



COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Council Meeting held on Monday, 14 September 2026
in Room RH1209, Level 12, Rutherford House, Pipitea Campus, Wellington
from 11 am to 4 pm**

PRESENT: Mr Alan Judge (Chancellor) (Chair)
Mr William Bell-Purchas
Professor Brigitte Bönisch-Brednich
Ms Pania Gray (Pro-Chancellor)
Ms Asifa Hanif
Professor Bryony James (Vice-Chancellor)
Ms Mei Fern Johnson
Mr David McLean
Mr David Smol
Mr James Te Puni
Ms Caroline Ward (Secretary to Council)

APOLOGIES: Professor Richard Arnold
Ms Megan Evans

IN ATTENDANCE: Dr Logan Bannister, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Students
Mr Graham Beever, Acting General Counsel
Ms Rachel Bruce, Chief Financial Officer
Mr Mairangi Campbell, Co-President, Ngāi Tahu
Ms Fiona Clarkson, Head of Strategic Communications
Mr Aidan Donoghue, VUWSA President
Ms Shannon Hughes, Student elect
Mr Clinton Jenkins, Associate Director, Planning and Performance Management
Mr Simon Johnson, Director, Campus Operations
Professor Robyn Longhurst, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic
Mr Dan Mahony, Head of Health, Safety, & Wellbeing
Professor Sally McArthur, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research
Ms Megan McPherson, Director of Communications, Marketing, and Digital Engagement
Mr Reece Moors, Director, Office of the Vice-Chancellor
Mr Chris Reed, Project Delivery Manager
Mrs Rachel Scott, Director, Governance, Risk, and Assurance
Mr David Stevenson, Director, Property Services
Ms Tina Wakefield, Chief Operating Officer

26.129

WELCOME / ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS / APOLOGIES

- Noted:**
- 1 that Mr William Bell-Purchas led the Karakia.
 - 2 that the Chancellor welcomed everyone to the meeting and particularly acknowledged the students in attendance for the fees item (see minute 26.143).

- 3 that the Pro-Chancellor, Ms Pania Gray, acknowledged that this was the start of Māori language week.
- 4 that apologies were received from Professor Richard Arnold and Ms Megan Evans.

Resolved that the apologies from Professor Richard Arnold and Ms Megan Evans be sustained.

260119

26.130 DECLARATIONS AND DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Received: the declarations and disclosure of interests register.

Noted:

- 1 that Council members were reminded to advise the Secretary to Council of any changes to their disclosure of interests listing between meetings.
- 2 that for item-specific disclosures, the Chancellor asked that Council members alert him at the time.
- 3 that Council member, Mr James Te Puni noted his interest in the fees increase item because his son is studying at the University. In addition, the Chancellor recorded that Ms Megan Evans has a son studying at the University. For both Council members this was deemed to not represent a conflict.

26.131 COUNCIL MINUTES, MEETING HELD 27 JULY 2026

Received: the public Minutes of the meeting of Council held 27 July 2026.

Resolved: that the public Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 27 July 2026 be approved.

260120

26.132 REPORT FROM THE CHANCELLOR

Received: an oral report from the Chancellor, Mr Alan Judge.

Noted:

- 1 that the Chancellor outlined events and activities since his last update to Council as follows:
 - attended regular meetings with the Vice-Chancellor
 - attended regular meetings with the Secretary to Council
 - chaired the University Council meeting on 27 July 2026
 - chaired the People & Culture Committee meeting held on 27 July 2026
 - attended the Foundation Risk & Investment (FRIC) meeting
 - attended the Chancellors' meeting on 12 August 2026
 - attended the combined Chancellors' and Vice-Chancellors' meeting held on 12 August 2026. This was followed by a dinner.
 - attended the August & Risk Committee meeting on 17 August 2026.
- 2 that the Chancellors had discussed the social licence of Universities as one of the main topics at their meeting.

Resolved: that the Chancellor's oral report be noted.

260121

26.133

REPORT FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

Received: a report from the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Bryony James, dated 3 September 2026 (document VUWC 26/92).

