

# Governance Statement

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## 1. WHAT IS GOVERNANCE?

Governance refers to the framework of rules, relationships, systems and processes by which an enterprise is directed, controlled and held to account and whereby authority within an organisation is exercised and maintained. It encompasses authority, accountability, stewardship and leadership, and direction and control exercised in any organisation.<sup>1</sup>

The culture of the University is the expression of its values in action. The Council and University management directly shape and influence that expression. Recognising that it is generally accepted that values drive behaviors, and behaviors drive outcomes, this Governance Statement expressly recognises that culture is founded on values-based principles, in addition to rules-based compliance.

The potential for enduring reputational damage in circumstances of negative culture ought not to be underestimated, although that should not be the only deterrent. Positive organisational culture is to be pursued because it is the right course of action.

The increased focus on culture is recognised as a critical element of the success of modern, globally successful organisations.

In the University context, the University Council (“the Council”) is responsible for governance.

The scope of this responsibility is set by the *University of Adelaide Act 1971 (SA)*, as the enabling legislation of the University, and by contemporary community expectations about the role and purpose of the higher education sector.

University governance should reflect and maintain the integrity of the University’s statutory object while ensuring that the institution is able to respond to changing economic, social and public policy priorities. This includes understanding the expectations of diverse members of the University community and stakeholders and partners in government, business and industry, in Australia and internationally.

In all endeavours, the University must meet its responsibilities in law and pay particular attention to standards and principles considered integral to the delivery of higher education services<sup>2</sup>, the conduct of research<sup>3</sup> and the general protection of academic freedom and the preservation of the University’s autonomy in setting and monitoring academic integrity.

## 2. THE PURPOSE OF THIS STATEMENT

The purpose of this statement is to assist the Council:

- 2.1 to communicate its commitment to effective governance;
- 2.2 to recognise the requirements of the University’s enabling legislation;
- 2.3 to express all the common elements that underlie good governance; and
- 2.4 to recognise the unique nature and purpose of the University.

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<sup>1</sup> G20/OECD, *Principles of Corporate Governance*, September 2023, 6; Australian Institute of Company Directors, ‘Not-for-Profit Governance Principles’ (Third edition, April 2024) (*Principles and Guidance*); TEQSA Guidance Note: *Corporate Governance*, August 2019, 1; Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission *Governance Standards*.

<sup>2</sup> The *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021*, issued under the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 (Cth)*, set the requirements for Australian higher education providers.

<sup>3</sup> [The Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018](#) sets criteria for the proper conduct of publicly funded research.

### 3. GOVERNANCE WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY

The University is established by an Act of State Parliament: The *University of Adelaide Act 1971 (SA)* (“the Act”).

*The Act* sets out the key governance entities in the University (Council, Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor), as well as associated bodies such as the Graduate Association and the Adelaide University Union.<sup>4</sup>

*The Act* provides the head powers for the Council to make statutes and rules<sup>5</sup> and by-laws<sup>6</sup> and provides for the University community to participate in the University’s governance through the holding of an Annual Meeting.<sup>7</sup>

*The Act* defines “the University” to consist of “...the Council, members of the academic staff, members of the general staff, graduates and students”.<sup>8</sup>

### 4. THE OBJECT OF THE UNIVERSITY

The object of the University is “the advancement of learning and knowledge, including the provision of university education”<sup>9</sup> (“the University’s Object”).

The University recognises academic freedom as essential to the practice of a discipline and fundamental to the advancement of learning and knowledge. The University values its autonomy in relation to the choice of academic courses and offerings and the manner in which they are taught, as well as its fields of research. The Academic Board is responsible for the integrity and quality of the University’s academic offerings and outcomes, including the preservation of scholarly standards and academic freedom. The Board reports on its function to the Council.

### 5. COUNCIL AS THE GOVERNING BODY

The Council is established under *the Act* and its composition determined by Section 12 of *the Act*.

Membership of the Council and Terms of Office are prescribed by *the Act*.<sup>10</sup> The Council Selection Committee is established by statute and operates under Council approved Guidelines.

The Council’s primary responsibilities are set out in Section 9(1) and 9(2) of *the Act*.

