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4 April 2025

Shaza Barbar
Director – Committees
Budget Estimates Secretariate
NSW Parliament House
6 Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Ms Barbar

RE: Responses to supplementary questions for the University of Technology Sydney from the Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No. 3 – Education, Budget Estimates 2024-2025 hearing held Monday 10 March 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before NSW Budget Estimates on 10 March 2025 in relation to the portfolio of Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education.

Please find enclosed:

- Answers to supplementary questions.
- Transcript correction – page 61 records the university's name as "University of Technology", the correct, full title is "University of Technology Sydney".

Should you require any further information then please do not hesitate to contact Danielle Woolley, Head of Government Affairs and External Engagement

Yours sincerely

Professor Andrew Parfitt
Vice-Chancellor and President

BUDGET ESTIMATES 2024-2025 SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

Questions from Ms Abigail Boyd MLC

(1) How many reasonable adjustments, accommodations and/or special considerations were applied for, in each calendar year from 2018?

a. Of these, how many were granted?

Adjustments, accommodations and special consideration

UTS aims to provide inclusive experiences and an equitable learning and working environment for all staff and students. Our [Accessibility and Inclusion Policy](#) (the Policy) outlines how UTS provides access for students and staff living with a disability.

The policy supports processes for making reasonable adjustments in accordance with the [Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#) (Cwlth) (the Act), the [Disability Standards for Education 2005](#) and the [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#). The Act requires that reasonable adjustments are made to avoid direct or indirect discrimination and allow students to access and participate in education on the same basis as their peers.

In the learning environment, we make the following available to students:

Reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments are the instances where the accommodations have been requested by students (or on behalf of students) and implemented – e.g. extension requests, examination provisions, alternative assessment arrangements, timetabling changes, etc.

Accommodations

Accommodations are support services set up and approved for the student in their personalised Access Plan. These include individual support services (such as note taking, live captioning, assistive technology and equipment, learning and assessment arrangements, etc.), and general support services (such as access to quiet and accessible study spaces, accessible parking, etc.).

Special consideration

Special consideration is intended to provide equitable academic treatment for students whose performance in an assessment task / exam has been significantly affected by extenuating or special circumstances beyond their control.

Statistical information regarding the above 2018-2024

Please note:

- Due to system migrations in 2020 and 2021, not all historical data pre-2021 is available in aggregate (i.e. historical data captured prior to the system change is now stored against individual student records) for all but centrally conducted examination accommodations (which were also recorded in the exams management system). This is indicated in italics as “Not available”.
- Accommodations are always granted as they form part of a student’s agreed Access Plan.
- 2021 and 2022 Accommodations data is likely lower than actual given the phased introduction and gradual user adoption of new systems (implementation completed mid-2022).
- 2020 Special Considerations data below does not reflect actual full-year transaction data given the move from one workflow system to another.

Calendar years	Reasonable adjustments		Accommodations		Special considerations	
	No. of applications	No. of applications granted	No. of applications	No. of applications granted	No. of applications	No. of applications granted
2018	<i>Not available</i>	<i>Not available</i>	2,046	2,046	<i>Not available</i>	<i>Not available</i>
2019	<i>Not available</i>	<i>Not available</i>	2,116	2,116	<i>Not available</i>	<i>Not available</i>
2020	<i>Not available</i>	<i>Not available</i>	1,316*	1,316*	2,964 (part year)	1,953 (part year)
2021	5,342	5,112	5,711	5,711	7,720	5,325
2022	6,909	6,732	6,745	6,745	11,825	8,562
2023	7,732	7,428	8,022	8,022	9,557	6,349
2024	9,421	9,096	13,500	13,500	10,937	7,656

*Reflects the decrease in the number of students sitting centrally conducted exams during the first year of the pandemic as learning moved online and alternative forms of assessment widely employed.

(2) Are you aware of student calls for a review of special considerations processes to ensure they are more equitable and trauma-informed?

a. Have you engaged with students in relation to this?

b. Will you commit to conduct such a review?

UTS students have used several fora (including the Student Council Liaison Group) to raise issues of concern related to consistency and perceived fairness in relation to various administrative activities that impact on the quality of their student experience and student outcomes. Student leaders have expressed a need for current processes to be made consistent both between and within faculties and have suggested that a clear policy and procedure that can be consistently applied is desirable.

In response, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) established the Academic Administration Working Group (AAWG) to address concerns raised by student representatives in partnership with student representatives. The AAWG reports to the university's Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC), which, in turn, reports to Academic Board.

The AAWG's 2025 Forward Plan includes special considerations. Work commenced in February with student and staff members of the AAWG co-leading and co-creating the process. The work being undertaken seeks to address:

- System and process streamlining – easy to access and use applications process with burden of proof commensurate to the nature of the consideration sought.
- Decision making guidelines – consistent approach taken by decision makers.
- Governance instruments – relevant Student Rules, policies and procedures reviewed and updated as appropriate.
- Culture – a trauma-informed approach to ensure compassion and fairness in the end-to-end process, with a streamlined appeals process should a student seek to challenge an outcome.

(3) What was the total cost of UTS's recent budget cuts, announced in November 2024?

In 2020, UTS, like others in the sector, was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the significant financial impact of a sudden reduction in international student enrolments due to border closures in Australia and other countries.

Recovery from COVID-19, including the return to campus, has been a long process. From a financial perspective, we planned a measured approach to returning to surplus by 2026.

In early 2024, additional financial challenges arose from government revenue capping, limits on international student numbers, and escalating costs.

In late 2024, UTS determined that the expenditure gap of \$100 million could not be closed without further expenditure intervention. Given this future scenario, in November 2024 UTS invited all staff to participate in an important initial consultation on UTS' Operational Sustainability Initiative which is currently in the planning stage and will soon move to detailed design ahead of change consultation and implementation.

(4) Have you responded to the open letter coordinated by the UTS Students' Association in relation to student concerns with recent faculty changes?

(<https://www.megaphone.org.au/petitions/protect-our-education-from-uts-budget-cuts- open-letter-to-uts>)

a. If no, do you intend to do so?

b. Have you met with student representatives in relation to these concerns?

On 17 March 2025 our Vice-Chancellor received the open letter from the UTS Students' Association. Our Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) met with the President of the UTS Students' Association on 18 March 2025 as part of their schedule of regular meetings. At that meeting, and at a separate, informal meeting with the undergraduate member of UTS Council and the President of ActivateUTS, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) talked through options for consultation when decisions are in progress. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) undertook that all students who will be directly impacted will receive individual information about any study plan changes and an opportunity for a 1:1 consultation. A response from the Vice-Chancellor is close to being formalised.