



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

University of Wollongong

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE – NSW BUDGET ESTIMATES

NSW Budget Estimates – Questions on Notice

Question:

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: Perhaps I can put it to everybody here. Could you take on notice if there are any research collaborations with Iran? If you could inform us of those, I'd be very grateful.

Answer:

I am advised that since 2020, UOW has not received any research income (including Grants, Commercial and Contract research). UOW academics have co-authored 148 research publications with academics from Iranian universities and research institutes over this period.

Question:

The CHAIR: Does that mean that UOW Global Enterprises is making a profit year after year?

G. Q. MAX LU: Yes. I've been here only three months. I'm still on a steep learning curve. With respect to the details of the numbers, I can take it on notice. My understanding is that it's been making a profit year after year.

The CHAIR: If you could perhaps, yes, take that on notice. We'd love to see the financials to see if that's the case, because, obviously, that would then back up the function. For example, I understand that the record for University of Wollongong Hong Kong has been quite weak and has actually gone backwards since University of Wollongong bought it, in terms of numbers of students. But, unfortunately, we are unable to see the financials for either UOW College Hong Kong Limited or the broader UOW Global Enterprises. So any information you can provide us on notice would be really good.

G. Q. MAX LU: I'll take it on notice and provide more details on those questions.

The CHAIR: Then if you could show us how those profits are then fed back into the local facilities. That would be very useful as well.

Answer:

UOW Global Enterprises (UOWGE) operates the University of Wollongong's offshore education network, including campuses in Dubai, Malaysia, and Hong Kong. These operations are strategically important to maintaining UOW's global reputation and financial sustainability. UOWGE serves approximately 17,000 students annually across its global network.

UOWGE Ltd and its controlled entities are required to prepare annual financial statements in accordance with the Government Sector Finance Act 2018 (GSF Act) and Australian Accounting Standards. These financial statements are subject to audit by the Audit Office of New South Wales, which issues independent audit opinions for all NSW universities and their controlled entities each year. The financial statements for UOWGE Ltd and its controlled entities are publicly available as they are included in UOW's [Controlled Entities Report](#), which is prepared to meet the University's annual reporting requirements. UOWGE also publishes an [Annual Report](#) which includes details on student enrolments by institution.

Since 2015, UOWGE has distributed \$162.8 million (dividends and franking credits) to UOW. This represents 108% of the adjusted net result before tax of the UOWGE Group over that period. The adjusted net result excludes the result of UOW College Hong Kong (UOWCHK), as its profits and net assets are not available for distribution to UOWGE or UOW. Over the period these dividends have supported academic, research and operating activities in Australia.

UOWGE has been consistently profitable at an operational level, with the exception of two years impacted by extraordinary circumstances:

- Loss after tax in 2022 (\$14.5m) was due to the cumulative impact of COVID-related enrolment declines, with revenue falling to \$110m from a pre-covid level of \$138m.
- Loss after tax in 2023 (\$49.1m) was largely driven by a one-off non-cash asset impairment of \$44.3m on the Tai Wai campus in Hong Kong, required under accounting standards. This impairment does not reflect the strategic value of the campus to UOWGE.

The UOWGE group was financially self-sustaining during this period through its own cash reserves. UOWGE's underlying operations have remained strong, and profitability resumed in 2024 (\$5m profit after tax) and is expected to continue to grow in 2025.

The establishment of UOW College Hong Kong (UOWCHK) is a strategic move to strengthen Australia's global education presence and enhance student mobility across Asia. Hong Kong serves as a key regional hub, enabling UOW to attract international students, provide high-quality English-language programs, and create pathways into Australian degrees. This initiative aligns with Australia's broader objective of positioning its universities as globally competitive, fostering international partnerships, and supporting economic and cultural engagement in Asia. UOWCHK also aspires to achieve independent university status, which would further elevate Australia's influence in the region's higher education landscape.

