



Griffith Council News—April 2025

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Council News is a high-level summary for staff of some of the key items and outcomes from the most recent ordinary Council meeting.

Vice Chancellor's Report

1. Council **noted** the *Vice Chancellor's Report to Council*, which had been circulated with the papers and was taken as read. The Vice Chancellor spoke to the report and commenced with an update on notable highlights and key issues:

- A Griffith Business School student team had earned a place in the top 10 finalists in the prestigious Global Case Competition at Harvard, which this year had received over 500 entries from more than 300 of the world's top universities across 50 countries.
- Griffith had a significant role in two Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) grants awarded, one on Additive Manufacturing and the other on the Care Economy. A third bid was underway for Griffith to lead a CRC on the Visitor Economy.
- Student load was approximately \$10m down but cost savings made early in the year had covered the immediate load deficit.
- The US policy shifts had not directly impacted Griffith but had our partners in the US, with several low value contracts cancelled. This is another element of international collaboration becoming more difficult.
- The Office of the National Student Ombudsman was operational, and Griffith had received three of the 500 complaints received by the office nationally. A

review of some of the University's internal processes for complaints management was being undertaken.

2. Members discussed the budget forecasts and uncertainty around commencing student numbers and the scale of deficit, and queried whether cost containment measures were sustainable or enough. In response, the current status of the budget was noted, and ongoing strategies to raise revenue, with the situation being closely monitored.
3. Members discussed the potential correlation between the downturn of international students and scholarships, noting that an analysis was underway. The reasons for the decline in higher degree research (HDR) completions were also discussed, noting that work to improve the pipeline and support completions was expected to result in improved outcomes by the end of the year.
4. The Chancellor advised members that the Vice Chancellor had been awarded the 2025 Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) Asia-Pacific Leadership Award, which recognises institutional leaders for their outstanding efforts in promoting and supporting education and advancement. Council congratulated the Vice Chancellor and noted that the announcement was under embargo until 15 May.

Health And Safety Report

Council **noted** the *Health, Safety and Wellbeing Report—Quarter 1 2025*, which had been circulated with the papers and was taken as read. The Chancellor introduced the item and acknowledged the value of the pre-meeting tour of the new Science Technical Annexe, which had demonstrated the health and safety uplift, and was a core feature of the building design and functionality.

1. The Chief Operating Officer spoke to the report, which was based on data from January to March 2025, and highlighted the following:
 - There had been no lost time injuries in Q1, which was atypical and an excellent outcome.
 - A third-party health and safety maturity assessment was completed in Q1 2025, with results showing Griffith to be at level 3.1 'Calculative,' validating improvement.
 - Mandatory health and safety training had declined from 2024 Q4 to 2025 Q1. Safety Leadership Training was also decreasing, this would be reviewed and reassessed later in the year. The Health and Safety Committee will continue to monitor training.
2. Members discussed the increasing lag indicator for Overdue Actions for incidents, inspections and audits, in particular whether any of those were of

high risk, and whether it was known why they were running behind. Members noted that this would be investigated by management, with the type and status of overdue actions confirmed and reported to the Audit and Risk Committee.

Strategic discussion: the place of AI in Griffith's strategy and operations

The Chief Digital Officer Mr Zoran Sugarevski joined the meeting for this item.

1. The Chancellor **noted** the introduction of a standing headline strategic discussion agenda item to ensure adequate time was given to strategy and to maintain focus following the recent development and finalisation of the new Strategic Plan. Members were reminded that artificial intelligence (AI) had been discussed at previous meetings and that it would continue to be revisited as the technology and its uses evolved.
2. The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education), Professor Shaun Ewen spoke to the item and highlighted the ways in which Griffith would approach and harness the opportunities presented by AI to drive innovation and efficiency at Griffith, including:
 - Plans to deliver against the three strategic AI pillars in learning and teaching:
 - Build staff capability and confidence.
 - Build student capability and confidence.
 - Students curate their learning journey.
 - Establishment of governance to support strategic delivery of AI across the institution.
 - Introduction of the new LearnWise platform to provide enhanced student support using AI and drawing data from other enterprise systems, noting Griffith would be the first university to embed it across all courses.
 - Other case studies and exemplars of AI use across the University.
3. Council **discussed** the Griffith AI approach, governance arrangements and planned staff capability uplift, in particular:
 - The impact of AI on assessment techniques and teaching capability, including but not limited to issues surrounding academic and research integrity, and the need to provide assurance of learning.
 - Use and ownership of student data, and protections in place particularly given new privacy obligations, noting that LearnWise was a closed

environment trained on Griffith data with restrictions on the data made available.

