Te Komiti Rangahau o Unitec | Unitec Research Committee

Date:	2025-06-12
Scheduled Start:	1300h
Scheduled End:	1500h
Location:	Microsoft Teams

MEETING OPENED:	1300h

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 Dipti Vora (proxy for Nora Md Amin).

SECTION 2 – STANDING ITEMS

Item 2.1   Ngā Whakapāha | Attendance, Apologies & Quorate Status

Members Present

1. Hadley Brown (Chair)
2. Kristie Cameron (until 2.40pm)
3. Daisy Bentley-Gray
4. Hinewai Reihana-White
5. Helen Gremillion
6. Xinxin Wang
7. Lian Wu
8. Khaled Ibrahim (from 1-1.30pm & 2-2.50pm)
9. Dipti Vora (proxy for Nora Md Amin)
10. Leon Tan
11. Kathryn George (from 1.35pm)

Total members represented: 11 members

Apologies

1. Nora Md Amin

2. Arun Deo
3. Hamid Sharifzadeh

Total apologies: 3 members

MOTION

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

Moved: Khaled Ibrahim
Seconded: Kristie Cameron

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
2. Aiono Manu Fa'aea, MIT (from 1.35pm)

Kambiz Borna is unable to attend future meetings, therefore the position of representative from the School of Building Construction is now vacant.

Action: The Chair will work with HoS, Paul Jeurissen, to recruit a new member to represent the School of Building Construction.

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

---

MOTION

That the committee approves the minutes of the 2025-05-01 meeting as a true and accurate record.

Moved: Daisy Bentley-Gray
Seconded: Lian Wu

MOTION CARRIED

Item 2.3   Mahia Atu | Matters Arising

Last month Kristie Cameron advised that an ITP Early Career Research (ECR) group has been created, with representation from most of the ITPs. The group has now developed some Terms of Reference and is endeavouring to establish senior leadership support to progress the group's kaupapa.

The group is keen to define an emerging researcher and an early career researcher in a way that is relevant to the wider ITP/vocational education sector.

Helen Gremillion was involved in the mahi associated with defining an ECR and an emerging researcher at Unitec. The ITP ECR group is keen to establish its own definitions in recognition of the diversity that exists between different institutions. For the purposes of accessing research support products at Unitec, the Unitec-specific definitions will continue to apply.

At Unitec an ECR is defined as being someone within 10 years of becoming an 'independent' researcher. It was raised that 10 years is quite a significant period of time. Ten years post PhD, it would be likely that a researcher would have been promoted to a position of Senior Lecturer or

Associate Professor. Is it fair that newly independent researchers at the level of Lecturer are competing with researchers that have reached Associate Professor level for grants and other resources?

A lot of funding schemes do make provision for ECRs at different career stages. E.g. the Royal Society offers one type of fellowship for researchers whose PhDs were conferred within four years and another type of fellowship for researchers whose PhDs were conferred more than four years and less than 12 years ago. At Unitec new ECRs have the option of including more experienced researchers and mentors in their applications for ECR funding. This means applications for funding from new ECRs could be as competitive as those received from more experienced ECRs.

Agenda Item(s)	Action	Responsible	Outcome
2.3	Raise with Jamie Smiler whether and how Pacific research and researchers will be incorporated into this year's ITP Research Symposium.	Hadley Brown	Complete. Hadley has reached out to Jamie and will be following this matter up at the next Rangahau Research Forum, which Jamie chairs. Meanwhile, Jamie has been in touch with Daisy Bentley-Gray, as last year she chaired the Pacific stream of the ITP Research Symposium. The Pacific Research Fonu is open to hosting a Pacific research stream as part of this year's ITP Research Symposium, which would be hosted at Unitec.
2.3	Form a small working group to consider and respond to a question about Individual Research Plans (IRP) in which it says: *"How will your research impact Māori research leadership, capability, excellence, partnership, processes and governance? "* The question is, can this question be broadened to include Pacific or Indigenous research? The working group should report back to the committee next month.	Hadley Brown / Daisy Bentley-Gray / Hinewai Reihana-White	Complete. The working group has recommended to Tūāpapa Rangahau that the IRP statement be amended to read: *"How will your research impact Māori or Pacific research leadership, capability, partnership, and processes?"*
3.1	Meet with other staff in NWaTT to review section 4.7 of the Scholarly Communication Guidelines, draft up new wording, and send to Arun Deo.	Hinewai Reihana-White	In progress (see update below).

