred items.
OC/26/02/01

2. * Celebrating Success

Dr Lili Paquet joined the meeting at 9.06am and presented to Council on her research into women's voices and writing. Dr Paquet shared the story of an Ezidi woman within the Armidale community, illustrating how her research provides a platform for women to tell their stories. Members thanked Dr Lili Paquet for the presentation.

Dr Lili Paquet left the meeting at 9.17 am.

3. * Staff and Student Safety and Risk Management

Members discussed a number of operational and strategic matters. These included the importance of encouraging staff to travel during daylight hours for safety purposes. It was agreed to retitle this agenda item as “Staff and Student Safety and Wellbeing, and Risk Management, ensuring that all three topics are covered at every Council meeting.

Members also discussed the potential impact of current global political upheaval, including the management of potential protests and a possible fuel crisis. It was noted that crisis management plans were in place.

The Vice-Chancellor advised that the Australian Government had provided guidance regarding research/collaborations with co-authors in areas where foreign interference had been identified as a risk.

4. Chancellor's Reports

4.1. * Chancellor Report

The Chancellor reported on the Chancellor's Scholarship for Women of Impact. The Chancellor advised that she had interviewed the shortlisted candidates and found them to be exceptional women committed to changing their communities and the world around them. The Chancellor confirmed that one candidate would receive the scholarship, and that she had committed to providing mentoring to any of the four shortlisted candidates that wanted it.

Council noted congratulations to Professor Peter Anderson for receiving the Indigenous Researcher Award and to Kate Pardy and her team for the 2025 NAGCAS Excellence Award in Supporting Student Success.

Operational Action:	Secretariat to draft congratulatory correspondence to Professor Peter Anderson and Kate Pardy
AOC/26/02/01	

The Chancellor advised that the Auditor-General had been invited to attend the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) meeting on 21 October 2026. All Council members were invited to attend and meet the Auditor-General.

Operational Action:	A Campus tour would be arranged for the Auditor-General's visit [Postscript: VC Office has arranged this]
AOC/26/02/02	

Resolution:	Council NOTED the Chancellor's Report to Council. [D26/37630]
OC/26/02/02	

4.2. * Professional Development Plan for Council

The Chancellor acknowledged the work done developing a Professional Development Plan for Council members. The Chancellor noted that while Council members bring significant skills and expertise, there were areas for further development, including sector knowledge, compliance, and skills such as AI.

A Council member commended the plan as a considerable step forward. The plan would help management and Council distinguish between governance obligations and discretionary development activities.

A suggestion was made that, given the University's high Indigenous student and staff population, an on-Country experience should be included in the development program.

Operational Action:	The Acting Director Governance and University Secretary to explore options for an on-Country/cultural awareness experience for Council members, in

consultation with Professor Peter Anderson (Pro Vice-Chancellor Indigenous), Uncle Steve Widders, and Dave Widders, with preference for a facilitator from the New England region.
AOC/26/02/03

It was noted that the development program involved significant commitment from Council members between May and December, and that sessions should ideally be scheduled on the same day as Council meetings to make best use of members' time on campus.

Resolution: Council:
1. APPROVED the proposed Council Professional Development Program for 2026 as outlined in this report;
2. NOTED that additional sessions on privacy, confidentiality and conflicts of interest will be delivered as part of implementing recommendations from the Bell Curve Report;
3. NOTED that a comprehensive induction program will be delivered for new Council members following elections in Q3/Q4; and
4. NOTED that the program will be reviewed following each session to ensure it continues to meet Council's professional development needs [D26/37661].

OC/26/02/02

4.3. * 2026 External Review of Council Performance

The Chair and the Acting Director Governance and University Secretary, Kus Pandey introduced this item, noting that an external review of Council performance is recommended every three years by the Expert Council on University Guidance Principles, which Council had endorsed a commitment to during its meeting on 3 December 2025. It was confirmed that three potential reviewers would be approached for quotes and proposals.

Council members raised the following points:

- The review should address not only governance compliance but also team dynamics, culture, information flow, and 360-degree feedback — described as a "high-performance" approach.

- Outstanding items from the previous Forster review will be inputs to the new review, particularly the dashboard reporting item, to confirm whether they have ongoing relevance. It was discussed that the strategic updates from the Vice-Chancellor were more valuable than the dashboard, though some Business Intelligence data remained important from a governance perspective (eg Student Load).