- Value proposition of AI for students—both how to use and not use AI—to delineate between human skills and machine skills and to ensure ethical use. Adaptation of AI for employability, to support development of the skills (like critical thinking) that employers are looking for coupled with the capability to demonstrate them.
- Potential for AI to drive productivity and early indications of some of the gains with the introduction of ServiceNow Assist. Considering the pace of change, the need to clarify risk appetite to ensure the University was not being too risk averse while acknowledging the constraints of compliance and cross-subsidised funding.
- Consideration of the larger existential questions that AI poses for universities around knowledge creation—what does AI mean for the creation of knowledge and how do we respond? How do we teach, assess and research given its evolution?
- Noting the need to invest in the University's digital infrastructure, being selective about our investment and looking for opportunities to leap forward rather than merely reaching the standard.

4. Council **noted** the establishment of an AI Steering Committee and Terms of Reference, which would help drive capability uplift and innovation in learning, teaching, student experience, research and engagement.

5. Council **noted** the action items from the discussion including a short note to be provided about the University's approach to enhanced privacy obligations, particularly in relation to student data and use of AI, and that AI would continue to be discussed at future meetings and would feature at the Council Strategic Retreat in September.

The Chief Digital Officer left the meeting.

Report on learning and teaching and the student experience

1. The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education), Professor Shaun Ewen spoke to the item and commenced with an analysis of the University's 2024 Student Experience Survey (SES) results, which considered results by specific cohorts, noting sector comparative data would not be available until late 2025. Outcomes by study area and major program were also considered, with areas of improvement and decline identified. It was noted that in addition to SES data, a range of other data sources were also used to evaluate and improve student experience. Insights from this data, together with enablement of student voice and partnerships, had helped shape a program of work across systems and curricular and extra-curricular activities through governance

mechanisms, including the Student Experience Sub-Committee and the Student Voice and Partnerships Framework.

2. Members discussed the report, including the decline in Business and the need to understand the reasons for this when planning for the move into the CBD, the decline in domestic student uptake generally as a result of the cost of living and high employment, reasons specific to Griffith inhibiting students choosing us—which included transport access and preferred programs, actions in place to respond to underperformance data at program level, the need to ensure small improvements like practical amenities for students, initiatives in place to support students given an increasing need for them to balance study with other commitments, low peer engagement for Indigenous students, and the improvements in student progression as a result of the significant program of work around retention.
3. Council **noted** the range of data Griffith uses to understand and improve the student experience, specifically in the context of the decline in the 2024 Student Experience Survey overall results.
4. The Chancellor thanked the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education) for his report and emphasised the importance of student experience both for the benefit and success of students and for the University, recognising that satisfied students would become important Griffith advocates.

Closing report on Creating a future for all – Strategic Plan 2020-2025

1. The Vice Chancellor spoke to the item and reflected on the significant achievements under the Strategic Plan, and reflected on what hadn't been achieved. Delivery of all the values-based commitments in the strategy was highlighted, which had included a doubling of the number of Indigenous staff. The COVID-19 pandemic and more recent government changes to student visa processing had significantly impacted the University, its financial position, and in turn its people and operations. Despite these challenges, an enormous amount had been achieved over the life of the strategy. Key learnings from its delivery and reflection on outcomes had informed the development of the new strategy, including recognition of the need to strip back and tighten focus.
2. Council **noted** the progress made during the life of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 and considered the following implications on the new strategy:

- The potential to tighten and refocus on the Asia-Pacific region and international engagement generally, noting that this would be built upon in the new International Strategy.
- Success of micro-credentials and online offerings as part of the revenue diversification strategy, including areas of decreased and low performance and future opportunities for growth, particularly around pathway programs and professional development offerings with industry partners.
- Noting the Beacons and Spotlights as part of the research section of the strategy, a report on what worked and what didn't work for consideration at a future Council meeting.