	Present the guidelines with the updated section 4.7 to the committee for approval.	Arun Deo	

Matter arising 3.1: Hinewai Reihana-White has sought feedback on section 4.7 of the Unitec Scholarly Communication Guidelines from NWaTT and Unitec mātauranga Māori whānau. The feedback that has been gathered has been provided to Arun Deo.

It has been recommended that the content of section 4.7 be updated and that the section itself is repositioned within the document. Currently mātauranga Māori is positioned in the document as an IP issue, which doesn't reflect Unitec's commitments under Te Tiriti o Waitangi or the values outlined in Te Noho Kotahitanga.

It is proposed:

1) The current section 4.7 be renamed "Māori Knowledge Systems and Scholarly Communication" to affirm taonga mātauranga as a distinct and protected body of knowledge.
2) The current section 4.7 be repositioned within the document as section 4.2. Currently section 4.1 of the guidelines is an overview, section 4.2 is about scholarly communication and section 4.3 is about responsibilities. It is recommended that the current section 4.7 be reframed and resituated immediately after the overview, which would serve to ground the entire guidelines within Unitec's Tiriti based responsibilities from the outset.

Hinewai provided the committee with a summary of the proposed revised wording of the section.

The current Unitec Scholarly Communication Guidelines reference Unitec's Guidelines for Researchers Regarding Māori and Community Social and Cultural Responsiveness, which itself are currently under review. Therefore, it is proposed that additional time to support that separate review process be given and a revised timeframe be considered to allow this piece of mahi to be carried out appropriately.

Hinewai also noted that in her communication to the working party charged with reviewing the guidelines that although a conversation had taken place, and she had informed the review team that amendments to section 4.7 would be required through consultation, the team decided to proceed without making any changes, with a decision made to retain the current section 4.7, based on the working party's own assessment that no revision was necessary. The importance of shared decision making needs to be highlighted in areas involving taonga mātauranga and Unitec's responsibilities under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Shared decision making will strengthen this committee's outputs and collaborations.

Action: Hadley will liaise with Nora Md Amin and Arun Deo to check on progress and to ensure that Hinewai's extensive mahi on this piece of work will be incorporated into the revised guidelines.

SECTION 3 – MEA HEI WHAKAAE | ITEMS TO APPROVE

Section 3.1   2025 Early Career Research Fellowship Fund Grants Advisory Committee Membership

The committee retrospectively approved the membership of the 2025 Early Career Researcher (ECR) Fellowship Fund Grants Advisory Committee (GAC), a sub-committee of the Unitec Research Committee (GAC membership was unable to be approved in advance due to the timing of the committee's May meeting and the necessity of having Marcus Williams participate in the assessment process before his departure from Unitec).

MOTION

That the committee approves the membership of the 2025 ECR Fellowship Grants Advisory Committee.

Moved: Daisy Bentley-Gray
Seconded: Lian Wu

MOTION CARRIED

SECTION 4 - WHAKAWHITI KŌRERO | ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Section 4.1 Review of the Unitec Research Strategy Action Plan

The committee previously agreed to roll over the 2020 - 2024 Unitec Research Strategy into 2025. According to the committee's 2025 work plan, the Unitec Research Strategy Action Plan needs to be reviewed annually to ensure it has been appropriately responding to the research strategy.

It will be helpful for the new Research Director, when they are appointed, if we have identified how we are tracking towards achieving in the three priority areas of the Action Plan.

It was raised that linkages between research at Unitec and MIT currently exist but are not reflected in the Action Plan which speaks only to Unitec. For the purposes of this discussion, the review was approached within the scope of Unitec only.

The Chair asked members of the committee to consider: "how are we broadly tracking against the Research Strategy Priorities?"

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

Tūāpapa Rangahau (TR) has created a good platform to support applied research in different areas, including te taiao and wellbeing. Collaboration and partnering is supported via this forum as well as more broadly. There are many internal opportunities available to support research. TR and Marcus Williams have been instrumental in setting up that foundation.

One of the actions under this priority is to improve consultation processes with Māori researchers and use feedback to inform how contracts are managed so that Māori researchers are appointed through culturally appropriate procedures. Part of Hadley Brown's role is contracting external researchers. The way that we contract, particularly researchers involved in the kaupapa Māori research space can be quite awkward at times, mainly because of the bureaucracy and time it takes to contract a person. The Finance team has undertaken an internal review of Unitec's contracting procedures.