Noted:

- 1 that the report was taken as read.
- 2 that the passing of Emerita Professor Dame Margaret Clark, and her more than 30 years of service to Victoria and the discipline of Political Science, was acknowledged.
- 3 that the success of Open Day and the crucial role it plays as the University's primary recruitment tool was highlighted. This year's event was preceded by the highest ever level of registrations (7,400), and on a perfect Wellington Day, many thousands of visitors attended, as well as the Mayor of Wellington, Andrew Little.
- 4 that a recent recruitment drive into India under the heading 'Hello Wellington' had further raised the University's profile for potential international students.
- 5 that the current series of Election Panel debates has been well subscribed ahead of the General Election on 7 November.
- 6 that a new definition of student success has been drafted. This complements the graduate attributes statement and has been driven by a student view of success.
- 7 that recent international alumni visits had been a success with events held in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, and Hong Kong attracting excellence attendance by alumni with up to 80 people at each evening event. There is strong enthusiasm to support scholarships, mentoring and other philanthropic activity.
- 8 that there was discussion on the number of staff being recruited for Work Integrated Learning (WIL) and concern around FTE creep. It was confirmed that every new position is carefully weighed up at Te Hiwa. Council reinforced its requirement that FTE numbers are kept stable.

Resolved: that the report from the Vice-Chancellor be noted.

260122

26.134

FINANCIAL REPORT TO 31 JULY 2026

Received: the Financial report to 31 July 2026 from the Chief Financial Officer, Ms Rachel Bruce (document VUWC 26/93).

Noted:

- 1 that the report was taken as read.
- 2 that revenue was favourable to budget by \$5.5m, however this was largely due to timing. The end of year position is still expected to be a small deficit at the core level that is within the TEC target.
- 3 that returns from the Foundation continue to be favourable, however there has been volatility over recent weeks, and this cannot be relied on as markets become increasingly fragile.

Resolved: that the Financial report to 31 July 2026 be noted.

2600123

26.135

CONFERMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS

Received: the list of degrees, diplomas and certificates granted on 14 September 2026 (document VUWC 26/94).

- Resolved:**
- 1 that Council grants the degrees, diplomas and certificates in this University on the persons listed in document VUWC 26/94, and that their names be entered on the Roll of Graduates on 14 September 2026.
 - 2 that a motion of congratulations to the Graduates be recorded.

Hanif/Bell-Purchas
260124

at 11.23 am Ms Pania Gray left the meeting

26.136 RE-APPOINTMENT OF COUNCIL MEMBER

Received: a Council paper dated 18 August 2026 from the Chancellor, Mr Alan Judge, regarding the re-appointment of Council member, Ms Pania Gray (document VUWC 26/95).

- Noted:**
- 1 that the Council paper was taken as read.
 - 2 that Council members were unanimously supportive of the recommendation and appreciated Ms Gray being willing to undertake a further term.

Resolved: that on the recommendation of the Chancellor:
in accordance with clause 4.1(d) of the Council Membership Statute, Ms Pania Gray be appointed to Council for a further four-year term from 1 January 2027 to 31 December 2030.

260125

Noted: *at 11.25 am Ms Gray re-joined the meeting*
that Ms Gray was congratulated on her re-appointment.

26.137 APPOINTMENT OF COUNCIL MEMBER FOLLOWING STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE ELECTION

Received: a Council paper dated 21 August 2026 from the Chancellor, Mr Alan Judge, regarding the appointment of a Council member following the 2026 Student Representative election (document VUWC 26/96).

- Noted:**
- 1 that the Council paper was taken as read.
 - 2 that Ms Shannon Hughes, who was present at the meeting, was congratulated on the convincing mandate she had achieved in the election with 1296 votes more than the next highest polling candidate.

Resolved: that on the recommendation of the Chancellor:
in accordance with clause 4.1(c) of the Council Membership Statute, Ms Shannon Hughes be appointed to Council for a two-year term from 1 January 2027 to 31 December 2028.

