

Griffith Council News

June 2024

Council News is a high-level summary for staff of some of the key items and outcomes from the most recent ordinary Council meeting.

VICE CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

Council **noted** the Vice Chancellor's Report, which had been circulated with the papers and was taken as read. The Vice Chancellor highlighted:

- Griffith staff and alumni named in the King's Birthday honours.
- Positive results in the recent Graduate Outcomes Survey with improvements in retention, employment outcomes, and the salary gap, but noting there was still work to be done.
- An excellent outcome and significant improvement in the SDG Impact Rankings, which was under embargo at the time of the meeting.
- A recent trip to China and Hong Kong which had included an event to celebrate Professor Colin Mackerras AO and his 60 years of teaching at the Beijing Foreign Studies University, the signing of MOUs with three universities, a meeting with the new ambassador, and three alumni events.

An update on the impact and implementation of changes to industrial relations laws was then provided, and the Vice Chancellor noted that changes to casualisation had been difficult for universities. In response to a query about how the University was navigating the 'right to disconnect' the Vice Chancellor advised that work had commenced on this over a year ago with setting expectations and some protocols around boundary setting and response times, particularly for teaching staff.

The Vice Chancellor then spoke to a presentation to update members on the T2 load and income, noting that international commencements had been worse than anticipated. The University's plans in response were highlighted, which included ongoing work to reduce non-salary and salary costs. The impact of changes to international education legislation was also discussed, and the serious risks for Griffith and other universities which were being monitored and considered in short-term and medium-term financial sustainability plans. In addition, visa processing continued to be significantly delayed as a result of the migration strategy, a change in the University's risk rating and reported shortages of visa staff. The University was exploring transnational education opportunities with a consortium of universities from the Innovative Research Universities group, with an initial business case looking promising for offshore delivery in India.

Council members discussed the approach to cost reduction and plans to address workload, options for transnational education opportunities noting cost versus benefit, and the continued need to lobby government given the impact of the migration strategy and visa processing on universities, but also on the broader Australian economy.

Members congratulated the Vice President (Advancement) and his team for reaching the philanthropic income target, and also acknowledged the achievements and improvements in research outcomes.

HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT

Council **noted** the *Health, Safety and Wellbeing Report*, which was compiled from March and April 2024 data and had been circulated with the papers and was taken as read. The Chief Operating Officer highlighted the following items:

- The Lost Time Injury Frequency Rate (LTIFR) had increased from February, reaching 2.09 at the end of April, but remained below the industry benchmark of 2.50.
- Year to date, four new critical risks had been identified by the Critical Risk Program, bringing the total to 13, with nine having documented and verified controls.
- The Line 2 Assurance Program had seen a significant increase in the identification of high-risk regulatory issues and non-conformances to both regulatory and internal governance requirements, with significant safety issues continuing to be escalated to the Incident Management Teams for remediation and making safe. Physical risk was still assessed as elevated. Psychosocial risk remained low but was being monitored given the current issues in relation to the University's financial sustainability.
- The Pro Vice Chancellors from the Health and Sciences Groups had attended the May Audit and Risk Committee meeting to present their respective approaches to health and safety uplift in both Groups. The Pro Vice Chancellor also spoke about a proposed change to single use needles in response to a trend in needle/sharps injuries in the Health Group.

Members discussed the metrics and mechanisms for monitoring staff morale and engagement, particularly given the current internal and external context, the reasons for increase in Lost Time Injury Frequency Rate (LTIFR) since February, which was contractor related, with many more onsite due to infrastructure projects, and individual incidents – not the result of a repeated trend, and mechanisms to ensure instances of workplace bullying and harassment are being properly addressed, particularly if multiple are from the same area.

DEVELOPING A NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

Council **noted** the submission titled *Developing our Strategic Plan*, which had been circulated with the papers and taken as read. Members noted that the current strategic plan *Creating a future for all* would expire in 2025 and that a new ten year strategic plan was being developed. Council had been asked to provide early feedback on the emerging strategic themes ahead of it being progressed and discussed at the Council Strategic Retreat in September.

The Vice Chancellor advised that the submission provided an early view of the key themes that had emerged following internal discussions and feedback received through emails, roundtables and town halls. Next steps would involve engagement with students and external stakeholders, including industry leaders.

Council members discussed the importance of online delivery as part of the strategic plan and as a focal point for Griffith University, which included it being supportive of our equity focus. Support for codesigning/codeveloping with industry to produce employable graduates was noted, and the use of partnerships to support some of the challenges around assessment, with increased use of authentic assessment, as was the need for a core focus on digital/technological enhancement. Integration of the University's distinctiveness proposition was also highlighted, which should align to a doubling down on our values, as a feature of what makes Griffith different.

The Vice Chancellor invited members to contact her directly with any additional feedback following the meeting. The Chancellor advised that the draft program for the Council Strategic Retreat would be on the agenda for discussion and feedback at the August Council meeting and would include a focus on the development of the strategy.

