

ACADEMIC BOARD TE TAUMATA

Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Board held on Tuesday, 14 April 2026 at 1.00pm in GBLT2

The meeting was held face-to-face in GBLT2 (Old Government Buildings Lecture Theatre 2) and was convened by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Nic Smith. The meeting was opened with a karakia and everyone was welcomed to the meeting.

PART A

26.14 Apologies, acknowledgements and welcomes

Apologies were taken as read (see Appendix 1).

There were no welcomes or farewells.

26.15 Part B of the agenda – items brought forward

No items were brought forward from Part B to Part A.

26.16 Vice-Chancellor oral report

The Vice-Chancellor's oral report was **received**.

Recent Successes

- Professor Nic Smith acknowledged the remarkable achievements of three Te Herenga Waka professors, who have been elected as Ngā Ahurei fellows of the Academy of the Royal Society Te Apārangi:
 - Professor Averil Coxhead, in recognition of her contribution to learning and teaching specialised vocabulary and languages.
 - Professor Bing Xue, in recognition of her outstanding contributions to the field of artificial intelligence.
 - Professor Eric Le Ru, in recognition of his fundamental discoveries in how light interacts with nanoparticles.
- International enrolments have risen over 50%.

The Fuel Crisis

- Current messaging indicated that the Government is confident in New Zealand's fuel supply through May-June 2026 and is in negotiations for a trade agreement with Singapore as a key source of refined fuel.
- The cost of fuel will continue to rise, affecting students and staff – Te Hiwa will clarify accommodations (carpooling etc) in due course.

University Funding

- The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) has indicated that New Zealand universities are unlikely to see funding beyond 100% of the funding level agreed to by the TEC. Enrolments beyond this guaranteed funding risks a shortfall.
 - This is a drop from previous years – historically the TEC funding extended to additional enrolments.
 - The major NZ universities are taking a varied approach on the balance between enrolment and funding, with some universities budgeting as high as 107%
 - Te Herenga Waka—University of Wellington has taken a conservative approach and is on track for a final enrolment of 103.4%.
- The University Advisory Group (UAG) on Research Funding in universities has signalled a pivot in New Zealand towards the 'Irish model' of science funding, shifting away from primary industries and towards advanced technology (such as AI), and innovation that energises the economy. Nic will keep staff informed of developments.

Collaborations

- The collaboration between Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington, Auckland University of Technology and University of Otago continues to grow – it now encompasses joint-teaching programmes, professional staff exchange (whereby professional staff can spend two weeks in the equivalent area at another university) as well as student exchange. Details are forthcoming.

Events

- Electoral debates are being scheduled, with details to come.
- Staff forums will take place on 23-24 April 2026.
- Katie Wolf's documentary, *The Haka Party Incident* (2024) will be screened for staff on 30 April 2026 from 4pm to 6.30pm, in the Memorial Theatre, Student Union Building. After the screening, there will be a panel discussion with some of the people in the documentary.

The Vice-Chancellor recruitment process

While Nic is maintaining distance from this process, he can confirm that it is progressing on schedule.

The floor was opened for comment:

Responding to a question on the cost of demolishing the apartments at 320 The Terrace, Nic noted that the cost of maintaining the empty building is substantial, and that demolition will improve the University's balance sheet. The site is likely to be redeveloped for much-needed student accommodation.

26.16 Written Report of DVCs

AB26/13

The March 2026 DVC report was **received** from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Māori and Kaitiakitanga), Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students).

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic Report

Professor Robyn Longhurst spoke to the DVC (A) report which was taken as read.

Academic Quality Assurance

- The operating arm of Universities New Zealand is undergoing change, which will affect Academic Quality Assurance processes for all New Zealand Universities. As part of the new structure, UNZ has established a new agency – Matatāhuna-Universities Quality Assurance Agency (UQAA) – to replace the Academic Quality Agency.
- UQAA will have seven members, including a Board Chair. Robyn and Associate Professor Meegan Hall will serve as members.
- There has been an in-principle decision to move to audited self-accreditation of academic programmes by individual universities, in line with a national framework of agreed standards and guidelines that is still to be developed. This will mean the cessation of the Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP).
- It is expected that the new system of approvals will be implemented in 2028 – until then, we will continue doing approvals according to the CUAP process currently in place.