“Section 9 - Council to be governing body of University

9(1) *The Council is the governing body of the University and has the following as its primary responsibilities:*

- a. *appointing the Vice-Chancellor as the chief executive officer of the University, and monitoring his or her performance;*
- b. *approving the mission and strategic direction of the University, as well as the annual budget and business plan;*
- c. *overseeing and reviewing the management of the University and its performance;*
- d. *establishing policy and procedural principles, consistent with legal requirements and community expectations;*

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<sup>4</sup> *University of Adelaide Act 1971 (SA)* s 21.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid* s 22.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid* s 23.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid* s 18.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid* s 4(2)

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid* s 4A.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid* s 12–12A.

- e. *approving and monitoring systems of control and accountability, including general overview of any entities controlled by the University (within the meaning of Section 50AA of the Corporations Act 2001);*
- f. *overseeing and monitoring the assessment and management of risk across the University, including commercial undertakings;*
- g. *overseeing and monitoring the academic activities of the University;*
- h. *approving significant commercial activities of the University.*

9(2) *The Council must in all matters endeavour to advance the interests of the University.”*

The Council approves the strategic direction of the University and monitors its performance.

In the context of Council’s governance responsibilities during the transition from the University to Adelaide University, the Council’s responsibilities generally under section 9 of the Act and otherwise as the governing body of the University will continue until the Act is repealed (see clause 1 of Schedule 1 of the *Adelaide University Act 2023 (SA)* (“*the AU Act*”). The AU Act does not alter those responsibilities, but it does have a practical impact on their content. Those responsibilities must now be understood to include and accommodate the transition to Adelaide University.

The Council should note that Adelaide University is not a controlled entity of the University. This means that the responsibility of Council under section 9 (1)(e) of the Act with respect to entities controlled by the University (within the meaning of section 50AA of the Corporations Act 2001) do not apply to Adelaide University. Subject to the AU Act and its obligations under the Tripartite Agreement, Adelaide University makes its own decisions and operates independently of the foundational universities.

Council Members have duties to exercise care and diligence, act in good faith and to manage potential and actual conflicts of interest. The conduct of Council Members is regulated by Sections 15 to 17 of *the Act*.

To achieve the University’s Object, the University and the Council must together do all that is reasonably possible.

From a governance perspective this includes:

- 5.1 Recognising the role, powers and responsibilities of the Council as the governing body;<sup>11</sup>
- 5.2 Recognising the role, powers and responsibilities of the Chancellor;<sup>12</sup>
- 5.3 Recognising the role and responsibilities of Council members;<sup>13</sup>
- 5.4 Recognising the role, powers and responsibilities of the Vice-Chancellor;<sup>14</sup>
- 5.5 Recognising the requirement that the Council and the selection committee<sup>15</sup> appoint members<sup>16</sup> who have a commitment to education and higher education in particular <sup>17</sup> and who have an understanding of and commitment to the principles of equal opportunity and social justice & access and equity;<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid s 9.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid s 7, s 11(4)(a), s 12(1)(a).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid s 12(2), ss 15–17;

<sup>14</sup> Ibid s 8.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid s 12(1)(d)

<sup>16</sup> *The Act* s 12(2) requires the Council ‘as far as practicable, to be constituted of equal numbers of men and women.’

<sup>17</sup> Ibid s 12(2)(a).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid s 12(2)(b).

- 5.6 Recognising the need for an appropriate level of skills and experience to be represented on the Council to enable the Council to properly fulfil its responsibilities;<sup>19</sup>
- 5.7 Establishing, monitoring and maintaining its own system of reporting, management and maintenance of Council business including, where prudent, through Standing Committees of Council;
- 5.8 Establishing, monitoring and maintaining a system of review for its own effectiveness including with respect to performance of individual members as well as committees established by the Council;
- 5.9 Declaring, managing and monitoring potential conflicts of interest;<sup>20</sup>
- 5.10 Ensuring that the University manages and maintains systems that preserve and protect financial probity and internal controls;
- 5.11 Establishing the oversight and monitoring of risk across the University including for commercial undertakings;<sup>21</sup>
- 5.12 Establishing the oversight and monitoring of the University's academic activities;<sup>22</sup>
- 5.13 Ensuring that the University provides and monitors appropriate systems for preserving and protecting the interests and welfare of the *University Community* as that term is defined in *the Act*;<sup>23</sup>
- 5.14 Establishing "policy and procedural principles consistent with legal requirements and community expectations";<sup>24</sup>
- 5.15 Overseeing and reviewing the management of the University and its performance<sup>25</sup> as well as appointing the Vice-Chancellor and monitoring and reviewing the performance of the Vice-Chancellor;<sup>26</sup>
- 5.16 Approving the mission and strategic direction of the University and the annual budget and business plan;<sup>27</sup>
- 5.17 Protecting the University's proprietary interest in the official insignia;<sup>28</sup>
- 5.18 Advancing the interests of the University;<sup>29</sup>
- 5.19 Encouraging a culture within the University that is characterised by respect for individuals;
- 5.20 Encouraging the management of public and private funds to their highest and best use in pursuit of the University's Object;
- 5.21 Establishing and administering trust and other funds, including investment common funds;<sup>30</sup>
- 5.22 Ensuring that the University identifies, monitors and manages ethical decision-making;

