



Ara Institute of Canterbury Council

AGENDA

Tuesday 24 February 2026 – 9am
Ara Council Room, City Campus and online [if required]

Council Members: Hugh Lindo [Chair], Michael Rondel [Deputy Chair], Rick Hellings and Andrea Leslie.

**Note: Ara Council only time 8.30am to 9 am and the public meeting commences from 9am.*

Item	Subject
1) Meeting Business	1.1 Welcome and Apologies
	1.2 Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest
	1.3 Confirmation of Council Minutes [Public] Meeting held 9 December 2025 – matters of establishment to move into the public domain. a) Approval of minutes b) Matters arising c) Action List
	1.4 Correspondence [nil received]
2) For Discussion	MONTHLY REPORT
	2.1 Chief Executive a) Ara Performance Summary b) Education Performance Indicators [EPI] and Student Achievement 2025 [Provisional] c) Media Report
3) For Information/ Discussion	MONTHLY REPORTS
	3.1 Chair [Verbal]
4) For Information	STANDING ITEMS
	4.1 Risk Register
	4.2 Health and Safety
	4.3 2026 Council Work Programme
5) General Business	5.1 Council Member Appointment Process

ARA PUBLIC EXCLUDED COUNCIL MEETING

It will be moved that the public be excluded from the meeting.

The general subject of the matters to be considered while the public is excluded is:

Item	Subject	
6) Meeting Business	<p>6.1 Confirmation of Council Minutes Public Excluded</p> <p>Meeting held 9 December 2025 – matters of establishment to remain public excluded</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">a) Approval of minutes</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">b) Matters arising</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">c) Action List</p> <p>6.2 Correspondence – Public Excluded</p>	[s9(2) (f), (i), (j)]
7) For Discussion	<p>MONTHLY REPORT – Public Excluded</p> <p>7.1 Chief Executive - Summary</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">a) Safety, Health and Wellbeing</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">b) Strategic Business Priorities</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">c) General</p> <p>7.2 Governance Reports - Public/PE</p>	[s9(2) (f), (i), (j)]
8) For Decision <i>8.2 Policy: Director, Strategy, Planning and Performance to attend</i>	<p>8.1 Ara Campuses – Capital Intentions</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">a) Ara Property Disposals</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">b) C Block Business Case</p> <p>8.2 Ara Policy Framework Overview</p> <p>8.3 For approval</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">a) CPP304 Sensitive Expenditure</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">b) CPP606 Common Seal</p>	[s9(2)(i), (j)]
9) For Information <i>9.2 Financials: Chief Financial Officer to attend</i>	<p>MONTHLY REPORTS – Public Excluded</p> <p>9.1 Chair [Verbal]</p> <p>OTHER</p> <p>9.2 Financial Performance [December 2025]</p> <p>9.3 China Delivery</p> <p>STANDING ITEMS</p> <p>9.4 Risk Register</p>	[s9(2) (i), (j)]
10) General Business		[s9(2)(i), (j)]

This resolution will be made in reliance on s48(1) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 and the particular interests protected by s9 of the Official Information Act 1982 which would be prejudiced by the holding of the proceedings of the meeting in public.

The sections of the Official Information Act which applies are shown below:

- *Matters involving confidential information about an identifiable person*
s9(2)(a) – Protect the privacy of natural persons, including that of deceased natural persons
- *Submissions to Parliament and other formal advice*
s9(2)(f) – Maintain confidential conventions which protect political neutrality, and the confidentiality of communications and advice tendered by officials
- *Commercially sensitive financial data*
s9(2)(i) – The Crown or any Department or organisation holding the information to carry out, without prejudice or disadvantage, commercial activities
- *Negotiations in progress with other organisations*
s9(2)(j) – Enable a Minister of the Crown or any Department or organisation holding the information to carry on, without prejudice or disadvantage, negotiations (including commercial and industrial negotiations)

