



minutes

Te Komiti Rangahau o Unitec | Unitec Research Committee

Date:	2024-06-13
Scheduled Start:	1300h
Scheduled End:	1500h
Location:	Microsoft Teams

MEETING OPENED:	1300h
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SECTION 1 – NGĀ KUPU ARATAKI | PRELIMINARIES

Item 1.1 Karakia Tīmatanga | Opening Prayer

Item 1.2 Mihi Whakatau | Welcome from the Chair

The Chair warmly welcomed members of the committee to the meeting, including new member Xinxin Wang from the School of Architecture, who has taken over from Dr Yusef Patel.

SECTION 2 – STANDING ITEMS

Item 2.1 Ngā Whakapāha | Attendance, Apologies & Quorate Status

Members Present

1. Hadley Brown (Chair)
2. Tanya White
3. Nora Md Amin
4. Xinxin Wang
5. Leon Tan
6. Kambiz Borna
7. Lian Wu
8. Daisey Bentley-Gray
9. Kristie Cameron

Total members represented: 9 members

Apologies

1. Helen Gremillion
2. Hamid Sharifzadeh
3. Daisey Bentley-Gray (for early departure, 1.55pm)

4. Khaled Ibrahim

Total apologies:

4 members

Absent

1. Arun Deo

MOTION

That the committee accepts the apologies for today's meeting.

Moved: Lian Wu

Seconded: Nora Md Amin

MOTION CARRIED

Quorate Status

A minimum of seven representatives is required; the meeting was quorate.

Hunga Mahi | Staff in Attendance

1. Brenda Massey, Acting Secretary

Item 2.2 Pitopito Kōrero o Ngā Hui | Minutes of Previous Meeting

MOTION

That the committee approves the minutes of the 2024-05-09 meeting as a true and accurate record.

Moved: Kristie Cameron

Seconded: Daisy Bentley-Gray

MOTION CARRIED

Item 2.3 Mahia Atu | Matters Arising

Agenda Item(s)	Action	Responsible	Outcome
4.1	Summarise the committee's discussion on the difficulties Unitec's IT policies and procedures are posing to teaching and research endeavours. Circulate the discussion document to the committee, requesting any additional input, particularly in the form of specific examples.	Brenda Massey/All	Complete
	Use the committee's feedback to inform a submission to IT and Academic Committee.	Leon Tan	In progress. Leon will provide an update for the committee at the next meeting.
4.2	Provide the committee's feedback on the new Emerging Researcher Start Up Fund to Marcus Williams.	Brenda Massey	Complete. The Research Partners will discuss this at their next catch-up. Hadley advised that the committee's feedback

			that the minimum grant available from the fund be increased is being considered.
4.3	<p>Circulate the UAG consultation questions to the committee and, subject to committee members' availability, convene a meeting to gather feedback on the submission questions.</p> <p>Collate and disseminate the URC's feedback on the SSAG consultation to Jamie Smiler, National Research Director, Te Pūkenga, before COB Fri, 10 May.</p>	<p>Hadley Brown/ Brenda Massey</p> <p>Brenda Massey/ Hadley Brown</p>	<p>Complete. An invitation was forwarded to the committee to a workshop for Unitec staff to take a deep dive into the UAG's TOR and to contribute to a Unitec submission on the consultation.</p> <p>Complete. Jamie Smiler responded "He mihi atu ki a kōrua me te kōmiti. Thanks to you and the committee for providing input into the Te Pūkenga response. This response is a part of phase 1 of the advisory group's response with more feedback expected and then later there will be consultation on any significant changes as a result of the advice provided". Hadley advised that in terms of the response that Te Pūkenga compiled, the committee's feedback and discussion featured quite significantly in that.</p>
5.1	Draft a letter for Marcus Williams to send to Dr Sarah Wells thanking her for her ECR final report and encapsulating the committee's feedback on it.	Brenda Massey	Complete

SECTION 3 – MEA HEI WHAKAAE | ITEMS TO APPROVE

Section 3.1 Research Centre Update – Cybersecurity Research Centre

The committee agreed to pause the operation of the Cybersecurity Research Centre for one year in the wake of the recent resignation of the centre's director, Denis Lavrov.

