
**Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Board
held on Tuesday, 23 September 2025 at 1.00pm
in the Hunter Council Chamber**

The meeting was held face-to-face in the Hunter Council Chamber and was convened by the Vice-Chancellor Professor Nic Smith. The meeting was opened with a karakia and everyone was welcomed to the meeting.

Appreciation was given to attendees for their presence and participation in the well-attended Academic Board meeting. People were reminded of the importance of operating within the Board's defined remit and encouraged to engage with a diversity of perspectives. It was noted that while open dialogue is welcomed, personal views should not be attributed to those facilitating the process. As a governance body, members are well-positioned to thoughtfully consider complex and challenging ideas within the scope of their responsibilities.

PART A

25.62 Apologies, acknowledgements and welcomes

Okan Tan, new professional member, was welcomed.

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

25.63 Vice-Chancellor Oral Report

The oral report of the Vice-Chancellor was received.

The sector has seen significant news recently, particularly with the release of Sir Peter Gluckman's University Advisory Group (UAG) Report. The report's recommendations on university governance, collaboration, research assessment, and university size were largely anticipated. The Minister, Hon Dr Shane Reti, referenced the report at a recent conference, noting that while some recommendations received strong support, others were met with less enthusiasm.

A key outcome is the establishment of a new ministerial advisory board with diverse membership, tasked with guiding tertiary education strategy and advising on the replacement for the PBRF (now called TREF). The new TREF system aims to reduce compliance costs and use more metrics-based assessment. Implementation may begin in phases from 2027, but details, especially for secondary metrics, are still being developed.

NZ and Australian universities have formed a coalition to negotiate publishing fees with the four major academic publishers, addressing the high costs that affect not only their institutions but the wider sector. These fees are considered excessive given that publishers don't compensate authors or editors and rarely distribute physical copies. Universities in the USA and Europe have recently completed similar negotiations, and there's growing momentum

among the 47 New Zealand universities to collectively engage in these discussions. The issue is critical for the Academic Board, as there is a real possibility that one or more publishers may withdraw access by the end of the year or early next year.

Appreciation was given to those who attended the recent AI forums and it was emphasised that continued dialogue is encouraged. It was noted that we have the opportunity to learn from students in this space. While some have concerns that AI is being promoted too aggressively, the importance of openly discussing both the opportunities and risks was stressed.

Discussion included:

- There is interest in whether discussions with the four publishers have addressed open access models. There is a shift toward charging authors rather than readers, raising questions about affordability and access. The concern is that publishers are not only expensive but also control access to knowledge, which affects the public good. There is also the question about how the university is leveraging its open access repository to ensure public access to research outputs.
- There was an alternative option suggested where the author of a publication can be contacted directly to request a copy, or check if it's available through their institutional repository.
- A concern would be the potential impact on student projects, particularly within the tight timeframes. Limited access to high-impact journals could affect or delay thesis completion rates.
- We are grappling with the impact of AI on academic publishing which is amplifying existing issues. While the future direction is uncertain, we believe the true value of journals lies in revitalising scholarly communities and fostering meaningful engagement among peers, rather than focusing solely on publication outputs. This shift may also challenge the necessity of traditional publishers, as collaboration and peer relationships become more central.

The negotiating team is being led by Ian Martin, Vice Chancellor of Deakin University in Australia. This item can be revisited at the next Academic Board meeting.

A question was raised regarding the Academic Board's collective stance on the publishing issue given the potential impact, specifically asking whether pushing the boundaries would pose a significant risk, and whether the lack of access to one of the big four publishers would be a major concern. Members were generally supportive of taking a calculated risk.

25.63 Written Report

AB25-81

The August 2025 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).

Report of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic

Professor Robyn Longhurst spoke to her report which was taken as read.

The Council of Australasian University Librarians (CAUL), Universities Australia (UA), and Universities New Zealand – Te Pokai Tara (UNZ) are taking a sector-wide, unified approach to the negotiations with four of the world’s largest academic publishers—Elsevier, Springer Nature, Wiley, and Taylor & Francis in relation to new open access (OA) agreements.

Further information can be found on the CAUL website: <https://www.caul.edu.au/services-programs/content-procurement-services/major-negotiations>.

Professor Karen Smith was thanked for her leadership in the He Kokonga Whare e Kitea space. Appreciation was given to the contributions of over 400 staff who responded to the survey, as well as the approximately 100 individuals who participated in one of the two workshops. As we move into the next phase of the project, we are establishing workstreams, engaging students, and exploring the ideas that emerged during the initial stages.