2026 Register of Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest

Last updated 10 February 2026

Ara Council Members

Hugh Lindo [Chair]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simpson Grierson [Partner]
Michael Rondel [Deputy Chair]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christchurch City Holdings Ltd [Independent Chair, Audit and Risk Committee] • Environment Canterbury [Independent Chair, Audit and Risk Committee] • Comcare Charitable Trust [Trustee] • Golf New Zealand Inc [Director/Chair] • BDO Christchurch [and related BDO entities] [Director/Partner]
Richard [Rick] Hellings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helmac Action and Advisory Ltd [Part owner and Chair]
Andrea Leslie	Nil

Ara Council Officers

Darren Mitchell Chief Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ara Foundation [Trustee] • Ōtautahi Education Development Trust [Trustee] • RR Turnbull Family Trust [Trustee] • WorldSkills NZ [Trustee] • Quotezi Ltd [Shareholder and Director] • CAANZ [Member]
Christina Yeates Council Secretary	Nil

Ara Council 24 February 2026	Agenda Item	2.1
	Discussion Item	
PUBLIC	Presented by	Darren Mitchell

ARA COUNCIL REPORT SUMMARY	
TITLE OF REPORT	Chief Executive's Report
BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE	To provide the Ara Council with key information and data that are important in Ara's development.
RECOMMENDATION(S)	That the Ara Council Receive the Chief Executive's Report and Note the contents of the report.
LINK TO ARA STRATEGY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seven Strategic Priorities • Vision 2030
KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED	-
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR ARA	-
RISK IMPLICATIONS FOR ARA	-

Chief Executive's Report

Public Meeting

1. CE Overview

1.1 2026 Commencement

On many levels the year has started in typical fashion with little impact arising from Ara resuming standalone independent status as at 1 January. There has certainly been behind the scenes residual transition activity, but for most staff and all learners this will have largely gone unseen and with no direct consequences for daily activity. Staff have reported appreciation of having the extended closedown period (3 weeks) over the Christmas and New Year, supporting the intention to make that a standing decision going forward.

The campus environments spring back to life in the month of February with most programmes of study resuming over the course of this month. This brings with it a peak of activity, especially related to the enrolling, welcoming, and onboarding of new students. We are seeing the benefits of changes made to streamline aspects of the enrolment process requiring less touch points in the “apply to enrol” to phase.

Enrolments overall are tracking to a very similar level as last year, just slightly above. As is typical though, there are ‘unders and overs’ at the programme of study level. Managers are busily responding to this, looking to standup more instances where we are experiencing demand and managing costs of delivery where numbers are lower than expected. More insights on the enrolments are provided further on in this report.

MAINZ are now fully onboard at Ara with the successful relocation and integration of the team and equipment into Ara facilities, with strong enrolments across Level 4–6 programmes.

1.2 L Block Strengthening

Work has commenced to seismically strengthen and upgrade the Library and Learning Commons area in the heart of the city campus. The proximity of the facility to other core functions and active workspaces is problematic from a logistics and potential disruption point of view. However, it is unavoidable given the scale and duration of the project. We are continually monitoring for adverse impact. The project is presently running to schedule and budget. Council consents have been issued and the “soft demo” has commenced. The project is not expected to conclude until year end and its current status is “Green”.

1.3 Chief Executive and Staff Hui

The first of our regular all of staff hui was held. The opportunity of coming together was used to welcome colleagues back to Ara and to share the priorities for this year. The forums are also going to be used more so this year to build awareness and understanding as to the key drivers of our business model and our ongoing performance. This supports the expectation that we all have a role to play in securing the best future for Ara and our learners.

The 7 focus areas for 2026/27 were shared along with the “why”. Colleagues appreciated the clarity of direction. Insights were given into the role of the new Tertiary Education Strategy and upcoming plan guidance, and how institutional performance and outcomes aligned to regional economic needs will be a significant consideration in future funding decisions.

1.4 New Common Room at O House

Building consent for the residents’ common room to be built at the student accommodation facility has been granted. The site has been fenced off, and preliminary ground works have commenced. The project, funded by the Ōtautahi Education Development Trust [OEDT], will provide a long-awaited facility to the accommodation environment. All going well the construction should be completed before the end of the year.