MOTION

That the committee approves that the operation of the Cybersecurity Research Centre be paused for one year.

Moved: Leon Tan

Seconded: Daisy Bentley-Gray

MOTION CARRIED

This matter will be scheduled by Brenda Massey to be revisited by the committee in 12 months' time.

Section 4.1 Review of the Unitec Research Strategy Action Plan

The committee's Work Plan requires that the Unitec Research Strategy Action Plan be reviewed annually.

It was noted that the Unitec Research Strategy 2020-2024 is coming to the end of its five-year lifecycle.

The Action Plan lists three priorities. The committee's discussion is summarised as follows:

Priority One: Research that is aligned with Te Tiriti o Waitangi

- When the Action Plan was reviewed last year, former committee members Dr Cat Mitchell and A/P Marcus Williams, in consultation with Prof Jenny-Lee Morgan, then Director of Ngā Wai at Te Tūi, put a lot of thought and effort into strengthening many of the Actions associated with Priority One.
- It would be useful to explore in time for the development of the next Research Strategy how kaupapa Māori research could be better supported at Unitec, particularly within the context of some of the challenges that Unitec's contracting systems, practices, and policies can pose (e.g., around sensitive expenditure).
- Tanya White articulated that she would like an opportunity to review and consider the Actions associated with Priority One in a group setting. She sees some positives in the Actions, but also some gaps. For example, the need for support for kaimahi undertaking postgraduate supervision with Māori postgraduate students, what that might look like, and how the institution can support that, e.g., through workshops, was raised in a recent postgraduate research hui. The intention would be to work with the Pacific team as well to determine what's needed to be able to support tauira and kaimahi.
- The Chair agreed that it's appropriate that we give stakeholders time to feedback on the Action Plan. While the current Research Strategy is near the end of its lifecycle, it is important that the Actions are reviewed and adjusted, if necessary, as they will influence future strategic planning and goal setting.

Priority 2: A flourishing, collaborative research culture

- Over the last two or three years, the School of Creative Industries has had groups who've successfully applied for collaborative research dissemination funding. In 2022 that allowed the school to work with the Ngāi Kaitiaki group, Tanya White, and some of the Maia marae team to deliver an art trail, and this year the same fund is supporting the Matariki project. From the school's perspective, it's been good to have that support because that's allowed them to run these projects. Whilst the school procured some funds from outside of Unitec, the funding from Unitec really allowed them to realise the project at the level they wanted to. The Art Trail brought a number of different groups and iwi who supported the project to Te Noho Kotahitanga marae, and it was quite a significant project in terms of giving some of the histories of our place visibility.
- Regarding the Action 'structure the Unitec symposium around Groups', this was demonstrated in previous symposiums, however Unitec didn't hold a symposium last year. Going forward, will this statement continue to be reflected in the way that we action this Priority? Things at Unitec continue to be uncertain. Last year the symposium was cancelled

because there was a sense that if we proceeded with it, and then Tūāpapa Rangahau was restructured and there wasn't the capacity to deliver it, then that would have been quite detrimental. At this point in time Tūāpapa Rangahau is still waiting to know what the future of research support is. Marcus Williams presented a memo to the committee in March promoting the Conference Seed Fund. He noted that Tūāpapa Rangahau was seeing an increasing reliance by staff on presenting at annual all-staff research symposiums in order to generate research outputs, despite the outputs being non-QA. Marcus was promoting the Conference Seed Fund as an option because discipline-specific opportunities do allow for peer review and the inclusion of external participants, and they do tend to generate QA outputs for multiple staff at Unitec.

- Regarding the Action Summary "Increase research excellence and productivity", it was suggested that an additional Action be added along this line: "ensure sufficient and relevant research resources (books, databases, etc.) are in place including giving consideration to cost sharing". The Library is 'battling' when it comes to maintaining subscriptions to important databases such as Sage Research Methods due to constant budget cuts over the past few years. It is hoped that with this proposed Action, Tūāpapa Rangahau could consider sharing the costs of subscriptions to important library resources which support research activities at Unitec, as the cuts are impacting a number of active researchers.

