

Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee

Answers to Questions on Notice arising from the Hearing on 10 November 2025

	Questions on Notice from Hansard arising from the Hearing	Answers
1	<p>What due diligence are both the universities conducting to ensure any partnerships, investments, links or co-operations with weapons companies and the defence industry is not contributing to human rights violations, genocide and breaches of international law in Palestine?</p>	<p>The University of Adelaide</p> <p>The University of Adelaide is committed to supporting the Australian Government’s 2024 National Defence Strategy, which calls for a whole-of-nation approach to harness all aspects of Australia’s capability to secure national interests. This includes partnering with Australia’s defence sector, where such partnerships align with the national interest and are consistent with the University of Adelaide’s values and objectives. In doing so, the University of Adelaide ensures its activities reflect national priorities and comply with relevant legislative frameworks.</p> <p>The University of Adelaide recognises the importance of aligning its financial decisions with its mission and values. The University of Adelaide’s investment practices screen out funds that invest in the manufacture of controversial weapons, including cluster munitions, biological and chemical weapons, and land mines.</p> <p>The University of Adelaide has confirmed with its Fund Managers that for domestic and international equity asset classes, there is no investment exposure to organisations engaged in the manufacture of nuclear weapons.</p> <p>The University of South Australia</p> <p>The University of South Australia works with multiple partners across a range of industry sectors, including Defence. Its work in Defence is aligned to the Australian Government’s National Defence Strategy, which calls for a whole-of-nation approach to harness all aspects of Australia’s capability to secure national interests. This includes partnering with Australia’s defence sector, where such partnerships align with the national interest and are consistent with the University of South Australia’s values and objectives. All work is undertaken within the legislative requirements related to Foreign Interference and Defence Export controls to ensure alignment with Australia’s national interest.</p>

2	<p>What weapons companies do the universities have contracts with or investment in?</p>	<p>The University of Adelaide</p> <p>The University of Adelaide is committed to supporting the Australian Government’s 2024 National Defence Strategy, which calls for a whole-of-nation approach to harness all aspects of Australia’s capability to secure national interests. This will include partnering with Australia’s defence sector, where such partnerships align with the national interest and are consistent with the University of Adelaide’s values and objectives. In doing so, the University ensures its activities reflect national priorities and comply with relevant legislative frameworks.</p> <p>The University of Adelaide recognises the importance of aligning its financial decisions with its mission and values. The University of Adelaide’s investment practices screen out funds that invest in the manufacture of controversial weapons, including cluster munitions, biological and chemical weapons, and land mines.</p> <p>The University of Adelaide has confirmed with its Fund Managers that for domestic and international equity asset classes, there is no investment exposure to organisations engaged in the manufacture of nuclear weapons.</p> <p>A full statement regarding the University of Adelaide’s partnerships, including the Defence Trailblazer and other Commonwealth initiatives, is available here.</p> <p>The University of South Australia</p> <p>The University of South Australia works with multiple partners across a range of industry sectors, including Defence. Its work in Defence is aligned to the Australian Government’s National Defence Strategy, which calls for a whole-of-nation approach to harness all aspects of Australia’s capability to secure national interests. This includes partnering with Australia’s defence sector, where such partnerships align with the national interest and are consistent with the University of South Australia’s values and objectives. All work is undertaken within the legislative requirements related to Foreign Interference and Defence Export controls to ensure alignment with the national interest.</p>
3	<p>Do the universities invest or have partnerships with weapons and gambling companies?</p>	<p>The University of Adelaide</p> <p>The University of Adelaide invests in managed funds. While the University does not directly invest in gambling companies, some fund managers may hold incidental positions in businesses with exposure to the gambling industry. Following enquiries with our fund managers, we have confirmed that approximately \$271,000 of our total \$480 million</p>

		<p>investment portfolio is indirectly exposed to companies that derive some revenue from gambling activities. In these cases, gambling represents only a small proportion of the companies' overall revenue, for example, hospitality groups where gambling is a minor component of their operations.</p> <p>The University of South Australia</p> <p>The University of South Australia's Foundation Endowment Fund does not contain investments in companies that manufacture nuclear weapons or where the primary business is in the tobacco industry.</p> <p>In terms of gambling-related associations, the University of South Australia currently has a research contract for \$40 000 for research to be conducted which will inform marketing approaches for a Native American Casino operator, supporting an Indigenous owned business.</p>
4	Is EY is the internal auditor for UniSA?	Grant Thornton was engaged to provide internal audit support for the University of South Australia. Ernst & Young is not engaged by the University of South Australia.
6	What was the value of that particular contract with Deloitte?	<p>Please refer to the Corrections Letter from Professor David Lloyd.</p> <p>The Acting Chair said that once the Universities have come back to the Committee with what they believe to be what they can release, the Committee can then discuss what it wishes to do next. The Universities would not typically release this type of information outside of the disclosures required by the usual annual reporting processes. However, if the Committee determines that the contract value of this particular contract is relevant or of assistance to the Committee's inquiry, even in circumstances where the contract was awarded after a competitive tender process, and the committee confirms the request that it be disclosed by the Universities to the Committee, the Universities will comply with it.</p>
7	Does UoA have a policy that precludes internal auditors also undertaking consultancy work?	The University of Adelaide does not have a policy that absolutely precludes its internal auditor from also undertaking consultancy work. However, where the internal auditor (such as EY) is engaged for consulting services, this is only permitted under strict independence protocols. These protocols require clear separation of audit and consulting teams, transparency through quarterly declarations to the Risk Committee, University oversight of all engagements, and independence reviews and safeguards for each engagement to manage any actual or perceived conflicts of interest.