- A Council member requested access to the previous Forster review reports. It was confirmed these were available in the Council Reading Room on Convene, and the Secretariat would facilitate access.

- Concern was raised about the proposed timeline (April to December, with a decision on the reviewer not until August). Council members urged that the process be accelerated, noting it has been 5 years since the last review.

Resolution: That Council:

1. NOTED the expectations under the Expert Council on University Guidelines Principles for externally facilitated Council performance reviews every three years;
2. APPROVED the commencement of an external review of Council performance for 2026;
3. APPROVED the proposed scope of the review as outlined in this report, including evaluation of Council, its committees, the Chancellor, and individual member performance;
4. APPROVED the proposed procurement approach, including engagement of three vendors to tender for the review;
5. NOTED that the 2021 and 2022 external reviews conducted by The Consultancy Bureau (Forster Review) and the consolidated action management plan will be provided to the successful reviewer for consideration; and
6. DELEGATED authority to the Chancellor and Acting Director Governance and University Secretary to finalise the terms of reference, conduct the tender process, and appoint the successful reviewer, with the outcome to be reported to Council [D26/37693].

OC/26/02/03

5. Vice-Chancellor and CEO

5.1. * Vice-Chancellor and CEO Management Report

The Chair invited the Vice Chancellor & CEO, Professor Chris Moran to speak to the report.

The Vice-Chancellor explained that the VC & CEO KPI document, renamed the Key Priorities document had been developed in consultation with the Chancellor and Deputy Chancellor. The document was noted without further amendment.

The Vice-Chancellor drew Council's attention to a position statement on digital intelligence at UNE, prepared by the Executive Director, Future Students Engagement & Technologies (Dr Neil Durrant). While there had been a heavy and appropriate focus on assessment integrity for a period of time, this paper provided Council with a much more complete view of how artificial intelligence interfaced with the broader business of the institution. The Vice-Chancellor identified the people factor, taking the whole workforce and creating a digital infrastructure encompassing the entire institution, as the main area requiring further development.

Council members responded with strong support:

- Members commended the Vice-Chancellor and the Executive Director, Future Students Engagement & Technologies, describing the strategy as exciting and a point of difference that should be promoted externally to attract future business. Members agreed that UNE holds a significant leadership position in this area.

- Members noted that the inclusion of "prosperity of the regions" in the measures of success was particularly compelling and closely aligned with the University's purpose.

- Members observed that while the Vice-Chancellor may see risks in a more proactive public profile, Council, in the context of its risk appetite discussions, was comfortable taking that risk. Members encouraged the University to work with regional businesses and industry to identify how their world would change and what skill sets UNE could develop for them.

- The Vice-Chancellor noted the appointment of Cameron Turner to SRI and active conversations about interfacing with the business communities of the region, including using AI to close human capital gaps in the regions and support profitability, efficiency, productivity, and business.

The Vice-Chancellor reported on a significant sector development: a 30-page document produced through sector workshops proposing the addition of a teaching quality standard to the Higher Education Standards Framework, with a prescriptive set of agreed indicators and reporting requirements. The Vice-Chancellor thanked the Chair of Academic Board, advising that a special session of Academic Board had been convened to obtain academic input and opinion.

The Vice-Chancellor reported on discussions with the interim Chief Commissioner regarding the allocation of additional places in the sector, describing it as a complicated space, especially for smaller universities such as UNE. UNE will engage in 2026 student allocation discussions, with the process to be completed by the end of June. A more substantive process covering 2027 to 2032 will be undertaken later.

In response to a question from a Council member, the Vice-Chancellor reported that staff consultation on the governance and assurance functions review had been completed. The feedback was significant in volume and level of detail, though nothing in the feedback indicated the institution was on the wrong track. Many staff had written in support of the proposed changes. The Vice-Chancellor noted that the core next step was to proceed with expressions of interest for the leadership role.

