



COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Council Meeting held on Monday, 4 May 2026
in the Council Chamber, Leve, 2, Hunter Building Kelburn Campus, Wellington
from 11.00 am to 3.15pm**

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 Asifa Hanif
Ms Mei Fern Johnson
Mr David McLean
Professor Nic Smith (Vice-Chancellor)
Mr David Smol
Mr James Te Puni
Ms Vicki Faint (Acting Secretary to Council)

APOLOGIES: Ms Caroline Ward (Secretary to Council)

IN ATTENDANCE: Professor Bryony James, Provost
Professor Sally McArthur, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research
Professor Robyn Longhurst, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic
Ms Tina Wakefield, Chief Operating Officer
Dr Logan Bannister, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Students
Professor Rawinia Higgins, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Māori & Kaitiakitanga
Ms Rachel Bruce, Chief Financial Officer
Ms Kate Tibbitts, Chief People Officer
Ms Megan McPherson, Director of Communications, Marketing, and Digital Engagement
Mr Reece Moors, Director, Office of the Vice-Chancellor
Mrs Rachel Scott, Director, Governance, Risk, and Assurance
Ms Jackie Anderson, General Counsel
Ms Fiona Clarkson, Head of Strategic Communications
Mr Clinton Jenkins, Associate Director, Planning and Performance Management

26.51

WELCOME / ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS / APOLOGIES

Noted:

- 1 that Mr James Te Puni led the Karakia
- 2 that the Chancellor acknowledged and welcomed all present.
- 3 that today was the final Council meeting for Vice-Chancellor, Professor Nic Smith. A number of farewell events will take place before Nic's last day with the University on 12 June 2026. Council formally acknowledged Professor Smith's contribution to the University since taking up the role in January 2023 (see also Minute 26.65).

- 4 that the Chancellor advised that the Vice-Chancellor Recruitment process would be discussed under Council only time in the confidential session of the meeting.

26.52

DECLARATIONS AND DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

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

- Noted:**
- 1 that Council members were reminded to advise the Secretary to Council of any changes to their disclosure of interests listing between meetings.
 - 2 that for item-specific disclosures, the Chancellor asked that Council members alert him at the time.
Action:
 - 3 that David McLean's name be reinstated on the register (although his declarations are there, his name had dropped off).

26.53

COUNCIL MINUTES, MEETING HELD 23 MARCH 2026

Received: the public Minutes of the meeting of Council held 23 March 2026.

Resolved: that the public Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 23 March 2026 be approved.

260046

26.54

REPORT FROM THE CHANCELLOR

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

- Noted:**
- that the Chancellor outlined events and activities since his last update to Council as follows:
- attended regular meetings with the Vice-Chancellor
 - attended regular meetings with the Secretary to Council
 - chaired the University Council meeting on 23 March 2026
 - attended the Rotary Club of Port Nicholson breakfast
 - attended regular meetings with Kate Tibbitts, Chief People Officer re the Vice-Chancellor recruitment process.
 - attended a meeting with Strategic Pay re Vice-Chancellor role sizing
 - held conversations with prospective Vice-Chancellor candidates prior to the role closing on 3 April
 - chaired the VC Appointment Committee meeting (longlist to short list)

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

260047

26.55

REPORT FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

Received: a report from the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Nic Smith, dated 17 April 2026 (document VUWC 26/36).

- Noted:**
- 1 that the report was taken as read.
 - 2 that steady progress continues to ensure the University maintains momentum and resilience. This includes strengthening operational foundations, supporting staff and students, and advancing strategic priorities.

- 3 that there was a disciplined focus on staff with high leave balances with new reporting embedded to monitor this. It is now a standing Te Hiwa/Te Ama reporting item.
- 4 that there was strong delivery from Digital Solutions during April, including the annual Banner upgrade, migration of key assets to the Datacom data centre, and a full data-centre resilience failover test (first since 2016) providing assurance of continuity and recovery capability.
- 5 that key digital transformation milestones have been achieved including Future Web Programme (new hosting for ~33,000-page website improving stability/performance); and Enrolments Transformation aimed at improving online self-service admissions. The Data Reporting & Analytics business case was approved by Te Hiwa to lift decision-support capability.
- 6 that Independent Living occupancy remains strong due to international student growth. The team is exploring innovative/cost-effective accommodation development options including modular units.
- 7 that projects are progressing to support teaching, learning, and research. There is increased use of technology (e.g., drone condition capture) to inform asset condition and renewal planning.
- 8 that the establishment of Matatāhuna – Universities Quality Assurance Agency (UQAA) is underway. This will allow a shift toward audited self-accreditation of academic programmes (CUAP to cease); under a national framework expected to be operational from 2028.
- 9 that the whole-of-University Student Success Plan (He Kokonga Whare e Kitea) was endorsed by Te Hiwa and is moving into the implementation phase.
- 10 that library use continues to grow, and pathways and outreach programmes remain strong.
- 11 that the new CubaDupa partnership strengthened Wellington connection and experience-led engagement with 1,600+ campus visitors, 14 activations, 11 local business partnerships, plus strong media/social amplification expanding reach to prospective students.

