



## **OUTCOMES FROM DEAKIN UNIVERSITY COUNCIL MEETING 6, 2024 – 13 DECEMBER**

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Deakin University Council met on 13 December 2024 at the Geelong Waurn Ponds Campus and dealt with matters as follows in accordance with its legislative responsibilities and 2024 business schedule.

### **Setting strategic direction**

Council considered a report from the Vice-Chancellor on current matters including:

- the latest information on student enrolment numbers for 2024 and 2025 – there are variations among different cohorts but overall enrolments are consistent with 2025 budget settings
- international student enrolments – the Government is continuing to contemplate mechanisms to enforce caps for universities at levels it announced during the year
- National Student Ombudsman – following passage of the relevant legislation, the National Student Ombudsman will commence from 1 February 2025; Sarah Bendall is the inaugural appointee
- Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities – Deakin and other universities gave evidence to the Inquiry at hearings on 12 December 2024 and this continues to be an area of intense political focus.

### **Monitoring performance against strategic KPIs**

Council considered the 2024 performance review of the Vice-Chancellor against key performance indicators set at the outset of the year and achievements against those targets across the full year.

Council considered the Strategic Plan KPI report measuring progress across all areas of the *Deakin 2030: Ideas to Impact* strategic plan. Council was pleased to note the significant progress in 2024 and over the past four years in general. We are approaching the midpoint of the ten-year timeframe of the strategic plan. It continues to provide the University with a decisive and distinctive direction.

### **Overseeing and monitoring of academic activities**

#### ***Annual Report on upholding academic standards and freedom***

Council considered a report from the Chair of the Academic Board on the Board's actions in 2024 to uphold the highest standards in teaching and research and to foster a healthy academic culture centred on academic freedom and the free flow of ideas.

Council thanked Deakin Distinguished Professor Judy Currey, Chair of the Academic Board, for her informative and engaging reporting on academic governance throughout the year.

Council took positive note of the Board's revised approach to its biannual self-review process. In particular, Council welcomed the appointment of an expert panel to bring an external perspective to that review. Deputy Chancellor Dr Lyn Roberts reported that she had met with the panel to provide input on behalf of Council (focussed on reporting and clarity of responsibilities) and had found it a valuable process to build on.

Council members commented on their appreciation of the coordinated and cooperative relationship between corporate and academic governance bodies at Deakin. This is a cornerstone of good university governance.

### ***New Governance Framework for Specialist Research Groupings***

Council approved a new governance framework for the University's specialist research groupings, following the Specialist Research Groupings Review Report (October 2024) and recommendations from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation, supported by the University Executive.

The new framework aims to:

- streamline and simplify what has become a miscellany of arrangements across the University encompassing Institutes, Centres, School teams, networks, hubs and labs
- support the next phase of growth of University research activities
- improve alignment between research within Faculties and in Institutes
- empower decision making at the Faculty/research group level and improve clarity and consistency in accountability arrangements, whereby reporting to Executive Deans will become the norm to supersede the various reporting lines now in existence.

Council had a full discussion about the introduction of the new framework and expressed its eagerness for detailed reporting on implementation across the University commencing in 2025.

### ***Establishment of the Applied Artificial Intelligence Initiative (A2I2)***

The apex of the new arrangements for research groupings is the establishment of a small number of 'Initiatives', which will either be (i) established large-scale, strategically aligned research initiatives, characterised by their whole of university collaborations or (ii) important new areas to be developed.

Council was pleased to approve the first such Initiative, the Applied Artificial Intelligence Initiative (A2I2), whose work spans all Faculties and is at the leading edge internationally of the burgeoning area of artificial intelligence and data pattern recognition.

### ***TEQSA Reregistration submission***

Council was delighted to receive the University's Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) re-registration submission, comprising the Self-Assurance Report and the Research Quality Report.

Council congratulated all staff involved in preparing these excellent reports, which will be lodged with TEQSA before the end of 2024.

### ***Discipline rankings***

Council was pleased to note that, in addition to Deakin's outstanding record for a world-leading ranking in sports science for six years, a range of recent discipline rankings show both depth and breadth across the University, with all Faculties having very highly ranked disciplines.

Council congratulated staff across the University for their outstanding and sustained achievement.

### **Finances**

Council considered the Financial Report to 30 November 2024. Council was pleased to note favourable performance compared to 2024 budget, Outlook 2 and YoY measures, driven by strong teaching income and sound control of costs.

The end of year financial result is anticipated to be significantly better than budget.

Council welcomed the positive performance and emphasised that it is important to remember that the financial sustainability program introduced in 2020 and implemented since then had paved the way for this position. Council recognised that this had been a difficult period, however it has ensured that Deakin is well placed for the future.

### ***Investment strategy***

Council considered a report from the Investment Committee on the University's managed investments. The Committee reported on moves to rebalance the portfolio between growth and protection assets.

### **Overseeing risk management and systems of control**

Council considered a detailed report from the Audit and Risk Committee encompassing a range of compliance, risk management and audit issues. This included attention to the recent procurement and payroll risk internal audits. The Committee also approved the Strategic Audit Plan 2025-2027.

### ***Risk Appetite Statement***

Council considered the annual review of the University Risk Appetite Statement and approved a series of updates.

Council was pleased to note that the Statement is a 'living' document which is being actively used for planning across the University.

### **University Advancement**

Council considered a presentation from Jimmy Buck, Chief Advancement Officer. Council was pleased to note the close collaboration between the Advancement portfolio and other areas of the University, notably DeakinTalent on alumni-supported employment opportunities for students and Deakin Research, Faculties and research groups on fundraising projects.

Council thanked Jimmy and the team for the presentation and their work during the year.

### **Council's own affairs**

Council considered a number of end-of-year reports as part of its annual program to ensure that it fulfils all of its governance responsibilities under legislation, policy and best practice guidelines. These reports confirmed that Council had comprehensively met its responsibilities.

### ***Acknowledgement of outgoing members, Stuart Hamilton and Simar Bedi***

Council acknowledged with acclamation the contributions to Council and the University of outgoing Council members, Stuart Hamilton AO, Council appointed member, and Simar Bedi, elected student member. Both members reflected on their Council terms as they bid farewell to Council.

Stuart Hamilton expressed his pride in the fact that over his 12-year term the University had significantly lifted its research performance without compromising its commitment to the best possible educational experience for students. This has given Deakin the position of balanced excellence in teaching and research it has today.

Simar Bedi thanked Council colleagues and Deakin staff for his learning experiences at Deakin and expressed his determination to apply good governance principles in his future political work.

Council received the reflections of the two members with gratitude. The deep commitment of both members to students' best interests came through in their reflections, from the perspective of a education policy leader and a student leader respectively.

### ***Membership of Council Committees and related Boards***

Council approved appointments to Council Committees in 2025 and the appointment of the Chair and a Member to the Recycling and Clean Energy Commercialisation Hub (REACH) Governing Board.

## Expression of thanks and appreciation to the University community

In closing its business for the year Council expressed its sincere thanks and appreciation to staff, students and supporters of the University in 2024. All members of the University make Deakin a great place to study, work and to contribute to society.

The Council wished all members of the University community a great end to 2024 and a wonderful 2025, Deakin's 50th year.

**Disclaimer:** *This report provides an overview for the University community of the Council's decisions and actions at the relevant meeting. It is not intended to cover every decision made at the meeting or the full detail of decisions and discussions. Inquiries and requests for further information can be directed to the University Council Secretary on [council-secretary@deakin.edu.au](mailto:council-secretary@deakin.edu.au).*