1.5 Engagement with Timaru District Council [TDC]

We are attending the TDC meeting this month to brief them on the re-establishment of Ara, the changes occurring in the vocational education system more broadly, the extent to which the region is served by the network of vocational education, and the financial model of education delivery. This is part of a campaign to reconnect with key stakeholders in Canterbury post Te Pūkenga and to raise awareness and understanding of the environment in which Ara operates. We appreciate that to understand the decisions we make you need to also have awareness of the context in which we work. We have committed to sharing this knowledge within our stakeholder communities.

1.6 Whiria Te Muka Tangata

Whiria Te Muka Tangata is a partnership with Tokona te Raki, an indigenous social innovation lab based here in Ōtautahi. Formally launched in March 2025, it brings together a diverse cross-section of kaimahi through to Matariki, June 2026. The Kaikōkiri Group is a Design Team of 30 kaimahi who work through a structured, evidence-based process — based on the weaving concept — to help Ara understand the current state, explore what better could look like, and design practical changes that can be felt across all levels of the organisation. The outcomes and learning from this mahi are intended to be carried forward by Ara as part of its ongoing journey toward Vision 2030 and is anchored by our two key shifts: [1] honouring Te Tiriti through meaningful partnerships and integrating Māori perspectives and knowledge into our educational practices and organisational culture, and [2] prioritising the success of Māori, Pacific, and disabled ākonga.

This programme is an end-to-end organisational renewal process consisting of three phases; see the weave, unweave and reweave. The design team, see how each thread crosses another, noticing patterns, which ones strengthen the whole, and which need to change. The scope of this Whiria Te Muka Tangata process can better serve Ara’s Vision 2030 aspirations, examining and reshaping organisational structures, policies, and practices, understanding how different parts of Ara currently connect (or don’t connect), creating new prototypes and ways of working that embed equity and partnership, building capability across the organisation to be a responsive Tiriti partner. This work aligns with existing Māori Success, Pacific Success, and Disability Action Plans and broader organisational priorities. The Kaikōkiri are empowered to listen well, work respectfully, and hold our relationships with care, reinforcing that it is core to our Ara values—not an add-on.

1.7 Annual Legislative Compliance Questionnaire

Ara has now completed its annual legislative compliance exercise for year end 31 December 2025, which has been co-ordinated by NZIST for all business divisions. This is to ensure NZIST [Ara] has

operated in compliance with all applicable legislation. Ara also completed the same exercise on behalf of Tai Poutini Polytechnic. The compliance results are to be reviewed and approved by the NZIST Council in time for the completion of the year end audit in April 2026.

The results have shown a high level of compliance for both institutes. Out of 247 questions, Ara had only 23 returns advising partial compliance. These areas ranged from the requirement for improved record-keeping, in-house training and areas that are currently pending approval to meet legislative requirements [e.g. programme approval for qualifications]. Actions are already underway to address these areas that require improvements.

2. Ara Performance Summary – as at 11 February 2026

Select EFIS type to include:

