COUNCIL

Minutes of the Council Meeting held on Monday, 9 February 2026
in the Council Chamber, Level 2, Hunter Building, Kelburn Campus, Wellington
from 11.00 am to 1.15 pm and the Victoria Room from 1.15 pm to 2.30 pm

PRESENT:
Mr Alan Judge (Chancellor) (Chair)
Professor Richard Arnold
Mr William Bell-Purchas
Professor Brigitte Bönisch-Brednich
Ms Megan Evans
Ms Pania Gray (Pro-Chancellor)
Ms Mei Fern Johnson
Mr David McLean *via Zoom*
Professor Nic Smith (Vice-Chancellor)
Mr David Smol
Mr James Te Puni
Ms Caroline Ward (Secretary to Council)

APOLOGIES:
Ms Asifa Hanif

IN ATTENDANCE:
Ms Jackie Anderson, General Counsel
Dr Logan Bannister, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Students
Ms Rachel Bruce, Chief Financial Officer
Ms Sarah Forster, Content Manager
Professor Rawinia Higgins, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Māori & Kaitiakitanga
Professor Bryony James, Provost
Mr Simon Johnson, Director, Campus Operations
Professor Robyn Longhurst, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic
Mr Sam Mackay, Deputy Director, International
Ms Megan McPherson, Director of Communications, Marketing, and Digital Engagement
Mr Reece Moors, Director, Office of the Vice-Chancellor
Ms Amy Rutherford, Director, International
Mrs Rachel Scott, Director, Governance, Risk, and Assurance
Ms Kate Tibbitts, Chief People Officer
Ms Tina Wakefield, Chief Operating Officer

26.01 WELCOME / ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS / APOLOGIES

Noted:

1 that Ms Pania Gray gave the Karakia. She extended condolences on behalf of Council to the whānau of Dame Karen Poutasi who had deep connections with the University, including several years as Chair of Wellington UniProfessional.
2 that the Chancellor acknowledged and welcomed all present.
3 that an apology was received from Ms Asifa Hanif.

Resolved: **that the apology from Ms Asifa Hanif be sustained.**

Judge/Smith
Carried
260001

26.02 DECLARATIONS AND DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Received: declarations and disclosure of interests by members of Council.

Noted:

1 that Ms Megan Evans advised that her son was on today's conferment list.
2 that the Chancellor acknowledged both Megan's son, and the Secretary to Council's son who will have their qualifications conferred at today's meeting.
3 that Council members were reminded to advise the Secretary to Council of any changes to their disclosure of interests listing between meetings.
4 that for item-specific disclosures, the Chancellor asked that Council members alert him at the time.

26.03 COUNCIL MINUTES, MEETING HELD 1 DECEMBER 2025

Received: the public Minutes of the meeting of Council held 1 December 2025.

Resolved: **that the public Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 1 December 2025 be approved.**

Arnold/Gray
Carried
260002

26.04 REPORT FROM THE CHANCELLOR

Received: an oral report from the Chancellor, Mr Alan Judge.

Noted:

1 that the Chancellor outlined events and activities since his last update to Council as follows:

- attended the 24 November Finance Committee Workshop regarding the 320 The Terrace demolition business case
- met with members of Te Hiwa (the senior leadership team) regarding the Vice-Chancellor's annual performance review
- attended the Te Herenga Waka VUW 2025 Leadership programmes awards
- attended the 1 December Finance Committee meeting
- chaired the 1 December Council meeting
- attended the farewell for Professor Margaret Hyland, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research
- chaired the People & Culture Committee meeting to complete the Vice-Chancellor's performance review
- hosted a lunch for the two honorary doctorate recipients
- attended and addressed the Pasifika graduation ceremony
- presided over five graduation celebration ceremonies, three at the Michael Fowler Centre, and two at Ngā Mokopuna on the Kelburn Campus
- attended the Foundation Board of Trustees meeting

- chaired the Council Workshop hui on 27 January 2026 which Te Hiwa joined for the afternoon session which included presentations on Demographics, AI, and Social Licence.
- had regular meetings with the Vice-Chancellor, and the Secretary to Council.