Answers to Additional Questions on Notice received from Senator Faruqi

No	Question	Answer
1	How much additional work time is provided to UniSA staff to engage with the ongoing matters related to the transition to Adelaide University on top of their usual workload?	We greatly appreciate the contributions our staff are making to this important transition. To support them, the University of South Australia has invested significantly in additional resources and workforce capacity as part of the merger process. This includes funding to backfill positions so staff can focus on transition-related activities without compromising their core responsibilities. For academic staff, curriculum renewal is a key component of the transition and is supported through these measures, noting that curriculum development also forms part of normal academic duties.
2	What have you each done to address the psychosocial pressures facing academic staff in this merger?	We recognise that an amalgamation of this scale can create significant psychosocial pressures for all staff. To address this, both foundational universities have expanded their existing wellbeing and support programs. Our People and Culture teams have implemented additional measures, including continued access to confidential counselling services, resilience and change-management workshops, and regular communication to keep staff informed and engaged. We have also provided training for leaders to identify and respond to stress-related concerns early, ensuring staff feel supported throughout the transition.
3	I understand that the University of Adelaide subscribed to the UniForum benchmarking services. Have you seen the methodology that UniForum uses to benchmark? a) If you haven't seen them, what steps did the University of Adelaide's leadership take to satisfy themselves that UniForum benchmarking scores are meaningful, reliable and rigorous?	UniForum does not share all of its core IP with clients. The University of Adelaide has been part of the UniForum benchmarking over many years. Members of staff have participated in the discussion, development and interrogation of the UniForum methodology. Please refer to the answer to question 4 below.

4	<p>Does any staff member at UoA/UniSA/AU have full access to the underlying UniForum data and methodology? If not, how can you be confident about using UniForum reports and benchmarking scores?</p>	<p>Yes, staff from the University of Adelaide, University of South Australia and Adelaide University have had detailed access to underlying UniForum data for the purpose of preparing submissions. In addition, they have access to fine grained summarised and deidentified data from other institutions, along with the associated calculated benchmarks. This level of access enables us to understand the methodology and validate the benchmarking scores with confidence.</p>
5	<p>Has UniForum data ever been used to inform (directly or indirectly) proposals or decisions to merge University of Adelaide and University of South Australia?</p> <p>a) If yes, please provide details of the role that UniForum data played in decision making.</p>	<p>UniForum data played no role in the merger decision.</p>
6	<p>Will the new Adelaide University subscribe to UniForum benchmarking services?</p> <p>a) How did Adelaide University's leadership arrive at this decision?</p>	<p>UniForum contracts are for three years. The University of Adelaide's previous contract has now lapsed, and the University of South Australia's contract will transfer to Adelaide University for its final year in 2026. Beyond that, no decision has yet been made regarding whether Adelaide University will continue with UniForum benchmarking services.</p>
7	<p>Will the new Adelaide University subscribe to UniForum benchmarking services?</p> <p>a) How did Adelaide University's leadership arrive at this decision?</p> <p>b) What steps did Adelaide University's leadership take to assess whether UniForum benchmarking scores are meaningful, reliable and rigorous?</p>	<p>See responses to Questions 6 and 3.</p>