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

260048

26.56

FINANCIAL REPORT TO 31 MARCH 2026

Received: the Financial report to 31 March 2026 from the Chief Financial Officer, Ms Rachel Bruce (document VUWC 26/37).

Noted:

- 1 that the report was taken as read.
- 2 that revenue was unfavourable to budget by \$3.6m, primarily due to the timing of discounts for full fee students.
- 3 that expenditure was favourable to budget by \$3.0m, primarily due to staff vacancies and timing of spend on occupancy and operating expenses.
- 4 that the consolidated group deficit of \$3.1m included the Foundation surplus.
- 5 that the Foundation surplus of \$6.4m was favourable to budget by \$5.0m, primarily driven by higher donation revenue.

Resolved: that the Financial report to 31 March 2026 be noted.

260049

26.57 CONFERMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS

Received: the list of degrees, diplomas and certificates granted on 4 May 2026 (document VUWC 26/38).

Noted: that the Faculty names in the list need to be updated to reflect the decision made by Council at its 23 March 2026 meeting (resolution 260040).

Resolved:

- 1 that Council grants the degrees, diplomas and certificates in this University on the persons listed in document VUWC 26/38, and that their names be entered on the Roll of Graduates on 4 May 2026.
- 2 that a motion of congratulations to the Graduates be recorded.

Hanif/Evans
260050

26.58 TE TIRITI STATUTE MINOR AMENDMENTS

Received: a Council paper dated 23 April 2026 from the Chair of Te Aka Matua, Ms Pania Gray, regarding proposed minor amendments to the Te Tiriti Statute (document VUWC 26/39).

Noted: that the Te Aka Matua Committee considered the proposed amendments at its meeting on 16 March 2026 and was unanimous in putting the changes forward.

Resolved: that on the recommendation of the Te Aka Matua Committee, Council approve the minor amendments to the Te Tiriti Statute, as set out in document VUWC 26/39.

260051

26.59 COUNCIL DATES FOR 2027

Received: a Council paper dated 2 April 2026 from the Chancellor, Mr Alan Judge, regarding proposed Council dates for 2027 (document VUWC 26/40).

Noted:

- 1 that the Council paper was taken as read.
Action:
- 2 that informal meetings between Te Hiwa and Council are valued. It was agreed that a half-day session with Council and Te Hiwa on key topics be set up once the new Vice-Chancellor is in place. The Vice-Chancellor agreed in principle this was a good thing to do.

Resolved: that the proposed dates for 2027 set out in document VUWC 26/40 be approved.

260052

26.60 2025 FOUNDATION ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

Received: a Council paper dated 21 April 2026 from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Māori and Kaitiakitanga, Ms Rawinia Higgins, providing the 2025 Foundation Annual Accounts (document VUWC 26/41).

Noted: that the Council paper was taken as read and there was no comment or discussion.

Resolved: that the 2025 Foundation Annual Accounts be noted.

2600453

at 11.41am Dr Emma Dunlop-Bennett was welcomed to the meeting

26.61 PASIFIKA REPORT

Received: a Council paper dated 21 April 2026 from the Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Pasifika), Dr Emma Dunlop-Bennett, providing the Pasifika report (document VUWC 26/42).

Noted:

- 1 that the Council paper was taken as read.
- 2 that Pasifika student enrolments increased by 99 this year, bringing the University to a total of 1410 Pasifika students representing an 8% increase.
- 3 that Pasifika EFTS have been close to TEC targets: exceeding it in 2024 by 0.1%, but below the 2025 target by 0.7%. Currently, Pasifika EFTS are sitting at 7.7% of the 8% TEC target.
- 4 that retention is trending up from 85.2% (2020) to 91.3% (2025).
Action:
- 5 that the Pasifika Strategy will be on the confidential agenda for the July Council meeting.

Resolved: that the Pasifika report be noted.

