

# University Responses to Human Rights Watch

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**Professor Harlene Hayne ONZM**

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21 April 2021

Ms Elaine Pearson  
Australia Director  
Human Rights Watch  
PO Box 4278  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Email: [REDACTED]

Dear Ms Pearson

**Re: Research on Chinese Government Threats to Academic Freedom**

Thank you for your letter of 1 April 2021. I commend you on the extremely important work Human Rights Watch does in this area.

I have only just commenced as Vice-Chancellor of Curtin so am relying upon my colleagues to assist in the preparation of this response.

The key point which relates to a number of your specific questions is that whilst Curtin takes very seriously the threat to academic freedom from foreign interference, and the need to offer comprehensive support to our students, our approach is not specifically directed at potential interference from any particular country or students from any particular country.

Academic freedom is a defining value at Curtin appropriately protected by the University's policies, which are based upon the model code recommended by the recent review of academic freedom and freedom of speech on Australian campuses by the Honourable Robert French AC. Any improper encroachment on academic freedom by any government, entity or individual, Chinese or otherwise, is counter to the policies, guidelines and values of the University.

Curtin also has well considered governance and risk frameworks to monitor and manage the risk of foreign interference, including potential threats to academic freedom, drawing upon the guidelines to counter foreign interference in the Australian university sector developed collaboratively between representatives from the sector and the Australian government in 2019.

The University's comprehensive student support framework includes proactive student wellbeing and counselling services provided free of charge. Our counsellors provide one-on-one therapy sessions and group programs to help students deal with any issues affecting their life, study or mental health.

Application of these policies and frameworks allows us to monitor and manage foreign interference risks to academic freedom and the wellbeing of our students, including any such risks as may emanate from activities of the Chinese government.

In addition, our Student Guild provides a support and advocacy program – Student Assist. The Student Assist officers, who include Mandarin speakers, are unbiased, confidential and provide independent advice on any matters relating to harassment or intimidation.

While Curtin does not currently have a formal relationship with Tencent, it previously had a research network partnership with Tencent Research that focused on exploring international perspectives on digital technology. Outcomes included a postgraduate summer school and a symposium on open literacy. Like every other university, Curtin has a range of partnerships and alliances with business and industry and a robust system for maintaining academic freedom and integrity of research and its relationships.

Yours sincerely



Professor Harlene Hayne ONZM  
Vice-Chancellor

**From:** [Vice-Chancellor](#)  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: HRW Letter - Research on Chinese Government Threats to Academic Freedom  
**Date:** Monday, May 24, 2021 6:26:56 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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Dear Sophie and Nicole

Thank you for the letter of 31<sup>st</sup> March, below is Edith Cowan University's response.

ECU is committed to promoting and protecting academic freedom and freedom of speech within the University and the broader community generally. This is fundamental to our purpose of transforming lives and enriching society through education and research.

At ECU we have very accessible, transparent and consistently applied complaints and feedback processes and we also make available a range of student support to all ECU students and staff, irrespective of their background, field of study or location.

Best regards,

Karen

[Karen D'costa](#)

Executive Officer to the Vice-Chancellor & Manager, Executive Support

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Tel: [REDACTED] | Fax: +61 8 6304 2666 | Email: [REDACTED]

Web: <http://www.ecu.edu.au>

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19 April 2021

Ms Elaine Pearson  
Australia Director  
Human Rights Watch

Via Email: [REDACTED]

Dear Ms Pearson,

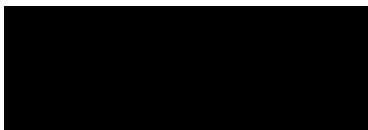
**Re: Research on Chinese Government Threats to Academic Freedom**

Reference is made to your letter dated 31 March 2021 concerning ongoing research by Human Rights Watch into alleged threats by the Chinese government to academic freedom.

La Trobe's approach to the full protection of freedom of speech and academic freedom as well as our response to the issues raised in your letter is enclosed.

Should you have any further questions or require further clarification, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours Sincerely



**Professor John Dewar AO**  
Vice-Chancellor and President

**Mailing address**

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Victoria 3086 Australia

T + 61 3 9479 2000

E [REDACTED]  
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**MELBOURNE CAMPUSES**

Bundoora  
Collins Street CBD

**REGIONAL CAMPUSES**

Bendigo  
Albury-Wodonga  
Mildura  
Shepparton

## La Trobe response to Human Rights Watch

For more than 50 years La Trobe has been an institution which has embraced free speech and enabled a robust diversity of views. The La Trobe University Act 2009 requires that the University serve the public interest by “promoting critical and free enquiry, informed intellectual discourse and public debate” and the La Trobe University Collective Agreement 2018 expressly addresses academic freedom and intellectual freedom.

In late 2018, the then Minister of Education Dan Tehan appointed the Hon Robert French AC to undertake an independent review of policies supporting freedom of expression in Australian higher education. That review produced a Model Code with respect to Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom for universities to choose to adopt, with or without modification. In response, I established the Freedom of Expression and Academic Freedom Working Group, whose work led to La Trobe being able to adopt the French Model Code without modification in December 2019. Late last year, when Professor Sally Walker AM was asked by the Education Minister to review [the implementation of the Model Code by universities](#), La Trobe’s approach was commended as an exemplar in the sector.

