



University of Sydney response to Questions on Notice from the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights hearing held on Friday, 29 November 2024

13 December 2024

Written Questions on Notice received 29 November 2024

- 1. Please provide details of all requests by the Vice Chancellor seeking meeting and engagement with Jewish students since September 2023; the details of any meetings that have occurred since that time; and the details of when the work on the complaints process commenced.**
- 2. What recommendations or policies can universities have to clearly outline what is acceptable behaviour for external actors, and does that involve external actors entering university property having to comply?**

Question 1: University response

Details of engagement with Jewish students since September 2023

Since Saturday 7 October 2023, the University has engaged widely with the student community around support available, expectations of conduct, risks in relation to health, safety and security, complaints reporting, antiracism initiatives and social cohesion. Of particular focus has been engagement with Jewish students, many of whom have been deeply affected by events in Israel and the development of the disruptive protest encampment in semester 1, 2024.

Between September 2023 and December 2024, the Vice-Chancellor, his Chief-of-Staff and other senior university staff including the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Student Life), engaged extensively with Jewish students and student representative organisations, Jewish staff members, Jewish representative organisations, community groups and Jewish leaders and advocates via direct university communications, correspondence, telephone conversations, meetings and roundtables. These interactions are provided in the table below.

The Vice Chancellor's Chief-of-Staff acts as the Vice-Chancellors' representative. The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Student Life) provides strategic academic leadership for student life at the University and plays an important role as an advocate for students to the University Executive.

Engagement details	Date
Vice-Chancellor message of support on the conflict in the Middle East	9 October 2023
Office for Student Life email to Israeli students following 7 October 2023 expressing support from the university	9 October 2023
PVC Student Life message to all USYD AUJS members expressing support from the university to the Australasian Union of Jewish Students (AUJS) and inviting engagement with Director of Protective Services and Operations Manager, Campus Security Unit re safety on campus	10 October 2023
Vice-Chancellor visits Mandelbaum House	12 October 2023
University of Sydney statement on the conflict in the Middle East	13 October 2023
Vice-Chancellor communication to students on expectations of student conduct	26 October 2023
Vice-Chancellor's Chief of Staff ongoing contact with M. Grenier (AUJS President) – via text/telephone	October 2023-May 2024
Office for Student Life various emails with M. (AUJS President)	October 2023 – November 2023

Vice-Chancellor seeks update on matters raised in M. Grenier (AUJS) email dated 30 October 2023	6 November 2023
Vice-Chancellor receives update from Senior Advisor on matters raised by M. Grenier (AUJS)	7 November 2023
Student Affairs Manager and Registrar meeting with AUJS	8 November 2023
Vice-Chancellor correspondence with D. Liraz re <i>On Belonging to the University as an Israeli-Australian Jew</i> email dated 9 November 2023	9 November 2023
Vice-Chancellor meeting with P. Wertheim, ECAJ	1 December 2023
Vice-Chancellor office correspondence with D. Liraz	3 December 2023
Office for Student Life – various emails with student: D. Liraz	December 2023, January 2024, February 2024, April 2024
Vice-Chancellor meeting with 5A	5 February 2023
Email re Meeting: Support for students from staff	9 February 2023
Vice-Chancellor meeting with Jewish staff and student representatives to discuss the protest activities taking place on campus	1 March 2024
University statement on respectful engagement on campus	16 March 2024
Chief-of-Staff attends ECAJ universities roundtable with AUJS	8 April 2024
Vice-Chancellor meeting with Jewish Board of Deputies (JBD) and AUJS	9 April 2024
Chief-of-Staff follow up meeting with members of Jewish staff and student representatives to discuss protest activity on campus;	9 April 2024
Support for students following Israeli missile strike of Iran included in 22 April 2024 Student News – see page 2	22 April 2024
Acting Vice-Chancellor communication to staff and students regarding unacceptable conduct, support available and complaints form	24 April 2024
Vice-Chancellor meeting with JBD and AUJS	1 May 2024
Vice-Chancellor communication to students and staff re expectations of conduct	1 May 2024
Vice-Chancellor communication to students re update on protest encampment, expectations of conduct and link to complaints reporting page	16 May 2024
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Life) email to AUJS titled 'Support for students affected by the ongoing conflict in the Middle East'	29 May 2024
Emails sent from PVC Student Life to student organisations (USU, SUPRA and SRC Presidents) regarding support services to share with their student members who may be impacted by the ongoing conflict in the Middle East	29 May 2024
Vice-Chancellor meeting with JBD and AUJS	31 May 2024
Vice-Chancellor and Chief of Staff meeting with 5A re encampment	3 June 2024
Vice-Chancellor communication to students re update on protest encampment, safety, support, and link to complaints reporting page	17 June 2024
Vice-Chancellor correspondence with D. Liraz: Letter from the Vice-Chancellor	25 June 2024
Vice-Chancellor meeting with CEO and Chair Mandelbaum House	18 July 2024
Email to AUJS from Student Administration Services re special considerations and exams	20 September 2024

