

COU 7/2026 #310 – Tuesday, 13 October 2026

The Council meeting **(#310)** was held on **Tuesday**, **13 October 2026** at **VU Footscray Park Campus,** 70–104 Ballarat Road, Footscray.

Victoria University (VU) is established under the VU Act 2010. VU's moral purpose is to transform the lives and communities it serves through the delivery of education and research with real-world impact, undertaken in partnership with industry and the community.

VU Council is the University's peak governing body, and is responsible for overseeing the University's operations, strategy, performance and risk, and for ensuring the proper management and control of the University in the public interest.

STRATEGIC FOCUS

Institutional sustainability and financial response

Council examined the University's projected financial position in the context of lower international student visa processing, changing revenue settings and underlying cost pressures. It emphasised the need for a purposeful multi-year response to address structural operating challenges while protecting educational quality, the student experience and the University's capacity to invest for the future. Council also considered opportunities to strengthen financial sustainability through meeting ATEC Compact targets, strengthening TAFE pathways and diversifying revenue through international and online education.

Digital resilience and security

Council approved significant investment in identity and access management and data security, recognising these capabilities as foundational to institutional resilience and the protection of students, staff, information and reputation. It sought strong milestone governance, clearer performance targets and benchmarking, and prioritisation of the systems and assets most exposed to cyber risk.

KEY MATTERS

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Council reviewed the projected financial deficit and the factors driving it, including international enrolment conditions, revenue and wage movements. It challenged management undertake a multi-year response to address underlying cost drivers, in a constrained operating environment and noted that cash reserves and the absence of debt supported a measured multi-year response. Council approved the 2027 VU Online Budget, noting strong growth, disciplined cost management and its contribution to university returns and access for regional and remote students.

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

Council received assurance through Academic Board reporting that academic integrity remained central as the University responded to financial and sector pressures. It considered how assessment design and clearer guidance on acceptable artificial intelligence use could strengthen academic integrity and reduce complaint referrals. Council also noted progress in academic quality assurance relating to placements and staff qualifications and considered planned new online courses subject to academic approval.

RESEARCH STANDARDS

Council maintained oversight of the University's broader research and impact context through institutional performance reporting and committee assurance; while emphasising that growth and financial responses must continue to protect academic quality and integrity.

RISK & COMPLIANCE

Council approved the University's risk management report and examined the emergence of foreign interference risk, including the effect of international conflict and the capability required to manage a high inherent risk profile. It reviewed cyber security maturity, approved foundational security investments. Council also approved refreshed fraud and corruption control and business resilience policy suites, strengthening whistleblower arrangements, critical incident management and responses to student incidents. Gender-based violence, complaints, health and safety, freedom of speech, academic freedom and mandatory disclosure obligations remained under active oversight.

UNIVERSITY CULTURE

Council considered staff engagement results and sought deeper analysis across staff cohorts and management levels to inform portfolio action planning. It noted opportunities to strengthen trust, career development and perceptions of workplace safety, while recognising positive engagement in parts of the University. Council also examined staff complaints, psychosocial safety and gender-based violence reporting, emphasising prevention, early intervention, accessible support and measurable outcomes. Progress under the equality, inclusion and belonging framework was noted, with Council seeking clearer baselines and targets for student equity and success.

STAKEHOLDER EXPECTATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

Council considered how to establish more regular and structured two-way engagement with students. It received a report on the various formal engagement forums and has requested some further benchmarking occur before they consider further.

WORKFORCE STRATEGY

Council reviewed workforce indicators through the staff engagement, complaints, health, safety and wellbeing reports. It emphasised evidence-based action planning, prevention and early intervention, and the need to understand differing experiences across staff cohorts. Council also noted the implications of workplace flexibility settings and the

importance of maintaining fair, safe and sustainable employment arrangements while the University responded to financial and sector pressures.

REMUNERATION STRATEGY

Council approved a University-wide remuneration framework that brings together pay decision-making across enterprise agreements, policies, processes and external benchmarking. The framework is intended to support fair and equitable governance of remuneration decisions and strengthen the University's ability to attract and retain staff.

COUNCIL MATTERS & PERFORMANCE

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

Council approved Deputy Chancellor appointments to support leadership continuity and orderly succession, Jill Hennesey was appointed and Kate Roffey was reappointed.

EXTERNAL REPORTING

Council noted that institutional performance would continue to be communicated through the annual report and strategic and operational plans. It also received annual assurance reporting on gifts, benefits and hospitality, governance policies, freedom of speech and academic freedom, and academic quality assurance.

REVIEW & EVALUATION

Council reviewed progress against the external governance review implementation plan and supported continued trialling of the revised Council paper template before full implementation in 2027. It welcomed clearer and more concise papers, while seeking stronger links between proposals, strategy and institutional risk.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT (STAFF, STUDENT & COMMUNITY)

Council focused on strengthening meaningful engagement with students. It considered staff perspectives through engagement survey and complaints reporting, and examined how wellbeing, inclusion and safety initiatives were responding to identified needs. Council also acknowledged the role of community, philanthropic and international engagement in advancing the University's purpose and sustainability.

OTHER MATTERS

Council approved the People and Culture Committee Terms of Reference, supporting a clearer governance focus on people, culture and workforce-related matters from 2027. It received reports from its committees and Academic Board on academic governance, risk, finance, investment and organisational priorities. Council also noted the current international environment and its implications for the University and requested a future strategic deep dive into VU Online.

DISCLAIMER

The Governing Body Report of Outcomes is provided for transparency and information purposes only. It summarises governing body oversight activities and outcomes during the reporting period and does not constitute a complete record of Council deliberations. It does not cover all matters discussed or the full detail of decisions or discussions.

The Expert Council's Principles recognise that, while the communication of the work and the decisions of the Governing Body is crucial, there are legal and commercial reasons for maintaining confidentiality.

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

THE HONOURABLE DR. STEVE BRACKS AC, *Chancellor*
K**ATE ROFFEY AM**, *Deputy Chancellor*
PROFESSOR ADAM SHOEMAKER, *Vice-Chancellor*
PROFESSOR ZORA VRCELJ, *Chair of Academic Board*
PRUE DIGBY, *Ministerial Appointment*
SUNNY GOMBOSO, *Student Elected*
PROFESSOR THE HONORABLE JILL HENNESSY, *Government Appointment*
EMERITUS PROFESSOR LIZ JOHNSON, *Council Appointment*
PROFESSOR ALEX PARKER, *Staff Elected*
ADRIAN POZZO, *Council Appointment*
FIONA SCHUTT, *Council Appointment*
JOSH SMITH, *Government Appointment*
JEN STOCKWELL, *Council Appointment*
FELICITY TOPP, *Council Appointment*
GREG TUCKER, *Government Appointment*

FURTHER INFORMATION

COUNCIL

VU Act 2010
VU Governance

COUNCIL COMMITTEES

Audit and Risk Committee
Finance and Investment Committee
Infrastructure Planning Committee
Nominations Committee
Remuneration Committee

OTHER USEFUL LINKS

Council Regulations 2021
Council Terms of Reference

ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE

Academic Board
Academic Board Executive Committee
Courses Committee
Learning & Teaching Quality Committee
Research & Research Training Committee

2026 COUNCIL MEETINGS

Council Meetings	Meeting Times	Location
Thursday, 26 November	8.30am – 1.00pm	**Footscray Park Campus,** 70–104 Ballarat Road, Footscray

Table 1: Remaining 2026 Council Meeting Schedule