
**Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Board
held on Tuesday, 4 November 2025 at 1.00pm
in the Hunter Council Chamber**

The meeting was held face-to-face in the Hunter Council Chamber, convened by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Nic Smith. It opened with a karakia and words of welcome.

PART A

25.72 Apologies, acknowledgements and welcomes

The following new members were welcomed:

- Professor Pamela Bell, Professor of Practice for Advanced Construction, School of Architecture
- Professor Zhenan Jiang, Robinson Research Institute.

The following people were farewelled, and thanked for their contributions:

- Professor Annemarie Jutel, Te Puna Hauora—School of Health
- Professor Margaret Hyland, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research, Vice-Chancellor's Office
- Carol Morris, Secretary Academic Governance, Academic Office

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

25.73 Vice-Chancellor Oral Report

The oral report of the Vice-Chancellor was received.

The Vice-Chancellor is leading a national initiative on behalf of Universities New Zealand (UNZ) focused on the social licence of universities. This work has secured agreement from all eight universities to participate in a coordinated programme exploring how the sector is perceived by the public.

Initial market research findings indicate a general antipathy and indifference toward universities in Aotearoa. The public tends to view universities mainly as institutions that train professionals, with limited recognition of their broader contributions to society. Unlike Australia, where public discourse often centres on anti-elitism and loss of social licence, New Zealand's challenge appears to lie in low engagement and perceived irrelevance.

The Vice-Chancellor noted the importance of addressing this issue collectively and intends to continue working with the other universities to strengthen public understanding and support for the sector. A more detailed discussion of the research findings will be brought to a future meeting.

Discussions on the Tertiary Research Excellence Fund (TREF) are continuing, with current attention focused on the development of secondary metrics to complement traditional STEM-oriented measures such as citation counts and the H-index. These proposed metrics, informed by Margaret Hyland's research, aim to better recognise contributions from the humanities, social sciences, and creative disciplines. Initial sessions have commenced, although there remains some scepticism about whether these new measures can adequately capture the breadth and depth of research currently reflected through the PBRF, and their effectiveness in valuing diverse academic fields is yet to be seen.

Discussions of the consortium of all Australian and New Zealand universities negotiating with four major academic publishers are ongoing, as discussed at a previous meeting. The consortium aims to secure improved and more sustainable commercial terms for access to scholarly publications. Agreements have been reached or are close to being finalised with three of the publishers, while negotiations with Elsevier remain unresolved. Professor Robyn Longhurst is exploring contingency options should a deal not be reached by early 2026. It is expected that read access will continue in the interim; however, questions remain regarding publishing rights and open-access provisions. Individual universities have limited influence over the process, but the collective approach provides an important opportunity to negotiate more effectively and address escalating costs across the sector.

There is positive news on enrolments, with Māori, Pasifika, Master's, and doctoral enrolments at record highs, and strong growth in scholarship applications for 2026. While domestic applications, including for accommodation, are currently down, international interest is increasing, and efforts are underway to strengthen recruitment across all cohorts.

A significant milestone was achieved today with the successful delivery of the School of Law's first digital exams. Thanks were extended to all involved, with particular appreciation to Professor Bryony James for her leadership in advancing this initiative.

Acknowledgement was given to the ongoing development of the Teaching Workload Allocation Model (TWAM). Analysis of emerging data is expected to provide insights into how academic time is allocated, particularly around marking and assessment, and to inform strategies for streamlining processes and enhancing both staff support and the student experience.

The Vice-Chancellor reported on a recent 10-day trip to London, New York, and Beijing. Alumni events were held in London and New York, where there's strong goodwill towards the University, with a direct funding request made in New York. The visit to Beijing included attendance at the annual international education conference, where New Zealand was the country of honour. It was noted that China is currently experiencing high youth unemployment, and the government is loosening regulations on joint international programmes and institutes, which may create new opportunities for collaboration.

Discussion included:

Professor Simon Keller expressed concern about the accuracy and workload demands of the Teaching Workload Allocation Model, asking how it would be used and what decisions it might inform.

The Vice-Chancellor responded that the model's purpose is to provide a consistent basis for comparing workloads across the University and to inform future resource allocation. While imperfect, it will be refined over time and is essential for equitable decision-making.

Bryony James added that completing the model has been demanding but necessary; as it moves into future iterations, the process will become more streamlined.

Dr John Haywood asked whether demographic trends have been factored into enrolment planning, noting projected population declines.

The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the University has considered both TEC and internal projections. The current decline in accommodation demand may reflect economic pressures, with students opting to live at home rather than in hostels, but a modest recovery is expected in 2026–27 before a longer-term national decline due to lower birth rates.