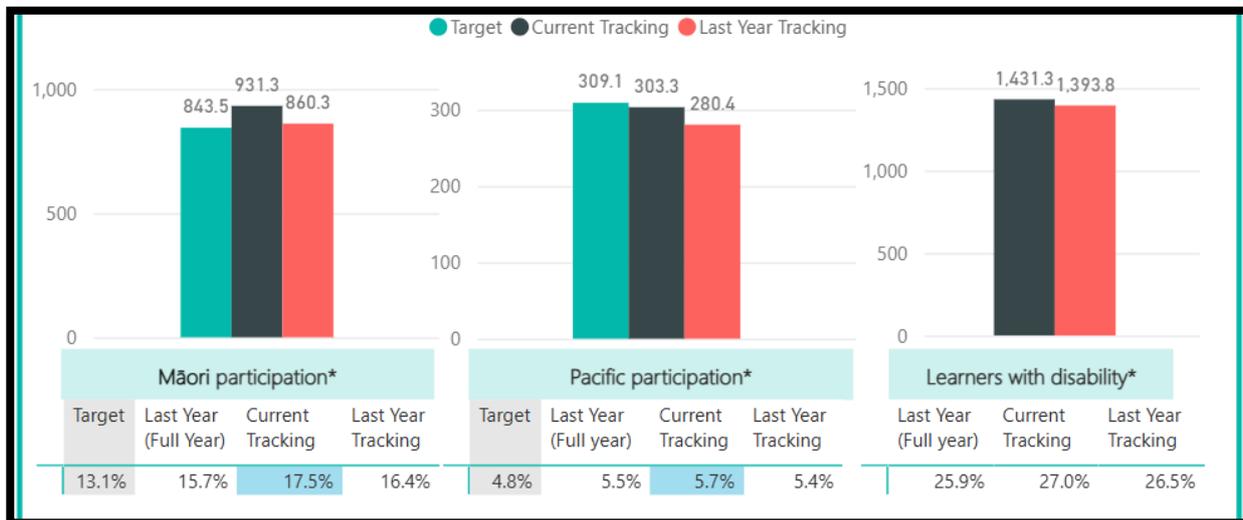
Active
Committed
Future
Potential

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Ara Overall	Target (Full year)	Last year (Full Year)	Current Tracking	Last year Tracking	Req. Growth	Actual YTD Growth
	7,109.3	6,843.4	5,702.5	5,598.8	3.9%	1.9%

International/Domestic						
Domestic	6,439.3	6,302.8	5,308.2	5,256.9	2.2%	1.0%
International	670.0	540.5	394.4	341.9	24.0%	15.3%

Location						
⊕ All Other	6,787.0	6,481.4	5,417.4	5,294.8	4.7%	2.3%
⊕ South Canter...	322.3	361.9	285.2	304.0	-10.9%	-6.2%



3. Educational Performance Indicators [EPI] and Student Achievement – 2025 [Provisional]

3.1 Educational Performance Indicators (EPI)

Pending final validation (April), 2025 performance indicates a broadly stable achievement profile with some variation by level and learner group:

- A slight decline in course completions at Levels 1–6, offset by an increase in Level 7 course completions.
- A 2% uplift in successful course completion for Māori learners, indicating positive progress for priority learners.
- The internal target for course completion across all dimensions was 88%; early results indicate performance at 87.7%, marginally below target and within an expected variance pending final validation.

Final validated results will be reported following April confirmation.

3.2 Tracking to 2026 Equivalent Full-time Students [EFTS] Targets

Early tracking against 2026 EFTS targets highlights a mixed but manageable position:

- **Foundation and Youth Guarantee:** Opportunities exist to increase delivery relative to current target tracking.
- **Trades Academy:** Performance is on track against targets.
- **International:** A significant focus will be required to secure the **24% growth** needed in 2026.
- **Diversified revenue (off-job training linked to apprenticeships):** Growth is likely to be influenced by increased competition, particularly from new PTE entrants.
- **Degree provision:** Tracking ahead of target, with demand in some health programmes exceeding available clinical placement capacity.
- **Priority learner participation:** Ahead of target and tracking above the same time last year (STLY).

Overall, performance remains close to target, with clear focus areas identified for 2026 planning and intervention.

4. Media and Communications

2025 communications activity – year in review

4.1. The numbers

- LinkedIn followers: **17,204** in January 2026, up from 15,075 in January 2025
- LinkedIn engagement: **19%** in 2025, up from 14% in 2024
- **113** stories written for the [Ara website](#), up from 58 in 2025 – 95% of stories shared in Tertiary Insight
- Most read website story (6,008 views): [Mother and son graduation moment goes viral](#)
- Chief Executive’s regular email to staff (13 sent in 2025) had an average read rate of 38%
- An average of 126 people attended our six Ara Updates (online hui)

4.2. Media coverage themes and examples

2025 media sentiment was predominantly positive to neutral, with periods of negative sentiment related to restructuring, first in Christchurch, then Timaru.

- Learner success and life-changing outcomes: [The Timaru Herald: Job and top honour within a week for Timaru nursing student](#)
- Creative industries, arts and public exhibitions: [Star News: 'Beyond anything I expected': Big break for talented Ara musician](#)
- Trades, applied learning and industry-connected education: [Restaurant and Café: Ara Chefs Pay Tribute to Local Food Icons](#), [Star News: Ara graduate builds new kitchen for his mum](#)
- Research, innovation and applied expertise: [RNZ: Checking in on new Dads](#)
- Restructuring: [The Timaru Herald: 'An easy target': Pushback on proposal to cut art and design at Timaru's Ara](#), [Students back Timaru courses: Blind artist credits Ara creative programmes for progress](#)
- Diversity and inclusion: Te Ao Māori News: [Midwives reclaiming tikanga Māori in birthing care across Ōtautahi](#)