260126

26.138 APPOINTMENT OF FOUNDATION TRUSTEE

Received: a Council paper dated 25 August 2026 from the Chancellor, Mr Alan Judge, regarding the appointment of a Foundation Trustee, Mr Russell Garrett (document VUWC 26/98).

- Noted:**
- 1 that the Council paper was taken as read.

- 2 that the diminishing number of Trustees was due to recent resignations and terms concluding. It was confirmed that the new Chair is working to invigorate the Board of Trustees and further appointments will be made to increase its numbers.
- 3 that Mr Garrett is a member of the Foundation's Finance Risk & Investment Committee, has a background in financial advice to the Foundation as a former employee at Mercer, and is well versed on the Charities Act.
- 4 that Council was unanimously supportive of the recommendation.

Resolved: **that on the recommendation of the Chancellor:
Council approve the appointment of Mr Russell Garrett as a Trustee of the Victoria University of Wellington Foundation under rule 2.4 of the First Schedule to the Trust Deed for a term of office commencing on 1 October 2026 and concluding on 30 September 2026.**

260127

26.139 AMENDMENT TO PEOPLE & CULTURE COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Received: a Council paper dated 28 August 2026 from the Chancellor, Mr Alan Judge, regarding an amendment to the People & Culture Committee Terms of Reference (document VUWC 26/97).

Noted:

- 1 that the Council paper was taken as read.
- 2 that the amendment recognised that Health, Safety, & Wellbeing sits under the full Council, rather than with a Committee.

Resolved: **that on the recommendation of the Chancellor:
Council approve the amendment to the People & Culture Committee Terms of Reference.**

260128

26.140 2027 DOMESTIC TUITION FEES

Received: a Council paper dated 28 August 2026 from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Students, Dr Logan Bannister, regarding 2027 Domestic Tuition Fees (document VUWC 26/99).

Noted:

- 1 that the Council paper was taken as read.
- 2 that the public gallery was full with approximately 30 students in attendance for this item, who expressed their protest in a quiet and dignified way.
- 3 that the Chancellor set out the history and current context which put Council members in a position where there was no other option, to ensure the institution's ongoing financial viability, but to approve the recommended 6% increase.
- 4 that the student representative members of Council spoke briefly. Mr Bell-Purchas stated that he would vote against the motion because it could hurt the University's long-term success by forcing University Councils to carry more of the load, and as fees increase fewer students can afford to attend. William's full speaking notes are on the file for this meeting. Ms Hanif said while she did not condone the increase, she accepted the increase was in the best interests of the University but would abstain from voting.
- 5 that the VUWSA President commented under his report (see minute 26.143).

- 6 that the Chancellor reinforced Council's discomfort with the need to make this increase and the Vice-Chancellor confirmed that all efforts would be made to provide support for students affected by the hardship a 6% increase would create. In addition, the Vice-Chancellors' Committee is actively working with government and an overall government funding review is still awaited, and this will be held up by the general election.
- 7 that since the Council papers were published, the Minister for Tertiary Education confirmed a 6% rate under the Annual Maximum Fee Movement (AMFM) for 2027.
- 8 that Council members absent from the meeting, Megan Evans, and Professor Richard Arnold, had provided their support for the motion in writing to the Chancellor prior to the meeting.
- 9 that the Chancellor thanked the students for attending.

- Resolved:**
- 1 that Council approve an increase to the domestic (government-funded) tuition fee rates for 2027 of 6% under the confirmed Annual Maximum Fee Movement (AMFM). Appendix 1 of document VUWC 26/99 outlines proposed 2027 fees at a 6% AMFM rate;
 - 2 that Council approve the proposed domestic (government-funded) tuition fee rates for new courses and fee exceptions (refer Appendix 2);
 - 3 that Council approve the proposed international (full-fee) tuition fee rates for new courses and fee exceptions (refer Appendix 3);
 - 4 that Council approve the proposed adjustments to the Administration Fees listed in Part D of the Fees Schedule (refer Appendix 4).

