

UTS Council meeting report

19 August 2020

This report covers some of the non-confidential matters considered by UTS Council at its 19 August 2020 meeting.

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

Strategic items of business

Annual DVC Corporate Services Strategic Briefing

Council received a report from the DVC Corporate Services and noted the following;

The Corporate Services Division provides a broad range of services for students and staff including; human resource management, IT, marketing and communications, student administration, legal services, and governance support.

The university's new strategy requires fundamental changes to the university's enabling systems, processes and services. Despite the disruption of COVID-19, the division has continued to partner with colleagues across UTS to make good progress in laying the operational foundations required to support UTS2027. This includes:

- Administrative agility to support the requirements of new forms of learning;
- Establishing new core technology platforms for learning;
- Developing new marketing approaches for our new forms of learning and making more sophisticated use of data, technology and market research in student/learner recruitment;
- Developing human resource processes to align behaviour and culture with our new strategy; and
- Developing a new digital strategy.

The other key strategic focus for the Division has been rethinking UTS' systems and processes. The key processes that require a fundamental review have been identified and a series of draft new models will be reviewed by the Fit for UTS2027 Steering Committee in August. We have also commenced work to build capability across the university in continuous process improvement.

UTS Corporate Plan 2020 mid-year progress report

Council received the mid-year progress report on the UTS Corporate Plan 2020 and noted the following;

In November 2019, Council approved the UTS Corporate Plan 2020, which outlines the 2020 priorities and key supporting activities that underpin the implementation of our three-year UTS 2027 strategic initiatives and the associated performance indicator targets for the university. The plan builds on the strong foundations we established last

year and sets out our next steps on the path towards the achievement of our strategic ambitions.

The university's performance during the first half of 2020 has been impacted by COVID-19, with end-of-year projections indicating that several key performance indicators will not be meeting their annual targets. However, despite the impact of COVID-19, based on the latest available data, there are some good performance results:

- the research quality indicator – *Field Weighted Citation Impact (excluding self-citations)* year-to-date result is 1.42 and is likely to exceed its annual target of 1.3
- the *percentage publications in the top 10 per cent journals SJR* is 48.6 per cent and likely to exceed its annual target of 33 per cent
- one of the key gender diversity indicators – *per cent of Female staff (Academic)* is 45.1 per cent at the end of March exceeding last year's result (44.5 per cent) and could exceed this year's target of 43.8 per cent
- due to the restricted access to the campus buildings and facilities, there have been substantial energy savings, reduction in water usage and reduction in pollution and waste. Hence, our environmental targets are likely to be met.

The progress against the initiatives in UTS 2027 during the first half of 2020 has been impacted by COVID-19. Overall, initiatives are maintaining momentum despite the impacts of the pandemic but amendments have been made to some initiatives to respond to our changed environment.

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 provided Council with an update on COVID-19 (Phase 2 of UTS campus reactivation on 27 July 2020 and the Campus Reactivation Portal). He commended staff for undertaking relevant safety measures to ensure the health and safety of the UTS community is maintained.

The DVC (Education and Students) provided an update on the completion of online examinations (Autumn 2020). It was noted that UTS hosts 65,000 exam sittings each semester, however, in the current COVID-19 environment, the majority of exams for Autumn 2020 were either take-home or online via the UTS learning management system.

Council noted that the media reports around the lack of support for international students stranded by COVID-19 would negatively impact Australia's international standing as an education destination. Council noted the measures being undertaken at federal, state and UTS-level to support these students.

The Vice-Chancellor was pleased to note that UTS was placed #1 in Australia for the Leiden world ranking of universities and performed well in the Academic Ranking of

World Universities subject ranking, as outlined in the report. While challenges linked to COVID-19 have surfaced recently, UTS continues to perform well.

The Vice-Chancellor provided Council with an update on the Voluntary Separation Program, and the recent online “Town Hall” meeting that he convened for UTS 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.

Physical Infrastructure Committee

The Physical Infrastructure Committee advises Council on matters relating to capital development and management matters within the context of the capital works budget as approved by Council on the recommendation of the Finance Committee.

The Chair of Physical Infrastructure Committee provided an overview of the recommendations related to the sale of some student housing properties noting the following matters:

- COVID-19 crisis has resulted in management planning for the ‘Scenario 3’ financial plan. Planning for Scenario 3 requires an increase in cash preservation and included the provision for the sale of the three outlying student housing assets identified in the recommendation;
- the proposed divestment provides an opportunity to consolidate student accommodation on campus including for management and operational cost efficiencies;
- while the student accommodation may or may not continue in these buildings following the sale, there is nevertheless adequate alternate student accommodation available in the area.
- Council agreed to proceed with the sale of the assets under specified criteria.

Commercial Activities Committee

The primary responsibility of the Commercial Activities 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 Chair of Commercial Activities Committee (CCA) provided Council with an overview of the Committees considerations including recommendations related to the approval of the new Commercial Activities Policy.

Council discussed the flexibility of the policy to cover the potential future substantive changes to the scale and scope of UTS commercial activities as a result of impact of COVID-19 and re-prioritisation of UTS 2027 initiatives. Council discussed the policy’s requirement to overlay a risk based approach (of varying degrees of rigour) to the management of activities classed as commercial and non-commercial. It was noted that the risk management responsibilities for all activities sit with the individual that is responsible for the activity.

The Chancellor thanked the Chair of CCA for leading the review of the policy and thanked the committee and all staff members who were involved in the development of the new policy.

Academic Board

Council noted, updates from the Board on: the UTS 2027 strategy; Higher Education Standards Framework 2015 (HESF 2015) – COVID-19; Internationalisation; Student Experience Autumn 2020; Academic Board COVID-19 Decision Register; Strategic Risk Assessment for Academic Board; Graduate Profile Framework; amendments to the Award Course Approvals Policy and procedures; new Subject Descriptions and Outlines Policy; course accreditation approvals; and graduate research matters.

Nominations Committee

The Nominations Committee recommends to Council candidates whom Council may, either nominate to the Minister for appointment as Council members, or appoint as Council members.

Council approved the nomination of Mr Jack Steele as a Council Appointed Member for a term of 19 August 2020 to 31 October 2023.

Items for approval

Interim Appointment as Assistant Student Ombud

Council approved the interim appointment of Assistant Student Ombud, Ms Wing Bui, for the term 1 July 2020 until 31 December 2020.

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
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Items of General Business

None

Other reports

- Work Health and Safety Report
- Finance Committee Report
- Student/Council Liaison Group Report
- Governance Committee Report