Action: Hadley Brown to invite Irene Lee, Finance Administration Manager, to feed back the outcome of the review to the committee and to hear if any changes have been implemented in the contracting space.

In kaupapa Māori research we often bring in people that are new to contracting or haven't previously been in a contract for services situation. It feels a little cumbersome sometimes. You can lose a personal relationship in the contracting process because it's so multi-layered: there's so many approvals required, and there's so many forms to fill out.

We are also in a good place because Unitec has Te Noho Kotahitanga, which is a thread that goes through all our delivery and our relationships. It gives us values that we can use in our collaborations and in our approach to research.

Priority Two: A flourishing, collaborative research culture

In Helen Gremillion's new role working with the Academic Leads (Research) at MIT, there's been quite a bit of discussion about the Research Productivity Traffic Light (RPTL). It's been raised that the RPTL is a retroactive measure (i.e. looking at research across the previous two years) and when new staff come on board, they don't fully understand the metric and what it's about. Applying the colour red to these new staff who are just starting to get up to speed with research outputs can be quite confronting. It has been proposed that a fourth colour could be applied to new staff, e.g. white as a 'blank slate' type colour. This is something we should bring to the new Research Director's attention as being a potential innovation. Some staff are quite sensitive about what they perceive as criticism. An innovation in this space might help to offset some of those feelings.

Mentorship is very important. Do we need to do some individual needs analysis for our emerging and ECRs in terms of their developmental needs? The obstacles they encounter in getting started in research could relate to either confidence or competence or both. It is important to ensure mentorship is available to address emerging and ECRs' very specific needs. The provision of development workshops could also be reviewed and revisited.

The School of Applied Business has Senior Lecturers, but not Associate Professors or Professors, with the exception of the APM, whose focus is understandably more on teaching and learning mentorship, rather than research. How can we overcome something like this? External mentorship is a possibility, but does that create a risk? This can serve to highlight what resources other institutions have that Unitec lacks. Mentorship support to publish in higher ranking journals, to go for grants, to attract more experience onto research projects is very important, and Unitec could definitely benefit from having a more robust mentorship system in place.

Priority 3: Partnered research and innovation

Are we doing enough to engage with our community and industry partners? An area of strength for Unitec is our applied research. However, it seems like a lot of people don't know what we do at Unitec. We're missing some sort of story telling piece around what we do and what we're good at. What opportunities are there to make our applied research strength more visible?

How do we get industry and community partners to come to us? We need to make Unitec a place that is welcoming for them to come and do business and to drop in. It would be good to position Unitec as a social hub. The Mayor has mentioned an innovation hub for Tāmaki – are we having conversations with him about this? We should be. A business hub model would provide excellent opportunities; the provision of an enterprise space to incubate ideas and connect investors with ideas and students.

It was acknowledged that while we do a lot of sub-contracting with the universities, that contribution can get hidden. Why can't we get more media traction about what we're doing well? E.g. articles in the Herald?

There are a huge number of obstacles when working with those external to Unitec, especially around payment for services. Once upon a time it was quite straightforward to get a small koha of $1-2k approved. In recent years that limit has dropped to the point that Finance is now saying that they need contracts for service to be implemented instead of koha being provided for marae for example. That becomes problematic, because koha is an appropriate form of exchange in the Māori world view.

The sensitive expenditure policy reflects Audit NZ's requirements. Hadley Brown has been trying to push to see if their guidelines can be relaxed to become more culturally appropriate. It's almost impossible to do kaupapa Māori research with the restrictions we currently have around koha.

It was also queried how can we build more resilience into our research centres. Their continuance is so often dependent on one individual. Is there any way we can mitigate against that?

SECTION 5 - NGĀ TUKUNGA | ITEMS TO RECEIVE

Section 5.1   Update on the Science System Reforms

Brenda Massey provided the committee with an update on MBIE's progress towards the Science System Reforms. This includes the Crown Research Institutes' merger into three new entities and the disestablishment of Callaghan Innovation.

In terms of the funding landscape, MBIE's large Endeavour Fund will not be inviting applications in 2026. In addition, Ako Aotearoa's AARIA funding scheme has been discontinued, and this will be the last year for TLRI (Teaching and Learning Research Initiative) funding.

