



UNIVERSITY  
OF WOLLONGONG  
AUSTRALIA

# University of Wollongong

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE – SENATE INQUIRY INTO UNIVERSITY  
GOVERNANCE**

## Senate Committee – Questions on Notice

### **1. What is the current range of salaries for all executives at the University of Wollongong? Please provide how many executives are paid at each band.**

Eleven positions are currently occupied by executives employed at UOW. Total Fixed Remuneration (inclusive of superannuation) ranges from \$298,000 to \$1,000,000 across five distinct remuneration bands commensurate with the position levels. The number of executives in each band is as follows:

- Band 1: 1 executive
- Band 2: 2 executives
- Band 3: 3 executives
- Band 4: 4 executives
- Band 5: 1 executive

Executive remuneration is externally benchmarked, informed by relevant market data, and reported on in the published annual report.

### **2. On 23 September 2025, University of Wollongong sent out a draft change proposal for the ‘Complaints, Safe and Respectful Communities [SARC] and Wellbeing, Health and Safety streams’:**

- a) In your consultation, did any student support the dismantling of the SARC team?**
- b) Has the University received complaints about SARC that led to the decision to dismantle and rebuild it?**
- c) Has the University considered the impact of this closure on providing support to students?**
- d) How will the services currently undertaken by the SARC team be delivered at the university?**

Please note, the following answer is being provided prior to the identified deadline of 25 November. A Revised Change Proposal is due to be released on Wednesday 26 November. More information will be made public at that point, following communication to staff and students.

UOW understands how important the Safe and Respectful Communities (SARC) service is to students and staff, and our communities. That trust matters, and the Draft Change Proposal does not seek to remove or reduce the support provided by SARC, nor does it reduce the number of permanent positions.

It proposes a structural redesign so that wellbeing, safety and complaints functions sit within a single, coordinated division for staff and students. The goal is to improve the system, make the system easier to navigate, reduce risk and ensure the right support is accessed faster. Students who experience sexual harm will continue to receive confidential, trauma-informed support. The proposed new model includes a simpler “front door” for disclosures, specialist case management, and more consistent triage and referral pathways.

The proposal has been and continues to be shaped by extensive consultation and feedback from students, staff, unions and subject-matter experts. It is also necessary to meet new national requirements, including the National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence, the creation of a National Student Ombudsman, and strengthened obligations for managing psychosocial hazards. The proposal seeks to strengthen our ability to meet those obligations by improving governance, reporting, escalation thresholds and specialist capability.

We know this is an important and sensitive area that some students and staff have concerns about. Their feedback has been valuable and is helping to shape the Revised Change Proposal, which is being developed at the time of writing this response and is due to be released on 26 November. The Revised Change Proposal will then be released for further consultation and feedback, and we expect it will evolve further through the consultation process.

UOW remains committed to ensuring our students and staff feel safe, respected and supported. That commitment is unchanged. The consultation period is ongoing, and we encourage staff and students to contribute their feedback so we can get this right.

**3. In February of this year, UOW signed a contract with Nous Cubane for UniForum services costing \$1,030,800.00. What steps did the University's leadership take to satisfy themselves that the UniForum benchmarking scores are sufficiently meaningful, reliable and rigorous to justify this cost?**

At the start of 2025, UOW did not have a sector benchmarking tool, and work was undertaken to explore options to help gain an external perspective to inform benchmarking in the future state. This would enable continuous review and improvement and help to assess resourcing needs in an ongoing and proactive manner, with the intent to prevent large scale transformation in the future. Internal consultation was undertaken, as well as desktop research to identify potential alternatives, and UniForum was deemed most suitable.

On the 7 February 2025 UOW Council's Program Control Board (PCB) was briefed during a meeting on the intent to engage NousCubane via subscription to the UniForum. Following endorsement from the Program Control Board, management met with NousCubane on 17 February to explore the UniForum subscription and develop a longer-term approach for implementation at the university given the transformation currently underway. As the vendor satisfied the University's business requirements, approval was given to proceed with required assessments and internal checks in line with university policy. The agreement for services with Nous Cubane is for four years at \$257,000 excluding GST per year.

**4. Could you please provide some specific examples of decisions that UOW have made with the support of UniForum benchmarking?**

The initial four-year engagement with NousCubane enables UOW to access the UniForum data set to help build a baseline which can be tracked over time. This external

benchmarked dataset will be valuable and informative but is not determinative for the University's purposes as it relates to the change process that has been undertaken this year.

Given the extensive time needed to undertake the full benchmarking exercise as part of the UniForum membership program, we decided to only undertake an initial collection and scenario benchmarking exercise to provide early insights.

