QTON No. SP-060

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory
Standing Committee on Social Policy

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2023–2024

Answer to question taken on notice

Asked by: Mr Thomas Emerson MLA

Addressed to: The Hon Bill Shorten, Vice-Chancellor

In relation to: Student enrolment figures

Hearing: 21 February 2025
Uncorrected Proof Transcript p 9
Transcript provided: 26 February 2025
Answer Due: 5 March 2025 5:00:00 PM

Mr Shorten took on notice the following question(s):

THE CHAIR: Thank you. My one, before I go to Mr Werner Gibbings, was on the—you said the new student forecast was not met last year. Do you know the gap? What was the scale of the gap between the forecast and what happened?

Mr Drummond: I should not just rely on memory, but I think the shortfall was nearly 30 million in revenue. Is that right, Jonathan?

Mr Pheasant: Yes, that is correct, made up predominantly from a decline in international students and domestic.

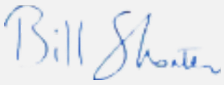
THE CHAIR: And the number of students that would have been for $30 million? Do you have that figure?

Mr Shorten: We can take that on notice and give that to you.

The Hon Bill Shorten: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

In 2024 the University had planned EFTSL growth of 1,229 (+10.8%) but we grew by 478 (4.2%). Though load still grew compared to 2023, the difference to target contributed to the reported $30 million deficit in revenue.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Social Policy



Signature: Date: 5 March 2025

By the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Canberra, the Hon Bill Shorten

QTON No. SP-061

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory
Standing Committee on Social Policy

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2023–2024

Answer to question taken on notice

Asked by: Ms Chiaka Barry MLA

Addressed to: The Hon Bill Shorten, Vice-Chancellor

In relation to: International student numbers

Hearing: 21 February 2025
Uncorrected Proof Transcript **pp 10-12**
Transcript provided: 26 February 2025
Answer Due: **3/5/2025 5:00:00 PM**

Mr Shorten took on notice the following question(s):

MS BARRY: We all have a supp. So just going back to what you said around the cause of the problem, so you did indicate that you started building or preparing for this future of a bigger university. When did this growth start? So when did you start planning for this growth? At what time? 2022, 2023? And what is the reduction in students numbers from that time of growth to date? The international student numbers?

Mr Shorten: I just cannot tell you about 22-23, but I might—

Ms Lincoln: But I can. So we started late '22 with an online strategy for the university, where we realised we were losing students to online competitors from around Australia. So we had a project to get a number of both new courses online and existing courses to place them fully online; fully asynchronous, online. And so there was work throughout 2023 to do that.

We launched 20 new courses at the beginning of 2024 and the impact that that had actually was to maintain our current student numbers. Given the environment that we were operating in then, without those courses we would have been in a much worse position than we are, and so it effectively maintained the level that we were at. We have very similar numbers between the two years.

But we had predicted growth, but you may recall that the new arrangements around international students actually came in in November of 2023, which was very late in the year. We had already done our planning, our budgeting, all of our financial work before that. And so, you know, that really turned things on its head quite a bit.

MS BARRY: So, sorry, just one more supplementary. So 2022 to 2024 you had predicted that there will be international students growth in 2024, not from the start of the planning so 2020 to 2023.

Ms Lincoln: We have been on a growth trajectory with international students for some time.

MS BARRY: Okay, and how has that number changed between 2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2024?

Ms Lincoln: We had 4,401 international students in 2023 compared to 3,940 in 2022.

MS BARRY: Okay, so it has essentially gone down by a few hundreds.

Ms Lincoln: No, it went up between 2022 and 2023.

MS BARRY: It went up? Yes.

Ms Lincoln: And then has sort of levelled off from there, and we had been projecting growth.

MS BARRY: Okay, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr Hanson?

Mr Pheasant: Perhaps if I could just add a point to that? So I think it is important to note, so our student numbers actually—our actual s score, whether it is undergraduate, postgraduate, domestic or international, have not actually gone down, but Michelle is correct. We budget to target. We budget to projection and when you think you are on a growth trajectory, so you budget accordingly, when those numbers do not come through, that is why we saw the significant shortfall in revenue from last year which caused the major challenges.

THE CHAIR: Mr Hanson?

MR HANSON: Yes, thanks. You mentioned what could be described as an imbalance in the academic profile, the staff profile, where you have got a lot more professors than perhaps other universities. My understanding is the University of Canberra has a policy whereby you come in at the low levels, As and Bs, and move up and if you do not achieve the next level within a certain timeframe, you are out.

And that then drives people, I guess, towards, you know, trying to get up the greasy pole, for want of another term. And so everyone ends up as a professor, where otherwise, in other universities perhaps, people are quite comfortable remaining at a C or a B or whatever level it is. Are you looking at that policy which seems to be sort of forcing that imbalance?