260129

Abstain: Hanif

Against: Bell-Purchas

26.141

2027 STUDENT SERVICES FEE

Received: a Council paper dated 26 August 2026 from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Students, Dr Logan Bannister, regarding the 2027 Student Services Fee (document VUWC 26/100).

- Noted:**
- 1 that the Council paper was taken as read.
 - 2 that the 2027 Student Services fee recommendations had been worked through in close consultation with student body representatives and while not delighted about the increase, they understood it and supported it.

- Resolved:**
- that Council approve:
 - 1 a 2% increase to the Student Service Fee price per point for 2027.
 - 2 that the Student Hardship Fee for 2027 increase by \$1 to \$33.

260130

26.142

STUDENT FEES STATUTE AND FEES PROCEDURE

Received: a Council paper dated 27 August 2026 from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Students, Dr Logan Bannister, regarding the Student Fees Statute and Fees Procedure (document VUWC 26/101).

- Noted:**
- 1 that the Council paper was taken as read.
 - 2 that the review of the Fees Statute and Fees Procedure was part of the regular review cycle led by the Legal team. This review was long over-due and aims to tidy up the documents, add clarity and use plain English.

- 3 that it was confirmed that there will be no change to the Vice-Chancellor's authority to set fees for micro-credentials to ensure an agile response to the market, and one that allows movement faster than the Council cycle would allow.
- 4 that fees for Halls of Residence will remain under the Vice-Chancellor's current delegation; however major decisions on accommodation must come to Council.
- 5 that it was confirmed that should a student dis-enrol from a course there are a range of options to deal with exceptional circumstances. This approach has been preserved in its move from the Policy to the Statute.

Resolved:

- that Council approve:**
- 1 **the revised Fees Statute and Fees Procedure; and**
 - 2 **that two members of Council and the Vice-Chancellor sign the proposed updates to the Delegations Schedule.**

260131

26.143

STUDENT PRESIDENT REPORTS

Received:

- 1 a report from Mr Aidan Donoghue, VUWSA President (document VUWC 26/102a).
- 2 a report from Mr Mairangi Campbell and Mr Manaia Puha, Ngāi Tauria Co-Presidents (document VUWC 26/102b)

Noted:

- Ngāi Tauria*
- 1 that Mr Campbell took his report as read. He stated that the Māori student community has never felt more vibrant than it does right now – it feels alive and connected. The Chancellor commented that this could be a key part as to why Māori student enrolments continue to increase.
 - 2 that Mr Campbell discussed two areas of concern; one around cultural competency and the need for a clear pathway to raise these issues; and two the need to provide greater support for the mental health and wellbeing of Māori students.
 - 3 that Council commended Mr Campbell for bringing these issues to the meeting. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the DVCMK and her staff will work on the cultural competency issue to ensure there is clarity on the pathway to raise concerns. She noted that the University's Te Tiriti Statute is an essential vehicle to underpin the cultural competency requirements of all staff at the University.
- VUWSA*
- 4 that Mr Donoghue also took his report as read and highlighted recent activity including a successful Democracy Week; and VUWSA's drive to ensure students are enrolled to vote in the upcoming general election. He addressed "the elephant in the room" with the following speech on the increase just approved to Student Fees in 2027.

I recognise the restrictions Council faces in making pointed public statements. I face no such constraints, so I ask you to indulge me for a moment.

I find it fitting that we meet at Rutherford House, almost in the shadow of the Beehive, on a day when students have again felt the reach of Government in their back pockets. The rationale behind today's decision may be understandable, but as Will has rightly pointed out, everybody here knows the current model is unsustainable. If students are expected to carry more of the cost of education, enrolments will fall. Student numbers cannot grow forever. There is a wall ahead, and we are being made to speed towards it.

There is a tension for universities to provide an essential public service while pushing a significant share of the cost onto individual students. We are being asked to privately finance something that no one could argue does not deliver an enormous benefit to nation.

We are seeing in real time what happens when funding fails to keep pace with the real cost of education: this council and others are left to cut programmes, reduce staff and services, defer investment, increase class sizes, or ask students to pay more.

