

Director Committees
Standing Committee on Social Issues
NSW Parliament House
6 Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Director,

Please find attached the post-hearing responses in relation to the hearing on 13 July 2026, for the Standing Committee on Social Issues inquire into the New South Wales university sector.

Please find enclosed:

- answers to questions taken on notice

Kind regards,

Duncan McDonald
Senior Manager, Government Relations and Policy
UNSW SYDNEY

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE
INQUIRY INTO NEW SOUTH WALES UNIVERSITY SECTOR
Hearing: 13 July 2026
University of New South Wales

Question taken on notice, from Monday 13 July

***The CHAIR:** I'm presuming, as an organisation that is as well organised and well-resourced as the University of New South Wales, you would have an idea of the costs associated with the move to trimesters and back again.*

***VLADO PERKOVIC:** I wasn't around at the time that the move to trimesters was made. That was a decade ago now, and it was part of the broader S25 strategy. I'm sure those numbers are available somewhere. I don't have them at hand.*

***The CHAIR:** If they are available and you can provide them on notice, that would be great.*

Response:

In 2016, the costs of implementation of the *UNSW 2025 Strategy*, which included moving to the 3+ academic calendar, were assumed to be approximately \$44.5 million.

The estimated cost of the curriculum transformation and enhancement of program and course offerings, including preparations for the flex-semester academic calendar, is approximately \$66 million. Importantly, this includes a range of initiatives aimed at modernising and updating both the University's approach to curriculum and the curriculum content itself. These activities would need to be undertaken regularly, irrespective of the calendar transition. The calendar-specific costs are intertwined and cannot be separated out. In addition, around \$75 million of planned spending on the construction and refurbishment of teaching spaces was brought forward to accommodate the additional space requirements of the new calendar.

It is important to reiterate that much of this work – both curriculum enhancement and uplift of teaching spaces, and associated systems uplift – would occur regardless of academic calendar transitions, so these figures are indicative only.

Question taken on notice, from Monday 13 July

The CHAIR: *Can I ask if there were external consultants involved in—and, again, I'm not suggesting that you were there—either the original move or the flex semester model move that's coming up? Have external consultants been engaged?*

VLADO PERKOVIC: *I understand that there were external consultants involved in developing the broader S25 strategy. I don't have the details of that available to me. I'd be happy to dig into that, if you wish.*

The CHAIR: *Yes, please.*

Response:

Yes.

Question taken on notice, from Monday 13 July

The CHAIR: *Thank you. You mentioned in your opening statement—and I appreciate that you're addressing the trimester issue. Do you have readily available and could you share with us your assessments? Because you said there were some successes but you're still moving. Could you share with us your data on the evaluation of the trimester implementation?*

VLADO PERKOVIC: *Sure. I'm happy to do that.*

Response:

Analysis of UNSW3+ in 2019 found the following benefits realisation:

- Increased student load compared to headcount of up to 12.5%, indicating strong uptake of study patterns enabled by three terms (9 courses across three terms rather than 8 courses across two semesters)
- Increased capacity of teaching spaces (by up to 13%) and fewer students with timetabling clashes (down by 29%)
- More timetable flexibility, and increased exchange/study abroad opportunities for students (increased by 63% in Term 1 2019)
- Growth in enrolments of around 7% per annum, including as a result of having three points of intake.

Question taken on notice, from Monday 13 July

The CHAIR: *I'm conscious that I have a million questions, but I am part of a Committee who will also, I'm sure, have a few questions for you, but I have two which are not related to each other. The first is—you may or may not be aware that one of the things we've been interested in has been the use of consultants by universities but also the reporting of consultancies by universities. Some universities, at various times, are better at reporting and some aren't. Some say, "Well, we don't have to report because the Treasurer's guidelines say we don't have to." You might not have it here, but could you give us an idea of how much in your part in the '24-'25 year was spent on consultants?*

VLADO PERKOVIC: *So, I am very aware of the issue and the interest and, equally, the challenge around reporting. I'd put it to you that it's not an issue of wanting or not wanting to report. It's the discrepancy between the Federal education requirements for reporting and the State education requirements for reporting. We'd welcome a clear and consistent approach and are happy to report either way. But at our university in 2025, the total spend on external consultants was \$8.7 million and approximately \$4 million of that, the largest single component, was around our estates management activities—consultants that provided specific expertise that wasn't available within the university.*

The CHAIR: *And was the rest basically Deloitte on wage—*

VLADO PERKOVIC: *I'd have to give you the details.*

Response:

Please refer the answer provided at Question 1, Supplementary Questions, for a breakdown of consultant expenditure for 2025.