As part of UOW's engagement with NousCubane, it is intended that another benchmarking exercise be undertaken during 2026 to refresh the preliminary results from the assessment based on 2025 data. It was envisaged that this ramp up to a 2027 full data collection would provide the time needed to ensure data is available, leaders are in place, and teams are operational for at least 12 months.

**5. Has UniForum data ever been used to inform (directly or indirectly) proposals or decisions to make staff members redundant? If yes, please provide details of the positions impacted (or proposed to be impacted) and the role that UniForum data played in decision making.**

No. The initial four-year engagement with NousCubane enables UOW to access the UniForum data set to help build a baseline which can be tracked over time. This external benchmarked dataset will be valuable and informative but was not determinative for the University's purposes as it relates to the change process that has been undertaken this year.

**6. Has UOW's executive ever cited UniForum data in presentations or statements to the university's governing council? If yes, please provide details of how and when the UniForum data was cited and the arguments it was used to support.**

Given the extensive time needed to undertake the full benchmarking exercise as part of the UniForum membership program, this data was not available or ready to be relied on for the purpose of the change process this year. To start to become familiar with the data set and activity framework, and build a baseline, UOW did a scenario benchmarking exercise.

As outlined in response to question three, the UniForum subscription was discussed at PCB meetings in February and March. At the meeting in March, PCB were advised that ideally the benchmarking data would be used to help inform change processes. However, the short timing and effort required to do the data collection delayed the benchmarking exercise.

Similarly, in the Transformation update to Council in the Council meeting on 28 March 2025, Council were provided with a copy of the preliminary insights from the initial benchmarking exercise that was currently underway as a reference, noting data is subject to validation through the full benchmarking exercise to be complete in future.

**7. Does any member of staff at UOW have KPIs that are linked to UniForum? If yes, please indicate what positions they hold and describe the KPIs in question.**

No.

**8. Does any staff member at UOW have full access to the underlying UniForum data and methodology? If not, does lack of access to underlying data and methodology inhibit UOW's confidence in UniForum reports and benchmarking scores?**

Staff in Finance and the Transformation Management Office have access to the data and methodology in order to commence building the capability and understanding of how to use the information as part of a continuous improvement program in the future. UniForum provide user group information and update sessions, study tours and other engagement activities to ensure participants engage with and understand the information.

**9. In the absence of access to underlying UniForum data and methodology, what steps does UOW take to validate the findings that UniForum provides?**

As stated in response to Question 8, staff in Finance and the Transformation Management Office have access to the data and methodology.

**10. How long has UOW subscribed to the UniForum benchmarking service? Please provide a year-by-year breakdown of how much UOW has spent on UniForum services.**

UOW's subscription with NousCubane commenced in February 2025. As stated in response to Question 1, UOW's agreement for services with Nous Cubane is for four years at \$257,000 excluding GST per year.

**11. Could you please provide a full list of documents, datasets and reports that UniForum has provided to Macquarie since the beginning of 2023? Please indicate which of these are available to all members of staff at UOW.**

UOW's subscription commenced in February 2025 and part of this question does not relate to UOW.

As outlined earlier, to familiarise ourselves with the data set and activity framework, and build a baseline, the University undertook a scenario benchmarking exercise centrally through Finance. This resulted in an indicative draft report for a preliminary view and assessment of how the University can use the platform moving forward to inform more meaningful, data led conversations on organisation design and service delivery. Some staff in Finance and TMO have access to the data and methodology in order to commence building the capability and understanding of how to use the information as part of a continuous improvement program in the future.

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

I am advised UOW has no known research partnerships directly with weapons corporations or lobby groups. UOW academics are involved in research activity related to the defence industry, including through the University's engagement with the DMTC that aims to

support projects that strengthen Australia's defence and sovereign capability, which is in the national interest. An example is the DMTC's work that involves the Australian Government, ANSTO, BAE Systems Maritime and UOW to develop advanced welding technologies for use on naval shipbuilding programs. Importantly, all of the University's research collaborations and partnerships are governed by the principles outlined in UOW's Research Sponsorship and Collaboration Policy, which states:

*(12) The University will not engage in research sponsorships or collaborations that involve entities that are owned or controlled by any country or entity that is prohibited by the [Australia's Foreign Relations \(State and Territory Arrangements\) Act 2020](#).*

*(13) Partnerships or sponsorships from the following industries must demonstrate that the sponsorship or partnership generates genuine benefit to community and/or in the generation of knowledge to address global challenges (for example tobacco related research that leads to a reduction in tobacco consumption and harm):*

