

Council Communiqué

Meeting 4, 2026 – 1 October



Deakin University is established in the public interest by the [Deakin University Act 2009 \(Vic\)](#) to deliver accessible, high-quality education and research to meet the needs of students and the community. The University's objects are set out in the Act and at the end of this communiqué.

The University Council actively oversees the University's strategy, performance, risk management, culture and compliance consistent with its purpose and in the public interest.

The Council met on 1 October 2026 at the Geelong Waterfront Campus and dealt with matters as follows in accordance with its governance responsibilities and [2026 business schedule](#).

This communiqué provides a summary of the key decisions and strategic discussions from the meeting.

Strategic focus

Finance

Council considered the Financial Report to 31 August 2026 and the Full Year Outlook². Council was advised of the domestic and international recruitment challenges that have led to a downturn in the student base. Council and the Executive Leadership Team had a full and broad-ranging discussion on the development of the 2027 Budget and Financial Plan, including current opportunities, challenges, and short- and long-term mitigation strategies.

GIFT City International Branch Campus

Council held a strategic focus session on the GIFT City International Branch Campus (IBC) strategy and future direction 2027-2030.

The session introduced the strategic opportunity for Deakin in GIFT City and its role in the University's broader

ambitions in India. The discussion focused on future ambition, the pace of development, and the opportunities and risks ahead.

Council welcomed the opportunity to consider the University's ambitions in India as part of the broader International Strategy at a future meeting.

Key matters

Executive appointments

Council approved the recommendation to appoint Briony Lewis as Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor University Services and Professor Amanda Mooney as Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic.

Council were provided with an update on the recruitment process for the Vice-Chancellor, including a summary of key themes from the stakeholder consultation on the desired qualities, capabilities and priorities for the new Vice-Chancellor.

Council appointments

Council considered and approved the reappointment of:

- Richard Carr as a Council Appointed Member for a three-year term of office from 1 January 2027 to 31 December 2029
- Stephen Bubb as a Council Appointed Member for a one-year term of office from 1 January 2027 to 31 December 2027
- Stephen Bubb as Deputy Chancellor for a one-year term from 1 January 2027 to 31 December 2027.

Major projects

Outside of the regular Council meeting cycle, Council considered a proposal for the Digital Core Program, a project that aims to deliver a renewal of Deakin's core enterprise platforms covering student, curriculum, workforce, payroll and finance functions.

Council approved the investment for Phase 1 of Tranche 1 of the Program and set out their expectations around project governance, accountabilities, critical milestone, validation and independent assurance.

Council also considered the Major Projects Report, including detailed progress reports on the International Branch Campuses.

Performance

Council discussed the measures and targets detailed in the latest iteration of the Strategic Plan *Deakin 2030: Ideas to Impact* Key Performance Indicators Dashboard Report (September 2026), and progress against the KPIs.

Risk culture

Academic Risk

Council received a presentation from Deakin Distinguished Professor Judy Currey, Chair of the Academic Board, Dr Matt Brett, Director Academic Governance and Standards and Professor Josh Newton, Deputy Dean, Deakin Business School, on Deakin's approach to managing academic risk.

Council discussed the increasingly complex external operating environment and the new and emerging challenges the sector is facing into regarding oversight of academic risk.

Council discussed the importance of enabling academic innovation and the need for the right level of controls for balanced assurance.

Risk Report

Council considered an update on Deakin's key risk management activities, current risk position and the latest Headline Risk Report.

Compliance with workplace obligations

Council discussed the latest report on the University's ongoing Enterprise Agreement Compliance Assurance program and noted recent system improvements. This a standing item on the Council agenda and reflects Deakin's firm commitment to meeting workplace obligations on an ongoing basis.

Academic governance

Council considered a report from Professor Currey, Chair of the Academic Board on academic governance matters including her recent visit to the Deakin Lancaster Indonesia International Branch Campus (DLI IBC). Highlights of the visit included meetings at the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, a forum hosted by DLI for students that involved key industry and government representatives, and a heart-warming impromptu graduation ceremony. Common to all meetings

was respect and admiration for academics, the Australian higher education sector, and Deakin for bringing a global education experience to their students by locating a campus in Indonesia.

The Chancellor thanked Professor Currey for the informative report which added value to Council's understanding of the work of the Board.

Deakin Honorary Doctorates

Council considered recommendations to award a Deakin Honorary Doctorate to individuals who have made an inspiring or significant and sustained contribution to the community aligned to the University's objectives. Council approved eight candidates for conferral.