Report of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research

Professor Margaret Hyland spoke to her report which was taken as read.

The Ministry of Education is conducting a fast, targeted consultation on the new Tertiary Research Excellence Framework (TREF), engaging through Universities New Zealand (UNZ) with Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Research and Academic) to gather feedback.

Staff are encouraged to upload their publications to the university’s Open Access Institutional Repository. The library website has helpful resources, and subject librarians are available to assist.

Neil Dodgson is helping lead the scheme which is now live, offering PhD scholarships and support for students based in industry. The current theme is energy innovation, involving projects with external partners supporting students on Aotearoa’s energy transition.

Report of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Students

Dr Logan Bannister spoke to her report which was taken as read.

Appreciation was given to people who donated to the [Winter Energy Grant](#) initiative which is a collaboration between Development and Finance Procurement teams, and is funded by donations from staff, alumni and university suppliers.

The 2025/26 Summer Research Scholarship Programme has received a strong response, with 62 projects submitted across all faculties. Appreciation was given to those who submitted a project. The contact email is summer-research@vuw.ac.nz.

Thanks were extended to all who attended and contributed to the Open Day on 22 August, and to those who put in time and effort into the day. There were record registrations of 7,147, which is a 20% increase in applications. Increases were attributed to a more targeted marketing approach and earlier and better promotion around information evenings, which attracted out-of-region attendees, and engaged parents.

Report of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Māori and Kaitiakitanga

Professor Rawinia Higgins spoke to her report which was taken as read.

The passing of Paramount chief Sir Tumu Te Heuheu was acknowledged.

The Academic Board was thanked for their support for the updated constitution for Toihuarewa.

Over the past month, future, current, and past students have been celebrated through a series of events including Open Day, with a week-long visit from our Te Paewathi o Te Rangi students leading up to it, and a special event that brought together sustainability organisations from across the city to foster connections and explore opportunities for future employment and internships.

Last week, we celebrated the Distinguished Alumni Awards with five remarkable alumni.

Appreciation was given to everybody who participated in Te Wiki o te Reo Māori last week, and for all those who went to Ngā Mokopuna to either participate in the student events or to attend the market celebrating local multi-businesses.

Rawinia was commended for her poised and thoughtful approach during the Q&A interview with Jack Tame, effectively highlighting the significance of Māori Language Week's history while also articulating a clear vision for its future.

25.64 Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions motion regarding Palestine AB25-82

The motion for the paper was to endorse and adopt the use of boycott, divestment, and other appropriate non-violent means in response to Israel's human rights violations, breaches of international humanitarian law, and destruction of the education system in Gaza.

It was acknowledged that Academic Board has a history of discussing difficult topics and a commitment to approaching such discussions thoughtfully and constructively. While people hold personal views on the civilian tragedy in Gaza, their role is to ensure the Board operates within its remit, fostering open, transparent, and respectful dialogue. The Board emphasised listening to diverse perspectives, respecting differences, and maintaining alignment with its governance responsibilities.

Four options for addressing the situation were:

1. Scope of the Motion - how it relates to Academic Board's remit.
2. Process - Options included:
 - Discuss at the meeting and revisit later
 - Form a subcommittee to explore
 - Combine discussion with other steps
3. Position - the Board may express a stance via:
 - A vote (public or confidential)
 - A joint consensus statement
 - Drafting a statement for future use

4. Response Beyond the Motion - consider broader advisory input to Council on academic implications for strategic implementation.

Consideration was given to the broader academic implications and advice to Council and whether it aligns with the Board's role under the *Education and Training Act 2020* to advise on academic matters and exercise delegated powers.

The motion from the Academic Board of Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington advises the University Council to:

1. Endorse the use of boycott, divestment, and other non-violent means to pressure Israel to comply with international humanitarian law and respect Palestinian human rights.
2. Investigate and disclose University ties to identify any financial investments, research collaborations, or contractual agreements with institutions or corporations known to be complicit in Israel's violations of Palestinian human rights and breaches of international humanitarian law.
3. Divest from corporations known to be complicit in Israel's violations of Palestinian human rights and breaches of international humanitarian law. End any existing contracts with these companies and pledge not to enter into new agreements with them.
 - a. Maintain existing divestment efforts, such as the VUW Foundation Board's \$50,000 divestment from Israeli Government Bonds.
4. Suspend any academic collaborations with Israeli universities or other institutions known to be involved in the development of military technologies or doctrines that contribute to Israel's violations of Palestinian human rights and breaches of international humanitarian law.
 - a. Maintain existing suspensions, such as the cancellation of the Embassy of Israel's essay scholarship prize.
5. Support Palestinian scholars at risk and contribute, where possible, to the recovery and rebuilding of Palestinian universities.
6. Protect staff and students against violations to academic freedom, freedom of expression, and freedom of assembly.

