COUNCIL MEETING SUMMARY

The following matters, which may be of interest to the staff and students of the University, were considered by the University Council at its meeting of 16 October 2026.

University Governance and Transparency

Council received an update on the University Governance Reset. Council noted that Emeritus Professor Peter Coaldrake AO had agreed to chair the Governance Reset Steering Committee, and Council approved revised Terms of Reference for the Committee. Recruitment of a Program Lead remained underway.

Council considered opportunities to improve the classification of submissions to Council and its committees as confidential or non-confidential. Council endorsed the broad principle of increasing transparency in University decision-making and governance outcomes, supported by clearer and more consistent classification practices across the University Executive Board, Council committees and Council.

Council requested that this work be incorporated into the University Governance Reset, including consideration of classification of governance submissions and clearer reporting of the basis for confidentiality. Council noted the importance of genuine transparency and a default position that governance business should not be classified as confidential without a defensible basis.

Council Composition, Skills and Future Appointments

Council approved a revised Council Skills Matrix and requested that aggregate, de-identified information about Council's collective capabilities be published in an appropriate format. Council considered how the presentation could provide a clear and transparent account of Council's capabilities and diversity while protecting information relating to individual members.

Council also approved core governance capabilities as mandatory requirements for future Council-appointed members and identified priority capability areas to inform recruitment for current member vacancies. Management was requested to progress the identification of potential candidates for consideration by the Council Nominations Committee, and decision by Council on future appointments. An agreed priority is First Nations Knowledge and Cultural Capability, and Council approved as a priority to pursue a Council-appointed member vacancy with a person with this capability.

Council also noted the status of current and pending elections for staff and student members of Council in accordance with the University of Wollongong Act, noting the valued contributions of staff and student members of Council.

Chancellor Recruitment

Council received a report from the Chancellor Nominations Panel and noted the Chancellor Success Profile and the findings from the consultation undertaken to inform the recruitment process. Council was advised that the process remained on track and comprised two concurrent streams: extensive stakeholder consultation and the executive search process.

Vice-Chancellor's Report

Council received an update from the Vice-Chancellor on strategic and sector matters, including the international student recruitment environment, progress on the University Governance Reset, engagement concerning the NSW Upper House standing committee's recommendations, recent University achievements and senior appointments, and the commencement of enterprise bargaining.

Financial Position and 2027 Budget

Council received an update on the University's financial position as at 31 August 2026, and the development of the 2027 budget. Council noted a revised approach to the development of budgeted expenditure, including detailed consideration of salary and non-salary expenditure and the University's capital management plan. Council noted that this approach is anticipated to improve transparency, identify funding arrangements and assist the University to align planned expenditure with financial priorities and delivery capacity. The draft budget is anticipated to be considered further by the Finance and Infrastructure Committee before being considered by Council in December.

Transformation and Process Improvement

Council received an update on efficiency outcomes arising from process simplification and policy remediation. Council discussed opportunities to accelerate implementation and build institutional capability to support change.

Council emphasised the importance of measuring transformation outcomes against expectations and ensuring that priority initiatives contribute to improved services and the University's longer-term financial sustainability.

Risk Management and Policy Oversight

Council approved the University's revised Risk Appetite Statement and associated allocation of executive responsibility for the University's highest-level risks. Council recognised the value of the summary risk appetite document as a practical resource for governance decision-making, and that further improvements are planned with governance submission templates expected to link decision-making more clearly to the University's strategy and risk appetite, supporting staff and members of governance bodies to understand the University's tolerance for risk.

Council also approved a new Investment Policy and amendments to the Treasury Management Policy. The two areas had previously been addressed through a single policy and were separated to reflect their different purposes, simplify the policy framework and better align it with industry benchmarks.

Conflict of Interest Framework

Council considered proposed revisions to the University's Declaration of Interests and Conflicts Policy and supporting procedure, together with the proposed consolidation of related policy requirements. The proposed framework was intended to strengthen the identification, declaration and management of actual, potential and perceived conflicts of interest.

In the interests of good governance and full transparency of process, Council determined that an additional out-of-session meeting should be held to consider approval of the revised policy material. This would allow Council to give appropriate consideration to a late amendment to the material and to the matters raised during its discussion.

Country-centred Curriculum

Council endorsed the continued expansion of Country-centred curriculum initiatives across the University and noted progress on the Country Centred Curriculum Framework and Curriculum Transformation Program. Council supported the proposed next steps relating to curriculum development, stakeholder engagement and cultural safety for staff teaching in Indigenous knowledge spaces.

Council discussed the importance of embedding Indigenous knowledge and experience within the curriculum as a core and sustainable approach, rather than a separate or supplementary activity. Council also noted opportunities to connect this work with other initiatives.

Council noted that its recently developed skills and capabilities matrix identified Indigenous capability as its greatest area for development. Members emphasised that this should be addressed both through future appointments and cultural immersion and learning opportunities for existing Council members.

Advancement and Alumni Engagement

Council received an update on Advancement activities and progress against annual goals. Council discussed opportunities to engage the University's alumni community more broadly on University developments.

Council and Committee Governance

Council approved its 2027 meeting schedule and noted that it provided a more balanced distribution of Council and committee meetings than the 2026 schedule. Council also noted the benefit of establishing future meeting schedules earlier to support Academic Senate planning and other University activities.

Council endorsed the designation of Morgan Bryant, Chief Legal and Assurance Officer, as Secretary to Council from 17 October 2026. Council also formally thanked Ellenie Petrou for undertaking the roles of Acting Chief Governance Officer and Secretary to Council from 2 March 2026 until 16 October 2026.

Council also approved administrative updates to committee Terms of Reference to reflect revised governance and secretariat roles.

Further Updates

Council received reports from the Finance and Infrastructure Committee, People and Culture Committee, Risk, Audit and Compliance Committee, University Executive Board and Academic Senate.

Council also noted the latest University strategic performance results and progress against strategic initiatives.

Council considered a request from the Wollongong Conservatorium of Music to remove the historical requirement for prior written approval from the University before amendments could be made to the Conservatorium's Constitution. Council agreed to the removal of the requirement, noting that the University no longer maintained a governance, ownership, funding or other relationship requiring the approval right to be retained.