Mr Shorten: I might ask Professor Lincoln to start and I might supplement at the end.

Ms Lincoln: Sure. Yes, so you are referring to the assistant professor scheme, which we have had since 2015, and the university used that as a strategy to lift our research profile, bring in people super keen, fast track them to associate professor. We have not appointed anyone to that scheme for two years now. And in fact, under the new work workplace legislation, it is not a legal scheme, so we are not using that scheme in the system. But some of what we are seeing, you are absolutely right, is, I guess, an unintended consequence of that, that we had a lot of people who worked very hard and were fast tracked through to associate professor level and—

MR HANSON: Right, so it is more of a legacy, and moving forward, it will not be a feature?

Ms Lincoln: Yes, correct.

Mr Shorten: As I understand it, the arrangement, the assistant professor program to fast track people, it is quite novel to UC. I think there was probably some assumption when it was introduced that some of the people would get to professor status and then spread out and work at other universities. UC is a nice place to work, so they did not spread.

MR HANSON: Stayed.

Ms Lincoln: Stayed.

Mr Shorten: They stayed. And that is a feature of the—so that is an issue, and you can see how it has happened. A good idea ten years ago, perhaps, but it has now led to some consequences where there is some grouping of people at the higher levels, who are all good people.

Ms Lincoln: Great people.

Mr Shorten: And just to—I am not sure how to refer to you all. Minister, members. We can probably show you and get some of that data about the number of students, 21, 22, 23. You know, reasonably, I think, again, it is the benefit of hindsight, and I was not there, but you can see how the council and the university said, "We have had growth each year trending upwards. Assume that continues in 2024." And there was some growth, but it was not at the dimension, but the hirings had already got underway for the extra growth.

The Hon Bill Shorten: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

[Insert answer to question taken on notice]

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Social Policy

Signature: Date:

By the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Canberra, the Hon Bill Shorten

QTON No. SP-062

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory
Standing Committee on Social Policy

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2023–2024

Answer to question taken on notice

Asked by: Miss Laura Nuttall MLA

Addressed to: Mr Jonathan Pheasant, Chief Operating Officer

In relation to: Ethical Investment Guidelines

Hearing: 21 February 2025
Uncorrected Proof Transcript **p 15**
Transcript provided: 26 February 2025
Answer Due: **3/5/2025 5:00:00 PM**

Mr Shorten took on notice the following question(s):

MISS NUTTALL: Okay, got you, and can you confirm that at this point in time that the UC is not investing in any of the companies on that list?

Mr Pheasant: I would need to take that one on notice. I think I am confident, but I need to, just to be double sure.

MISS NUTTALL: That would be great. Thank you very much. That is it for me.

The Hon Bill Shorten: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

[Insert answer to question taken on notice]

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Social Policy

Signature: Date:

By the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Canberra, the Hon Bill Shorten

QTON No. SP-063

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory
Standing Committee on Social Policy

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2023–2024

Answer to question taken on notice

Asked by: Miss Laura Nuttall MLA

Addressed to: Mr Jonathan Pheasant, Chief Operating Officer

In relation to: Ethical Investment Guidelines 2

Hearing: 21 February 2025
Uncorrected Proof Transcript **pp 14-15**
Transcript provided: 26 February 2025
Answer Due: **3/5/2025 5:00:00 PM**

Mr Shorten took on notice the following question(s):

THE CHAIR: Miss Nuttall?

MISS NUTTALL: Yes, with a substantive? Beautiful. So, I am keen to understand more about the ethical investment guidelines. Has there been any effort to expand the UC's ethical investment guidelines to exclude investigative weapons manufacturers and financial institutions, the ones listed by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on 20 June 2024 which are complicit in human rights violations and possibly genocide?

Mr Shorten: I might ask Jonathan to answer that question,

Mr Pheasant: Yes, thanks, vice chancellor, and I am just trying to pull up—so last year, council approved a new investment policy which includes quite a detailed section on ethical investment. As members are probably aware, the investment policy has to be signed off by ACT Treasury, so we are in the process of submitting that investment policy for review.

I will just bring up, so I just wanted to specifically—to use the language that we have got in our investment policy, if you do not mind, we have looked at a range of other investment policies that exist across the sector. We did have an ethical investment framework. We did touch on what we deem to be acceptable. So if I can just—bear with me, I am just going to bring that up now.

So the way that the investment policy here is structured, we have structured it around ESG factors, including both positive screening and negative screening. In terms of negative screening, we are excluding an investment in a direct security company or entity that undertakes the manufacture of tobacco related products, generates more than 10 per cent of revenue from gambling operations, manufactures or sells controversial weapons, including nuclear weapons, or undertakes the extraction of fossil fuel.