It was advised that Simon Keller had prepared proposed additional amendments which were presented to the Board in the meeting:

1. Recognise that the Academic Board does not comment on all international justice issues but asserts that the current situation of Israel's actions in Gaza warrants condemnation.
2. Acknowledge the existence of differing opinions in relation to Israel and Gaza within the university and affirm the right of all members to express themselves freely and engage in open, honest debate.
3. Recognise the significance and emotional sensitivity of the issue for members of the university community with the issue of Muslim and Jewish members of our community.
4. For others who have close ties to Israel and Palestine, acknowledge that discussion of

the conflict has led to incidents of Islamophobia and antisemitism and solidarity is expressed with all members of the university community affected by the conflict and affirm our condemnation of all forms of racism and bigotry.

It was noted that the University had already completed an investigation earlier this year into its research collaborations, including academic and student exchanges with Israeli institutions, and confirmed that none exist; this remains the case. Rather than undertaking further investigations or disclosures, the University will commit to not entering into any such collaborations for a significant period.

A query was raised on why the amended Academic Board motion omits the earlier divestment wording and whether this was based on legal advice.

It was confirmed that this was based on legal advice from Buddle Findlay, and with reference to the Academic Board Statute (Clause 3.3) and the Education and Training Act 2020; only components 4, 5, and 6 fall within the Board's functions and may be presented. Components 1 and 3 are outside the Board's remit and have been excluded. Component 2 is partly in scope: the request for Council to investigate and disclose any research collaborations is relevant to academic matters and has been included; however, the request to investigate or disclose financial investments or contractual arrangements (i.e., divestment-related elements) is out of scope for the Board and has been omitted.

A question was asked about how the University verified that no collaborations exist. Margaret Hyland (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research) explained that a March 2025 review examined formal, institution-level arrangements only, not individual researcher-to-researcher links. The team checked signed MOUs with institutions and research contracts with the listed organisations, and the International Office reviewed international education and student exchange agreements.

The decision was made to discuss the motion at the meeting today.

Members shared personal perspectives with sincerity and conviction.

Liban Ali, President of VUWSA, spoke to the motion. He recognised that staff and students are here for peaceful support of the motion.

Simon Keller expressed his support for the motion and spoke to amendments he had drafted; these had not been circulated in advance. He proposed adding contextual wording because it is unusual for the Academic Board to address such matters, and highlighted three points: (1) the Board is not claiming authority over all justice issues; (2) endorsing the motion does not require unanimity - diverse views are expected and welcomed; and (3) although geographically distant from Gaza, many in our community feel deeply connected; the amendments aim to express care, concern, and solidarity with those who feel vulnerable. Feedback was invited.

Annemarie Jutel, Professor of the School of Health, spoke saying she is a Jew but Israel does not represent her. She noted that, as academics, we carry both a legal and ethical obligation to serve as the critic and conscience of society—a responsibility that the students have courageously brought to our attention. Referring to Section 3.3.3 of the Academic Board Statute on the Functions and Powers of the Board, she emphasised that our role extends

beyond critique; we are also entrusted with safeguarding academic freedom. She expressed her support for the students' motion and invited others to stand with her.

Leon Gurevitch, Head of School Design, shared that he is the son of Italian Catholic and Russian Jew and wanted to reaffirm the point that this motion is not in any way an attack on Jewish people and that it's important to separate the actions of a state from the people, and it's important to stand up and say when something is wrong.

Speakers were thanked for bravely sharing their voices on a difficult issue.

It was acknowledged that the Academic Board does not typically issue statements on every matter; however, this is an exceptional circumstance, representing a deeply significant issue for many at this time.

It was also acknowledged that some members are personally affected by the issue at hand and emphasised the importance of offering a supportive response and agree with the point about the necessity of cautioning against taking strong stances on every global injustice. It was also noted that while some may disagree with some of the university's international relationships, they separate their personal views from their professional responsibilities and stress the need for clarity in managing such situations.