*a. alcohol production and sales;*

*b. tobacco production and manufacture of nicotine alternatives;*

*c. gambling operations, licensing of gambling products and provision of gambling related services; and/or*

*d. weapons manufacture of whole weapon systems or components for the exclusive use of nuclear and controversial weapons such as cluster munitions, anti-personnel mines, depleted uranium weapons, biological or chemical weapons.*

*(14) The University applies the above negative screens and can apply further internal analysis to limit exposure to certain sectors and activities.*

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

UOW was founded in 1975 to meet the needs of a region built on steel, mining and heavy industry. For 50 years, UOW has maintained strong partnerships with the sectors that shaped its community, and these relationships reflect our commitment to supporting the region's economic foundations while also driving progress. We are proud to be working collaboratively with industry to explore innovative solutions that address the complex social, environmental and economic challenges associated with these industries, ensuring a more sustainable and resilient future for our communities. Some examples are outlined below.

UOW is a partner in the Australian Research Council (ARC) Hub for Transforming energy Infrastructure through Digital Engineering (TIDE). This Centre is supported by government and includes a range of industry partners, some of which are fossil fuel companies. This work will transform the operation of Australia's offshore energy infrastructure, helping to improve safety, and lower environmental impacts. This research activity is critical and can only be done in collaboration with industry partners.

Similarly, UOW academics in Mining Engineering collaborate with the Australian Coal Association Research Program, while UOW's School of Mechanical, Materials, Mechatronic and Biomedical Engineering also has ongoing collaboration with gas pipeline operators.

This work is primarily related to the transitioning of such pipes from natural gas to hydrogen or carbon dioxide, which will be critical infrastructure in a net zero economy. Importantly, all of the University's research collaborations and partnerships are governed by the principles outlined in UOW's Research Sponsorship and Collaboration Policy.

In the teaching space, UOW has an existing partnership with the NSW Minerals Council to support scholarships for students undertaking mining engineering courses. The Minerals Council contributed \$1.25 million to UOW to strengthen and modernise our mining engineering program over the next five years. This strategic partnership will enable UOW to deliver a cutting-edge curriculum, expand student leadership and industry engagement opportunities, and position graduates at the forefront of a rapidly evolving resources sector. Importantly, this partnership underscores UOW's commitment to shaping a new generation of engineers equipped with the skills to drive innovation, sustainability and responsible mining practices. UOW has also partnered with mining sector organisations such as Yancoal, South32 and Hume Coal to provide valuable scholarships for students pursuing careers in the industry.

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

I am advised UOW has no known research partnerships or investments with the gambling industry. Importantly, all of our research collaborations and partnerships are governed by the principles outlined in UOW's Research Sponsorship and Collaboration Policy, which states:

*(12) The University will not engage in research sponsorships or collaborations that involve entities that are owned or controlled by any country or entity that is prohibited by the [Australia's Foreign Relations \(State and Territory Arrangements\) Act 2020](#).*

*(13) Partnerships or sponsorships from the following industries must demonstrate that the sponsorship or partnership generates genuine benefit to community and/or in the generation of knowledge to address global challenges (for example tobacco related research that leads to a reduction in tobacco consumption and harm):*

*a. alcohol production and sales;*

*b. tobacco production and manufacture of nicotine alternatives;*

*c. gambling operations, licensing of gambling products and provision of gambling related services; and/or*

*d. weapons manufacture of whole weapon systems or components for the exclusive use of nuclear and controversial weapons such as cluster munitions, anti-personnel mines, depleted uranium weapons, biological or chemical weapons.*

*(14) The University applies the above negative screens and can apply further internal analysis to limit exposure to certain sectors and activities.*

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

I am advised UOW has no known research partnerships or investments with tobacco companies or associated entities. UOW academics have however conducted [research](#) related to vaping, including investigating the chemical contents of e-cigarettes and their effects. Importantly, all of our research collaborations and partnerships are governed by the principles outlined in UOW's Research Sponsorship and Collaboration Policy, which states:

*(12) The University will not engage in research sponsorships or collaborations that involve entities that are owned or controlled by any country or entity that is prohibited by the [Australia's Foreign Relations \(State and Territory Arrangements\) Act 2020](#).*

*(13) Partnerships or sponsorships from the following industries must demonstrate that the sponsorship or partnership generates genuine benefit to community and/or in the generation of knowledge to address global challenges (for example tobacco related research that leads to a reduction in tobacco consumption and harm):*

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*(14) The University applies the above negative screens and can apply further internal analysis to limit exposure to certain sectors and activities.*

**16. 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?**

UOW has previously advocated for the removal of Jobs Ready Graduates, in line with sector efforts and the associated recommendation of the Universities Accord.