4.3. 2025 highlights

- [Christchurch tutor honoured as Prime Minister’s Educator of the Year](#)
- [Ara officially launches groundbreaking AI education book](#)
- [Rova: WATCH: Son’s powerful solo haka brings mum to tears at her graduation](#)
- [Ara student Viyana Cooray honoured at 2025 Waitaha Canterbury International Student Awards](#)
- [Pacific community endorsement of Ara Pacific Strategy](#)
- Matariki celebrations – [Kawe mate ceremony](#), star gazing, the [return of “lwi-off”](#), [Hākari with our Hāpori closing event](#)

Ara Council Meeting Schedule - Work Programme 2026

as at 24 February 2026

Month	Topics	Notified Non-availability
February	4 Induction and Strategy Day	
	18 Ara Whakatau Semester One – Woolston	
	19 Academic Committee	
	24 Council Meeting (Christchurch)	
March	4 Ara Whakatau Semester One – City	
	5 Audit and Risk Committee	
	11 Ara Whakatau Semester One – Timaru	
	13 Autumn Graduation (Christchurch)	
	18 Ara Whakatau Semester One – Manawa	
	24 Council Meeting (Christchurch) • Quarterly TKM Reports • Health and Safety Walkabout	
	26 Academic Committee	
April	28 Council Meeting [Christchurch] • STRATEGY TOPIC • Health and Safety Walkabout	CE 8/4 to 27/4
	30 Timaru Graduation	
May	7 Academic Committee	Chair 28/5 to 20/6
	26 Council Meeting (Timaru) • Report on Affixing of Common Seal • Health and Safety Walkabout [Timaru]	
June	? Remuneration Committee	Chair 28/5 to 20/6
	3 Audit and Risk Committee	
	18 Academic Committee	
	23 Council Meeting (Christchurch) • Quarterly TKM Reports • Health and Safety Walkabout	
July	22 Ara Whakatau Semester Two – City	
	23 Academic Committee	
	28 Council Meeting (Christchurch) • Fee Setting	
	29 Ara Whakatau Semester Two – Timaru	
August	11 Ara Whakatau Semester Two – Woolston	
	12 Ara Whakatau Semester Two – Manawa	
	25 Council Meeting (Christchurch) • STRATEGY TOPIC	
	27 Academic Committee	
September	2 Audit and Risk Committee	
	17 Spring Graduation (Christchurch)	
	22 Council Meeting (Christchurch) • 2027 Budget Sign Off	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarterly TKM Reports Ōtautahi House Site Visit / Health and Safety Walkabout 	
October	15	Academic Committee	
	27	Council Meeting (Timaru) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Report 2025 – content/format Report on Affixing of Common Seal Health and Safety Walkabout – Timaru Campus 	
November	4	Audit and Risk Committee	
	?	Remuneration Committee	
	19	Academic Committee	
	24	Council Meeting (Christchurch) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning 2027 	
December	8	Council Meeting (Christchurch) (if required)	

Ara Council meeting timings

8.30am – 9.00am Council only time

9.00am – 12pm Council meeting

Ara Council and Committee meeting venues

Christchurch – Room G202, Council Room, Te Kei, Christchurch City Campus

Timaru – Room TA210, Boardroom, Timaru Campus

<p>Waitangi Day – Observed Friday 6 February</p> <p>Otago Anniversary – Mon 23 March (Oamaru campus closed)</p> <p>Good Friday – Fri 3 April</p> <p>Easter Monday – Mon 6 April</p> <p>Easter Tuesday – Tues 7 April</p> <p>ANZAC Day observance – Observed Mon 27 April</p> <p>King’s Birthday – Mon 1 June</p> <p>Matariki – Friday 10 July</p> <p>South Canterbury Anniversary Day (Timaru campus closed) – Mon 28 September</p> <p>Labour Day – Mon 26 October</p> <p>Canterbury Anniversary/Show Day (Christchurch campuses closed) – Fri 13 November</p>
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