Caution was expressed about the proposal to suspend all academic collaborations with Israeli universities. Members noted that universities are diverse communities and collaborations are typically with individual scholars, so it is unjust to hold all staff accountable for the actions of one group. They emphasised universities' role in societal progress: if peaceful coexistence is to emerge, change within Israeli society, supported by its universities, will be crucial. The Board should back relationships that foster hope and progress, and continue to support long-standing, trusted collaborators, while recognising the distinction between institutional positions and individual academic partnerships.

There was strong support from members in favour of both the motion and Simon's proposed amendments, with consensus to proceed with both.

The question was asked if there will be money set aside to support Palestinian scholars at risk, and to contribute to the rebuilding of universities in Gaza. It was advised that Jonathan Boston and Liban Ali are hosting a charity event on 30 September where there will be the opportunity as a community to donate directly to the humanitarian causes. It was also suggested that there should be an established channel for scholars at risk to develop a durable pathway for people to come to our university and continue their research. It was advised that in the Ukrainian-Russian conflict there were scholarships set aside and philanthropy prioritised in that space but although this is a tangible step, there is a much longer path to work in that space.

The Vice Chancellor advised that this can be taken to Council but emphasised that the Academic Board is fully empowered to make and own its own statements and that these are matters where we do not necessarily need to wait for Council's approval. Council operates under its own specific statute, and while this can be referred to them for advice, we wouldn't want that process to delay the support we've already seen, and believe the Academic Board is well within its remit to issue an independent statement.

A way forward was proposed to build broad consensus while allowing space for differing views. The Board agreed to signal support in principle for the motion, emphasising two points: distinguishing the University's institutional position from individual academic relationships, and acknowledging the kaupapa discussed. Rather than commissioning further investigations, the University would make a clear statement that it has no current or planned research collaborations with institutions or corporations known to be complicit in violations of Palestinian rights or breaches of international law, would continue its suspension of formal collaborations with Israeli universities and related institutions implicated in such activities, and would reaffirm staff and students' rights to academic freedom, freedom of expression and assembly, including the right to associate with individual academics. The motion will be reframed to incorporate Simon Keller's amendments and returned for formal ratification at the next meeting.

Several phrasings were considered. An initial option, stating the University has no future plans to enter into such collaborations, was noted but the meeting preferred a stronger, definitive form: *"The university confirms that it has no current collaborations with institutions or corporations known to be complicit in violations of human rights and international law, and will not enter into any such collaborations in the future."*

This phrasing reinforced the University's stance and effectively concluded the discussion.

To ensure full confidence in the outcome, a confidential vote was held. The initial result was 55 in favour and one abstention. Following the meeting, one member changed their vote from in favour to abstention, resulting in a final tally of 54 in favour and 2 abstentions.

The Vice Chancellor acknowledged everyone who engaged in this challenging topic in such a thoughtful and respectful way, and expressed it makes him proud to be part of this university.

25.65 Work Programme discussion on *Enhanced good practice and Impact for Sub-Lecturing Pool (SLP) teaching* [Marc Wilson] AB25-83

The Work Programme discussion on enhanced good practice and impact for sub-lecturing pool (SLP) teaching was deferred to the next Academic Board meeting on 4 November 2025.

25.66 Curriculum Mapping Project AB25-84

The [Curriculum Mapping Project](#) discussion has been deferred to the next Academic Board meeting on 4 November 2025. It is noted that the consultation period closes on 17 October, and feedback still needs to be incorporated into the process. If any Academic Board members are concerned about not having the opportunity to provide input at today's meeting, Robyn is available to facilitate alternative avenues for feedback.

PART B OF THE AGENDA

The following items, not having been brought forward, were confirmed.

25.67 Confirmation of the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 August 2025

The minutes of the Academic Board meeting (Part A and B) held on 19 August 2025 as set out in document AB25-85 (Numbers 25.50-25.60) were confirmed.

Note: Part C of meetings are excluded for reasons of confidentiality where applicable.

25.68 Graduating Year Reviews (GYRs)

AB25-86

The following GYRs were approved to go to CUAP:

- Bachelor of Design Innovation major in Fashion Design
- Master of Education
- Master of Health Psychology
- Pasifika Pathways Programme
- Postgraduate programme in Artificial Intelligence
- Bachelor of Engineering with Honours Cybersecurity Engineering
- Master’s degree in Data Science
- Master of Environmental Science
- Renewable Energy Systems
- Master of Indigenous Studies
- Executive Master of Business Administration
- Graduate Certificate in Restorative Justice Practice
- Tourism Management major in the Bachelor of Commerce

25.69 Academic Programme Review Reports – Religious Studies and Art History

AB25-87

The Academic Programme Review report and Implementation plan for the Religious Studies (Study of Religion) programme; and The Academic Programme Review report and Implementation plan for the Art History programme were endorsed.