He Kokanga Whare e Kitea

- The He Kokanga Student Success Plan has been approved by the new Student Success Committee.
- The TEC has approved Progress Report 3, and the project has moved into the implementation phase.

The floor was opened for comment:

- In response to a question about whether the 2028 conclusion of CUAP would result in proposals being expedited in 2027, Robyn clarified that current processes will be maintained until the new processes are implemented – the information that CUAP requires will likely largely align with the information needed for robust self-accreditation.
- VUWSA asked if the UQAA, as a small agency, will include student representation? Robyn noted the question and advised that the new agency is at a very early stage of development, and membership is not yet entirely confirmed.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Māori and Kaitiakitanga Report

Professor Rawinia Higgins spoke to the DVC (Māori and Kaitiakitanga) report, which was taken

as read.

- The refreshed Mai I te Iho ki te pae Māori Strategic Outcomes Framework is now available on the University website.
- Cecelia Tuiomanufili has taken up the role of Acting Manager of Āwhina while Tara Fisher is seconded to Rawinia's office.
- Rawinia encouraged members and attendees to register for graduation ceremonies.

The floor was opened, with no comment.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research Report

Professor Sally McArthur spoke to the DVC (R) report, which was taken as read.

External Research Website

- There has been a relaunch of the outward-facing Research Hub, including a new "Research for Impact" section, which is an opportunity to showcase the breadth and depth of the work being done around the University.
- Staff can [share feedback](#) and submit ideas for other future stories, or [request for stories to be featured](#) on the Research Hub.

Faculty of Graduate Research

- The Faculty of Graduate Research (FGR) is focusing on improving recruitment and retention of PhD students (PhD completion has risen from 80% to 85% in the last two years) by (a) improving the admissions process to ensure our selection processes are robust, and (b) developing postgraduate and PhD communities locally.
- With the roll out of Panoho, our new system for managing research student enrolment, schools should no longer be running separate spreadsheets.

Research Strategy and Funding

- The newly structured University Research Committee will be rolling out a workshop model in 2026 (to accompany 3-4 meetings that focus on key operational and reporting systems), to enable wider engagement on key strategic topics.
- Following the changes in research policy focus signalled by the Prime Minister's Science, Innovation and Technology (SIT) Advisory Council, the Research Office is developing tools and strategies to build larger research teams across disciplinary boundaries to promote mission-led, cross-disciplinary research.

The floor was opened for comments:

In response to a question from VUWSA about how the University planned to address the fact that the current average time of completion for PhD students is a year longer than the "standard" enrolment of three years, Sally responded that we can address timeliness using the same methods that FGR plans to use to increase rates of completion: carefully considering applications so that a student's topic meets their capabilities, and a more intense engagement with students as an academic community.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Students Report

Dr Logan Bannister spoke to the DVC (S) report, which was taken as read.

New Student's Orientation

- Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington is moving to a wider orientation model, which covers both traditional Orientation activities and a longer transition period (including the UNI101 programme) which has seen wide engagement from Wellington students outside the halls of residence seeking opportunities for establishing University communities.

Kitea Impact Programme

- Registrations for the new Kitea Impact Programme opened at the start of Trimester 1 with registrations among Wellington students and international students continuing to grow.

Scholarships

- Logan highlighted the success of the Te Herenga Waka and Fale Malae Pasifika Scholarship, started in 2025, in supporting Pasifika students to complete undergraduate degrees and move on to postgraduate study.

Te Kahupapa ki Tai-International Office

- Application turnaround has been reduced from 90 days to 15 days.
- Trimester 1, 2026 saw a 50% increase year-on-year in the number of new international students enrolled.
- The 2026 Hello Wellington China Roadshow is currently underway, with Logan just having returned from China. Of those students who attended roadshow workshops, at least 5% have conditionally enrolled at Te Herenga Waka.
- Open Day is scheduled for 21 August 2026.

