



OUTCOMES FROM DEAKIN UNIVERSITY COUNCIL MEETING 1, 2020 – 19 MARCH 2020

Deakin University Council met on 19 March 2020 at venues in Geelong and Melbourne and by videoconference in accordance with the provisions for approved methods of communication for Council meetings under the *Deakin University Act 2009*.

There were no apologies and all Council members were in attendance.

Non-members in attendance included the three Deputy Vice-Chancellors, the Chief Operating Officer and the Chief Financial Officer.

The Chancellor thanked all attendees for being present despite the difficulties created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 pandemic

Further to recent communications by email Council considered a detailed update from the Vice-Chancellor on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the University.

Endorsement of principles and actions underpinning the University's response

Council endorsed the following principles as continuing to underpin the University's response to the crisis:

- the health and wellbeing of our community is paramount
- the University will follow and implement public health advice on preventing the spread of the virus and dealing with infections and suspected infections
- the University will maintain a high level of communication to staff and students
- the University will cooperate fully with government authorities and community partners on actions to prevent the spread of the disease.

Council passed resolutions in support of the Vice-Chancellor continuing to implement actions in accordance with the principles. Council also approved contingency arrangements in the event of management and governance leaders falling ill.

Minimising and pausing on-campus teaching and non-essential activities

Council received a detailed briefing from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education on the use of Deakin's Cloud Campus to continue lectures and seminars online wherever practical.

The Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education emphasised the difference between minimising on-campus teaching and closing a campus. As far as possible campuses need to stay open to underpin online learning, to support students including those in residences, and to continue research projects. Campuses can remain open while implementing public health advice on social distancing. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education highlighted students' strong desire to progress and complete their study. Feedback from students indicates that they support the arrangements being made to enable them to continue studying despite the difficult situation.

Financial sustainability

Council noted that the pandemic will have a significant negative financial impact but its magnitude and duration are unknown at this stage. The University has paused discretionary expenditure and is minimising activity where it is not directly related to teaching and research. It was emphasised that very close attention to operating cash flow would be required in the coming months.

Expression of appreciation to staff in challenging times

Council thanked the Vice-Chancellor and Executive for their dedicated work on ensuring the safety of the University community. Council expressed its appreciation of the outstanding efforts of staff to respond quickly and effectively to the crisis. Council paid tribute to the dedication and exceptional commitment of staff to move on-campus teaching online, support students, continue research where appropriate and to make and implement crisis and contingency plans.

Overseeing University performance

2019 Student Experience Survey

Notwithstanding the very difficult COVID-19 situation Council noted that it was important to recognise the University's achievement in being rated as Australia's top public University for overall educational experience in the 2019 Student Experience Survey. Council acknowledged this outstanding result with acclamation.

2019 Deakin University Annual Report

Council reviewed the University's 2019 Annual Report and considered:

- a report from the Chancellor's Advisory Committee on its endorsement of the narrative sections of the Annual Report
- detailed information from the Chief Financial Officer on the management sign off process to verify the integrity and accuracy of the 2019 financial statements in the Annual Report, encompassing the Executive, Senior Management Group, Finance Managers, Corporate Finance and eSolutions
- a report from the Audit and Risk Committee on its endorsement of the 2019 financial statements as a true and fair view of the financial position and performance of the University.

Subject to the resolution of an outstanding matter under discussion at the time of the meeting Council approved the 2019 Deakin University Annual Report.

Following finalisation the Report will be forwarded to the Hon. Gayle Tierney MP, Minister for Training and Skills and Minister for Higher Education for tabling in the Victorian Parliament and will subsequently be published on the University's website.

LIVE the future implementation report

Council considered a report on the University's progress against key performance indicators under the *LIVE the future* strategic plan for the period until 31 December 2019. Council was pleased to note good progress against the vast majority of indicators.

Overseeing the management and control of finances

2019 financial result

Council considered the Financial Report for the period to 31 December 2019 but noted that the full year financial result for 2019 needed to be seen in the context of the significant financial impact of the COVID-19 crisis.

Investment strategy

Council considered a report from the Investment Committee on its review of the University's Investment Governance Framework. Council noted further work underway on the University's responsible investment strategy in the context of the University's commitment to sustainability.

Overseeing and monitoring academic activities

Council received a report on the outcomes of the meeting of the Academic Board held on 20 February 2020 and requested that the 'hot topic' presentation by the Dean of Students also be presented to a future Council meeting.

Council endorsed a proposal by the Chair of the Academic Board to amend the terms of reference of the Academic Board Executive Committee (ABEC) to empower it to advise the Chair on matters requiring expeditious consideration and approval. This proposal will be presented to the Academic Board for approval.

Council received a presentation from Alfred Deakin Professor Svetha Venkatesh on artificial intelligence and its applications in education, industry and society. Professor Venkatesh also addressed ethical issues associated with the use and advancement of artificial intelligence.

Council thanked Professor Venkatesh for her excellent, informative presentation and was pleased to observe that the presentation worked well in the online format.

Honours and acknowledgements

Council expressed its appreciation of the valuable legacy left to Deakin and education by Professor Geoff Wilson AM, Deakin's Vice-Chancellor from 1996 to 2002 who passed away on 9 January 2020. This legacy lives on through the scholarship established in his name by his family and the University to support Indigenous students in the fields of ecology and environmental science.