Policy and governance matters

Review of policy

Council approved amendments to the Treasury Policy and Treasury Management Procedure which strengthen the University's practices around liquidity and borrowing management and oversight.

Council also approved amendments to Investment Policy Schedule A: Investment Strategy. In making this decision the Council considered a review of responsible investing regarding Environmental, Social and Governance considerations.

Committee reports

Council received the minutes from recent meetings of its committees, including a six-monthly report on student complaints and grievances and the quarterly report on health, safety and wellbeing.

Elections

Council considered and noted a report on the 2026 Council elections process and outcomes and a proposal to enable a smoother transition and handover period.

Council congratulated Alice Faulkner (Staff member) and Paul Ting (Student member) on their appointment to Council effective 1 January 2027.

Disability Governance Committee

Council considered a report on the establishment of the Disability Governance Committee, required under the Higher Education Support (Other Grants) Amendment (Disability Support Fund) Guidelines 2026.

Council approved the establishment of the Disability Governance Committee as a subcommittee of the new Student, Staff and Culture Committee of Council from January 2027.

Presentations

External presentation

Council received a presentation from Professor Barney Glover AO, inaugural chief commissioner, Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) on ATEC's role in working with universities on strategic direction.

Discussion was broad and wide ranging, including matters such as ATEC's Statement of Strategic Priorities, mission-based compacts, student demand and load forecasting, and student safety and wellbeing.

Council heard also about ATEC's plans to expand credit recognition pathways and challenges with the domestic research training pipeline.

Concluding matters

In closing the meeting, the Chancellor acknowledged the dedicated work across the University on the range of important items considered at the meeting.

The next Council meeting will be held on 12 and 13 November 2026.

Special acknowledgments

Council acknowledged the hard work and dedication of Distinguished Deakin Professor Matthew Clarke in his role as Caretaker Vice-Chancellor. Council thanked Professor Clarke for his calm and transparent approach during a challenging period for the University.

Council also acknowledged with acclamation the outstanding contributions provided by Clare Lezaja, Chief Financial Officer who is departing Deakin at the end of October, since joining Deakin in May 2024. Council expressed their appreciation for her strong financial stewardship and recognised her ability to articulate complex financial matters, providing assurance to the Council in its deliberations and decision-making.

Disclaimer

Please note that this report provides an overview for the University community of the Council's decisions and actions at the relevant meeting. It is not intended to cover every decision made at the meeting or the full detail of decisions and discussions. It has regard to the need for decisions of the governing body to be kept confidential for legal or commercial reasons.

Inquiries and requests for further information can be directed to the University Council Secretary at council-secretary@deakin.edu.au.

Further information

Please see the [Council's webpage](#) for detailed information on Council's membership, committees, Charter, annual business schedule, Operating Provisions, Operating Protocol and reports addressing a range of governance matters.

Please see the University's [Policy Library](#) for:

- University Statute and Regulations, including the Council Regulations
- Council approved policies relating to the governance of the University, including the University's Policy Framework.

The Objects (aims) of the University (from s 5 of the Deakin University Act) are as follows:

- (a) to provide and maintain a teaching and learning environment of excellent quality offering higher education at an international standard;
- (b) to provide vocational education and training, further education and other forms of education determined by the University to support and complement the provision of higher education by the University;
- (c) to undertake scholarship, pure and applied research, invention, innovation, education and consultancy of international standing and to apply those matters to the advancement of knowledge and to the benefit of the well-being of the Victorian, Australian and international communities;
- (d) to equip graduates of the University to excel in their chosen careers and to contribute to the life of the community;
- (e) to serve the Victorian, Australian and international communities and the public interest by—
 - (i) enriching cultural and community life;
 - (ii) elevating public awareness of educational, scientific and artistic developments;
 - (iii) promoting critical and free enquiry, informed intellectual discourse and public debate within the University and in the wider society;
- (f) to use its expertise and resources to involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia in its teaching, learning, research and advancement of knowledge activities and thereby contribute to—
 - (i) realising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aspirations; and
 - (ii) the safeguarding of the ancient and rich Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage;
- (g) to provide programs and services in a way that reflects principles of equity and social justice;
- (h) to confer degrees and grant diplomas, certificates and other awards;
- (i) to utilise or exploit its expertise and resources, whether commercially or otherwise.