The decision made today kept the lights on but it did not address the underlying problem.

Instead, it means the student already skipping meals or missing class is made to borrow more. The highschooler considering whether to become the first in their family to study at Uni doesn't take the risk, and the graduate starts working life with an even larger financial burden. It means absolutely nothing to someone wealthy and sorted.

This cannot be the long-term model for a country that claims to value equal opportunity.

At some point, we all need to confront the question:

What is a university education actually worth to New Zealand?

Because the answer is surely not whatever a student can afford to borrow.

I don't need to explain to you as members that the value of a university education is not just the salary earned by an individual graduate.

You all know its value is in the teacher educating the next generation, the researcher pushing boundaries, the engineer building infrastructure, the public servant improving policy, the doctor treating patients, or the entrepreneur creating opportunity. The benefit is shared across society.

That is what makes education a public good, and public goods require public investment. I want those in the room today to repeat this message, as many times as it takes.

I want to be clear that this isn't an argument against universities being financially responsible.

Universities absolutely have a responsibility to manage their finances carefully.

But there is a limit to what good management can achieve when the underlying funding model does not provide sufficient support for the services, we are asking universities to deliver. You cannot efficiency your way out of a structural funding problem. You cannot continually ask universities to do more with less and then be surprised when they eventually must make difficult decisions.

It is deeply contradictory to say that New Zealand needs a highly skilled workforce while simultaneously making it harder to sustain the institutions that educate that workforce. Ultimately these are political choices.

There must be political accountability for the consequences of those choices.

If funding decisions lead to programme cuts, higher fees, more debt, or reduced access for students from poorer backgrounds, government need to own that.

And if those choices create a tertiary sector that is less attractive to students, less capable of research, and less able to retain talented graduates, they need to own that too.

Graduates look at wages, housing, the cost of living, and whether this country is prepared to give them a future.

If the answer to that last part is no, we should not be surprised when our students stop investing their futures in this country.

I'll end it there, but all this is the same point we have been making for 35 years, it's the same point our student representatives have been making today, and it's the same point I'm sure next year's VUWSA president will be making.

- 5 that the Chancellor and Council members thanked Mr Donoghue for his eloquent address agreeing there is an urgent need for the government's promised funding review. Mr Judge reinforced the Vice-Chancellor's earlier

comments that every effort will be made by this University to increase philanthropic and other initiatives to ease the strain on students suffering hardship.

- Resolved:**
- 1 that the report from the VUWSA President be noted.
 - 2 that the report from the Ngāi Tauira Co-Presidents be noted.

260132

26.144 FORTHCOMING EVENTS AND NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

Received: a Council Paper from the Secretary to Council, Ms Caroline Ward, dated 1 September 2026 regarding Forthcoming Events (document VUWC 26/103).

- Noted:**
- 1 that the Council paper was taken as read.
 - 2 that the upcoming staff student debate for the John Allen (former Chancellor) trophy was highlighted and all Council members were encouraged to attend.
 - 3 that the next meeting of Council will take place on Monday, 19 October 2026 at 11 am in the Council Chamber, Level 2, Hunter Building, Kelburn Campus.
 - 4 that the final Council meeting of the year will take place at 11 am on 30 November, at Rutherford House, Level 12, Pipitea Campus.

Resolved: that the Council paper on Forthcoming Events and the date and details of the next Council meeting on 19 October 2026 be noted.

260133

26.145 COMMITTEE AND ACADEMIC BOARD MINUTES

Received: the following minutes:

- Academic Board, 14 July 2026
- Audit & Risk Committee, 17 August 2026
- Academic Board, 18 August 2026

Noted: that the minutes were taken as read.

Resolved: that the Committee and Academic Board minutes be noted.

260134

26.146 RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

Received: a recommendation that certain items be taken with the public excluded (document VUWC 26/104).

Resolved: 1 that the public be excluded from the following parts of the proceedings of this meeting, namely agenda items 19-31.