A substantive discussion took place regarding the University Ombudsman position. A Council member raised a concern about the management of complaints and strongly advocated for a full-time impartial and independent Ombudsman. The member expressed the view that an Ombudsman would relieve the Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor of some of the burden and provide independence in decision-making. Other Council members supported the call for genuine independence. Discussion then focussed on how to understand the necessary level and reporting required to ensure independence, the benchmarking information (that indicated very few universities had a fully external ombudsman), and whether trialling the suggested approach would be a sensible way forward.

The Chancellor summarised the discussion as follows:

- The benchmarking evidence presented by the Vice-Chancellor supported the proposed approach.
- The role would proceed as a 12-month trial.
- The definition of "independence" within the role would need to be clarified.
- The matter would be reviewed after the trial period, potentially through the People, Culture and Community Committee.

- The response to the Standing Committee of Convocation would reflect Council's position.

Resolution: Council NOTED the Vice-Chancellor and CEO Management Report – April 2026 and NOTED the update on the status of the UNE Ombudsman's role [D26/39985].
OC/26/02/04

5.2. * Business Plan Monitoring – April 2026

The Vice-Chancellor presented the Business Plan Monitoring report, noting that updates had been made from the previous version, particularly around refining the research component. The Vice-Chancellor drew attention to the presentation of student load data that had been improved. Rather than a single annual indicator that had already turned orange in Q1, the data had been disaggregated by trimester to provide greater fidelity on which components were at risk and in which trimester.

Key points included:

- T1 commencing students were down on budget, though up on the previous year.
- Load forecasting continued to be refined through a bottom-up process. Heads of School were now taking ownership of their numbers.
- The flow-on effects would be visible in the Financial Rectification Plan reporting on the revenue side.
- The Vice-Chancellor noted that with residential colleges now full, the school-leaver-led recovery of the University had essentially reached its ceiling. The two levers of school-leaver recruitment and the resident community had been successfully pulled, meaning future growth would need to come from other sources.

A Council member asked whether the University was an outlier in commencing student numbers. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the University was an outlier, noting that the majority of universities were meeting their caps. Large universities had made very few second and third round offers, indicating a systemic shift where school counsellors were advising students to accept first-round offers.

The Vice-Chancellor identified the following contributing factors for UNE:

- Course profiles did not appear to be sufficiently attractive.
- Institutional reputation and perceptions of distance were factors.
- The gap between budget and actuals on T1 commencements was quite general across approximately the first 10 courses, rather than concentrated in a few areas.

A Council member asked about approaching students who had not received offers elsewhere. The Vice-Chancellor explained that the University had gone through UAC to access information on students who had received no offer, but the response had been limited. The Vice-Chancellor noted difficulty in establishing causation between specific interventions and enrolment outcomes.

The Vice-Chancellor also referenced a presentation to the New South Wales Business Council (Western Sydney) regarding the University's partnership with Business New South Wales, noting that many attendees were unaware of how present UNE was in the metropolitan area.

The Chancellor summarised the discussion by linking back to the digital intelligence strategy and the need to promote the University's exciting work externally as a means of attracting students.

Resolution: Council:
1. APPROVED the updated 2026 Business Plan
2. NOTED the Business Plan Performance Report – April 2026 [D26/38020]
OC/26/02/05

Council suspended Standing Orders at 10:30am. Council resumed Standing Orders at 10:40am.

5.3. * UNE Annual Report Narrative
The Vice-Chancellor presented the 2025 Annual Report to Council for approval. The Vice-Chancellor noted some minor grammatical awkwardness in the Vice-Chancellor's statement that would be corrected prior to finalisation.

The Chair acknowledged the significant amount of detail in the report and noted that while it necessarily reflected on the past, she was looking forward to the following year's report focusing more on the future and the new strategy.

Resolution:
That Council APPROVED the drafted narrative sections of the 2025 Annual Report. [D26/37740]
OC/26/02/06

5.4. * UNE 2025 Consolidated Financial Statements - Audited
The Chair noted that the Consolidated Financial Statements had been through two joint meetings of the Finance and Infrastructure Committee and the Audit and Risk Committee (11 March and 2 April 2026) and invited the Chief Financial Officer (Karma Auden) to present.

The Chief Financial Officer advised that:

- All material issues had been worked through, with no material changes since the last Joint Committee meeting.
- Substantial supporting documentation was available.
- Council was being asked to:
  - Note the consolidated financial statements (audited)
  - Approve the statements

- Authorise the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor to sign the Report by the Members of Council (pages 207–211 of the Convene pack) and the Statement by Appointed Officers and Responsible Entities Declaration.