3. Council thanked the Vice Chancellor for the report, and members agreed that, despite significant and unprecedented challenges during the life of the strategy, many excellent outcomes had been delivered that would pave the way for implementation of the new strategy.

Griffith University Strategic Plan 2025-2030

1. The Chancellor reminded members that at the 1/2025 (February) meeting they had provided feedback and broad endorsement of an advanced draft of the new Strategic Plan. The Vice Chancellor spoke to the submission titled *Griffith University Strategic Plan 2025-2023 – FINAL DRAFT*, which had been circulated with the papers and taken as read. The Vice Chancellor thanked members for the previous feedback, noting it had helped crystallise core messages and aims.
2. The Vice Chancellor **noted** she had circulated a designed version of the new Strategic Plan ahead of the meeting, which included images, artwork, and a vision of Griffith in 2030. Members supported the amendments made in finalising the strategy and noted the design helped to shape the narrative.
3. Council **resolved to approve** the final draft of the Griffith University Strategic Plan 2025-2030 and **noted** the release sequence, including invitations for them to attend the launch on 5 June.

Capital Infrastructure Program: Major Projects update

1. Council **noted** the submission titled *Strategic Campus Infrastructure Program Update*, which had been circulated with the papers and was taken as read. The Chief Operating Officer provided updates on major campus and infrastructure projects underway or planned, noting that digital as well as physical infrastructure would be included in reporting.

2. The Science Technical Annexe, part of the Science Enabling Works at the Brisbane South (Nathan) campus, was on track for completion in April, which would deliver a fit-for-purpose environmental laboratory facility with state-of-the-art facilities to support Griffith's broad range of environmental research.
3. The Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system achieved a critical milestone in March with go-live for domestic student recruitment. The CRM project was focused on improving domestic student acquisition and retention outcomes.
4. Challenges with the demolition of N13 continued and had been exacerbated by Tropical Cyclone Alfred. The Chief Operating Officer updated Council on the status of dispute items with Lendlease. Hard demolition of the building was scheduled to commence in Q3 2025, with demolition practical completion expected in late 2025.

Treasury CBD campus—schematic design for internal fitout

The Chief Operating Officer spoke to the submission and Council **noted** the following updates:

- The Early Contractor Involvement (ECI) contract had been awarded to FDC Construction & Fitout (FDC), a very engaged and highly experienced partner who would bring extensive heritage and higher education fitout experience to the project. FDC would commence in April and would also be responsible for the mould remediation works.
- On the recommendation of the Finance and Infrastructure Committee, the Council **noted** the schematic design and spatial allocations for the Treasury Building fitout, with discussion and feedback to inform the detailed design stage.

Independent review of Corporate Governance

Council **discussed and noted** the initial findings of the independent review of Council's corporate governance, which is being undertaken by Directors Australia in accordance with the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards)*.

Other reports to Council

Council also **noted** or **approved** the following:

- Reports from the following University Committees
 - Academic Committee 1/2025 (March) meeting
 - Audit and Risk Committee 1/2025 (February) meeting
 - Finance and Infrastructure Committee 1/2025 (March) meeting
 - People, Nominations and Remuneration Committee 1/2025 (March) meeting
 - Griffith University Elders and First Peoples Knowledge Holders Advisory Board 1/2025 (April) meeting
- Council and Council Committee Membership Appointments
- Amended Council Committee Constitutions
- Council and Committee Member EOI Process and Amended Council Charter
- Establishment of Council Executive Committee and Council Crisis Management Committee
- New Budget Model Framework
- Annual Report on Advancement and Campaign Activities
- Annual Report on Qualifications Awarded
- Organisational Review—Department of Tourism, Sport and Hotel Management Review and Implementation Plan
- Annual Report from the Office of the Student Ombudsman

Policy changes approved

Council approved amendments to the following policy documents:

- Defence Security Policy (2025/0001027) and the Defence Security Policy—Excerpt Only, to be effective from 28 April 2025, with a new review date of 2026.

April 2025