The floor was opened for comment:

- The huge jump in international applications over the last year (from 80% to 85%) is at least partly a response to the current political situation. How is the University planning to retain that growth? Nic responded that as these increased enrolments are due to a wider external context that presents both opportunities and challenges, and Te Herenga Waka can't ensure that we will hold on to that growth. The wisest way forward is to move carefully, and make sure that we are not wholly financially dependent on that revenue source.
- Nic advised that while the University does not have a strategic target number of international students, 20% of the total student population is a healthy outer limit.
- In response to a question about the lower number of Future Student Staff at Faculty level, Logan responded that the Future Student team is carrying several vacancies deliberately – leadership is aware that Future Students are not as available to Faculties as they have been, and this will be rectified over the next six weeks. Meanwhile, the Future Students team has maintained good traction in Wellington high schools.
- Please contact Monique Warder or Logan with ideas to facilitate engagement with high schools.
- Does the University have a strategy in place to maintain the interactive relationships that have been established or re-established during the China roadshow? Logan replied that the roadshow was very effective in reactivating our institutional

partnerships, and that maintaining that connection will depend on a commitment to return to China. In between visits a face-to-face connection can be maintained online.

26.17 AI Collaboration Group Update and AI Vision Statement

AB26/14

The AI Collaboration Group update and AI Vision Statement were **received**. Professor Nic Smith spoke to this item.

Particular thanks were given to Ethan Rogacion, Academic Vice-President of VUWSA, who provided a valuable student perspective, and to Senior Legal Counsel, Matt Farrington for his work in articulating the University's vision.

The AI Vision Statement

- The four Strategic Pillars that make up the University's AI vision statement can be found on pages 24-25 of the papers for this meeting.
- This vision is principle-based rather than prescriptive – it is not a policy or an implementation plan.
- The statement will be going out for wider consultation and returning to Academic Board in June 2026.

The floor was opened for comments and suggestions:

- In the last statement of Pillar one: "Our graduates and staff will be equipped with the knowledge and skills to act confidently in a fast-changing world"
 - It was suggested that "and governance" or similar be added to this statement, making explicit that the University uses AI tools, but also that as an institution it leads discussion on AI in wider society.
- In the third sentence of the preamble: "Through openness and transparency, we support student and staff agency, enabling informed decisions about when and how AI is used"
 - Suggestion to add "or if" – ethical refusal should remain an option for staff and students (even if there need to be boundaries around blanket student refusal in courses that require the use of AI).
- While it is made clear that this Vision Statement is not a policy or implementation plan, and nothing in it is inconsistent with University policy, how will it interact with that policy? What is the distinct focus of this additional source?

Nic responded that the purpose of the Vision Statement is to signal the University's general direction of travel in this area without being prescriptive. Specific interactions with policy as well as the other suggestions raised will be explored during the consultation period.

26.18 Council Statement on Freedom of Expression

AB26/15

The draft statement of Council on Freedom of Expression was **noted**.

Professor Nic Smith spoke to this item. The Council's formal statement is mandated and fulfils a new legal requirement after a statutory amendment to the Education and Training Act 2020

(the Act). The relevant sections of the Act can be found on pages 29 and 30 of the papers for this meeting.

- The approval of this statement by Council will require a review of University policy to ensure it is consistent with the amended Act. This includes the Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Policy and the Campus Life Policy.

The floor was opened for comment:

- The following suggestions were made regarding specific wording:
 - In paragraph 6 of the draft statement: "As part of maintaining an environment that protects and promotes freedom of expression, the University will not take public positions on matters that do not directly relate to its role or functions"
 - It was suggested that "will not" be changed to "should not"
 - This wording raises the larger question of how the amended Act interacts with the University's role/function as the critic and conscience of society.
 - How far is the phrase "mission and purpose" in Section 4.3 of the Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression policy meaningfully distinct from the phrase "role and function" in the amended Act?
 - What is the standard for expression that is "likely [...] to disrupt the ordinary activities of the University" in Section 7.4(a) of the Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression policy?
 - The health and safety of staff and students should be explicitly mentioned in the sentence in paragraph 5 "where the expression is likely to be unlawful or disrupt the ordinary activities of the University."
- This instance of legislating academic freedom is not regarded by the Academic Board at large as conducive to the way the University functions.
 - How does this statement (and indeed, the amended Act) affect the practical capacity of the University to manage and/or refuse hosting requests?
 - It was suggested that the University's formal policy responses ought as much as possible to reflect the view held by many in the University community that scholarly standards and values need to be upheld.
- The University has a duty to act consistently with its statutory obligations (and any changes in those obligations), in accordance with maintaining its community functions

The Vice-Chancellor will advise Council, and this item will return to Academic Board.