- A representation letter (a template from the Audit Office) had been signed by the Vice-Chancellor and the CFO that morning.

- Three very minor editorial changes had been made since the previous Thursday: the addition of the letter "s" to the word "regulation," a correction of a summation table and a row heading reversal in the fair value measurement note (Level 2 instead of Level 1). No material changes had occurred.

Key Financial Results:

- The parent entity bottom line result for 2025 was a deficit of $23.3 million, compared to $41.3 million the previous year — a significant improvement driven by both revenue growth and a decrease in non-payroll expenditure. Council thanked staff for their hard work to achieve this.

- The current ratio (unadjusted) at year end was 0.95, sitting in the middle of the university sector.

- The University had sufficient reasons to believe it could pay its debts as and when they fell due, largely due to the timing of funding.

- Cash had increased, and the University had adequate liquidity.

Consultancy Spend:
The Chief Financial Officer drew Council's attention to Note 10 of the financial statements, which showed consulting and professional fees of just over $20 million at face value. The following breakdown was provided:

- Commissions paid (agents' fees): $4 million.

- Outsourced services (contracts supporting teaching): $9.6 million.

- Legal fees, internal audit fees, and other professional fees were also grouped under this line item.

- True consultancy spend on contracts greater than $50,000 for 2025 was $1.3 million.

- Apart from EY (internal audit), no Big Four consultancies had been engaged by the University.

- This represented a significant improvement from three to four years prior.

A Council member noted that the Standing Committee of Convocation had previously raised consultancy spend as a major issue, and that this breakdown indicates a positive story that should be communicated. The Chair agreed and directed that the minutes reflect the consultancy spend breakdown.

Attendance Table:
The Vice-Chancellor raised a concern regarding the attendance table (page 208 of the Convene pack), noting that two blank spaces appeared under Audit and Risk for the Vice-Chancellor. The Vice-Chancellor attended those meetings as an official attendee, not as a committee member, and was concerned the table could be misinterpreted as absence. It was agreed that either an additional row for "observer" would be added, or a footnote would be included to clarify. It was also noted that Jan McClelland's row required a similar correction.

Communication of Results:
The Chair asked the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Financial Officer to develop talking points and a narrative for communicating the improved financial position to staff, alumni, and the broader community. It was noted that:

- The Annual Report could not be formally announced until it had been through the Treasurer's Office and tabled.

- A detailed presentation to all staff was scheduled for 30 April.

Operational Action: Chief Financial Officer to develop talking points and communicate these to Council members.
AOC/26/02/04

Resolution: Council:
1) NOTED the UNE 2025 Consolidated Financial Statements - Audited
2) APPROVED the UNE 2025 Consolidated Financial Statements - Audited and AUTHORISED the Chancellor & Vice Chancellor to sign (by digital signature) the Report by the Members of Council.
3) In accordance with the resolution of the Council of the University of New England and pursuant to the Government Sector Finance Act 2018 and the Government Sector Finance Regulations 2025 Council AUTHORISED the Chancellor & Vice Chancellor, being Councillors of the University, to sign (by digital signature) the Statement by Appointed Officers and Responsible Entities' Declaration, which states that:
a) The financial statements of the University of New England and the consolidated entity present fairly the financial transactions of the University and the consolidated entity during the financial year ended 31 December 2025 and the financial position of its operations for the year ended on that date: and
b) The amount of Australian Government financial assistance expended during the reporting period was for the purpose(s) for which it was intended, and University of New England has complied with applicable legislation, contracts, agreements and program guidelines in making expenditure; and
c) The Student Services and Amenities Fees were charged strictly in accordance with the Higher Education Support Act 2003 and the Administration Guidelines made under the Act. Revenue from the fee was spent strictly in accordance with the Act and only on services and amenities specified in subsection 19-38(4) of the Act; and

d) The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Australian equivalents to International Financial Reporting Standards (AIFRSs), other mandatory professional reporting requirements, including the provisions of the New South Wales Government Sector Finance Act 2018, the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012, Division 60 of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulations 2022, the Government Sector Financial Regulation 2024, and the requirements of the Australian Government Department of Education.
In addition, we are not aware at the date of signing these statements of any circumstances which would render any particulars included in the statements to be misleading or inaccurate and there are reasonable grounds to believe that University of New England will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due. [D26/39792]

OC/26/02/07

5.5. *Financial Management Report YTD February 2026

Members agreed that this item be starred. The Chair invited the Chief Financial Officer, Karma Auden to speak to the report.