Section 5.2   Research Centre Update – Cybersecurity Research Centre

The committee received an update on the future of the Cybersecurity Research Centre. The centre has a robust plan in place for its recovery, including widening its discipline focus to include Artificial Intelligence and the Internet of Things, connecting the mahi of several research groups in the school to the centre, seeking external funding, and aligning with postgraduate programmes within the school, including the new DComp.

Section 5.3   2024 Research Centre Report – Environmental Solutions Research Centre

The committee was advised of the closure of the Environmental Solutions Research Centre after it was initially put into abeyance following the departure if its founder and director Prof Terri-Ann Berry.

Section 5.4   2024 Research Centre Reports

Two research centre reports were received, with highlights as follows:

Ngā Wai a Te Tūī Māori & Indigenous Research Centre (NWaTT)

While the core kaupapa and intent of NWaTT remain consistent, the research priorities and areas of focus have started to shift due to new staff appointments including that of new Centre Director, A/P Deb Heke. These appointments are gradually reshaping the Centre's direction in meaningful ways.

MAI ki Wairaka is hosted by NWaTT and is part of a national network within Te Pae Whakatairanga Hiranga, the Capability Building programme of Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga. The programme provides a kaupapa Māori support network for Māori and Indigenous postgraduate students.

The centre continues to attract external funding and has a robust plan in place for fund seeking and mentorship opportunities in 2025.

Digital Heritage Research Centre (DHRC)
Late in 2024 it was identified that the centre has become a solo effort, even while achieving remarkable things right up to a Ministerial level. In 2025, DHRC will have shared leadership between Renata Jadresin Milic, Christoph Schnoor, and Peter McPherson.

With NZ's changing (diminishing) funding landscape, international opportunities are being pursued, specifically through the Horizon Europe programme. The potential exists for the centre to join a consortium to apply for EU tenders.

5.5　　　　Transitional Arrangement for Director Research & Enterprise Position

Hadley Brown is serving as Director Research & Enterprise in an interim capacity following the departure of A/P Marcus Williams on 30 May. We are possibly two or three months away from a new Director being appointed/starting.

SECTION 6 - KUPU WHAKAMUTUNGA | CLOSING

Section 6.1　　　　Ētahi Kaupapa Anō | Any Other Business

Prof Martin Carroll strongly thanked and acknowledged the committee for its feedback on the Science System Advisory Group Phase 2 Consultation. The feedback was presented to Te Komiti Mātauranga who acknowledged the committee's significant efforts in this space. It was reiterated that Unitec was the only Business Division that responded to the consultation. Before his departure from Unitec the former Director Research & Enterprise asked that this feedback please be passed onto the committee again.

Khaled Ibrahim advised the committee that after long discussions, finally all issues of the New Zealand Journal of Applied Business Research are now freely available on Informit. This is a great milestone for everyone who contributes to the journal to have wider visibility of their research.

Section 6.2　　　　Komiti Self-Assessment

Prof Martin Carroll has advised that the committee should not be self-assessing its performance within the live meeting, and that a process needs to be developed so that committee members can provide feedback confidentially. There is a concern that committee members may not feel they're able to give feedback directly, particularly if they feel that the Chair and/or Secretary aren't performing.

Action: Hadley Brown and Brenda Massey will work together on how we might develop a confidential self-assessment and feedback loop.

Section 6.3   Karakia Whakamutunga | Closing Karakia

MEETING CLOSED:	1450 h

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Agenda Item(s)	Action	Responsible	Outcome
2.1	Work with the HoS to recruit a new committee representative from the School of Building Construction.	Hadley Brown	
2.3	Liaise with Nora Md Amin and Arun Deo to check on progress towards updating the Unitec Scholarly Communication Guidelines and to ensure that Hinewai Reihana-White's extensive mahi around the revision of section 4.7 will be incorporated into the revised guidelines.	Hadley Brown	
2.3	Present the reviewed and updated Unitec Scholarly Communication Guidelines to the committee's July meeting for approval.	Arun Deo	
4.1	Invite Irene Lee, Finance Administration Manager, to a future meeting to give an update on the review of Finance's contracting procedures.	Hadley Brown	
6.2	Develop a framework within which committee members can provide feedback on any aspect of the committee's operation and processes confidentially and outside of the live meeting.	Hadley Brown / Brenda Massey	