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<sup>19</sup> *Principles and Guidance*, above n 1, 6 [Principle 3].

<sup>20</sup> The Act ss 15–17.

<sup>21</sup> *The Act* s 9(1)(f).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid* s 9(1)(g).

<sup>23</sup> *The Act* s 18 defines '*University Community*' as '*the Council, members of the academic staff, members of the general staff, graduates and students.*'

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid* s 9(1)(d).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid* s 9(1)(c).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid* s 9(1)(a).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid* s 9(1)(b).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid* s 5B(1).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid* s 9(2).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid* ss 30–33

- 5.23 Giving due consideration to the identity and heritage of the University, its contribution in shaping South Australia and its benefactors and stakeholders; and
- 5.24 In the context of Council's governance responsibilities during the transition from the University to Adelaide University:
- Council must be cognisant of its expanded responsibilities to ensure appropriate governance is maintained during the transition from the legacy universities to Adelaide University;
  - Council must monitor compliance with its obligations; and
  - Council should proactively identify potential health and safety risks that the co-Vice Chancellor and University staff working at Adelaide University might face in their role.

## 6. DELEGATION

Section 10(1) of *the Act* allows the Council to delegate any of its powers or functions to

- a member of the Council; or*
- an employee of the University, or*
- the holder of a particular office or position in the University; or*
- any committee of the Council or the University.*

However, this section does not authorise the Council to divest its principal responsibilities or any function of the Council that *the Act* clearly intended the Council to perform itself.

A delegation of power or function under section 10(2):

- must be by instrument in writing; and*
- may be absolute or conditional; and*
- does not derogate from the power of the Council to act in any matter; and*
- is revocable at will by the Council.*

Under section 10(3), the power or function can be further delegated if the instrument of delegation allows it.

Delegations are a legal mechanism for permitting the exercise of powers by an entity where the powers are vested in another entity. The delegate exercises the power in their own right. Delegations of statutory powers can only occur where the law permits.

Many functions exercised on a day to day basis do not involve the use of a delegation, but instead come from an entity's authority. Authority can arise from the nature of a role or position or entity: for example, the functions and duties set out in an individual's Position Description, or in committee Terms of Reference, or from specific direction from a Policy.

The regulations under the AU Act may provide for additional scope for delegations to facilitate the transition to Adelaide University.

## 7. STANDING COMMITTEES

The Council has established Standing Committees and has approved their terms of reference.

The Committees are as follows:

- 7.1 Academic Board
- 7.2 Convenors' Committee

- 7.3 Finance Committee
- 7.4 People and Culture Committee
- 7.5 Special Degrees Committee
- 7.6 Risk Committee

The committee structure serves two important purposes: to encourage and facilitate appropriate information sharing to enhance the performance of each committee; and to enhance communications between the committees and the Council so that performance of the University overall is enhanced.

The Chairs of each of the Committees meet together as the Convenors' Committee.

## 8. ACADEMIC BOARD

*The Act* assumes the existence of the Academic Board.

The Chair of the Academic Board is an *ex officio* member of Council.<sup>31</sup>

Academic Board is the key body assisting the Council in the oversight and monitoring of academic governance and management of the academic activities of the University. The work of the Academic Board is supported by an academic governance structure involving a number of sub-committees.

These sub-committees support governance in the following key areas:

- 8.1 University Education
- 8.2 University Research
- 8.3 Academic Program Entry and Approvals
- 8.4 Faculty Boards

## 9. VICE-CHANCELLOR

The Council appoints the Vice-Chancellor<sup>32</sup> under Section 8(1) of *the Act*.

The Vice-Chancellor "*is the principal academic and chief executive officer of the University, responsible to the Council for the academic standards, management and administration of the University.*"<sup>33</sup>

The Vice-Chancellor establishes an appropriate management structure in order to discharge the obligations of that Office.