The Chief Financial Officer presented the Financial Management Report for February 2026, noting that the March report was being finalised and that this report had not been through the Finance and Infrastructure Committee due to timing.

Key points:

- Two months into the year, the University was showing a $1 million unfavourable variance against budget.

- A waterfall chart illustrated the movement from budget to actual deficit position:
    - Student revenue was up $800K, reflecting the upside from T3 of the previous year recognised in 2026, providing a small buffer heading into the year.
    - Other revenue was behind budget, driven by grant revenue, business revenue (farms, childcare), and timing issues related to the Higher Education Continuity Guarantee.
    - Payroll expenditure was $300K over budget as at February, with further deterioration expected in March.
    - Interest and taxes were unfavourable due to unrealised revaluation of US dollar holdings purchased to hedge library contracts, driven by current share market movements.
    - Depreciation was favourable due to the obsolescence factor.
    - Tamworth development was behind schedule compared to budget.
    - Research was behind expectations, largely a timing issue related to the difficulty of budgeting accurately for research milestones.

The Chief Financial Officer presented the Financial Rectification Plan (FRP) update, noting that four out of five target areas were at some degree of risk:

1. Teaching course performance optimisation (domestic growth): A list of top 20 courses was being monitored. At risk.

2. International on-campus recovery: Being impacted by visa rejections centrally, driven by the countries being targeted. At risk.

3. International offshore online: A completely new initiative and one of the biggest challenges. Being refocused. At risk.

4. Payroll savings ($5.2 million target): A significant vacancy factor had been applied to budgets. Approximately 22 areas were tracking well; a handful were over budget even without the vacancy factor; the remainder were finding it challenging to meet the vacancy factor. Monthly reports to EXT now included FTE, dollars, excess leave balances, and fixed-term contract expires. At risk.

5. Non-payroll expenditure: The only area tracking to target. However, price shifts (fuel, delivery costs, winter gas heating) were being monitored. Reprioritisation of services (e.g., deferral of some repairs and maintenance to 2027) might be required, but no re-forecast was considered necessary at this stage.

Council discussion:
Council asked what could be done to address the at-risk items. Discussion focussed on topics such as the Structural Adjustment Fund, course portfolio attractiveness, and reducing staff overwork to enable staff to do things differently.

The Chair summarised the discussion, noting that the Vice-Chancellor was asking Council for patience while the institution was brought along a journey, and that Council supported the process while continuing to hold management accountable to the FRP.

Resolution:	The University Council NOTED the Financial Management Report for YTD February 2026. [D26/39774]
OC/26/02/08	

5.6. * Treasury and Cash Report
The Chief Financial Officer, Karma Auden, presented the Treasury Cash Report, drawing attention to the cash forecast graph which showed a downward trend. The Chief Financial Officer explained:

- The current forecast was based on existing assumptions, including the Tamworth construction profile.

- 60% of the 2026 CapEx forecast fell in the second half of the year, causing the dotted line to drop in the closing months.

- Income recognition was more heavily weighted in the first half of the year, while expenditure recognition was more heavily weighted in the second half; a pattern that needed to be normalised.

- The Chief Financial Officer expected the forecast to level out as part of the re-forecast process.

Resolution: The University Council NOTED the Treasury & Cashflow Update Report for February 2026. [D26/39778]
OC/26/02/09

5.7. * Strategic Risk Update

The Chair introduced the Strategic Risk Update, noting it had been through the Executive Team multiple times and the Audit and Risk Committee (27 February 2026), with feedback from those discussions incorporated.

The Audit and Risk Committee Chair, Ian Gillespie presented the key elements:

- 11 Strategic Risks were consistent with those identified at the Council and Executive workshop earlier in the year.
- Risk Appetite Statement was split into the following categories:
  - No appetite: Governance, compliance and integrity; Cyber security; People safety.
  - Risk managed (limited appetite): Teaching, students and academic quality; Financial security; Business continuity and infrastructure; People capability development.
  - Risk tolerant: Reputation, trust and social issues; Research and innovation; Technology innovation.

