

**Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**Inquiry into national security risks affecting the Australian  
higher education and research sector – 11 March 2021**

**Outcome: Higher Education, Research and International**

**Department of Education, Skills and Employment Question No. IQ21-000022**

Senator James Paterson provided in writing.

***University Foreign Interference Taskforce***

**Question**

Which part of the Australian Government is responsible for UFIT? Given it was established by the Minister for Education, why is it now being viewed as a creation of Home Affairs?

**Answer**

In August 2019 the former Minister for Education, the Hon Dan Tehan MP, established the University Foreign Interference Taskforce (UFIT) as a collaboration between the Government and university sector to respond to foreign interference risks in the higher education sector. Since UFIT's establishment, the National Counter Foreign Interference Coordinator, a Deputy Secretary in the Department of Home Affairs, has chaired the UFIT Steering Group. UFIT's Secretariat function is provided by the Counter Foreign Interference Coordination Centre, within the Department of Home Affairs.

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) is a member of the UFIT Steering Group and works closely with the UFIT Secretariat.

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**Department of Education, Skills and Employment Question No. IQ21-000021**

Senator James Paterson provided in writing.

***Australia's exposure to international students***

**Question**

Is Australia's exposure to international students, including from China, a national security concern? If not, why? If so, why?

**Answer**

The Australian Government welcomes international students from all countries to study in Australia and recognises the significant social, cultural and economic benefits they bring to our community. International students are required to have and maintain a visa to enter and study in Australia, with visa application processes taking into account national security considerations, among other issues.