25.74 Written Report

AB25-92

The November 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 DVC (Academic) reported strong progress on the He Kokonga Whare a Kitea project, with a process underway to appoint workstream chairs and a proposed focus on embedding an organisational culture of student success.

Appreciation was expressed to Professor Stephen Marshall and colleagues for the successful rollout of digital exams in the Faculty of Law, and to Teresa Schischka and her team for efficiently rescheduling 14 exams affected by the recent weather-related campus closure.

Trish Wilson and her team are continuing contingency planning in case negotiations with Elsevier are unsuccessful. The Library has recorded an increase of over 62,000 visits compared with the same period last year, reflecting greater on-campus activity.

The Curriculum Mapping document will be discussed later in the meeting.

Report of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research

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

Appreciation was extended to Digital Solutions and the Faculty of Graduate Research for the successful launch of Panoho, which has been a challenging but well-received project.

Work continues on updating research policies, with Human Ethics next on the agenda.

A new procedure for accessing extreme and restricted materials was approved, broadening the scope beyond the previous framework for sexually explicit material and providing clearer support and guidance for researchers working in this area.

The University is also contributing to Tertiary Research Excellence Fund (TREF) workshops exploring alternative research metrics to complement traditional citation-based measures; staff are encouraged to contact Professor Hyland with input.

There are no further updates yet on the establishment of Research Funding New Zealand.

Report of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Students

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

Noted highlights were:

- Trimester 3 International Orientation will be held from 11–13 November.
- The International Student Experience Team recently hosted a valuable workshop for 60 staff on supporting international students in the classroom, with further sessions planned.
- Results from the 2025 Have Your Say Student Survey are now available via a [new dashboard](#) developed by Colin Hewat, which provides valuable insights and shows positive trends in several student experience measures.
- There has been continued growth in Māori and Pasifika enrolments and strong uptake in scholarship applications, with thanks extended to Claire Williams and her team for maintaining a responsive and relevant scholarship portfolio.
- Focus now turns to re-enrolling returning students for next year, and staff are encouraged to remind students to complete their enrolment as promotional campaigns launch.

Report of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Māori and Kaitiakitanga

In Professor Rawinia Higgins' absence, Associate Professor Meegan Hall, Assistant Vice-Chancellor, Mātauranga Māori, presented the report. Recent activity at Ngā Mokopuna has included hosting a range of kaupapa, notably the 50th anniversary conference of the Waitangi Tribunal, Professor Ocean Mercier's inaugural lecture, and mental health workshops for students during the exam period.

A refreshed version of Mai i te Iho ki te Pae – Māori Strategic Outcomes Framework has been approved by Te Hiwa for wider circulation to faculties and central service units. The revised framework, while retaining its core intent, has a new look and feel and aligns closely with the University's strategic plan, inviting all areas to consider how their work contributes to the realisation of its outcomes. The team is also keen to attend Faculty Boards and relevant CSUs to discuss the framework and support its implementation.

25.75 Revised motion from Item 5 - AB25-82 In relation to Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions regarding Palestine

AB25-92

The Vice-Chancellor introduced the item, noting the aim to conclude the discussion begun at the previous meeting. The revised motion sought re-approval, rather than new approval, and the changes circulated were minimal, intended to reflect the intent of the earlier debate without becoming mired in semantics. The version presented included both a tracked-changes and clean copy; key clarifications were that the University's position on no formal collaborations was "affirmed" (not "reaffirmed"), and that the Board was informing, rather than advising, Council.

During discussion, Professor Annemarie Jutel expressed support for the motion and reflected on the importance of the previous meeting as a watershed moment for the Academic Board, encouraging continued open, robust debate on complex issues. Other members echoed the value of such discussions, and questions were raised about how policies should be interpreted "in line with" broader institutional principles. The Vice-Chancellor clarified that this wording was intended to ensure clarity and consistency in policy interpretation.

Ethan Rogacion, on behalf of VUWSA, thanked the Vice-Chancellor for his leadership and noted that the discussion made students proud to be part of a university willing to engage constructively with challenging topics.

The motion, proposed by Annemarie Jutel, was approved.

25.76 Master's Thesis Regulations

Professor Neil Dodgson presented the updated Master's Thesis Regulations, noting that the 50-page paper was taken as read. The revisions primarily clarify existing provisions, address feedback from schools, and align the regulations with system updates in PanoHo. As the project has been underway for some time, a few minor updates to the version circulated in the papers will be incorporated into the final version.

In response to a question from Dr Ally Gibson, it was clarified that the option to designate an ad hoc subcommittee is intended as an alternative to requiring full school research committee involvement, allowing smaller groups to be convened where appropriate.

