

Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington
Minutes of the Academic Board meeting
held at 1.00 pm on 24 September 2024

The meeting was held face-to-face in the Kelburn Council Chamber and was convened by Professor Bryony James (Provost, Vice-Chancellor's Office), on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Nic Smith (who was an apology). The meeting was opened with a karakia and everyone was welcomed to the meeting.

PART A

52.24 Apologies, acknowledgements and welcomes

The apologies were taken as read (see appendix 1). The Convenor advised there were no new members or welcomes.

53.24 Part B of the agenda – items brought forward

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

54.24 Vice-Chancellor Oral Report

The Vice-Chancellor was an apology for this meeting.

55.24 Written Report

AB24/69

The September 2024 written reports from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Māori and Engagement), Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Students were **received**.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor - Academic Report

Professor Robyn Longhurst spoke to her report taking it as read.

The report format now focusses on strategic initiatives associated with academic office portfolios. Robyn led the Academic Promotions Process Review together with Bryony James. There have been 10 focus groups and more than 100 staff involved. Specific focus groups held with the research institutes has gone well and included Māori and Pasifika staff. Special thanks was given to Derek White who attended most focus groups, and to the group involved in the academic programme approvals process. The next step is seeking feedback on a revised set of principles, which will be circulated with preferred outcomes shared in a survey in November.

Themes included whether so many barriers are needed, the importance of transparency and fairness in the process, and whether we need to review the whole career when assessing for accomplishments that have been in train since the last promotion. People are encouraged to complete the online survey.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor - Research Report

Professor Margaret Hyland spoke to her report taking it as read.

Those who participated the inaugural research showcase in Matira were thanked. The event provided an opportunity to showcase the ways researchers are mobilising their work to make meaningful contributions and to celebrate collective achievements. Learnings included the prospect of doing various versions of the future showcases, with some focused on particular themes, and with bespoke external community engagement.

The Postgraduate Students Association (PGSA) has not been functional for over a year. It was suggested that in the absence of a PGSA that we need a student voice, so looking at setting up a reference group of postgraduate students that meet on a regular basis.

Coordination of the development of the academic freedom and expression of freedom policy has taken place and academics and professional staff were thanked for their ideas. The policy will go out for consultation mid-November for feedback.

Positive feedback was received in relation to the engagement from internal and external people including Local Government, community groups, professional organisations/people, investors, as well as people who have been donors to the university.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Students Report

The report was taken as read. An apology was received from Dr Logan Bannister.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Māori and Engagement Report

The report was taken as read. An apology was received from Professor Rawinia Higgins.

56.24 Work Programmes

AP24/70

A discussion took place in relation to the topic *A new vision for first year experience – reduced expectations/assessments* by Dr Stuart Marshall, Faculty of Engineering. This is the first of five presentations over the next six months.

This topic looks at first-year experience and habits, covering assessment, timetables and workload hours, and identifying different times, schedules for people to be able to meet, and the transitions from school to university. This shows that it is more than course offerings and is looking to increase first year enjoyment and retention. Discussion was around first-year experiences and how we can improve this. Thanks was given to those involved.

The question was asked: should the university impose a structure and/or purpose for 100-level and not leave it up to individual majors/programmes to do.

Responses included:

- No, because each subject area has its own pedagogical reasons on how to teach and how many assessments there should be.
- Need to consider the context on how students are learning and that there is a real push in terms of needing to work/financial pressures. Cost of living implications.
- Question whether it is better to have lots of smaller papers, or a smaller number of slightly bigger papers.

- Student voice component is essential.
- Would not want to see an environment where students are interacting less often and need to look for the opportunity to move away from content overload and focus on foundational skills and relationships.
- Student Voice very successful and the timing was ideal to plan for 2025 students who started trimester 1. Need to focus on relationships over content.
- Think about purpose and challenges of the first year of university, and how to manage transition from school to university.
- Consider the experience students have at school and university - encourage people to take risks and trust people's judgment.
- Retention is important. First year has the highest dropout rate for students and is when they decide it's not the course they thought it would be.
- Need to reflect on students knowing what to expect in the first year. Standardization defers that and students can make mature choices.
- NZ universities have structures that are flexible, and the consequence is we don't specify what the university could look like. Big picture isn't given fast enough. Need less about structure and more about content in degree structures. One-size-fits-all doesn't work.
- BCom has a single course trying to give students study in business and government and understanding how that goes out re societal functions. Help students make better choices beyond that course and teach them how to be successful.
- Connection of disciplines to the outside world is one of our design features and shows students how to succeed.
- Feedback transition in helping students prepare. Our optimism and care is amazing so doing good things now and in future.
- Challenging facilities/facilitation and clarify what faculties are doing. Staff valued the opportunity to get together to discuss what worked/what didn't. Get a sense of what barriers students face.
- Moving forward, consider whether a pan-university course and skills are needed within a particular faculty with different subjects and different needs.
- Teaching 101 - consistency and how to get be approved by CUAP.
- Be careful not to undermine trust in individual academics and schools, identify problems and inspire one another with the best and most exciting practices that we can find and share across the university.

