

UTS Council meeting report

16 April 2025

This report covers some of the non-confidential matters considered by UTS Council at its 16 April 2025 meeting.

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

Strategic items of business

Report from 2025 UTS Council Retreat

Over the two days of the Retreat, consideration was given to the delivery of the UTS 2030 strategy and what the areas of focus should be for Council, and the University more broadly.

At the pre-Retreat dinner, the Chief Executive Officer of the Grattan Institute, Dr Aruna Sathanapally, reflected on the broader themes impacting the Australian Economy, serving as a useful backdrop to discussions at the Retreat.

The form of each session at the Retreat was a structured discussion, facilitated by a member of Senior Executive and chaired by a Council member, around key strategic matters confronting the University.

This first year of implementation of the Strategy will be the most significant in terms of change, particularly in the context of progressing the Operational Sustainability Initiative (OSI) transformation.

It is also clear that there is a great deal of uncertainty in the policy and external environment. The Finance Plan and Budget have been developed to support the financial sustainability of the University. There is a dependency on the delivery of the OSI and progressing implementation of technology transformation as an enabler. Being clear on our function and role in society as a university is woven through the Strategy. Finding the balance between sustainability, creativity and innovation will be a key feature moving forward.

UTS Annual Plan 2025

Council approved the UTS Annual Plan for 2025. The Plan reflected the first year of execution for the 2030 Strategy.

The role of Council was discussed in the context of oversight of the delivery of the Plan, applying judgements and overseeing management making informed decisions.

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Technology Architecture

Council was briefed on the progress in developing UTS' technology solution architecture capability and indicative roadmaps, which will shape future technology investments. Council noted the significant improvements since the post-COVID period, highlighting efforts to reduce technical debt and enhance the overall technology landscape, transitioning from a fragmented application-based approach to a more integrated platform-based strategy, and the shift to a data-centric architecture to improve flexibility and reuse capabilities.

The model focuses on maximising the use of key platforms and driving value from those platforms, concentrating on those platforms that allow significant integration.

Members noted the constant vigilance and scrutiny applied to cyber security and the integrity of UTS platforms and systems.

Operational Sustainability Update

The Vice-Chancellor provided a brief background to give perspective of the flexibility and degrees of freedom as a result of strategic decisions and external factors impacting the University. Council reflected on the journey of recovery from the pandemic years and government policy throughout the ensuing years, including the return of international students.

In late 2023 it became evident that the University had to consider opportunities to reduce its cost base to deliver financial sustainability particularly in the context of being unable to generate sufficient revenue growth commensurate with increasing costs.

The Operational Sustainability Initiative (OSI) has been developed to respond to these circumstances. The OSI is giving consideration to both academic course viability and the University's operating model.

The Operating Model Program is identifying opportunities that will be provided by new technology platforms to enable the streamlining of processes and removing administrative redundancy where possible.

The Academic Course Viability program is identifying courses and subjects which are not viable. The program will enable the identification of guideposts from which course viability will be analysed including space requirements for course delivery.

Council was advised that international student revenue is a significant determinant of course financial margin. Given this, the Federal Government's decision to cap international students will have a significant impact on course viability. Furthermore, Council recognised the consequences of international student caps directly impacts the previous objective to grow the academic profile of the University and therefore necessitates a review of that position.

As previously indicated, the OSI program has been designed to learn the lessons from previous programs to reduce costs, particularly their unintended consequences, and wherever practicable to be able to make data informed decisions. Council acknowledged the process of considering and identifying opportunities to reduce costs.

Council noted Management's commitment to engage with staff to keep them informed as to the process and progress with the OSI program.

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 2030 Strategy, State and Federal Government issues, updates regarding the university sector and internal matters, particularly achievements and awards.

The Vice-Chancellor highlighted areas of his Report. The current Strategic Examination of Research and Development (SERD) was discussed. UTS has prepared a submission for the Review and once finalised this will be shared with Members of Council.

Council also discussed the work of Universities Australia and Go8 in preparing a definition of Antisemitism, which has been shared with Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) to determine the positioning of the definition within the Higher Education Standards Framework, including consideration of how the working definition interacts with university responsibilities to uphold and protect academic freedom and freedom of speech.

Social Justice Report 2024

Council discussed the current increased scrutiny of policies and activity in Social Justice and Inclusion and took comfort and pride in the work in this space.

The Social Justice Framework was discussed highlighting its impact. The Framework, now seven years old, will be refreshed moving forward to ensure UTS continues to build on the work done to date.

The UTS Pathways Plan was discussed, including the excellent success rates of students. It was recognised that this area must continue to receive clear focus.

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Social Justice and Inclusion) and the team were thanked for the comprehensive reporting of social justice activity.

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 Annual Health Safety and Wellbeing Report was discussed, in particular the Consent Matters training compliance for staff.

Council noted the actions taken and information it had received throughout the year as supporting the discharge of its due diligence responsibilities in relation to the Work Health and Safety Act.

The UTS 2024 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 2024.

Report from Student/Council Liaison Group (SCLG)

The Chair of the Student/Council Liaison Group highlighted aspects of the Report, including work progressing on the broad review in relation to Student Misconduct, Sexual Harm, Gender Based Violence, Concerning Behaviours and Interventions Policies, Rules and processes.

Council also noted that management is giving consideration to the establishment of a permanent, university-provided space for UTS Students' Association Food Services to ensure the uninterrupted delivery of this service.

Items for approval

none

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

Items of General Business

Presentation: Faculty of Business

Professor Carl Rhodes (Dean) Faculty of Business)) provided Council with a presentation on the Faculty.

Council discussed the focus on educating career-ready graduates who are innovative, technologically savvy, and socially responsible. The Dean also highlighted how the offerings and research within the Faculty The new offerings have improved enrolments and provided an agility in program curation.

The diversification strategy for international students was discussed. An emphasis on broadening our international student demographic has led to a notable shift in student diversity over the past five years.

The work of the Business School's Research Centres was also discussed through the lens of social impact and social responsibility. This is supported by publicly available impact case studies, further enhancing student choice for UTS and its programs.

UTS' global leadership in business education and research has been recognised through numerous awards and the Dean was thanked for presenting a concise but comprehensive view of the School's activities and achievements.

Other reports

- Student Load Report 2025
- Work Health and Safety Report
- Report from Governance Committee
- Report from Infrastructure Committee
- Report from Academic Board