And then when we are looking at our managed investments, which, as you are aware, are a little bit more challenging to understand the detail. We have got our best endeavours approach to ensure that there is no individual exposure by revenue of more than 10 per cent to each of the excluded industries, including primary manufactured tobacco, gambling operations, manufacture or sale and then fossil fuels, including thermal coal extraction or conventional or unconventional oil and gas extraction.

MISS NUTTALL: Can I confirm, then, controversial weapons? Is that a technical term? I am interested in understanding what constitutes, I suppose, a controversial weapon as opposed to an uncontroversial weapon?

Mr Pheasant: I have to admit, that is the first time I have been asked that question. So maybe I can I take that one on notice? You know, in our review of other policies, it was a term that we came across quite a lot. So, yes, as I said, I have not been asked that question and I will need to do some research on that one.

MISS NUTTALL: Yes, please, if that is okay. And so, just to confirm, as part of that process, did you go through and, like, systematically review all of your current investments, or is it just the policy right now that is being formed?

Mr Pheasant: No, no, so we have an investment committee that is now part of our finance committee. On a quarterly basis, we review all of our investment and on an annual basis, we do a detailed sort of ESG review, red and green. In fact, last year, we divested some funds, Blackrock as an example, where we were not comfortable that we could guarantee we were meeting the ethical investment framework. So it is a very active strategy that we take to ensure we meet our investment policy.

The Hon Bill Shorten: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

[Insert answer to question taken on notice]

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Social Policy

Signature: Date:

By the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Canberra, the Hon Bill Shorten

QTON No. SP-064

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory
Standing Committee on Social Policy

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2023–2024

Answer to question taken on notice

Asked by: Mr Jeremy Hanson MLA CSC

Addressed to: The Hon Bill Shorten, Vice-Chancellor

In relation to: Land use

Hearing: 21 February 2025
Uncorrected Proof Transcript **pp 18-19**
Transcript provided: 26 February 2025
Answer Due: **3/5/2025 5:00:00 PM**

Mr Shorten took on notice the following question(s):

MR HANSON: Back in 2015 there were some changes made to the Territory Plan legislation rezoning that gave the UC the ability to do developments, including, as I recall, residential developments on its land. And we sort of talk about the suburb of UC and things like that. We are running out of time, but are there any plans more broadly to either sell off land for residential purposes, or is the university considering doing a residential development on its land?

Mr Shorten: Because of the time, I will give you a sort of very high level, but then we can reply in writing, I think, and give you more detail. There was this peak development for—well, you all know the map of UC better than I. Basically, it is like the continent of UC and then there is some land beyond Haydon drive, and the other side is Benjamin, is it?

Mr Pheasant: ...(indistinct)... (11.58.46)

Mr Shorten: Yes. Within that, there is a peak development. You know, I am just sort of trying to get over the history of all the ins and outs of that. I am still getting through the history of that. So there is a residential development in that sort of bigger mass of land. Beyond that, and obviously we are having discussions with people. We want to see that sort of move forward.

But beyond that, where it is within that big continent of UC, our principal approach is that we do not want to sell off any further land. Partnerships. We would use that land to generate revenue consistent with the sort of overarching objectives of the university. So shared development would be good, but just giving it away or selling it in a one-off we are not interested in. There are two little pockets of land beyond that, which I think are in a different category, because they are just sort of—

MR HANSON: So something that will give you ongoing income, rather than a sugar hit.

Mr Shorten: Yes. Partners. Like, we would love to do more in the health space with health providers who then we have got the workforce and training. I think there is a lot of opportunities in the IT area with our science and tech faculty. It would be good. It is very early days, but I want this university—it has got good educational partnerships. It works closely with government. I want us to work more closely with the private sector for development, which would see jobs and research and opportunities for our students and our teachers.

MR HANSON: All right. If you have got more to add on that, I would be interested.

Mr Shorten: I think we can sort of give a summary of where the peak development stuff is up to, and we could provide a bit of a state of play.

MR HANSON: Because it was sort of sold to us in 2015 as, you know, this is the panacea that is going to keep UC on a stable footing for ever and ever, and here we are. And that has not come to fruition. So I am just wondering how that land is going to be used as part of your growth plan to make sure that we are not back here.

Mr Shorten: We will take that on notice, but I think that is a fair—again, just having a ...(indistinct)... (12.00.54). I think some of that critique is fair.

MR HANSON: All right, thanks.

The Hon Bill Shorten: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

[Insert answer to question taken on notice]

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Social Policy

Signature: Date:

By the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Canberra, the Hon Bill Shorten