Appreciation was given to everyone for their feedback, and it was noted it is good to get communities together to talk about the joy of teaching.

57.24 Faculty Realignment

AP24/71

At 1.58 pm Robyn Longhurst chaired the meeting.

Bryony James gave an update on the Faculty Realignment. The discussion echoed and expanded on key themes from previous feedback from the consultation on Faculty Realignment. It emphasised the need for support for:

- maintaining the academic identities of affected programmes and staff while building a shared culture for the new Faculties

- transitioning to new structures and roles and ensuring adequate academic, technical and comms support
- growing opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaboration
- Ensuring equitable representation and a strong academic voice in key decisions.

The Academic Board proposed to forward to Council the points raised for consideration, and noted the responses of the Provost, summarised below.

1. **Academic identity and Faculty culture**

- Members of the Board directly affected by the proposed realignment expressed goodwill and a willingness to work together in the new structures, but also some sadness about losing ties with current Faculties. There was concern about a potential reduction of opportunities for collaboration for disciplines currently sharing a Faculty, and about possible differences in Faculty culture i.e. allocation of research funding to postgraduate students. Concerns were also voiced about how the public and students may perceive the different disciplines (for example with Psychology being separate from Science), and about how partners in the alignment might need to adjust their understandings of the identities of their counterparts.
- The Provost replied that while Faculty restructuring does not in itself solve barriers to cross-disciplinary collaboration, it does offer an opportunity to think about how to reduce them across the University. The planned new financial model will incentivize collaboration across faculties, reducing competition for resources and focusing on growing collective opportunities. Workload and promotion models will also change to encourage cross-disciplinary work and incentivise behaviours aligned with academic values. It was also noted that public/student perceptions of different disciplines are often more closely related to how they are marketed and recruited for, rather than their position within a particular Faculty, and that the realignment also offers opportunities to tell new and engaging stories.

2. **Iho Option and Faculty Support**

- There was support for the Iho option, but concern was expressed about how academic support structures like Associate Deans will be managed for Te Kawa a Māui when it is outside a traditional faculty structure.
- The Provost responded that the Iho option does not have the same timeframe as the other elements of the realignment. It will gradually transition, with time to ensure appropriate support. It will not follow a typical university faculty structure but will still interface with university processes and roles.

3. **Faculty Realignment Impact on AD Roles**

- Concern was expressed about how the restructuring will affect the size and workload of AD roles, given the number of stakeholders, students, and programmes.

- The Provost responded that flexibility in AD roles is needed, understanding that different faculties may need different ADs. ADs are seen as crucial academic leaders, and their roles will be supported and refined over time.

4. **Education, Health and Psychology Faculty concerns**

- Some apprehension was expressed about Psychology overshadowing smaller areas in the new structure. It was also noted that staff in Psychology had unanimously voted for an option different to the one that is being recommended, and this needs to be kept in mind, especially given the size of the Psychology major across multiple degrees. The discussion suggested that there may be challenges in forging an identity and working model for this proposed faculty, although plenty of good will has been expressed by staff in all three areas.
- The Provost replied that these issues have been acknowledged and efforts will be made to ensure balanced governance across disciplines within the new faculty and support will be given in building a shared culture.

5. **Support for technical systems and communications**

- Concerns were raised about the technical challenges associated with faculty realignment, especially around existing systems like Banner. A request was made that any technical or other concerns be raised with staff as early as possible so that they can face any challenges with eyes open and be prepared.
- The Provost acknowledged the technical challenges and the institution's history of sometimes awkward transitions, but replied that she believes we will address them over time and mitigate in the meantime. She also noted the potential to share positive new stories in connection with the realignment.

6. **Importance of maintaining strong academic voices**

- Concerns were expressed about reducing the number of faculties (and therefore Deans and Associate Deans) potentially diluting academic voices in key decision-making bodies.
- The Provost replied that time will be taken to ensure representation is fair, with a possibility of having dual ADs during the transition to maintain academic input. The Provost expressed confidence in the ability of academic leadership and faculty members to navigate the changes.