UOWGE assumed stewardship of the former Community College of City University (CCCU) on 1 July 2015, with no consideration paid. At that time, UOWGE acquired net assets of HK\$937m (A\$182m*), including cash reserves. CCCU was subsequently renamed UOW College Hong Kong. UOWCHK has received strong support from the Hong Kong Government including the allocation of the Tai Wai Campus building for a peppercorn rent. UOWCHK invested HK\$326m (A\$63m*) in the fit-out of the Tai Wai Campus, fully funded from UOWCHK own available cash reserves.

Enrolments at UOWCHK declined between 2015 and 2023 due to demographic shifts, increased competition, and delays in the campus move. However, the new Tai Wai Campus opened in 2023, and enrolments have begun to recover. UOWCHK enrolled more than 2,500 students in 2024, with new enrolments at our Tai Wai Campus increasing by 33 per cent in 2024.

UOWCHK remains financially strong, with net assets of HK\$814 million (A\$158m*) and cash reserves of HK\$230 million (A\$45m*) as at 31 December 2024.

** Using the HKD/AUD exchange rate at 11 September 2025*

Question:

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINÉ: Thank you all very much for appearing today. Before I ask individual questions, I wondered if you all might take on notice to provide your reflections on our progress to the representation of women at the upper echelons of universities in New South Wales.

Answer:

UOW is committed to providing a diverse and inclusive workplace and are proud of our culture that aims to provide equal opportunity regardless of gender. UOW is committed to promoting and achieving gender pay equity, and to addressing gender imbalances that exist across the University. Information relating to UOW's work in this space is available on our [website](#).

UOW has a Gender Equity Action Plan target of 50% women in the senior executive workforce and were recently granted an s126 exemption to advertise women only senior executive roles in pursuit of this goal. Women currently make up 40% of the University's Council membership, and we are also excited to welcome Professor Helen Partridge to UOW in November as our new Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education). Two of our four Executive Deans are women, and recruitment is being undertaken to fill the remaining senior executive positions where women will be highly considered. We recognise that universities must do everything we can to promote opportunities for female leaders and we will continue to strive for progress in this space.

Question:

The CHAIR: We know there's an enormous and growing mental health crisis, and it's often crashing down on young people of university age. We also know that a lot of universities are going through extremely turbulent job cuts and restructures, which puts a huge psychological strain on staff as well. In that context, what are you each doing to monitor and identify deaths on campus and/or suicides amongst staff and student cohorts? I start perhaps with you, Professor Carlin? ... and then I might take the rest on notice in the interest of time.

TYRONE CARLIN: Sorry, Chair, was your question deaths on campus?

The CHAIR: Deaths and suicides amongst staff and student cohorts—is it something that you monitor?

Answer:

While the occurrence of staff and students' deaths is rare, UOW continues to monitor the health, safety and wellbeing of our staff through the following means:

- Regular reporting from our employee assistance provider on the utilisation of the free and confidential counselling service and support provided to staff. Utilisation rates are currently comparable with those in the sector for work and personal issues.
- Ongoing consultation with the University's Work Health and Safety Committee on psychosocial and physical work health and safety risks.
- Regular monitoring of the University's psychosocial risk assessment initially developed with SafeWork NSW and in consultation with staff.
- Promotion of reporting of psychosocial and physical work health and safety risks and implementing risk controls to prevent injury and illness.

Through promotion of the various teams and services within the Support and Wellbeing Unit and of the Student Critical Incident Guidelines, there is a building awareness throughout UOW to advise the Support and Wellbeing Unit when they become aware of the death of a student through any means.

Support and Wellbeing Unit staff liaise with the notifier and appropriate stakeholders to coordinate a supportive response which includes

1. Contact with the student's Emergency contact and family.
2. Map out the key staff and students who may be affected by the death of the student.
3. Coordinating specific communication and specialist supports for students and liaising with P&C regarding staff impacted.
4. Coordination with Student Operations Teams to consider any actions regarding potential conferrals, withdrawals, fee implications.
5. A local guideline has been developed to ensure that all required tasks are considered and actioned as required. This is mostly followed by the Student Operations and Support and Wellbeing Units.
6. Any notifications of student death are noted within the Student Critical Incident Register to keep track of actions.