ONLINE STRATEGY

Council **noted** the submission titled *Griffith's proposed new online strategy*, which was circulated with the papers and taken as read. The Provost noted that the proposed new online strategy was one of the strategies to increase student enrolments and support new income generation, and that Nous had developed an online business case supplemented by financial analysis from the Griffith Finance team. The proposal was for an asynchronous approach to online education, which was a departure from the current timetabled teaching model and aimed to address quality and scheduling issues for students.

Members discussed the mechanisms for online delivery and for measuring cost against benefits realisation. Challenges and opportunities were also discussed, including those specific to the competition in online delivery both nationally and internationally and staff workload management and capability development.

The Chancellor closed the discussion, noting that the topic would be revisited in the future as the strategy was further developed and would likely be discussed in the context of the Council Strategic Retreat.

MAJOR CAMPUS AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS UPDATE

Council **noted** the submission titled *Strategic Campus Infrastructure Program Update*, which had been circulated with the papers and was taken as read. Members received updates on the following major campus and infrastructure projects:

- *N82 Building*
 - Significant pricing increases for N82 main works had been confirmed which would require consideration of various options for the project.
 - Funding and project structure alternatives were being considered.
 - Preliminary discussions were underway regarding alternative capital funding mechanisms for N82.
- *Student accommodation*
 - Financial close for the Campus Living Village (CLV) Gold Coast campus student accommodation had been delayed, however it was near completion and anticipated in the weeks following the meeting.
 - Negotiations with CLV regarding potential student accommodation development at Nathan campus were ongoing.
- *CBD campus*
 - Project due diligence and contract negotiations continued.
 - The total investment required for the leasehold acquisition, stage 1, and stage 2 fit-out, would be higher than the Capital Outlook projection, and the final investment was dependent upon the final agreed acquisition price and updated fit-out estimates.

The Chancellor and Vice Chancellor asked Council members to advocate for Griffith where possible with The Treasury building deal, and to also take any opportunity to advocate for improved public transport to the Nathan campus.

REPORT ON INDIGENOUS MATTERS AND THE LOGAN COMMUNITY

The Director, Student Equity and Diversity, GUMURRII Student Success Unit, Mr Shane Drahm, joined the meeting for this item.

Council **noted** the submission titled *Report on Indigenous Education and the Logan Community*, which had been circulated with the papers and was taken as read. Professor Shannon started by introducing the Director, Student Equity and Diversity, GUMURRII Student Success Unit, Mr Shane Drahm, noting that it was her last meeting in office and that Mr Drahm had been appointed as Acting Deputy Vice Chancellor (Indigenous) until an appointment had been finalised.

Professor Shannon then highlighted:

- Proposed changes to the University's approach to reconciliation to integrate a stronger focus on Truth-Telling and noting that a paper would be tabled for discussion at the June meeting of the GU Elders and First Peoples Knowledge Holders Advisory Board.
- Progress and outcomes on Griffith's strategic priorities in Indigenous education and the Logan campus in 2023 / 2024 including improvements in Indigenous student participation and outcomes, but with continued challenges for student retention.
- Investment in the Tutoring for Success Program (TSP) over the past 2 years had resulted in increased student success, with approximately 90% of courses passed for those students involved in the program. The program had national recognition and was a finalist in the Australian Financial Review Higher Education Awards in the Equity and Access category.
- The GUMURRII Student Success Unit was working closely with Student Services on the implementation of a university-wide retention program being led by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education) to improve retention.
- Improvements in Indigenous employment, though it was noted that it would be challenging to meet 2025 Indigenous workforce targets given the University's financial position.
- Implementation of the Cultural Competency Program.

- Strong and ongoing commitment to community engagement and supporting Indigenous, Maori and Pasifika community empowerment in Logan through a number of programs and events.

Members discussed the difficulties around Higher Degree Research student recruitment, and the correlation between student attrition and the need for employment.

The Chancellor acknowledged Professor Shannon and thanked her on behalf of the Council for her outstanding contribution to the University, noting the significant and enduring impact of her leadership during her tenure. He advised that there would be an opportunity to celebrate Professor Shannon at a formal celebration in the coming months. The Council then recognised Professor Shannon with a round of applause. The Chancellor then thanked Mr Drahm for attending for the item.

The Director, Student Equity and Diversity, GUMURRII Student Success Unit, Mr Shane Drahm, left the meeting.

RESEARCH PERFORMANCE REPORT

Council **noted** the submission titled *Research Performance Report 2018-2023*, which had been circulated with the papers and was taken as read. The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) updated the Council on the University's research performance over the 2018 to 2023 period and provided assurance of the monitoring of research quality in line with TEQSA requirements, and highlighted the following:

- 2023 research highlights, including the move towards major bids, and Griffith's increased recognition on the international research stage.
- Griffith's HERDC-eligible research income had grown substantially between 2018 and 2023, with a particularly steep upwards trajectory in the last three years.
- Growth and diversification of income sources was a focus. CCR income was important, and dependent on strong industry engagement, and development of the pipeline had benefited from the work of the Vice President (Industry and External Engagement).
- A consistently high proportion of Griffith's HDR candidates had reported overall satisfaction with their experience (80% or above for the last four years) – satisfaction with supervision is very high; satisfaction with skills development is on an upwards trajectory.
- The number of HDR commencements had remained stable over the last five years, though with a recent decrease in commencing domestic candidates (in line with the rest of the sector), offset by an increase in commencing international candidates.
- HDR completions had remained above 300 per year since 2018, though with slight increases in time to completion due to the impacts of Covid.
- Griffith's largest areas of research productivity in terms of volume of research outputs were Health, Natural Sciences and Physical Sciences, and Society and Culture.
- Griffith's relative citation impact for the six-year period (2018-2023) was slightly above the Australian average and was a focus for growth over coming years.
- Griffith had remained in the top 300 universities in the world over the 2018-2023 period, according to the Times Higher Education World University Rankings – improving this would continue to be a focus in coming years.
- The Supercharging Research at Griffith (SuRG) Program had introduced new principles to guide research strategy, capability, investment and structures.

Members acknowledged the excellent outcomes and the need to ensure the University's research was well publicised, noting the potential to continue to engage industry and ways in which the Council might be able to support this. The acquittal of research income was also discussed.

The Chancellor thanked the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) for his report and acknowledged the strong improvements in research performance.

TEQSA RE-REGISTRATION UPDATE

Council **noted** the submission titled *TEQSA Re-registration – Confirmed by TEQSA for low risk assessment processes*, which had been circulated with the papers and was taken as read. The Provost updated Council on the outcome of the recent assessment conducted by TEQSA and advised that TEQSA had confirmed the scope for the University's

registration renewal, which would now only require submission of core evidence requirements. In reaching this decision, TEQSA had considered Griffith's regulatory history and other risk factors and deemed the University as low risk. This was an excellent outcome and meant a reduction in the materials that would need to be provided for TEQSA's review for re-registration.

On the recommendation of the Academic Committee, Council **noted** the confirmed re-registration assessment scope and confirmed evident requirements and noted the progress of the University's TEQSA re-registration activities.

The Chancellor congratulated the Provost and the teams involved in achieving such an excellent outcome.

REPORTS FROM UNIVERSITY COMMITTEES

Council **noted** verbal updates from the Pro Chancellors and Committee Chairs for the Academic Committee, Audit and Risk Committee, Finance and Infrastructure Committee and People, Nominations and Remuneration Committee, together with copies of the most recent meeting agendas and most recent copies of approved meeting minutes.

To address recommendations from the Wells Advisory External Review of Academic Governance, the following submissions were included with resolutions for Council approval and noting.

Amended Academic Committee Composition of Membership and Constitution

On the recommendation of the Academic Committee, the Council **resolved to approve**, effective from the commencement of 2025:

- the changes proposed to the size and composition of Academic Committee membership as outlined in the attached discussion paper (2024/0000894)
- the amended Academic Committee Constitution (2024/0000895).

Amended Group Level Academic Governance and Griffith University Governance Framework

On the recommendation of Academic Committee, Council **resolved to approve**, effective from the commencement of 2025:

- inclusion of Group Boards as sub-committees of Academic Committee
- rescission of the Structure and Governance of Academic Groups (2023/0001223)
- inclusion of the revised Academic Committee structure in the Griffith University Governance Framework
- updated Delegations Register to reflect the revised Academic Governance structure
- inclusion of required updates to the Council and Committees Chart.

SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

The submission titled *Sustainability Report 2023* was circulated with the papers and taken as read. Council **noted** the *Sustainability Report 2023*, which provided an overview of work undertaken towards implementation of the Sustainability Operating Framework; documented progress against the Sustainability Strategy 2023-2030, including detailed performance data on environmental sustainability across waste, water, emissions, and biodiversity; and showcased impact stories emerging from Griffith University staff initiatives.

REPORT ON QUALIFICATIONS AWARDED

The submission titled *Report on Qualifications Awarded (2023/2024)* was circulated with the papers and taken as read. Council **noted** the process by which qualifications are awarded, including the controls and monitoring in place to ensure legitimate conferral.

CAMPUS LOCATION AND NAME UPDATE

On the recommendation of the Academic Committee, the Council **noted** the relocation of Griffith College and GELI to a city location, location name updates for the Brisbane City and Brisbane South campuses and Academic Committee endorsement for submission of the above changes to TEQSA.

ANNUAL MODERN SLAVERY STATEMENT

On the recommendation of Audit and Risk Committee, the Council **resolved to approve** the Griffith University Modern Slavery Statement for the reporting period 2023.

HONORARY DEGREE POLICY

On the recommendation of the People, Nominations and Remuneration Committee, Council **resolved to approve** the Honorary Degree Policy (2024/0001044) with a new review date of 2027.

AMENDED CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

The Council **resolved to approve** the amended Conflict of Interest Policy (2024/0001074) effective from 10 June 2024.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND FREEDOM OF SPEECH POLICY

The Council **resolved to approve** the Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech Policy (2024/0001062) with a new review date of 2027.

JUNE 2024