Robyn Longhurst, as chair, brought this part of the meeting to a close, and acknowledged that it is not going to be easy but that other institutions like our own have successfully done this and come out the other side, and is sure we will too.

Bryony James resumed chairing at 1.45pm.

Part C of the agenda

The Resolution concerning exclusion of non-members was not relevant for this meeting.

PART B OF THE AGENDA

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

The minutes of the Academic Board meeting held 20 August 2024 (Numbers 40.24 to 50.24) were confirmed. AB24/72

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

58.24 Report of the Academic Programmes Committee

The September Academic Programmes Committee report was noted. AB24/73

59.24 Graduating Year Reviews (GYRs)

AB24/74

The following Graduating Year Reviews were approved.

- Communication – FHSS
- Intercultural Communication and Applied Translation – FHSS
- TESOL - FHSS
- Animation and Visual Effects – FADI
- Designed Environments – FADI
- Doctor in Education – Education
- Tourism Management – WSBG
- Science in Society – Science
- Geographic Information Science – Science

General Business

Marcail Parkinson reminded people that the student representative celebrations are being held on Wednesday 25 September at 3.30pm in the Hunter Lounge. There is an award for outstanding lecturer and she requested people attend as it is a good opportunity to recognise the hard work that student representatives do.

60.24 Part C members only

The meeting closed at 2.48 pm as there were no confidential matters to discuss.

Appendix 1: Academic Board attendance 24 September 2024

Professor Bryony James		
Professor Richard Arnold	Professor Anne Goulding	Professor Stephen Marshall
Professor Graeme Austin	Dr Monica Handler	Professor Jim McAloon
Professor Brigitte Bonisch-Brednich	Monika Hanson	Professor Geoff McLay
Associate Professor Diana Burton	Professor Dave Harper	Professor Simon Mackenzie
Professor Jane Bryson	Dr John Haywood	Professor Nicola Nelson
Associate Professor Sasha Calhoun	Professor Nikki Hessel	Professor Rewi Newnham
Dr Luke Chu	Professor Sally Hill	Marcail Parkinson
Professor Stephen Cummings	Associated Professor Val Hooper	Associate Professor Janet Pitman
Professor Carmen Dalli	Professor Margaret Hyland	Professor John Randal
Dr Nathaniel Davis	Dr Nigel Isaacs	Dr Helen Rook
Dr Noelle Donnelly	Professor Annemarie Jutel	Dr Mike Ross
Dr Eli Elinoff	Professor Simon Keller	Professor Paul Teesdale-Spittle
Professor Alejandro Frery	Professor Sarah Leggott	Amandie Weerasundara
Associate Professor Robin Fulton	Associate Professor Spencer Lilley	Trish Wilson
Dr Nicola Gilmour	Jian Liu	
Professor Vanessa Green	Professor Karl Lofgren	
	Professor Nick Long	
	Professor Robyn Longhurst	

Non-members in attendance

Vicki Bee
Anita Brady
Toby DalGLISH
Gina Grimshaw
Lynn Grindell
Joseph Habgood
Angela Joe
Dr Stuart Marshall
R Mckee – Acting Head of School
attending for Averil Coxhead
Reece Moors
Carol Morris
Cathy Powley
Kate Schollum
Dr Robert Stratford
Anna Rogers
Linda Roberts
Varsha Narasimhan
Diane Ormsby
Elena Louverdis
Valentina Tikhonova
Andrew Wilks

Apologies

Dr Barbara Allen
Professor Siah Hwee Ang
Dr Logan Bannister
Professor Daniel Brown
Associate Professor Sue Cherrington
Dr Tim Corballis
Professor Alberto Costi
Professor Averil Coxhead
Professor Joanne Crawford
Professor Neil Dodgson
Professor Nicholas Golledge
Associate Professor Meegan Hall
Dr Caz Hales
Asst Vice-Chancellor, Maturanga Māori,
Megan Hall
Professor Rawinia Higgins
Professor Linda Hogg
Associate Professor Kathy Holloway
Professor Kate Hunter
Professor Dean Knight
Associate Professor Winnie Laban
Professor Karin Lasthuizen
Professor Catherine Iorns Magallanes
Christine McCarthy
Kirsty McClure
Stella McIntosh
Dr Bruno Marques
Professor Sally Jane Norman
Professor Robyn Phipps
Professor James Renwick
Professor Sarah Ross
Professor John Townend
Professor Marc Wilson (part-attendance)