260054

at 11.50am Dr Emma Dunlop-Bennett left the meeting

26.62 2025 RESEARCH ANNUAL REPORT

Received: a Council paper dated 31 March 2026 from Professor Sally McArthur, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), providing the 2025 Research Annual Report (document VUWC 26/43).

Noted:

- 1 that the Council paper was taken as read.
- 2 that the University Research Committee (URC) provides institution-wide governance and leadership for the University's research portfolio and research strategies
- 3 that the URC supports researcher development and research culture, gives effect to the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (as set out in the University's Te Tiriti o Waitangi statute), and promotes engagement in excellent research.
- 4 that the URC reports to Academic Board via an annual report and verbal updates from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research.
- 5 that the 2025 URC annual report outlines the strategic environment, initiatives supported and delivered, outcomes achieved across the University, and key performance indicators. It also highlights researchers and excellent research recognised and rewarded in 2025.
Action:
- 6 that Council asked that an update on Intellectual Property (IP) be scheduled for a future Council meeting.

Resolved: that the 2025 Research Committee Annual Report be noted.

260055

26.63 FORTHCOMING EVENTS AND NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

Received: a Council paper from the Acting Secretary to Council, Ms Vicki Faint , dated 22 April 2026 regarding Forthcoming Events (document VUWC 26/44).

Noted:

- 1 that the Council paper was taken as read
- 2 that the next meeting of Council will take place on Monday, 15 June 2026 at 11am at Ngā Mokopuna, Kelburn Campus, Wellington
- 3 that Council meetings during the remainder of 2026 will be held at venues as follows:
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 on 15 June 2026 be noted.

260056

26.64 COMMITTEE AND ACADEMIC BOARD MINUTES

Received: the following Committee and Academic Board minutes:

- Te Aka Matua Committee, 16 March 2026
- Academic Board, 14 April 2026

Noted:

- 1 that the Committee and Academic Board minutes were taken as read.
- 2 that the AI statement was discussed at the Academic Board meeting.
- 3 that the Council Statement on Freedom of Expression (to be considered later in the agenda) will have a flow on effect on University policies.

Resolved: that the Committee and Academic Board minutes be noted.

260057

26.65 VICE-CHANCELLOR FINAL COUNCIL MEETING

Noted:

- 1 that the Chancellor acknowledged that this was Professor Smith's final Council meeting. He commended the Vice-Chancellor for his strong leadership and transparency, leaving the university well-positioned for the future after some very challenging times at the start of Nic's appointment.
- 2 that the Vice-Chancellor thanked the Chancellor and members of Council and expressed a well-received interest in maintaining contact.

Resolved: that a vote of thanks be recorded to Professor Smith for his contribution as Vice-Chancellor to Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington.

260058

26.66 RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

Received: a recommendation that certain items be taken with the public excluded (document VUWC 26/45).

Resolved: 1 that the public be excluded from the following parts of the proceedings of this meeting, namely agenda items 16-27.

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
16. Minutes of previous meeting held 23 March 2026	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)
17. Health, Safety, and Wellbeing report, deep dive, site works	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)
18. 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)
19. Council only time Strategic Topic: VC final reflections including University size and composition	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)
20. Financial report to 31 March 2026, Q1 forecast and CFO report	Commercial prejudice, commercial activities, Confidential basis	s9(2)(b)(ii), s9(2)(i),and s9(2)(ba)(i) LGOIMA s48(1)(a)(ii)
21. Council Statement on Freedom of Expression	Confidential basis	s9(2)(ba)(i) LGOIMA s48(1)(a)(ii)

22. Honorary Doctorate recommendation	Privacy Confidential basis	s9(2)(a), s9(2)(ba)(i)	LGOIMA s48(1)(a)(ii)
23. Hunter Fellowship recommendation	Privacy Confidential basis	s9(2)(a), s9(2)(ba)(i)	LGOIMA s48(1)(a)(ii)
24. Foundation Trust Deed	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)
25. Foundation quarterly report to 31.3.26	Commercial prejudice, commercial activities, confidential basis.	s9(2)(b)(ii), s9(2)(i), and s9(2)(ba)(i)	LGOIMA s48(1)(a)(ii)
26. Accommodation quarterly report	Commercial prejudice, commercial activities, confidential basis.	s9(2)(b)(ii), s9(2)(i), and s9(2)(ba)(i)	LGOIMA s48(1)(a)(ii)
27. Committee and Academic Board minutes	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 19, because of their knowledge of the relevant matters identified above which will be of assistance in relation to those matters.

260059