## 10. CONTROLLED ENTITIES

The University's operating controlled entities are listed below.

- 10.1 Innovation & Commercial Partners Pty Ltd
- 10.2 Roseworthy Campus Farm Pty Ltd

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid* s 12(1)(c)

<sup>32</sup> To accommodate international convention the title 'Vice-Chancellor' is now generally accompanied by the words "and President" immediately following. The title 'Vice-Chancellor and President' has been in conventional use since 2004.

<sup>33</sup> *The Act* s 8(2).

### 10.3 National Wine Centre Pty Ltd

Each of these entities is subject to governance, monitoring and reporting requirements directed and reviewed by various Standing Committees of Council.

Each entity also reports directly to one of the University's senior executive managers, as shown in the Table below.

Name of Entity	University Liaison Representative	Relevant reporting requirements
Innovation & Commercial Partners Pty Ltd	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)	Financial
		Risk
		Insurance
		Notifiable event
		Internal Audit
Roseworthy Campus Farm Pty Ltd	Chief Operating Officer	WorkCover
National Wine Centre Pty Ltd		WHS Due Diligence

## 11. INDEMNITIES

The University will indemnify, to the full extent permitted by law, any member of the Council, Academic Board or of a committee constituted or appointed by resolution of the Council or under statute or rule against liabilities incurred as a consequence of anything that is done, or omitted to be done, in good faith and in the exercise of the powers or duties conferred by that role.<sup>34</sup>

The indemnity does not apply to any act prohibited by law or arising from wilful negligence.

This indemnity continues despite resignation or removal from the role.

## 12. STRATEGIC PLANNING AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The University has developed and adopted a strategic plan, entitled "Future Making".

The University has a coherent and transparent university-wide framework for performance monitoring, reporting, and planning which fulfils internal and external accountabilities and is consistent with good practice in Australian higher education and enables the University to:

- 12.1 pursue its strategic direction through broad-based strategic planning processes;
- 12.2 systematically monitor and report on outcomes against the University's objectives and targets;
- 12.3 integrate planning and resource allocation cycles for the purposes of making realistic and informed decisions on the University's core business activities; and

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid s 29

- 12.4 use its performance reports and plans as the principal tools to effectively oversee progress against its strategic directions, statutory obligations and quality improvements.

The University reviews performance and undertakes planning at all levels.

In accordance with best practice, the University ensures that good governance is part of its routine operations and that the requirements of laws, regulations, codes of best practice, and organisational standards and conduct are integrated in the University's day to day practices and procedures.

### 13. POLICY FRAMEWORK

To manage internal governance, the Council has adopted the Adelaide Policy Framework that provides the operational structure for developing, implementing, reviewing and maintaining the University's policies and procedures in a form and manner consistent with best practice.

Under the Adelaide Policy Framework there are three categories of policies – governance, academic and management.

### 14. GOVERNANCE POLICIES

These are policies that underpin the University's governance and are approved by Council, unless Council has otherwise determined to delegate that approval.

Reflecting the University's commitment to best practice and recognising the powers and responsibilities of the Council set out in *the Act*, Council has determined that certain key obligations shall be managed by and through the Council.

This includes policies that influence or direct the University on key strategic issues or that concern matters that warrant Council oversight or attention.

The rationale for determining how policies are classified is broad and is based on a number of factors primarily (but not exclusively) found in Section 9 of *the Act*.

#### 14.1 The classification factors include:

- 14.1.1 potential for advancement of the University's core objectives arising from the policy;
- 14.1.2 where the subject matter is the direct responsibility of the Council under Section 9 of the Act and the Council has not otherwise determined to delegate it;
- 14.1.3 the relative importance of the subject matter;
- 14.1.4 the protection of proprietary interests of insignia in the University;
- 14.1.5 the preservation or protection of the University's name and reputation.