The Master's Thesis Regulations were approved.

25.77 Updates to the Terms of Reference and Standing Orders for the Faculty Board of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FHSS)

Updates to the FHSS Faculty Board Terms of Reference and Standing Orders were approved.

25.78 Academic Programme Review one-year update for the Film Programme

The One-Year Update on the Implementation Plan formulated by the Film programme in response to their Academic Programme Review was noted.

25.79 Work Programme – Enhanced Good Practice and impact for Sub-Lecturing Pool (SLP) *(Item carried over from meeting held on 23 September 2025)*

The discussion document was presented by Professor Marc Wilson and received by the Board. The paper outlined current practice and future opportunities for improving the use and management of SLP funding, which supports a range of teaching activities such as laboratories, tutorials, studios, and professional contributions from external practitioners.

Discussion noted positive progress since concerns were raised in 2023 about the erosion of SLP support, while also highlighting ongoing challenges in ensuring equitable allocation and clarity around recruitment and workload processes. Members suggested that the term “sub-lecturing” may feel demeaning and could be reconsidered. The Teaching Workload Allocation Model (TWAM) will assist in identifying variation in SLP use across faculties and inform future planning.

There was broad agreement on the need to improve support and conditions for SLP staff, recognising their essential contribution and the pressures of short-term or intensive workloads. The University continues to aspire to pay at least the living wage, though this must be balanced with overall financial sustainability.

Members also saw opportunities for SLP to act as a pathway into academia, particularly for Māori, Pasifika, and recent PhD graduates, and encouraged further exploration of post-PhD employment structures and longer-term contracts.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked members for a constructive discussion, noting that insights from the TWAM will help guide next steps. Marc Wilson and colleagues will continue work on various aspects of this.

25.80 New Programme - Master of Global Studies, Postgraduate Diploma, and Postgraduate Certificate

Faculty	Faculty Ref	Proposal Title	Reference
FHSS	VUW/25 - MGS/1	Introduction of a new Master of Global Studies with nested PGDip and PGCert; new courses and course code (ICAT); amendments to related qualifications.	AB25-98 APC25-68

Professor Sally Hill presented the proposal for the new Master of Global Studies, together with the associated Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate. She thanked colleagues for their patience and collegiality throughout the development process, with particular appreciation to SES staff and to current Bachelor of Global Studies students, whose input and enthusiasm have been invaluable.

The proposal was approved internally for submission for approval to CUAP.

25.81 Curriculum Mapping Project Discussion Document

The Curriculum Mapping discussion document was received. Robyn Longhurst thanked colleagues across the University for the 56 submissions received during the feedback period (which closed on 17 October), noting a strong mix of academic and professional perspectives and a clear appetite for change. The main themes identified were points value, assessment, and delivery modes, with additional commentary on AI and workload. Insights from this meeting will be incorporated into the overall feedback and discussed further at the upcoming Learning and Teaching Committee meeting.

Ethan Rogacion (VUWSA) summarised student feedback indicating strong support for a move to 20-point courses, with 88% of surveyed students preferring this model to improve workload management and maintain full-time StudyLink eligibility. Notably, 64% reported no discernible workload difference between 15- and 20-point courses, suggesting inconsistencies in workload expectations across the University.

Members discussed the balance between standardisation and academic quality, with some cautioning against moves that could inadvertently devalue degrees or overlook disciplinary differences. Associate Professor Xavier Márquez queried whether the issue was primarily pedagogical or administrative, and who would ultimately make decisions on any future changes. Robyn Longhurst responded that no decisions have yet been made; the purpose of the document is to prompt University-wide discussion and inform the terms of reference for a future phase of work.

Stephen Marshall noted that most students work 15–20 hours per week alongside their studies (more than at comparable universities), but this does not appear to negatively affect performance. He emphasised that assessment structure, rather than points value alone, is the key driver of workload.

Professor Dean Knight observed that while the document effectively outlines the benefits of standardisation, it should also highlight the costs and workload implications for staff. A move to a consistent points value could require redesigning up to 45% of undergraduate courses, representing a major academic undertaking.

Joseph Habgood (VUWSA) and others reflected on the need to consider staff workload, not only student workload, noting that points value is only one factor influencing both. Robyn Longhurst reiterated that 15-point courses should equate to 150 learning hours and that recalibration may be needed where this is exceeded.

Dr Linda Hogg suggested that staff collaboration on workload design and awareness could help address these issues without full standardisation. Annemarie Jutel added that while points value is important, the broader pedagogical question of assessment design remains central.

