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25 November 2025

Committee Secretary
Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
By email: eec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Chair

RE: Inquiry into the quality of governance at Australian higher education providers

I refer to an email from Aisha Bottrill, Research Officer dated 18 November 2025 with questions on notice from Senator Mehreen Faruqi in relation to the Inquiry into the quality of governance at Australian higher education providers.

Attached are responses to the Questions on Notice.

Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Yours sincerely

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of Professor Andrew Parfitt.

Professor Andrew Parfitt
Vice-Chancellor and President

ATTACHMENT

Inquiry into the quality of governance at Australian higher education providers Questions on notice

Questions on notice from Senator Faruqi:

1. I understand that UTS' Head of Government Affairs and External Engagement, Danielle Woolley, is a former partner at KPMG.
 - a. Does Danielle Woolley receive any ongoing financial benefits from KPMG or have any other ongoing financial interest in KPMG?

No.

2. What role has Danielle Woolley played in UTS' decisions to award contracts to KPMG?

Ms Woolley played no role in UTS's decision to award contracts to KPMG.

3. What roles has Danielle Woolley had in relation to UTS' ongoing relationship with KPMG?

None. We also note that KPMG has now completed all work and is no longer engaged by UTS.

4. What measures have UTS taken to manage conflicts of interest that senior members of staff including Danielle Woolley have with KPMG?

UTS is committed to maintaining a culture of integrity and transparency, requiring all staff and affiliates to identify, disclose and manage conflicts of interest. The Conflicts of Interest Disclosure Policy supports the Code of Conduct and more information can be found here: <https://www.uts.edu.au/about/leadership-governance/governance/speak-up/conflicts-of-interest>

5. The Saturday Paper in October reported on a "master spreadsheet" on research staff performance produced by KPMG for UTS. On what date did the Vice Chancellor or his office first become aware of this spreadsheet?

The Vice-Chancellor became aware of a spreadsheet on 4 November 2024 when Professor Kate McGrath, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research (DVCR) consulted him on bringing in the UTS Research Office data team as an alternative to proceeding with the KPMG analysis. Professor McGrath had by this point determined the spreadsheet prepared by KPMG was neither reliable nor required as part of developing change proposals.

The Vice-Chancellor's office sighted the spreadsheet prepared by KPMG on 29 August 2025 as a result of searches in response to a GIPA request.

6. Did any members of staff at UTS receive or review any version of the spreadsheet? If so, who and when? What version of the spreadsheet did they review or receive?

Professor Kate McGrath, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) (DVCR), received the spreadsheet on 21 October 2024, reviewed it over the next 2-3 weeks and discounted it for further consideration in November 2024.

7. Have UTS used the spreadsheet, or any derivative of it, to inform deliberations about proposed redundancies? If so, please describe in detail the ways in which the spreadsheet or its derivatives have been used.

No, we did not. This work was discontinued and regarded as a completed activity after being reviewed by the DVCR in late 2024. The DVCR determined the spreadsheet was neither reliable nor required as part of developing change proposals.

8. What measures have UTS taken to ensure that its use of the spreadsheet or its derivatives are consistent with UTS' obligations under its EBA and the Fair Work Act?

The spreadsheet was explored for veracity and use and discounted and not considered further or used in any subsequent work.

9. Why did UTS repeatedly deny the existence of the spreadsheet in response to *Government Information (Public Access) Act* requests, despite senior executives having received it months earlier?

The search terms referred to "any reports of KPMG (or other third-party consultancy) regarding operational sustainability, including those informing the initial consultation phase, and any thereafter". Stand-alone spreadsheets of data were not considered to be "reports".

10. Were those denials made on the basis of advice from university legal counsel?

No, they were made on the basis of not being aware that the spreadsheet existed.

11. Why did UTS tell barrister Hugh Stowe that the spreadsheet did not exist when he was conducting an internal GIPA review?

At the time of the internal review for GIPA2025/04 which commenced 2 June (completed 9 July 2025), the team working on the GIPA and review did not know the spreadsheet existed and no spreadsheet had been located in response to the searches at that time. The scope of a subsequent GIPA request (GIPA2025/10), and the searches conducted in response, located a spreadsheet.

12. Did any officer of the university deliberately withhold documents from GIPA applicants or from barrister Hugh Stowe?

No.

13. Do you accept that UTS' actions in relation to the spreadsheet may have misled both barrister Hugh Stowe and the GIPA applicants?

No.

If so, how do you account for this failure of governance?

Not applicable, see response above.

14. Did UTS disclose the existence of the spreadsheet to its governing Council before it became public? If not, why not?

No, there was no need to inform Council of the spreadsheet. The content within the Academic Change Proposal and addenda, the courses and subjects proposed for discontinuation, and the staff reduction in curriculum offering, have been identified based on student demand, enrolment trend, strategic alignment and financial viability. The content of the spreadsheet did not inform these decisions.

15. What role has the UTS Council played in overseeing and scrutinizing KPMG contracts and activities related to the Operational Sustainability Initiative?

Consistent with the University's procurement processes and financial delegations, there was no requirement for Council to be involved in the procurement of consultants to support the University's Operational Sustainability Initiative. Similarly, Council was also not involved in the overseeing and scrutinizing of KPMG activities as this is a function of management.

16. What information has been made available to UTS Council about:

- a. the role of KPMG within the Operational Sustainability Initiative?
- b. the data and methodologies upon which KPMG has based its advice to the university?

KPMG was competitively appointed to support detailed analysis of university operations and to help identify opportunities and risks in our current state, as they pertain to our financial and operational sustainability. KPMG was also contracted to support the preliminary design process across all OSI programs, working closely with program sponsors to consider a more sustainable future state and to articulate the changes required and their potential impact.