#### 14.2 The following University policies are classified as Governance Policies and are subject to review and approval by the Council:

- 14.2.1 Acknowledgement of the Kaurna People and Their Land at Significant University Events
- 14.2.2 Award of Emeritus/Emerita Professor, Emeritus Fellow and Honorary University Fellow Titles Policy
- 14.2.3 Brand Policy
- 14.2.4 Chancellor Honorarium Policy
- 14.2.5 Contracts and Agreements Policy



- 14.2.6 Controlled Entity Policy
- 14.2.7 Credit Risk Management Policy
- 14.2.8 Endowment Fund Policy
- 14.2.9 Foreign Exchange Risk Management Policy
- 14.2.10 Fraud and Corruption Prevention and Control Policy
- 14.2.11 Freedom of Information Policy
- 14.2.12 Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom Policy
- 14.2.13 Interest Rate Risk Management Policy
- 14.2.14 Legal Compliance Policy
- 14.2.15 Liquidity and Cash Investment Risk Management Policy
- 14.2.16 Procedures for the Election of Student Representatives to Faculty Boards
- 14.2.17 Protocol for appointments by the University of Adelaide to the governing bodies of entities affiliated with, or operating to the benefit of, the University (not including controlled entities)
- 14.2.18 Public Interest Disclosure Policy
- 14.2.19 Risk Management Policy
- 14.2.20 Rule and Procedures for the Use of the University Seal and for the Execution of Documents

## 15. **ACADEMIC POLICIES**

Academic policies relate to the academic activities of the University. These policies are generally overseen by the Vice-Chancellor, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), and Academic Board.

## 16. **MANAGEMENT POLICIES**

These are policies that underpin the University's administrative and operational functions and include policies in the following management areas; human resources, health and safety, behaviour and conduct, financial and asset management, infrastructure and property management, recordkeeping and information technology.

## 17. **RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK**

The University's Risk Management Framework defines the University's risk operating model, appetite, responsibilities, methodology, and monitoring and reporting obligations.

The University has a statutory obligation for risk management that is established within *the Act*. In addition, the University recognises that effective risk management is an integral part of good governance and best management practice, and that it assists the University to meet its statutory objectives and deliver on its broader strategy and business plans.

The Council, the Risk Committee, and the Vice-Chancellor, have ultimate responsibility for risk within the University. From this highest level of governance and management, each of the Divisions work with the Faculties, Schools and administrative areas so that risks are managed strategically and operationally.

For the University's Controlled Entities, the Board and Senior Management of each entity takes responsibility for managing their risks and interacts with the University Liaison Representative - customarily, a Senior Executive.

The University's Risk Management Framework and Policy are aligned to the International Standard ISO 31000: 2018 Risk Management – Guidelines, which outlines the principles, framework and process for risk management.

This Policy affirms the University's commitment to building a risk culture that encourages deliberate and proactive risk management in a manner and at intervals commensurate with the University's strategies.

## 18. LEGAL COMPLIANCE FRAMEWORK

The University has adopted a Legal Compliance Framework to facilitate a robust compliance culture. It includes the following features:

- 18.1 Legislation Directory - providing links to legislation relevant to a school or area and legislative resources;
- 18.2 Legislation update process – informing staff of relevant changes to State and Commonwealth legislation that impact on the University;
- 18.3 Legal Compliance Register - an on-line database used to record and manage compliance matters; and
- 18.4 Annual compliance certification process - demonstrating organisational compliance to regulators, funders and other partners.

## 19. ACCOUNTABILITY

The University is subject to external oversight through a number of mechanisms and has developed its own internal processes to ensure that it maintains high standards of governance.

Under *the Act*, the University is required to provide to the Minister, not later than 30 June each year, an Annual Report, including audited accounts, details of every University statute confirmed by the Governor and every rule made by Council during the preceding year. The Minister provides a copy of the Report to both Houses of Parliament.

External audits and reviews are conducted through both Commonwealth (Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, National Health and Medical Research Council) and State (Auditor-General, ReturnToWorkSA) authorities.

Professional associations and accrediting bodies also monitor aspects of the University's operations.

The University receives grant funding from various sources and is required to report on the acquittal of funds received and on compliance with grant conditions.

The conduct of employees is guided by an adopted Code of Conduct and Behaviour and Conduct Policy.

Both employees and contractors are 'public officers' for the purposes of the *Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 2012* (SA).

The University has established internal mechanisms to ensure accountability, including an internal audit program, regular reviews of Faculties and Schools, as well as an annual legislative compliance certification process and broad accountability reporting from Heads of academic and administrative units, Faculty Executive Deans and Divisional Heads.

20. **REVIEW**

This Statement has been authorised by the Council.

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**Version History:**

First approved by Council 8/15, 7 December 2015

Revised and approved by Council 6/19, 16 December 2019

Updated 21 December 2021 to reflect changes resulting from the Review of the Non-Statutory Standing Committees of Council and changes to the University's controlled entities.

Revised and approved by Council 6/24, 2 December 2024 to reflect the transition to Adelaide University and for minor updates.