25.70 Report of the Academic Programmes Committee

The Academic Programmes Committee report of 2 September 2025 was noted. AB25-78

The following Programme Amendments were approved:

Faculty	Faculty Ref Number	Proposal Title	Reference
FHSS	VUW/25 - BA/12	Amend the requirements for the Environmental Humanities He Aronui Aotūroa (EHUM) major in the BA and BEnvSoc	AB25-89 APC25-69
FHSS	VUW/25 - MFA(CP)/1	Amend the regulations for the Master of Fine Arts (Creative Practice) (MFA(CP)) and introduce a new course, ARTS 403	AB25-90 APC25-70

The meeting concluded with a Karakia Whakamutunga

Whakairia te tapu	Restrictions are moved aside
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Kia wātea ai te ara

Kia turuki whakataha ai

Hui e! Tāiki ē!

So the pathway is clear

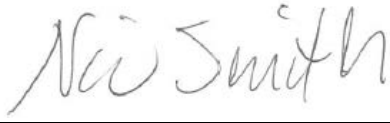
To return to everyday activities

Enriched, unified and blessed!

The meeting closed at 3.00pm.

Attendance

58 members attended; 13 non-members were in attendance; 22 apologies were received (refer to Appendix 1 for detailed record).

Signed:  _____

Professor Nic Smith, Vice-Chancellor

APPENDIX 1

Appendix 1: Academic Board attendance 23 September 2025

Liban Ali	Associate Professor Robert Keyzers
Professor Richard Arnold	Professor Karl Lofgren
Professor Graeme Austin	Professor Robyn Longhurst
Professor Susan Ballard	Professor Ivy (I-Ming) Liu
Professor Ema Maria Bargh	Professor Simon Mackenzie
Professor Brigitte Bönisch-Brednich	Professor Stephen Marshall
Professor Jane Bryson	Associate Dean Xavier Marquez
Associate Professor Sasha Calhoun	Professor Geoff McLay
Mairangi Campbell	Professor Robert McKay
Professor David Capie	Andrew Munkacsi
Associate Professor Sue Cherrington	Professor Nicola Nelson
Professor Alberto Costi	Professor Rewi Newman
Professor Urs Daellenbach	Yvette Perrot
Professor Simon Davy	Professor Robyn Phipps
Professor Neil Dodgson	Professor Janet Pitman
Dr Eli Elinoff	Professor John Randal
Ally Gibson	Dr Revti Raman
Dr Nicola Gilmour	Professor James Renwick
Professor Nicholas Golledge	Professor Jenny Ritchie
Professor Michele Governale	Ethan Rogacion
Professor Leon Gurevitch	Dr Helen Rook
Associate Professor Meegan Hall	Dr Mike Ross
Dr John Haywood	Beth Smith
Professor Rawinia Higgins	Professor Karen Smith
Associate Professor Kathy Holloway	Dr Okan Tan
Professor Margaret Hyland	Professor Paul Teesdale-Spittle
Professor Bryony James	Professor Marc Wilson
Professor Annemarie Jutel	Jenny Wollerman
Professor Simon Keller	

Non-members present

Heather Day
Joseph Habgood
David Lewis
Dr Stuart Marshall
Reece Moors
Carol Morris
Edward Schofield
Dr Robert Stratford
Lynn Grindell
Pam Green
Linda Roberts
Craigie Sinclair
Varsha Narasimhan

Apologies

Dr Barbara Allen
Professor Siah Hwee Ang
Professor Averil Coxhead
Professor Graeme Austin
Dr Luke Chu
Professor Kim Cunio
Professor Gary Evans
Professor Alejandro Frery
Professor Anne Goulding
Professor Vanessa Green
Professor Sally Hill
Professor Kate Hunter
Associate Professor Maja Krtalic
Professor Dean Knight
Professor Hai Lin
Professor Jim McAloon
Professor Ocean Mercier
Professor Sarah Ross
Tanya Ruka
Professor John Townend
Dr Linda Hogg
Dr Amanda Wolf