Question taken on notice, from Monday 13 July

The CHAIR: I appreciate that. So those SHARP hires, there was a separate fund for that? Can you provide on notice the global amount of the fund? I don't need it to be identified to individual professors, but the breakdown of what was spent on the attraction of those SHARP hires over the course of that program.

VLADO PERKOVIC: *I am happy to have a look at that.*

Response:

Based on our financial records for the last 5 years (2021-2025), UNSW spent \$82.815m on the SHARP program/fund. The costs relate to people, non-people and support costs. The Division of Research conducted a review of the program, following its completion, and found it to have been highly effective.

2021 \$000s	2022 \$000s	2023 \$000s	2024 \$000s	2025 \$000s	Total \$000s
18,568	18,076	15,546	15,678	14,947	82,815

Question taken on notice, from Monday 13 July

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: *I'm just wondering what the university might stand in terms of international students. We're looking at the revenue breakdown of what the international student cohort is bringing to the university and possibly enrolment numbers between domestic and international students.*

VLADO PERKOVIC: *I'm happy to provide those numbers in detail on notice. I don't want to misspeak here. Approximately 45 per cent of our student cohort is international students, overall. They tend to be more heavily represented in the postgraduate rather than the undergraduate cohort. I'm very happy to provide additional details in terms of the revenue. Again, I wouldn't have those numbers at hand, but I'm happy to provide them.*

Response:

As published in our Annual Report, in calendar year 2025, UNSW had 41,297 international students, out of a total student body of 86,235.

In calendar year 2025, UNSW collected \$1,591,337,000 from Fee-paying onshore overseas students, out of Total revenue and income from continuing operations of \$3,642,058,000.

Question taken on notice, from Monday 13 July

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: *If you maybe just reaffirm, in terms of the undergraduate cohort, it was one-third foreign students?*

VLADO PERKOVIC: *We make sure the proportion doesn't go above one-third.*

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: *Of which 78 per cent or 77 per cent are from China. Is that correct?*

VLADO PERKOVIC: *I'd have to check the specific proportions. There is a significant proportion of our international students from China. When the numbers of Chinese students are reported, it does need to be taken with some caution, because it often includes students of Chinese origin who have, for example, gone to high school in Australia or students of Chinese origin who've come from countries like Singapore or Malaysia or other parts of the region. That needs to be broken out specifically, but we can provide you those details.*

Response:

In 2025, 54% of UNSW's international students were Chinese nationals from the Chinese mainland.

Question taken on notice, from Monday 13 July

***The CHAIR:** Interesting. Can I take you back now to the wage remediation issue—I'm sure you don't want me to call it wage theft. Do you have a global amount for how much UNSW has paid on all the external advice for wage remediation, payroll review and compliance work? Do you have a global figure for that?*

***VLADO PERKOVIC:** I don't have that at hand, but we can get that for you.*

Response:

As at July 2026, to date UNSW had incurred approximately \$24.9 million in external advisory costs, including legal fees, professional services and consultancy fees.

Question taken on notice, from Monday 13 July

The CHAIR: A related question—again, thinking about answers I've had from other universities, are the people who constitute your council encouraged to engage with staff and students to inform themselves about the running of the university?

Response:

Yes.

Question taken on notice, from Monday 13 July

***The CHAIR:** If it's possible. Again, I do know that we've given a very compressed time frame, but if there is a position statement or a role description that council members are given—because I know at the University of Sydney, one of the concerns I had was their position description says to get your information from management or council. I want to know if that's a normal thing or whether there are other approaches.*

Response:

The conduct of UNSW Council members is governed by the UNSW Council Charter, and the Council and Council Committees Code of Conduct and Values statement, available on the UNSW website: <https://www.unsw.edu.au/governance/council-committees/council>

Question taken on notice, from Monday 13 July

The CHAIR: That's good to know. Do you publish the minutes?

VLADO PERKOVIC: I'd have to check that. I'll take that on notice.

Response:

Reports of Council meetings are published on the
UNSW website: <https://www.unsw.edu.au/governance/council-committees/agendas-minutes>

Question taken on notice, from Monday 13 July

The CHAIR: So, it is a decade strategy [Progress for All]. And I presume that's a publicly available document?

VLADO PERKOVIC: Absolutely. I'd be happy to share it.

Response:

The UNSW Strategy 2025-2035, 'Progress for All', is available on the UNSW website, <https://www.unsw.edu.au/strategy>