2 that Council member, David McLean is working on a Council paper to bring to the March meeting to remove the need for Council to 'move' and 'second' motions.

Resolved: **that the Chancellor's oral report be noted.**

Bönisch-Brednich/Arnold
Carried
250003

26.05 REPORT FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

Received: a report from the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Nic Smith, dated 21 January 2026 (document VUWC 26/01).

Noted:

1 that the report was taken as read.

2 that the honorary doctorate luncheon mentioned by the Chancellor had provided a wonderful opportunity to develop an appreciation of the restorative justice work carried out by honorary doctorate recipient Sir David Carruthers.

3 that the end of year unaudited Financial result shows a $10m surplus. This was a good result given the financial challenges the University has faced. It was explained that although a small surplus was budgeted for FY25, the better-than-expected result was largely due to returns from the Foundation.

4 that an agreement will be signed this week with the George Mason Trust for a philanthropic donation of $5m. This will support ecological research for years to come.

5 that a celebration of the success of the Taiawa Wellington Tech Hub, home to a wide range of innovative, high-growth Wellington businesses, will take place this week. The Hub was launched 18 months ago, and there are now 14 tech companies involved, and a waiting list to join. Patrons include Mayor Andrew Little, and Stephen Tindall, and it has provided an $11.8m boost to the Wellington economy.

6 that the Victoria University Exchange Aotearoa was launched mid-January. This is an initiative that gives second-year students in their second semester the opportunity to study at Otago, or AUT (and for students at those universities to study here). Students will have the chance to experience study at a very different university as well as build their own networks.

7 that the University's new sponsorship with CubaDupa is in place and the upcoming event (from 28-29 March) is keenly anticipated. The team will continue to look for opportunities where the University can engage with its Civic mission.

8 that in the run-up to this year's general election, a series of debates on key discussion topics will be hosted at Victoria. The Vice-Chancellor will update further once details are confirmed.

9 that the two-year Cycle 6 Academic Audit report was positive, so much so there is no need for a mid-cycle review. The leadership of Professor Robyn Longhurst, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic was commended for this result, as well as the success of the He Kokonga project she is leading to ensure students have the right support to achieve their academic qualifications.

10 that a celebration was held to recognise one year since Ngā Mokopuna opened. The Living Building certification process, led by the DVCMK, Professor Rawinia Higgins, is continuing and it is hoped a red-letter day is on the horizon if this is achieved.

11 that the University's first Artificial Intelligence (AI) hackathon was an exposition of the way AI tools can be used. This will continue to be an area of ongoing engagement and discussion around the opportunities and challenges it presents.

12 that domestic enrolments are looking good with a small increase on the same period in 2025 and real confidence in the international student pipeline. There is a minor concern around the delay in some Wellington based students returning, however final numbers will not be known until the March census.

Resolved: **that the report from the Vice-Chancellor be noted.**

Bönisch-Brednich/Te Puni
Carried
260004

26.06 FINANCIAL REPORT TO 31 DECEMBER 2025

Received: the Financial report to 31 December 2025 from the Chief Financial Officer, Ms Rachel Bruce (document VUWC 26/02).

Noted:

1 that the report was taken as read.

2 that the unaudited Consolidated Group surplus of $9.8m includes the Foundation surplus which was driven by higher donation revenue and investment gains.

3 that Core University results were close to the year-end forecast of $5m, and there were no surprises in the final result.

4 that a breakeven budget has been set for 2026, a year that has several headwinds due to factors outside the university's control, including the impact of government funding decisions.

5 that TEC monitoring was discussed given the University's improved financial performance. The Vice-Chancellor explained how because some lag indicators are used by TEC within their metrics, there is a residual effect still in play. This does not distract from the University's risk rating being lowered last year.