Chancellor attends 7 th October commemoration event	7 October 2024
Vice-Chancellor meetings with Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism	14 & 17 October 2024
Chancellor meeting with Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism	15 October 2024
Vice-Chancellor meeting with Jewish Council of Australia	24 October 2024
Vice-Chancellor attends JBD 2024 Kristallnacht Commemoration event in Sydney	10 November 2024
Chancellor meeting with AUJS USYD and National representatives	21 November
Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Life email to AUJS re co-design of additional content for the Engaging with Civility module	5 December
Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Life, Registrar and Head of Student Wellbeing meeting with AUJS	12 December 2024

Details of complaints review

In November 2023, as a consequence of an escalation in the number and complexity of complaints, the University put in place additional protocols and resources to manage our response to complainants and ensure consistency. This included the allocation of dedicated resourcing, trend tracking and additional processes with respect to complaints associated with the Middle East conflict. The University formally commenced a review of its complaints procedures in September 2024. Senior executives at the University were party to conversations about a review and its potential scope in the preceding months.

In July 2024, the University appointed Mr Bruce Hodgkinson AM SC to undertake an independent review of policies and procedures following the protracted encampment protest. The Hodgkinson Review noted that the University's complaints procedures are presently the subject of a comprehensive review and made the following recommendation:

“The present review should be continued to achieve a complete overhaul and simplification of every aspect of the complaints procedures.”¹

The outcomes of the complaints review will shape a new university complaints system. The Hodgkinson Review recommended the establishment of a central Complaints Office to create a single place in the University where all complaints are directed and noted that it is likely that a complete overhaul of complaints procedures will result in the need for an investment in appropriate technology.

Importantly, the Hodgkinson Review found that,

“Those involved in administering and dealing with complaints are highly trained, diligent and professional in the way they treat all aspects of the complaints made to the University. All complaints are treated seriously.”²

¹ Bruce Hodgkinson AM SC, November 2024, *University of Sydney External Review Report*, <https://www.sydney.edu.au/content/dam/corporate/documents/news-opinions/2024/external-review-bruce-hodgkinson-report-29112024.pdf>, p. 32.

² Bruce Hodgkinson AM SC, November 2024, *University of Sydney External Review Report*, <https://www.sydney.edu.au/content/dam/corporate/documents/news-opinions/2024/external-review-bruce-hodgkinson-report-29112024.pdf>, p. 30

Question 2: University response

Policies relating to external visitors to campus

The University of Sydney is an open campus with porous borders to surrounding suburbs, designed to encourage community access and use. The University aims to be a welcoming, safe, and inclusive place for all members of our community, including members of the public who come to campus for a range of reasons. As such, the University has clear requirements of conduct on campus for students, staff, affiliates and visitors to our campus³. These were strengthened in July 2024 with the establishment of a new *Campus Access Policy 2024*⁴ that sets out the requirements for the conduct of individuals on our campuses. This policy has been controversial, and we have commenced a review which we promised to undertake when we introduced it. The period for making submissions has recently closed and we are assessing them and aim to release an amended policy next year.

The policy balances the University's commitment to freedom of speech and academic freedom with our legislative obligations to protect the health and safety of our community.

The Campus Access Policy also specifies that the right to organise a protest on University lands is reserved for our students and staff and requires prior notice to be provided to the University.

If any external groups intend to come to campus, they are required to use [a booking process](#) so the University can consider the request and, if appropriate, allocate sufficient safety measures, services, and resources to any events to help make sure other planned activities are not disrupted.

The University reserves the right to withdraw permission for access to our campuses and use of our facilities by external individuals and organisations. The University also reserves the right to determine the terms and conditions upon which it shall permit external visiting speakers and invited visiting speakers to speak on University land and use University facilities.⁵

While members of the public are welcome on our campus, all visitors are expected to act peacefully and consistently with the Campus Access Policy. Anyone who engages in unacceptable conduct may be requested by a University representative to leave, with the assistance of the police requested if considered necessary. Unacceptable activities are listed in section 10 of the Campus Access Policy 2024.

The Hodgkinson Review supports key elements of the Campus Access Policy. Additionally, it recommended that the University should approach both the NSW Police and the Federal Police with a view to entering into formal protocols with them which set out how they can assist the University if the need arises (Recommendation 14).

³ University of Sydney, 9 May 2024, *Our expectations of behaviour on our campuses*, <https://www.sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2024/05/09/our-expectations-of-behaviour-on-our-campuses.html>.

⁴ University of Sydney, 27 June 2024, *Campus Access Policy 2024*, <https://www.sydney.edu.au/policies/showdoc.aspx?recnum=PDOC2011/143&RendNum=0>.

⁵ University of Sydney, *Charter of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom*, 9 December 2019, <https://www.sydney.edu.au/policies/showdoc.aspx?recnum=PDOC2011/64&RendNum=0>, section 5(8), p. 4.