Priority 3: Partnered research and innovation

- The Research Voucher scheme enables Tūāpapa Rangahau to match external research funding dollar for dollar up to a value of \$5,000 with a research voucher. Sometimes the amount that a client puts in is in-kind (e.g., a person to assist with the research) and that is translated into a dollar value. The scheme has been very successful in getting some small research projects launched which then get developed to next stage.
- Unitec has two Research Partners who have a focus on connecting businesses and communities into Tūāpapa Rangahau and our research centres in order to facilitate research initiatives.
- Tūāpapa Rangahau has been actively working with the legal team to commercialise some of Unitec's research products and outputs. This has been quite successful over the years, particularly in the area of cybersecurity.
- It was noted that Unitec currently has three active research centres (Ngā Wai a Te Tūi Māori & Indigenous Research Centre, the Digital Heritage Research Centre, and the Applied Molecular Solutions Research Centre). Three research centres have been 'paused' this year (the Centre of Research in Education for Healthcare Professionals, the Environmental Solutions Research Centre, and the Cybersecurity Research Centre).

Action: Hadley Brown will check with Marcus Williams whether Unitec will be having a symposium this year and report back to the committee.

Action: Hadley Brown, in collaboration with Tanya White and Daisy Bentley-Gray, will convene a small group to procure further feedback on Priority One.

Section 4.2 Te Pūkenga-wide Research Awards

The committee was asked to discuss the idea of establishing a sector-wide Research Awards initiative. A summary of the committee's discussion is as follows:

- Some members of the committee were not supportive of the idea:

- It's counter to the direction currently of refocusing on localities and regions and it feels like it would dilute an already stretched research budget.
- How productive will it be to concentrate on building into a structure that is being disestablished? While there is benefit in connecting with other ITPs across the sector, it is not certain as to whether this is one of the ways that would be productive for Unitec, and whether focusing our energy and resources on something like this would benefit our students.
- Will this initiative have tangible outcomes for those that are likely to even be nominated? Who is likely to be awarded these awards? What's in it for those people so it's meaningful? Will it take them somewhere? Because it may cost a lot of money, and with Te Pūkenga disestablishing, we do not know what a national research structure in the ITP sector will look like, and whether it will have the resources to support or continue to support such an initiative.
- What are the logistics of what is being proposed? If it does go ahead, how long will it continue? Is it something that will happen once or is it something that will carry on? We're in a very fragile situation with where this disestablishment is going to lead and what impact that will have on a national ITP research centre.

On the positive side:

- Happy to see that there's consideration of including a whanau/iwi/hapu, community, or industry partnership category in this space.
- It is good to see energy going into creating some sort of national research network that will survive Te Pūkenga.
- If the initiative went forward, it would not necessarily compromise any research awards that are being promoted at local level.

Questions:

- By 'award' is it meant that researchers will get a monetary award or a trophy or similar for work in the past? Or is it intended that it would be like a fellowship or a scholarship or a fund or a grant for research in the future? The latter not the former would be preferred, so that the awards aren't necessarily "good job". Whereas, to provide something to keep a researcher's momentum going, something progressive such as the new Royal Society Fellowships, would be good. While something like that would cost a huge amount of money, it would be more valuable, especially for ECRs. It might be nice for the sector to have something like that, since it sometimes feels like we do not have the same access to opportunities that researchers in universities have.
- What is meant when we talk about 'sector-wide research awards'? The Chair responded that it's his understanding that 'sector-wide' is a reference to all the ITP business divisions currently sitting in Te Pūkenga.
- Is one of the motivations for this that some of the other ITPs don't have the resource to be able to promote and support these kind of research award opportunities internally? So, this is an opportunity to do something through a network where some of the more research active or intensive ITPs have got resources to facilitate the nominations, selection and award of this initiative?
- Will it be repeated and long-term, or will it be trialled first? Is this being proposed as a pilot? It could only be a reoccurring initiative if there is a commitment within whatever structure we end up with that funds would be pooled or made available in a recurring way.

- Thinking about the Excellence in Teaching Awards that are happening soon, just last year or the year before there was one specifically for Pacific, the Moana Award, and it's now in its third iteration this year. Is that going to be the case with this particular award? There will need to be a structure that will provide the support for it to continue.
- Are these financial or non-financial awards? If they are financial, where does the money come from and how will it affect business divisions' budgets for research?