6 that in 2027 we will start to move beyond the low enrolment numbers of 2023 and the position will continue to improve.

Resolved: **that the Financial report to 31 December 2025 be noted.**

Bönisch-Brednich/Te Puni
Carried
260005

26.07 CONFERMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS

Received: the list of degrees, diplomas and certificates granted on 9 February 2026 (document VUWC 26/03).

Resolved:

1 that Council grants the degrees, diplomas and certificates in this University on the persons listed in document VUWC 26/03, and that their names be entered on the Roll of Graduates on 9 February 2026.

2 that a motion of congratulations to the Graduates be recorded.

Bell-Purchas/Johnson
Carried
260006

26.08 FOUNDATION BOARD OF TRUSTEES APPOINTMENTS

Received: a Council paper dated 28 January 2026 from the Chancellor, Mr Alan Judge, regarding Foundation Board of Trustees appointments (document VUWC 26/04).

Noted:

1 that the Council paper was taken as read.

2 that the Chancellor thanked Megan Evans for agreeing to be appointed to the Foundation Board of Trustees so soon after the commencement of her Ministerial appointment to Council.

3 that appreciation for the service of Pania Gray, as the appointed member of Council on the Board of Trustees during 2025, was recorded.

4 that there is scope to build a closer relationship between Council and the Board of Trustees particularly on issues including sustainability and guidance on responsible investments in keeping with the University's strategic plan sustainability intentions.

Resolved:

1 that Megan Evans, being a member of the Council, be appointed as a Trustee of the Victoria University of Wellington Foundation under rule 2.2 of the First Schedule to the Trust Deed for a term of office of one year from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2026.

2 that Aidan Donoghue, being a student of the University nominated by the Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association, be appointed as a Trustee of the Victoria University of Wellington Foundation under rule 2.3 of the First Schedule to the Trust Deed for a term of office of one year from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2026.

McLean/Smol
Carried
260007

26.09 APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR TO U.S. FRIENDS OF VICTORIA UNIVERSITY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Received: a Council paper dated 9 January 2026 from the Chancellor, Mr Alan Judge, regarding the appointment of a Director to the U.S. Friends of Victoria University of Wellington Board of Directors (document VUWC 26/05).

Noted: that the Council paper was taken as read and Council members were unanimously supportive of the recommendation.

Resolved: **that Shivali Gulab be appointed to the Board of Directors of the U.S. Friends of Victoria University of Wellington, Inc. for a term of three years commencing on 1 March 2026.**

Smol/McLean
Carried
260008

26.10 2026 NEW YEAR HONOURS

Received: a Council paper from the Secretary to Council dated 28 January 2026 regarding New Year Honours (document VUWC 26/06).

Noted:
1 that the Council paper was taken as read.
2 that the success of members of the University's community in these awards demonstrates the extraordinary variety, depth and contribution of Te Herenga Waka's alumni.
3 that the appointment of Graham Le Gros to KNZM; and Professor Bev Lawton to CNZM was particularly acknowledged.

Resolved: **that Council conveys its congratulations to all Te Herenga Waka - Victoria University of Wellington graduates, staff and stakeholders honoured in the 2026 New Year Honours.**

Judge/Smol
Carried
260009

26.11 FORTHCOMING EVENTS AND NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

Received: a Council Paper from the Secretary to Council, Ms Caroline Ward, dated 28 January 2026 regarding Forthcoming Events (document VUWC 26/06).

Noted:
1 that the Council paper was taken as read.
2 that the next meeting of Council will take place at 11 am on Monday, 23 March 2026 in Room 1209, Level 12, Rutherford House, Pipitea Campus, Wellington.
3 that Council meetings during the remainder of 2026 will be held at venues as follows:

4 May, Council Chamber
15 June, Ngā Mokopuna
27 July, Alan McDiarmid Building, Room AM103
14 September, Rutherford House, Level 12
19 October, Council Chamber
30 November, Rutherford House, Level 12

Resolved: **that the Council paper on Forthcoming Events and the date and details of the next Council meeting be noted.**

Gray/Bönisch-Brednich
Carried
260010

26.12 RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

Received: a recommendation that certain items be taken with the public excluded (document VUWC 26/08).

