

UTS Council report

26 November 2025

This report covers some of the non-confidential matters considered by UTS Council at its 26 November 2025 meeting.

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

Strategic items of business

Organisational Sustainability Initiative (OSI)

Council was provided with an update on the Operational Sustainability Initiative (OSI) by the Vice-Chancellor.

Council noted the extensive feedback received during the consultation process for the Academic Change Proposal which has now been considered by the University Leadership Team (ULT). That consideration will enable the Vice-Chancellor to signal the broad direction of the University's response to feedback in advance of the detailed implementation plan which will be finalised early in 2026.

The Vice-Chancellor advised that in broad terms there were three thematics that informed the feedback received – risk, identity, and culture.

Council noted that the Operating Model represents a significant and complex redesign of how the University delivers support and services and discussed the importance of staff being actively involved in the implementation and embedding of changes to ensure inclusion and engagement.

Digital UTS

Council received a briefing from the Chief Information Officer on the Digital Strategy and noted that the Digital Strategy provides a coherent framework to guide UTS towards 2030.

The Strategy aims to build digital capability across the University, bring artificial intelligence (AI) into practical use for staff and students, simplify the technology environment, and reduce complexity. Security remains a foundational principle, with all initiatives embedded in a "Secure by Design" approach to ensure resilience and recovery capability.

Council discussed the role of AI, including governance and risk management and was reassured that management has implemented a robust governance framework for AI, including assessment processes and ongoing monitoring.

Draft UTS Annual Plan 2026

Council was provided with the Draft 2026 Annual Plan for consideration and feedback. The Draft UTS Annual Plan remains aligned with the University's established strategic direction, demonstrating strong institutional performance and global impact.

UTS 2030 continues to provide a robust framework for faculties and divisions to engage proactively in discussions about future direction and strategic alignment.

The UTS Annual Plan 2026 will be considered for approval by Council in early 2026.

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 briefed Council on UTS's positive engagement with the National Student Ombudsman and provided updates on the Managed Growth Funding and Needs-Based Funding systems, highlighting their impact on resource allocation and strategic planning.

Council noted UTS's continued rise in global rankings, driven by research quality, industry engagement, and international engagement.

Council also noted UTS's leadership in establishing Australia's first controlled emergency call test facility to advance telecommunications resilience.

Health Safety and Wellbeing Standing Report

Council noted that psychosocial risk remains the dominant concern within the University and received an update on the psychosocial risk management framework, which aligns with Safe Work Australia's Code of Practice for Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work and WHS Psychosocial Regulations.

Concerns were raised about the continued increase in psychosocial risk, and Council highlighted the importance of a human-centred approach. Council noted that the University is conducting staff focus groups to gain insights into experiences with risks and controls during major change processes, and that a wellbeing focus group plan has been established to further support staff. Council also noted that an internal audit of psychosocial risks is scheduled for 2026 that will build upon a recent audit that had been focused on staff.

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.

Report from 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.

Council was briefed on the University's improved financial position, primarily driven by increased international student revenue, one-off and investment income, delayed capital expenditure, and significant non-salary savings through contingency expenditure management.

Council acknowledged that forecasting the 2026 budget remains challenging amid ongoing uncertainty in government policy, inflation, and regulatory requirements.

Report from Governance Committee

The primary responsibility of the Governance Committee is to assist Council in regard to policy, general governance specified risk matters.

Council was briefed on the proposed response to the National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence (GBV), noting that all higher education providers, including UTS, must comply with the Code from 1 January 2026.

There is now a shift in oversight responsibility for GBV from the Vice-Chancellor to Council as the governing body, as required by the Code.

Council approved the Gender Equity Action Plan, Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Policy, amendments to the Code of Conduct, the Conflict-of-Interest Disclosures Policy, the Equity, Inclusion and Respect Policy.

Council members were advised that they will be provided with appropriate training to support their role in the oversight of the University's compliance with the Code and that this will occur by the end of the first quarter of 2026.

Council approved changes to the AustLII Constitution (regarding membership changes and minor drafting updates for improved governance practice) and Activate UTS Constitution (clarifying ActivateUTS independence).

Report from Academic Board

Council noted the Report from Academic Board that included advice that Academic Board had endorsed the Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Policy and the Gender-Based Violence Response Procedure and approved consequential changes to Academic Board policies.

Report from Student/Council Liaison Group (SCLG)

Council noted the UTS Student Partnership Agreement 2025-2027 (the 'SPA' or the 'Agreement') was signed by all parties on 16 June 2025. The Group had received an update on progress to date against the priorities outlined in the Agreement. Given the short time since the Agreement was signed, further updates on progress will be provided to the Group.

Council also noted that the DVC (E&S) and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students) had provided an overview of coordinated work underway to strengthen UTS's institutional response to gender-based violence.

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 a distinguished service award.

Items for approval

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

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

Annual Report on Council Performance

Council noted that the Annual Review focuses solely on compliance with the Council Charter and oversight of designated risks. An external review of Council will be scheduled for 2026 consistent with the Governance Framework which specifies that an external review will be undertaken every four years. Council acknowledged its responsibility for the Strategic Risk Taxonomy and confirmed that Council is the point of approval for updates to the Taxonomy.

Council also noted the "*Final Report and Principles of the Expert Council on University Governance*," which outlines eight overarching principles of good governance and associated areas for improvement. Preliminary assessment has been undertaken to determine the current level of compliance with these principles. Council further noted that the 2026 external review will provide additional analysis and consider the Expert Panel's recommendations.

Other reports

- Audit and Risk Committee
- Report from Infrastructure Committee