The general subject of each matter to be considered while the public is excluded, the reason for passing this resolution in relation to each matter, and the specific grounds under section 48(1) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 for the passing of this resolution are as follows:

General subject of each matter to be considered	Reason for passing this resolution in relation to each matter The public conduct of each item below would be likely to result in the disclosure of information for which good reason for withholding would exist under the sections of the OIA identified below.		Ground(s) under section 48(1) for the passing of this resolution
19. Minutes of previous meeting held 27 July 2026	Privacy, commercial prejudice, commercial activities.	s9(2)(a), s9(2)(b)(ii), s9(2)(i), and s9(2)(ba)(i)	LGOIMA s48(1)(a)(ii)
20. Health, Safety, and Wellbeing Q2 report	Privacy, commercial prejudice, commercial activities, confidential basis.	s9(2)(a), s9(2)(b)(ii), s9(2)(i), and s9(2)(ba)(i)	LGOIMA s48(1)(a)(ii)
21. Vice-Chancellor's report	Privacy, commercial prejudice, commercial activities, confidential basis.	s9(2)(a), s9(2)(b)(ii), s9(2)(i), and s9(2)(ba)(i)	LGOIMA s48(1)(a)(ii)
22. Wellington UniProfessional update	Commercial prejudice, commercial activities, Confidential basis	s9(2)(b)(ii), s9(2)(i), and s9(2)(ba)(i)	LGOIMA s48(1)(a)(ii)
23. Financial report to 31 July 2026, Q2 forecast, and CFO report	Commercial prejudice, commercial activities, Confidential basis	s9(2)(b)(ii), s9(2)(i), and s9(2)(ba)(i)	LGOIMA s48(1)(a)(ii)
24. 2027 Budget and Targets update	Commercial prejudice, commercial activities, Confidential basis	s9(2)(b)(ii), s9(2)(i), and s9(2)(ba)(i)	LGOIMA s48(1)(a)(ii)
25. Deep dive – Curriculum	Commercial prejudice, commercial activities, Confidential basis	s9(2)(b)(ii), s9(2)(i), and s9(2)(ba)(i)	LGOIMA s48(1)(a)(ii)

26. Honorary Doctorate recommendation	Privacy Confidential basis	s9(2)(a) s9(2)(ba)(i)	LGOIMA s48(1)(a)(ii)
27. Indicative Business Case – Easterfield	Commercial prejudice, commercial activities, Confidential basis	s9(2)(b)(ii), s9(2)(i),and s9(2)(ba)(i)	LGOIMA s48(1)(a)(ii)
28. Intellectual Property and Commercialisation update	Commercial prejudice, commercial activities, Confidential basis	s9(2)(b)(ii), s9(2)(i),and s9(2)(ba)(i)	LGOIMA s48(1)(a)(ii)
29. 320 The Terrace update	Commercial prejudice, commercial activities, confidential basis.	s9(2)(b)(ii), s9(2)(i), and s9(2)(ba)(i)	LGOIMA s48(1)(a)(ii)
30. Committee and Academic Board minutes	Commercial prejudice, commercial activities, confidential basis.	s9(2)(b)(ii), s9(2)(i), and s9(2)(ba)(i)	LGOIMA s48(1)(a)(ii)
31. Council only time	Privacy, commercial prejudice, commercial activities, confidential basis.	s9(2)(a), s9(2)(b)(ii), s9(2)(i),and s9(2)(ba)(i)	LGOIMA s48(1)(a)(ii)

In relation to each of the above items, no public interest consideration has been identified favouring disclosure of the particular information in public proceedings of the meeting that would override the need to withhold the information.

This resolution is made in reliance on section 48(1)(a) of the Local Government Information and Meetings Act 1987 and the particular interest or interests protected by section 6 or section 7 or section 9 of the Official Information Act 1982, as the case may require, which would be prejudiced by holding of the whole or the relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting in public are set out above.

- 2 that such members of the senior leadership as the Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor request be permitted to remain at this meeting, after the public has been excluded, with the exception of agenda item 31, because of their knowledge of the relevant matters identified above which will be of assistance in relation to those matters.

260135