26.19 New programmes requiring CUAP approval

The following new programmes were endorsed by the Academic Board for submission to CUAP Round Two:

Introduction of a Master of Chemistry**AB26/16**

Faculty	Proposal Title	Reference
FOSE	Proposed new Master of Chemistry (MChem) with nested PGDipChem and PGCertChem	AB26-16 (APC26-14)

Professor Paul Teesdale-Spittle introduced the new Master of Chemistry. The initiative responds to a gap in the curriculum, providing a professional pathway for chemistry students to accompany the existing research pathway.

Introduction of a new major in Gender and Sexuality in the BA**AB26/17**

Faculty	Proposal Title	Reference
FHSS	Proposed new major in Gender and Sexuality Studies (GNSX) in the BA	AB26-17 (APC26-15)

Associate Professor Xavier Marquez (ADA, FHSS) introduced the new major, which is essentially a coalescing of existing courses – it is intended to enable a pathway to existing students rather than to grow EFTS.

Introduction of a new postgraduate Earth Science major in MSc etc**AB26/18**

Faculty	Proposal Title	Reference
FOSE	New postgraduate Earth Science (ESCI) major in the MSc, BSc(Hons), PGDipSc, PGCertSc, and associated amendments	AB26-18 (APC26-16)

Associate Professor Monica Handler introduced the new major, which builds on the recent reorganisation of undergraduate Earth Science courses and provides a clear pathway for Earth Science undergraduates.

APPENDIX 1

Academic Board attendance 14 April 2026

Professor Barbara Allen	Professor Sally Hill	Professor Geoff McLay
Dr Logan Bannister	Professor Bryony James	Professor Lisa Marriott
Assoc Prof Fiona Barker	Professor Dean Knight	Professor Nicola
Professor Jane Bryson	Professor Bev Lawton	Moreham
Assoc Prof Sasha Calhoun	Professor Sarag Leggott	Dr Andrew Munkacsi
Dr Luke Chu	Professor Giacomo	Professor Nicola Nelson
Professor Averil Coxhead	Lichtner	Dr Yvette Perrott
Professor Kim Cunio	Professor Hai Lin	Assoc Prof Revti Raman
Aidan Donaghue	Professor Robyn	Ethan Rogacion
Dr Emma Dunlop-Bennett	Longhurst	Professor Martha Savage
Professor Eberhard Feess	Assoc Prof Xavier	Beth Smith
Assoc Prof Nicola Gilmour	Marquez	Professor Karen Smith
Professor Anne Gold	Professor Stephen	Professor Nic Smith
Professor Leon Gurevitch	Marshall	Professor Kathryn
Assoc Prof Meegan Hall	Dr Stuart Marshall	Sutherland
Assoc Prof Monica	Professor Sally McArthur	Dr Okan Tan
Handler	Shay McEwan	Professor Paul Teesdale-
Professor John Haywood	Senior Lecturer Jacqueline	Spittle
Professor Nikki Hessel	McIntosh	Dr Amanda Wolf
Professor Rawinia Higgins	Professor Simon	Dr Jenny Wollerman
	McKenzie	

Non-members in attendance

Dr Andrew Chalmers	Reese Moors	Craigie Sinclair
Rochelle Gribble	Varsha Narasimhan	Dr Robert Stratford
Joseph Habgood	Alyana Oquendo	Andrew Tipton
Dr Liz McKibben	Linda Roberts	Derek White
Megan McPherson	Dr Angelina Sbroma	