Resolution: Council:
1. APPROVED the eleven (11) Strategic Risks for 2026-2035 as the foundation of UNE's Enterprise Risk Management Framework;
2. APPROVED the Risk Appetite Statement and nine (9) Consequence Categories with associated appetite positions;
3. NOTED the phased implementation roadmap for embedding the strategic risk framework into business-as-usual governance and reporting. [D26/34039]

OC/26/02/10

5.8. * Policy Amendments – Gender-based Violence

The Chair invited the Acting Director Governance and University Secretary, Kus Pandey to speak to the report. Two headline policies had been changed and approved by the required deadline in December 2025. The current request was to approve consequential amendments to sub-policies that had an effect from those changes, aligning language with the national code.

Council:
1. APPROVED the amendment to the Complaints Policy – UNE Representatives not covered by the Enterprise Agreement; and
2. APPROVED the amendment to the Reporting Wrongdoing at UNE Policy. [D26/34827]

OC/26/02/11

5.9. * Student Member Report

The Student Representative, Kristy Sillman advised that due to developments over the preceding weeks, she was unable to present a report. She undertook to provide a full written report at the next meeting.

5.10. * Chair of Academic Board Report

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

The following was highlighted:

- The interim ATEC's draft report on teaching quality standards had been discussed at a special Academic Board session the previous day. If the proposal proceeded, it would have significant implications for the Higher Education Standards Framework and operational requirements. New standards were being discussed for teaching quality and professional development.

- The Chair had improved communication with the broader University community, including a digest of Academic Board activities circulated to all staff and the publication of minutes on SharePoint.

- Academic freedom was expected to return as a topic requiring attention.

- The Chair acknowledged the contributions of Professor Amir Kharton (Chair of Research Committee) and Associate Professor Tristan Taylor, both of whom had taken leave from Chairing due to work and family commitments.

The Chair commended the report for its insights and the Chair of Academic Board's efforts to break down silos between governance bodies and the wider University.

Two-track assessment architecture:
The Vice-Chancellor drew Council's attention to the embedding of the two-track assessment process. Every unit in the University had been reassessed and restated by academics. This was a significant amount of work completed quietly and thoroughly. It was noted that the second track had resulted in a significant move to invigilated examinations, which would have a financial implication for the University.

Gender Balance in Academic Leadership:
The Chair observed that recent new academic leaders appeared to be predominantly men and suggested that women may need to be actively encouraged to put themselves forward for leadership roles.

Resolution:	Council NOTED the Chair of Academic Board's Report to Council and provide feedback on concerns that have been highlighted for the period from 10 February 2026 to 10 April 2026 [D26/40119].
OC/26/02/12	

5.10.1. * Terms of Reference - Human Research Ethics Committee & Sub-Committee

The Chair invited the Chair of Academic Board, Professor Adrian Walsh and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research, Professor Chris Armstrong spoke to the report.

The following was noted:

- Two separate Terms of Reference were required: the full Committee (for above-low-risk research) and the Subcommittee (for low-risk research, usually chaired by the Deputy Chair).

- New Standard Operating Procedures and a separate Grievance and Complaints Procedure had been developed to address confusion between complaints about a trial and complaints about decision-making regarding a trial.

- Significant discussion had occurred between the Research Committee and the HREC over approximately 18 months. The Terms of Reference had also been considered by the Academic Board.

- The Terms of Reference had been aligned with the National Health and Medical Research Council codes (2023 and 2025).

- A balance had been struck between diversity of membership (as required by the National Code) and experience.

- The Chair of the HREC could be a senior academic (Level D or E) or a previous researcher, allowing for diversity beyond current UNE academics.

- An external review of the HREC was scheduled for 2027 (every five years).

Resolution: The Council:
1) APPROVED the Human Research Ethics Committee Terms of Reference; and
2) APPROVED the Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee Terms of Reference. [D26/38683]
OC/26/02/13

Executive Team members left the meeting at 12 noon.

CLOSED SESSION

[redacted]