Resolved:
1 that the public be excluded from the following parts of the proceedings of this meeting, namely agenda items 13-22).

The general subject of each matter to be considered while the public is excluded, the reason for passing this resolution in relation to each matter, and the specific grounds under section 48(1) of the Local Government Official

Information and Meetings Act 1987 for the passing of this resolution are as follows:

General subject of each matter to be considered	**Reason for passing this resolution in relation to each matter** The public conduct of each item below would be likely to result in the disclosure of information for which good reason for withholding would exist under the sections of the OIA identified below.		**Ground(s) under section 48(1) for the passing of this resolution**
13. Minutes of previous meeting held 1 December 2025	Privacy, commercial prejudice, commercial activities.	s9(2)(a), s9(2)(b)(ii), s9(2)(i), and s9(2)(ba)(i)	LGOIMA s48(1)(a)(ii)
14. Health, Safety, and Wellbeing Q4 report and Officers' briefing	Privacy, commercial prejudice, commercial activities, confidential basis.	s9(2)(a), s9(2)(b)(ii), s9(2)(i), and s9(2)(ba)(i)	LGOIMA s48(1)(a)(ii)
15. Vice-Chancellor's report	Privacy, commercial prejudice, commercial activities, confidential basis.	s9(2)(a), s9(2)(b)(ii), s9(2)(i),and s9(2)(ba)(i)	LGOIMA s48(1)(a)(ii)
16. Financial report to 31 December 2025	Commercial prejudice, commercial activities, Confidential basis	s9(2)(b)(ii), s9(2)(i),and s9(2)(ba)(i)	LGOIMA s48(1)(a)(ii)
17. 2027 International (full fee) tuition recommendations	Commercial prejudice, commercial activities, confidential basis.	s9(2)(b)(ii), s9(2)(i), and s9(2)(ba)(i)	LGOIMA s48(1)(a)(ii)
18. Digital roadmap – Q3 report, and end of year 2025 status report	Commercial prejudice, commercial activities, confidential basis	s9(2)(b)(ii), s9(2)(i),and s9(2)(ba)(i)	LGOIMA s48(1)(a)(ii)
19. Report on Appeal Committee hearings	Privacy	s9(2)(a)	LGOIMA s48(1)(a)(ii)
20. National Music Centre update	Commercial prejudice, commercial	s9(2)(b)(ii), s9(2)(i), and s9(2)(ba)(i)	LGOIMA s48(1)(a)(ii)

	activities, confidential basis.		
21. Committee update	Privacy, commercial prejudice, commercial activities, confidential basis.	s9(2)(a), s9(2)(b)(ii), s9(2)(i), and s9(2)(ba)(i)	LGOIMA, s48(1)(a)(ii)
22. Council only time	Privacy, commercial prejudice, commercial activities, confidential basis.	s9(2)(a), s9(2)(b)(ii), s9(2)(i), and s9(2)(ba)(i)	LGOIMA, s48(1)(a)(ii)

In relation to each of the above items, no public interest consideration has been identified favouring disclosure of the particular information in public proceedings of the meeting that would override the need to withhold the information.

This resolution is made in reliance on section 48(1)(a) of the Local Government Information and Meetings Act 1987 and the particular interest or interests protected by section 6 or section 7 or section 9 of the Official Information Act 1982, as the case may require, which would be prejudiced by holding of the whole or the relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting in public are set out above.

2 that such members of the senior leadership as the Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor request be permitted to remain at this meeting, after the public has been excluded, with the exception of agenda item 22, because of their knowledge of the relevant matters identified above which will be of assistance in relation to those matters.

Bönisch-Brednich/Arnold
Carried
260011