UTS Council meeting report

19 October 2022

This report covers some of the non-confidential matters considered by UTS Council at its 19 October 2022 meeting.

*The Report structure replicates the flow of the agenda.

Strategic items of business

Strategic Briefing – Digital Capability

Council discussed the key issues of culture and mindset; IT infrastructure and systems; curriculum development for digital capability ; frameworks to assist in identifying and deconstructing issues; and communication and engagement planning.

In discussions around future-state of the University's technology platforms, the criticality of these platforms enabling innovation in both research and teaching activities was emphasized. This capability should form a key component of the University's identity.

As the University embarks upon replacing and updating key IT infrastructure and systems, it was acknowledged that there would be significant disruption, particularly given that a number of system changes will occur simultaneously. In this context, it will be important for Council to monitor progress in accordance with key priorities and measure performance in accordance with strategic objectives.

The two significant dimensions of culture and mindset, and supportive IT Infrastructure were recognised as being very different although having many inter-dependencies. UTS recognises it has a key role as a transformer in curricula to increase digital capability of students in parallel with a digital culture and mindset shift for UTS staff. Council requested more work be conducted to identify what a "good" digital capability might look like (across these dimensions), and how we could monitor progress toward such targets. The importance of being able to nuance the strategy in accordance with key stakeholder groups was also discussed.

Strategic briefing – Cybersecurity

It was noted that the Audit and Risk Committee of Council monitors Cybersecurity and that Council had requested a briefing in relation to this area. Council discussed the operating environment and the strategy of driving cultural change through training.

The work being done to detect and prevent threats and vulnerabilities was discussed, including asset identification and management and the level of maturity of the organisation. There is a methodical approach to areas of threat significance and risk, and the priority areas are well articulated. Compensating controls are continually reviewed and there is good network segmentation.

Council was assured that there is a well-established framework to enable risk understanding and targeted mitigation, however acknowledged the significance of the issue, the need for ongoing vigilance, monitoring and improvements.

Report from the External Governance Review

Council commissions an external provider to review the Council's governance every 4 years. The Report was provided to Council and discussed.

Council noted one area that was not highlighted in the report but apparent through the TEQSA re-registration process, being that Council should increase its oversight of student satisfaction findings. This will be considered with the other recommendations made in the report.

The skills matrix suggested in the report was discussed and noted that consideration will be given to the most appropriate way to capture skills.

There was also discussion as to whether Council wished to consider remuneration of Council and committee members. Following the discussion, Council agreed that, at this time, there is no compelling reason to move to member remuneration. This could be reconsidered in the future should circumstances change.

The Governance Committee will undertake further consideration of the report and Council's feedback and report back to Council with proposed actions.

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.

Council took the report as read and discussed further developments since the time of writing. These included: the submission of evidence to TEQSA as part of re-registration process; enterprise bargaining update; the successful integration of UTS College into the main campus; Times Higher Education rankings; and the improving international student market.

Council thanked the Acting Provost for her role in the TEQSA re-registration process, and particularly noted the significant work of Ms Margaret Connolly.

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.

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.

In 2013 Council approved a health and safety compliance reporting framework, the "UTS Council Health and Safety Responsibilities". The Committee monitor various activities, and receive a number of reports, against the framework, in order to assure itself and subsequently Council. Council was provided an assurance statement as to the effectiveness and completeness of the University's actions with regards to health and safety.

Academic Board Report

The Chair of Academic Board provided a summary of the Report. This included the Board receiving an update on the University's progress in preparing for the TEQSA re registration.

Council noted that Academic Board had received the Courses Accreditation Committee Report and its attachments; approved seven new OPM courses offered via Keypath Education Australia (Keypath); approved six courses for reaccreditation; approved four courses for phasing out and discontinuation; approved one course extension of accreditation and approved one admissions matter.

Report from Student/Council Liaison Group

The Chair, Student/Council Liaison Group updated Council on the activity of the group. The partnership with 'Workplace Options' providing a service that allows offshore UTS students to contact a counsellor in their home country, was discussed.

Council discussed batyr@uts, a non-profit organisation engaged by UTS to help empower and educate young people around mental health. The Organisation's objective is to help break down the stigma surrounding mental health issues and change the way those with mental health problems are perceived. Programs are available to enable students who have experienced mental ill health to share their story with others. Council was pleased to note that this year alone, nearly 2000 students attended batyr events.

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
- Final Council and Committee Meeting Dates for 2023
- Notice of Election of Deputy Chancellor and Pro-Chancellors

Items of General Business

Student member Report

Mr Juneyt Cihan addressed the meeting and thanked members for their genuine interest in the student perspective.

Mr Peter Munford, in his address to Council, particularly noted the ability of Council, during the pandemic, to pivot in order to fulfil its governance role and drive the strategy forward within the associated difficult economic environment

Other reports

- Work Health and Safety Standing Report
- Finance Committee Report