8	<p>How much has UoA and UniSA, and the new AU, spent on consulting services related to UniForum since 2023? Please provide details of all contracts and their amounts.</p>	<p>The University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia have paid annual subscription fees to participate in the UniForum benchmarking program since mid-2023. These fees cover access to benchmarking data, methodology, and support services. During the transition to Adelaide University, the subscription arrangements have been maintained to ensure continuity of benchmarking and data submission. The final year of the University of South Australia’s contract will transfer to Adelaide University in 2026.</p> <p>Pricing information is unable to be shared because it falls into the category of Confidential information under the UniForum agreement and cannot be disclosed externally.</p>
9	<p>Have the executives of UoA/UniSA/AU ever cited UniForum data in presentations or statements to university governing councils?</p> <p>a) If yes, please provide details of how and when the UniForum data was cited and the arguments it was used to support.</p>	<p>On 19 November 2024, the University of Adelaide Finance Committee reviewed a paper on the UniForum 2023 findings for the University of Adelaide. The information provided general benchmarking context and was cited by the Committee as background rather than to support specific decisions or arguments.</p>
10	<p>Does any member of staff at UoA/UniSA/AU have KPIs that are linked to UniForum data?</p> <p>a) If yes, please indicate what positions they hold and describe the KPIs in question.</p>	<p>No staff have KPIs linked to UniForum data.</p>
11	<p>How long have the University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia subscribed to the UniForum benchmarking service? Please provide a year-by-year breakdown of how much University of Adelaide, University of South Australia and Adelaide University have spent on UniForum services.</p>	<p>The University of Adelaide has participated in UniForum annually between 2012-2016 and 2022-2024. Prior to 2023, the University of South Australia last participated in 2012.</p> <p>Pricing information is unable to be shared because it falls into the category of Confidential information under the UnrForum agreement and cannot be disclosed externally.</p>

12	Please provide a full list of documents, datasets and reports that UniForum has provided to UoA/UniSA/AU since the beginning of 2023. Please indicate which of these are available to all members of staff at UoA/UniSA/AU.	<p>UniForum primarily provides access to interactive dashboards rather than multiple standalone reports. Each year, a single consolidated report is issued under strict usage conditions, as below:</p> <p>“UniForum Reports are only to be shared with staff who have executive management responsibility, or are the Institution’s management, committees or committee members who have a relevant and legitimate interest in the material in the context of the management of their Institution. “Sharing” includes physical copies, electronic copies, and visual / verbal presentations and recordings of Reports, or significant parts of Reports.”</p> <p>No UniForum report or dataset is available to all members of staff.</p>
13	Does your institution have any partnerships, investments or links with any weapons companies or associated entities?	<p>The University of Adelaide</p> <p>The University of Adelaide is committed to supporting the Australian Government’s 2024 National Defence Strategy, which calls for a whole-of-nation approach to harness all aspects of Australia’s capability to secure national interests. This will include partnering with Australia’s defence sector, where such partnerships align with the national interest and are consistent with the University of Adelaide’s values and objectives. In doing so, the University of Adelaide ensures its activities reflect national priorities and comply with relevant legislative frameworks.</p> <p>The University of Adelaide recognises the importance of aligning its financial decisions with its mission and values. The University of Adelaide’s investment practices screen out funds that invest in the manufacture of controversial weapons, including cluster munitions, biological and chemical weapons, and land mines.</p> <p>The University of Adelaide has confirmed with its Fund Managers that for domestic and international equity asset classes, there is no investment exposure to organisations engaged in the manufacture of nuclear weapons.</p> <p>A full statement regarding the University of Adelaide’s partnerships, including the Defence Trailblazer and other Commonwealth initiatives, is available here.</p>

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14	Does your institution have any partnerships, investments or links with any fossil fuel companies or associated entities?	<p>The University of Adelaide has a small number of research partnerships relating to hydrogen and carbon storage, and agreements that provide for several scholarships.</p>
15	Does your institution have any partnerships, investments or links with any gambling companies or associated entities?	<p>The University of Adelaide</p> <p>The University of Adelaide invests in managed funds. While the University does not directly invest in gambling companies, some fund managers may hold incidental positions in businesses with exposure to the gambling industry. Following enquiries with our fund managers, we have confirmed that approximately \$271,000 of our total \$480 million investment portfolio is indirectly exposed to companies that derive some revenue from gambling activities. In these cases, gambling represents only a small proportion of the companies’ overall revenue, for example, hospitality groups where gambling is a minor component of their operations.</p> <p>The University of South Australia</p> <p>In terms of gambling-related associations, the University of South Australia currently has a research contract for \$40 000 for research to be conducted which will inform marketing approaches for a Native American Casino operator, supporting an Indigenous owned business.</p>

16	Does your institution have any partnerships, investments or links with any tobacco companies or associated entities?	<p>University of Adelaide</p> <p>The University of Adelaide has divested 99.95% of its \$480m Endowment Fund from fossil fuels, controversial weapons and tobacco. The Endowment Fund Policy was updated in 2023 to include the following:</p> <p><i>The Endowment Fund Policy excludes public equities and corporate bonds issued by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Any listed company that derives 10% or more of total revenue from the ownership and exploitation of its fossil fuel reserves, including thermal coal, oil, and gas</i> • <i>Any listed company which manufactures tobacco products</i> • <i>Any listed company which manufactures controversial weapons (including components produced exclusively for use in controversial weapons) such as cluster munitions, biological/chemical weapons, and land mines.</i> <p>University of South Australia</p> <p>The University of South Australia’s \$50m UniSA Foundation Endowment Fund does not contain investments in companies where the primary business is in the tobacco industry.</p>
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