

## UTAS Council Minutes – 29 October 2020

## 4.3 \* Return to Campus

With social distancing measures likely to continue into 2021, there is a desire to physically return students and staff to campus. In order to facilitate this, more suitable learning and teaching is required than is currently available on the Sandy Bay campus. Key matters highlighted energise the University community to create the experience students desire and expect in 2021 on campus included recognition that:

- We are primarily an on-campus university however COVID-19 has required a move to on-line operation.
- While successfully adapting to the COVID-19 environment, there is a need for a long-term model to be on-campus or risk losing students or not adequately delivering on the student experience.
- Students need to be placed at the centre and shifting focus and culture to create a sector-leading experience, while supporting workplace flexibility.

It was noted that a range of steps have been established to develop the 2021 plan to create and contribute towards a vibrant campus experience and this is a particular focus for staff during November 2020.

Matters raised for discussion included:

- Querying whether, in progressing with the leasing and refurbishment of Hobart CBD sites, all sites on the Sandy Bay campus had been explored for suitability. It was noted that functionally the Sandy Bay campus does not provide sufficiently suitable small group learning spaces which enable new modes of delivery and quality learning outcomes. In addition, while these Hobart CBD spaces are not envisaged for long term use, they will facilitate full day usage to promote social connectivity and creation of critical mass of students and staff.
- Querying whether consideration has been given to alternatives should the University be unable to secure the leasehold space within desired timelines. It was noted that a short-term lease agreement, with options, has been executed in respect to the KPMG building and that this will largely address the immediate shortage of suitable learning and teaching spaces.
- Noting that while COVID-19 has presented significant challenges to the University, there are a range of opportunities which have arisen through changed teaching methods and importantly as a potential accelerator of a longer term campus move to the Hobart CBD. This will afford opportunity to recreate the on-site campus experience and test concepts and ideas in the short term for application as part of longer-term relocation planning.
- Noting the need to consider access to buildings in a COVID-19 constrained environment which have multiple stories and predominantly depends on use of lifts.
- Some College leadership have expressed a desire to test new approaches to learning and teaching and utilise short term leased space in the Hobart CBD. It was noted that there is a critical need to physically return students and staff to campus and create a vibrant and positive experience.
- Querying how student attitudes are being monitored. It was noted that student surveys have been conducted throughout the COVID-19 period to collect views and experiences and inform how

students are best engaged.

A query was raised in respect to the extent of input from the academic community in developing the approach to return to campus. It was noted that a 'bottom up' collaborative approach has been adopted when engaging with key stakeholders, including academic staff, with a strong student centric focus.

30-10-2020\_UC\_16610-8778

Council noted the intention to secure leasehold space in the Hobart CBD for the delivery of 2021 Learning and Teaching space in response to continued COVID19 restrictions on space utilization.

30-10-2020\_UC\_16610-8778

Council delegated authority to the Vice-Chancellor to execute contracts (subject to appropriate legal and financial advice) for the refurbishment of:

- the Forestry building (estimated value \$ [REDACTED])
- Philip Smith Centre, Graphics & LARC buildings (estimated value [REDACTED]).