Apologies

Professor Astrid an Huef	Professor Carmen Dalli	Professor Richard Furneaux
Professor Siah Hwee Ang	Karen Davis	Dr Ally Gibson
Professor Richard Arnold	Heather Day	Professor Nick Golledge
George Baker	Professor Kevin Dew	Professor Anne Goulding
Professor Susan Ballard	Professor Neil Dodgson	Professor Vanessa Green
Professor Todd Bridgman	Assoc Prof Noelle	Professor Gina Grimshaw
Professor Daniel Brown	Donnelly	Lynn Grindell
Professor Chris Bumby	Dr Michael Dudding	Dr Linda Hogg
Professor Sue	Dr Eli Elinoff	Dr Kathy Holloway
Cherrington	Jonathan Flutey	Professor Patricia Hunt
Professor Alberto Costi	Professor Alejandro Frery	Professor Kate Hunter

Professor Catherine Iorns Magallanes
Ash McPherson
Professor Anna Jackson
Professor Zhenan Jiang
Professor Paul Jose
Professor Joanna Kidman
Professor Sara Kindon
Assoc Prof Maja Krtlačić
Professor Phil Lester
Assoc Prof Jian Liu
Professor Karl Lofgren
Professor Marcus Luczak-Roesch
Dr Bruno Marques
Professor Sally Jane Norman
Sue O'Donnell
Professor Wayne Patrick
Professor Robyn Phipps
Professor John Randal
Dr Tanya Ruka
Assoc Prof Rhian Salmon
Dr Kate Thornton
Kate Tibbits
Professor John Townend
Tina Wakefield
Caroline Ward
Dr Tony Ward
Trish Wilson



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF
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Academic Board 14 April 2026

Following from the changes to the Education and Training Act and the adoption of a Council Statement, some specific changes will be required to the University policy documents. Full University wide consultation will take place in relation to all proposed policy changes.

Academic Freedom & Freedom of Expression Policy

The following sections of the current Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Policy will likely require revision to align to the Council Statement on Freedom of Expression or the Education and Training Act 2020:

Section 1 sets out the purpose of the policy. This may need minor adjustments.

Section 3.2 provides that the rights and freedoms contained in the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act “may be subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society”.

Section 4 includes a statement, along with principles, that underpin the University’s approach to the matters covered by the policy. While these appear largely consistent with the Council Statement on Freedom of Expression, it may be necessary to make some changes to ensure full consistency.

Section 4.3 provides that the University will not take a position on public matters and issues that do not pertain to the mission and purpose of the University. This wording will likely require minor amendment to align with the Council Statement namely that the University “will not take public positions on matters that do not directly relate to its role or function”.

Academic Freedom & Freedom of Expression Policy

Section 6.2 provides that the right to freedom of expression is not an absolute or unlimited right. It further states that this right does not impose an obligation on anyone to listen, or to be invited or hosted by the University, and that, while there must always be a presumption in favour of free expression, the right may sometimes be justifiably curtailed. This section will likely require revision..

Section 7.4(a) aims to ensure that decisions about hosting events, activities, or speakers are guided first and foremost by consistency with the University's academic mission, including whether the activity promotes and enhances scholarly pursuit, facilitates the genuine sharing and/or testing of ideas, connects evidence to hypothesis, and/or seeks to further understanding. This section will likely require removal or significant revision, as limitations on expression will only be permissible where the expression is likely to be unlawful or to disrupt the ordinary activities of the University. The section will also need to clearly state the new requirement that University premises should not be denied to invited speakers because of that speaker's ideas or opinions.

Academic Freedom & Freedom of Expression Policy

Section 9 provides that complaints made in relation to matters covered by the Policy will be managed in accordance with the Staff Conduct Policy and the Student Conduct Statute, as appropriate. This largely parallels the Council Statement on Freedom of Expression, except for the new requirement that complaints made against the University as an institution should be referred to the University Council through the Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Committee.

Campus Life Policy

Minor inconsistencies between the Campus Life Policy and the Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Policy will need to be addressed as part of the review process.

This is likely to include aligning definitions relating to events and providing greater clarity on the distinction between commercial and academic events.

This may also involve the development of a new Events Management Procedure, based on the principles articulated in the Council Statement.