The Board received the discussion document, noting the valuable debate and the need for careful consideration of both academic and operational impacts before any future decisions are made.

25.82 Resolution concerning exclusion of non-members

The Resolution concerning exclusion of non-members in relation to item 17 was resolved.

PART B OF THE AGENDA

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

25.83 Programme Amendments

The following Programme Amendments were approved:

Faculty	Faculty Ref No	Proposal Title	Reference
FADI	BDI/3	Amend the MDDN Major	AB25-101 APC25-87
FEHP	BMid/1	Amend the Bachelor of Midwifery (BMid) programme	AB25-102 APC25-88
WSBG	BCom 17/BC/2	Amend MKCO minor in Bachelor of Communication	AB25-103 APC25-89
Law	MIntr Tr/1	Amend Master of International Trade regulations	AB25-104 APC25-90
FHSS	BA/10	Amend the BA Schedule to remove Part B	AB25-105 APC25-91
WSBG	MMPA/1	Make ST MMPA 517 permanent as MMPA 527; amend GOVF major requirements in the BCom(Hons) and MCom	AB25-106 APC25-94

25.84 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 23 September 2025 (Numbers 25.62 to 25.70) were confirmed.

25.85 Report of the Academic Programmes Committee (APC)

The following items were noted in the APC Report Summary from the meeting on 14 October 2025:

- One new programme proposal: Introduction of a new Master of Global Studies was approved internally for submission to CUAP (*noting this proposal was not included in the APC meeting of 14 October and was endorsed by APC on 2 September 2025*).
- One Deletion was approved for notification to CUAP.
- Six non-CUAP programme amendment proposals were approved.
- All other items discussed and/or approved by the Committee at its 14 October 2025.

The meeting concluded with a Karakia Whakamutunga

Whakairia te tapu

Kia wātea ai te ara

Kia turuki whakataha ai

Hui e! Tāiki ē!

Restrictions are moved aside

So the pathway is clear

To return to everyday activities

Enriched, unified and blessed!

The meeting closed at 2.58pm.

Attendance

57 members attended; 11 non-members were in attendance; 15 apologies were received (refer to Appendix 1 for detailed record).

Signed: _____



Professor Nic Smith, Vice-Chancellor

APPENDIX 1

Appendix 1: Academic Board attendance 4 November 2025

Barbara Allen	Professor Kate Hunter
Liban Ali	Professor Margaret Hyland
Professor Pamela Bell	Professor Bryony James
Professor Brigitte Bönisch-Brednich	Professor Annemarie Jutel
Professor Daniel Brown	Professor Simon Keller
Associate Professor Sasha Calhoun	Professor Dean Knight
Associate Professor Sue Cherrington	Professor Karl Lofgren
Dr Luke Chu	Professor Robyn Longhurst
Professor Averil Coxhead	Professor Stephen Marshall
Dr Matt Crawford	Associate Professor Xavier Márquez
Professor Kim Cunio	Professor Geoff McLay
Professor Urs Daellenbach	Professor Robert McKay
Heather Day	Professor Katharine McKinnon
Professor Neil Dodgson	Professor Nicola Nelson
Professor Bart Ellenbroek	Professor Sally-Jane Norman
Professor Alejandro Frery	Professor Robyn Phipps
Dr Ally Gibson	Professor Janet Pitman
Dr Nicola Gilmour	Dr Revti Raman
Professor Gina Grimshaw	Ethan Rogacion
Professor Leon Gurevitch	Dr Helen Rook
Associate Professor Meegan Hall	Dr Mike Ross
Associate Professor Monica Handler	Beth Smith
Professor Dave Harper	Professor Karen Smith
Dr John Haywood	Dr Okan Tan
Professor Nikki Hessel	Professor Paul Teesdale-Spittle
Professor Sally Hill	Trish Wilson
Dr Linda Hogg	Professor Marc Wilson
Associate Professor Kathy Holloway	Jenny Wollerman – leaving early

Non-members present

Joseph Habgood
Yang Liu
Dr Stuart Marshall
Reece Moors
Carol Morris
Andrew Tipton
Linda Roberts
Dr Robert Stratford
Lynn Grindell
Varsha Narasimhan
Claire Williams

Apologies

Professor Siah Hwee Ang
Professor Richard Arnold
Professor Jane Bryson
Professor Anne Goulding
Professor Rawinia Higgins
Zhenan Jiang
Professor Catherine Iorns Magallanes
Associate Professor Maja Krtalic
Professor Ocean Mercier
Andrew Munkacsi
Yvette Perrot
Professor John Randal
Professor Jenny Ritchie
Professor Sarah Ross
Professor John Townend