

MEMORANDUM

TO: UQ Staff

FROM: Maurie McNarn, Executive Director (Operations) and University Secretary

DATE: 9 November 2011

SUBJECT: Memo to staff

Dear Colleagues

Following the recent resignations of the Vice-Chancellor and the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the University has come under significant media scrutiny. We understand that it has been a difficult time for staff. We hope this message, and the accompanying message from the Vice-Chancellor, addresses some concerns.

Paul and Michael have been heartened to receive numerous messages of support and goodwill. It is clear that they are both held in high esteem within UQ, nationally and internationally, and that each will be remembered and respected for their extraordinary contributions to the University, academia and community.

Without downplaying the gravity of recent events, I ask that all staff provide Paul and Michael with their support. To ensure an orderly transition, Paul has agreed to stay on as Vice-Chancellor until 1 July next year, while an international search for his successor is completed. Michael will be with us until December 31 this year.

I expect we will continue to have a difficult period in the coming days, and the best way staff can support Paul, Michael and the University is to get on with their important work. Should any member of the media seek to speak with you regarding these matters, I invite you to refer them in the first instance to Kathy Grube (0418 524 297) in UQ's Office of Marketing and Communications.

Paul is currently overseas on pre-existing work commitments, and will be back soon. The senior leadership team remains in place. We have a great deal to get through by the end of the year and we are working hard to ensure that we are well prepared for the next academic year.

Paul and Michael have the full support of the University's senior leadership and Senate.

On behalf of the Senate and the senior executive team, I thank all staff for their forbearance at this difficult time. While UQ's leadership will undergo some transition in coming months, it will be business as usual throughout this period.

In some areas, the information I can provide is limited by legal privilege and by restrictions set down in various legislative codes under which the University operates.

The Senate today issued a media statement. It is available [here](#), and for staff who may have questions about recent events, I can provide the following additional information:

Why did the VC and SDVC stand down?

Two of our close and deeply respected colleagues have paid a high price over an irregularity that occurred in our admission procedure. Many are grieving the impending departure of two extremely capable and popular men who have played such key leadership roles in the extraordinary success of UQ. However, we cannot have one standard for some and a different one for others. The issue clearly demonstrates a willingness, at great cost, to protect the integrity of our academic processes.

What has UQ done to ensure there cannot be a repeat of this issue?

The University took immediate steps to ensure that the admission irregularity that occurred could not be repeated. This involved a thorough and extensive review of our student admission processes. As a result of this review, changes to tighten relevant rules and processes have been recommended and will go to Senate's Legislative Committee before being considered by the December 8 Senate meeting.

Why not release the legal report prepared for the UQ Senate?

It is a legally privileged document and as such, the University does not have the option of making it public. The Senior Counsel who prepared the report, Tim Carmody, spoke to various people on the basis that the information they provided would remain confidential. As UQ is an organisation that receives public funding, it was appropriate that the report be provided to the Crime and Misconduct Commission, on a legally privileged basis.

Why won't UQ identify the student and the program involved in the issue relating to the VC and the SDVC?

The University has been placed under considerable media pressure to release many details about the student. However our own policies, and the Privacy Act, prohibit us from providing the details of any student to the media. It should be noted that in relation to the student in this case, the external independent investigation found no evidence of wrongdoing on their part.

Can we identify the person who reported the student admission irregularity?

For reasons of privacy, we cannot do this. We take any complaint seriously and take just as seriously the requirement to protect those who bring forward complaints. This is a legal requirement and a matter of ethics.

Why is the VC remaining in place until mid next year?

Stability and continuity are vital for an organisation as large and complex as UQ, so the Senate felt it was in the University's best interest to allow an orderly transition and for an international search for a new VC to take place. This week an executive search company was engaged for this process.

Has UQ provided individual staff financial details to media?

No. Some media articles have published information on individual staff financial matters. Some of this information was incorrect and pure speculation. UQ does not give out personal financial information.

Why did the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency seek information from UQ on this matter?

This was a reasonable and appropriate request on TEQSA's part and we were entirely comfortable providing the authority with the detail it requested on our processes and procedures. TEQSA is one of a wide range of regulatory bodies – State and Federal - to which universities are accountable.

Complaints have been raised publicly in recent days on another two issues. Are all these matters related?

No. These issues are unrelated to the one involving Paul and Michael, but it seems some people have tried to link them to create an ongoing, longer story.

On both these matters, the Ombudsman received an anonymous complaint. He then passed those complaints to the CMC, which referred them to UQ to investigate. Preliminary internal investigations, finalised last week, found no evidence of any inappropriate actions. However, to ensure there is no perception of anything inappropriate, the investigations have been passed to an independent external investigator. The CMC has been advised of this.

Yours sincerely

Maurie McNarn
Executive Director (Operations) and University Secretary