In summary, the committee would like to see more detail about how the awards would be structured and financed and the rationale for having them.

Action: Hadley Brown/Brenda Massey to summarise the committee's feedback and share it with Jamie Smiler.

SECTION 5 - NGĀ TUKUNGA | ITEMS TO RECEIVE

Section 5.1 Update on SSAG and UAG Consultations

The committee received an update on the Science System Advisory Group (SSAG) and University Advisory Group (UAG) consultations.

Hadley Brown and Brenda Massey collated and provided feedback to Jamie Smiler on the committee's discussion on the SSAG consultation, and on the 21 May, Jamie confirmed that Unitec research committee feedback was read and synthesised along with feedback received from other Te Pūkenga business divisions. The feedback that the committee provided featured prominently in the Te Pūkenga response.

Prof Martin Carroll facilitated a workshop on 21 May around the UAG consultation. Some committee members were present at that meeting, including Helen Gremillion and Hadley Brown, Unitec's Director Research and Enterprise, Marcus Williams, was also in attendance.

Martin opened the workshop by painting a fairly gloomy picture if ITPs were to be completely cut out of research, and the ability to offer degree level programmes, and if we were able to only offer trade certification. We don't know what that probability is at this stage. Martin then asked what is it that ITPs and Unitec do that would be a justification for that scenario not happening and prompted those present to make those compelling arguments to inform the submission.

Those in attendance were very motivated to think about where we might sit within the university ecosystem. Some of the themes picked up at Hadley's table group were:

- ITPs produce thinkers and doers, not just thinkers.
- We produce graduates that are technically skilled, adaptive, and socialised to work within their communities and small to medium enterprises.
- There are relatively few large organisations in Aotearoa, so producing adaptive critical thinkers who can problem solve for local communities and business is crucial.
- We provide vocational pathways that uplift students in the professions that may otherwise be excluded from such opportunities.
- We scaffold qualifications flowing from sub-degree certificates to postgraduate qualifications. It is important to have that lower-level entry but also provide an opportunity to progress all the way to postgraduate study.

- Applied research happens at sub-degree level, e.g., testing new building materials so students can be instructed in their use.
- ITPs provide cost-effective, timely, applied research solutions to organisations who are often resource constrained and cannot afford to conduct their own investigations or don't know where to start.
- Concentrating tertiary education and research with just a few providers, i.e., universities, and potentially asking each university to be very specialised in its research scope, thus limiting their own research aspirations, can create a single point of failure. ITPs ensure a diversity of research and education that is not only responsive to local communities, and industries, but feeds into partnered opportunities with universities and CRIs.

Jamie Smiler will be sharing Te Pūkenga's submission to the UAG with regional leaders on 19 June and then with research offices and then through Te Pūkenga's website for all kaimahi to access, dates to be confirmed.

In the meantime, MBIE has advised that the SSAG received around 300 submissions from the public consultation and that there was a higher-than-expected interest from the business community. Some organisations have shared their submissions on their websites, e.g., the [Royal Society](#).

There will be opportunities as we go along the consultation path to provide further input.

Section 5.2 2023 Research Centre Reports

The committee received annual Research Centre Reports from Ngā Wai a Te Tūi, Māori & Indigenous Research Centre (NwaTT), the Digital Heritage Research Centre (DHRC) and the Applied Molecular Solutions Research Centre (AMS).

NWaTT

When Prof Jenny Lee-Morgan, former Director of NWaTT, left Unitec a significant amount of funding and contracted research left with her. A/P Hinekura Smith has taken over as Director and has been instrumental in rebuilding NWaTT and bringing in new research contracts. Hinekura is very successful at proposal writing and the centre at the moment is going well. The committee acknowledged the work that's been done by Hinekura and those that previously worked in the centre.

A highlight of 2023 was that two MAI ki Wairaka Masters students were awarded Hine Kahukura New Horizon's Research Awards. MAI ki Wairaka is a network of Māori and Indigenous researchers that spans nationally. There is a grouping here at Wairaka which also includes Pacific students. It's a space for Indigenous researchers to collaborate and to focus on their writing and research and be supported in that environment.