All the decisions and choices within OSI are being made by University Leadership Team in their role of overseeing the OSI work. As such, all reports provided to Council have been prepared by UTS management.

17. In 2024, UTS leadership revised its deficit from \$45 million to \$100 million—a \$55 million blowout. How did leadership get it so wrong, and why should staff bear the brunt of executive mismanagement?

In early 2024 UTS projected that a \$45 million expenditure reduction was required. However, later government policy changes impacting international student numbers reduced our revenue forecasts, which were based on achieving reasonable growth in international student numbers. This had the effect of increasing the requirement for savings to a \$100 million target.

18. How does scrapping degrees in education and public health, including the Bachelor of Public Health, one of the very few public programs nationally with a dedicated major in Indigenous Health and Wellbeing, align with the mission of a public university, which is supposed to serve the social needs of this country rather than corporate priorities?

Courses proposed for discontinuation have low demand at UTS and, as currently delivered, are not financially viable. However, we are confident that some of the options suggested by staff during consultation may mean we will be able to continue to offer some of these courses in a more sustainable way.

UTS is deeply committed to providing education and research that students want and that delivers positive social impact that benefits our communities and we need to make sure we can do with this with the funding we have.

No final decisions have been made but we are looking very carefully at the range of options that have been suggested as part of the consultation process.

19. Does your institution have any partnerships, investments or links with any weapons companies or associated entities?

When selecting partners, UTS evaluates each potential collaboration against our core values — excellence, innovation, entrepreneurship and social justice — alongside our commitment to academic freedom and adherence to regulatory and internally imposed standards. Each partnership is evaluated based on its unique context, weighing risks, benefits and potential impacts on UTS's reputation and values.

UTS defence-related partnerships are listed on our website: <https://www.uts.edu.au/for-industry/how-to-partner-with-uts/defence-related-partnerships>

20. Does your institution have any partnerships, investments or links with any fossil fuel companies or associated entities?

Yes. Most of the research we do with those sectors has a strong focus on sustainability, decarbonisation and fossil fuel transition. The benefits of our research into clean energy, fuels and renewables can be found here: <https://www.uts.edu.au/for-industry/climate-sustainability> and <https://www.uts.edu.au/for-industry/energy-transport>.

Additionally, UTS itself is working towards achieving Net Zero (for scope 1 and 2 emissions) by the end of 2025 and climate positive by 2029.

In relation to investments, in 2019 UTS moved to a fossil free fund, Australian Ethical, to align our investments with the university's sustainability and social justice commitments, guided by the UTS Treasury and Investments Policy. Australian Ethical restricts investment in areas such as fossil fuel companies, gambling and tobacco.

21. Does your institution have any partnerships, investments or links with any gambling companies or associated entities?

UTS does not have any institutional level partnerships with gambling companies or associated entities. In relation to investments, as mentioned above, in 2019 UTS moved to Australian Ethical which restricts investment in areas such as gambling.

22. Does your institution have any partnerships, investments or links with any tobacco companies or associated entities?

UTS's Research Policy formally prohibits any relationships with the tobacco industry.

Clause 3.7 provides that UTS will not seek or accept research funding in any form from the tobacco industry. The policy can be found here: <https://www.uts.edu.au/about/leadership-governance/policies/a-z/research-policy>

23. Four years down the line from the Job Ready Graduates (JRG) fee hikes, what impacts are you seeing?

- a. Do you agree that the government should urgently scrap the JRG fee hikes and funding cuts?

The JRG package has resulted in a reduction in Federal Government funding for UTS. Since the introduction of the JRG by the Coalition Government in 2020, the net effect has been a reduction in per student funding of approximately \$2,000. That currently amounts to an estimated \$60 million reduction in funding we would have received had the changes under the JRG not been made.

We agree that the Federal Government should urgently make changes to how universities are funded, to reflect the true cost of teaching and research, and have made that case at every available opportunity.

24. UTS has indicated it plans to cut following TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) courses:

- Graduate Certificate in TESOL and Applied Linguistics (C11254)
- Graduate Diploma in Applied Linguistics and TESOL (C06116)
- Master of TESOL and Applied Linguistics (C04305)
- Master of TESOL and Applied Linguistics (Extension) (C04420)
- Doctor of Philosophy (Education discipline) (C02097).

- a. has any consideration been given to the impacts of the proposed cuts to NSW's capability in delivering sustainable adult foundation skills (language, literacy, numeracy and digital) as a national priority under the National Foundation Skills Strategy 2025-2030?

The inclusion of these courses in the Academic Change Proposal as potentially ceasing was done with reference to a range of strategies including the NSW Skills Plan, various priorities set out by Jobs and Skills Australia, and the UTS 2030 Strategy. Other factors taken into consideration were low-demand intakes, aligning our future course portfolio with employer and skills needs and disciplines where UTS has demonstrable strength. None of the proposals in the Academic Change Proposal were made lightly or without consideration of the impact on our communities and our institution.

- b. Who is consultation open to and when will consultations close?

The Academic Change Proposal was released to staff for consultation on 17 September 2025 for a period of 7 weeks and closed on 6 November 2025.

Student communications have been enhanced through website FAQs and regular updates in the student newsletter. Our Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) also meets regularly with student representatives to address their thoughts, provide an overview of OSI and listen to their concerns.

- c. When is a final decision expected to be made on whether these cuts will go ahead?

In relation to the Academic Change Proposal, the aim is to release a change implementation plan in February 2026, pending consideration of feedback. It may be that these timelines change as we seek to take on board our community's feedback.