The centre has a new appointment. Dr Byron Rangiwai has returned to Unitec as a full-time A/P, based at NWaTT. He will be actively seeking research grants and funding and also providing supervision.

DHRC

Some ambitious proposals for external funding were submitted last year which were unfortunately unsuccessful. A/P Renata Jadresin-Milic has regrouped and has connected with Senior Grants Advisor, Brenda Massey, to develop a good plan for grant seeking activity in 2024 that they're working towards. A strength of Renata's centre has always been the involvement of Architecture

students in her programme of work and all her industry collaborations. The value of in-kind support that has been secured by industry is significant. Renata has research assistant support for the centre which will help her with proposal development, particularly towards a big bid for 2025 MBIE Endeavour Fund Research Programme funding in collaboration with Prof Regan Potangaroa at Massey University.

AMS

Prof Peter de Lange has resigned from his Co-Directorship of the centre, but Dr Sarah Wells remains as Director. In 2023 AMSRC became an associate of Genomics Aotearoa, a government funded organisation to promote genomics research in New Zealand. Sarah has already secured quite a lucrative grant from Genomics Aotearoa for a project “Population genomics of Ngā roimata o Tohe”.

AMSRC (and their partner school EAS) has a strong history of partnering with Māori. It is pleasing to see that in 2023 new collaborations with iwi were formed and strengthened.

Another strength of AMS is the opportunities afforded to students to be involved in the centre and its activities, with a lot of student supervised projects having been undertaken in 2023.

General

Overall, despite all the uncertainty and disruption Unitec has been through during the restructuring, it's good to see that we've still got three vibrant centres, and even with all the staff resignations from the centres, there's still considerable capability and capacity there. We're always a big grant away from launching each one of these centres into the stratosphere!

Action: Brenda Massey to draft letters of thanks to each of the centre directors for Marcus Williams, Director Research and Enterprise, to issue.

SECTION 6 - KUPU WHAKAMUTUNGA | CLOSING

Section 6.1 Ētahi Kaupapa Anō | Any Other Business

Kristie Cameron has been appointed the new Co-Chair of the Royal Society's Early Career Researcher Forum. This will be formally announced by the Royal Society soon. This representation is important in that our sector will have more of a voice going forward. Committee members congratulated Kristie on her appointment and for the fabulous job she is doing in the ECR space at Unitec.

There are still places available for the 2024 3-Minute Spiel Competition in both ECR and Emerging Researcher (ER) categories. The competition is aimed at those who have got a research idea or are doing research that has an impact and want to pitch it. The Chair encouraged committee members to come along and show their support for their ER and ECR colleagues. There are two prizes of \$600 for the most innovative ECRs and a new emerging researcher prize of \$600 which winners can utilise to further their research, e.g., research dissemination or starting a new endeavour. The competition is also a good networking opportunity.

Section 6.2 Komiti Self-Assessment

An opportunity was given for the committee to reflect on their self-assessment provocations. The committee is reminded that feedback on any aspect of the committee's operation can be emailed to the Chair or the Secretary at any time (in confidence if requested).

Tanya White mihied to Hadley, commenting that it's good to be able to look at things together in quite some detail.

Section 6.3 **Karakia Whakamutunga | Closing Karakia**

MEETING CLOSED: 1420 h

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Agenda Item(s)	Action	Responsible	Outcome
2.3	Provide an update to the committee on a draft submission to IT and Academic Committee on the difficulties Unitec's IT policies and procedures are posing to teaching and research endeavours.	Leon Tan	
4.1	Check with Marcus Williams whether Unitec will be having a research symposium this year and report back to the committee. Convene a small group to give further feedback on Priority One of the Unitec Research Strategy Action Plan.	Hadley Brown Hadley Brown/ Tanya White / Daisy Bentley-Gray	
4.2	Summarise the committee's feedback on the proposed sector-wide research awards for Jamie Smiler.	Hadley Brown / Brenda Massey	
5.2	Draft letters to Research Centre Directors thanking them for their 2023 Research Centre Reports ready for Marcus Williams, Director Research and Enterprise to issue.	Brenda Massey	