In terms of the issues raised in your letter regarding instances of harassment, intimidation, and self-censorship on Australian university campuses, while we understand the need to provide anonymity to interviewees, the lack of detail provided on the *content* of interviews which relate to La Trobe makes it difficult to address any specific issues which may be raised in your report.

From our end, as part of our standard practices, all students at the university are provided with information regarding our policies and procedures and the protections that the university offers in terms of reporting of bullying and harassment. This includes information about our [Safer Community](#) service, on how to report incidents of harassment and assurance that all services are confidential with students’ privacy protected under the Australia Privacy Act. The University actively records and tracks all incidents of this nature reported to the university by students.

For international students in particular, all international students, irrespective of their nationality, are provided with a comprehensive orientation program that provides information about the supports available and how to report incidents of harassment. In addition, students participate in an academic integrity module and are provided with information to help them understand what it means to be a student in Australia. These sessions, including sessions with Victoria Police, cover topics such as ‘campus safety and security’ and ‘staying safe in the community’. The International Student Services team works closely with the Safer Community team to support students experiencing any threats or harassments.

Through our Enterprise Risk Management approach, we constantly monitor changes to our operating environment and act accordingly. For instance, in response to Hong Kong’s new National Security Law, we immediately conducted an audit of the students who could be affected by the laws and who were enrolled in subjects that cover material that may be considered politically sensitive under these laws. This two-step approach identified one student who could have been affected and we worked at departmental level to advise the student and ensure the necessary protection was afforded. At all times, we require all our staff to be fully aware of their obligations under the university’s academic integrity policies, whether that teaching is taking place on campus, overseas or online.

As outlined, La Trobe is committed to academic freedom and freedom of speech on all its campuses. If Human Rights Watch has further information about alleged instances of harassment, intimidation, and self-censorship relating to La Trobe, we would urge you to provide us with further detail about this information, so that we can investigate accordingly.



20 April 2021

Ms Elaine Pearson  
Australia Director  
Human Rights Watch  
By email: [REDACTED]

Dear Ms Pearson

I respond to your letter of 31 March 2021 regarding Human Rights Watch research into international students and academic freedom in Australian Universities.

Macquarie University places a high importance on academic freedom and has a long tradition of fostering free and unfettered scholarly debate. These principles are embedded in our Student Code of Conduct and Staff Code of Conduct and other university policies. The University has systems and services to support students and staff during their study and work which allow for the registration and resolution of concerns about behaviour that may contravene these codes. I address each of your questions sequentially as follows:

1. In June 2020, Macquarie University implemented the Student Care and Reporting Network, through which community, students and staff can seek support or report concerns regarding student wellbeing, inappropriate behaviour or misconduct. This mechanism allows for the reporting of harassment, surveillance or threats on campus. We have not received any reports of government interference via this reporting mechanism. Students also have free access to the My Legal Mate app in seven different languages including Mandarin. Staff can also report these types of issues through Macquarie's Risk Online Active Reporting (ROAR) Portal.
2. All Macquarie students can confidentially and anonymously report harassment or intimidation. The university also has a strong Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Prevention Policy which outlines the rights and responsibilities of the Macquarie University community for the achievement of a diverse, equitable, inclusive and safe campus environment, free from unlawful discrimination, bullying and harassment.
3. Regarding the academic freedom of students from mainland China and Hong Kong studying in Australia, I note that Macquarie University's Student Code of Conduct

provides that “every member of the University community and associate of the university has a right to freedom of expression”. It is a condition of enrolment that students are aware of the Student Code of Conduct.

4. Macquarie University offers students who are studying outside of Australia synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities. Chinese students join online classes via Zoom and through the University’s student management systems (iLearn and ProLearn). They are joined by students from many other countries in these virtual classrooms. No specific security risks have been identified through these online learning practices.
5. Not at this time.
6. We do not have any records of reports of breaches of privacy that relate to allegations of harassment, intimidation or censorship or “doxing” on behalf of foreign governments. This kind of conduct is covered by existing disciplinary avenues should it arise. Under section 2, 6a (i) of the Macquarie University Student Code “a student must not intentionally or recklessly ... do anything which may endanger the physical or mental health or safety of any person”.
7. This is currently an issue of considerable discussion and policy debate in the context of the University’s compliance with the Foreign Relations Act 2020.
8. Macquarie University’s WeChat account is primarily followed by education agents and focusses on promoting Macquarie’s program offerings. We record and track content and none has been censored, removed or restricted.
9. Macquarie University offers a range of support services to international students to assist them develop and enhance their academic skills and research aptitude. Regarding orientation, I note Macquarie University’s Student Code of Conduct provides that “every member of the University community and associate of the university has a right to freedom of expression” and that it is a condition of enrolment that students are aware of the Student Code of Conduct.

Sincerely 



S Bruce Dowton

## Monash University responses to Human Rights Watch questions

### **1. Does your university actively track incidents of Chinese government harassment, surveillance, or threats on campuses? If it does, how many incidents have been reported in each calendar year for the past three years?**

The University has sophisticated cyber security and online monitoring. Additionally, the University has patrolling security at all times on campus. While in the past three years we have witnessed debate across many geopolitical issues and individual or student group incidents, the University has not noted any incidents of Chinese Government harassment, surveillance or threats on campus.

If the University was to become aware of any incidents of harassment, surveillance or threats from any country, organisation or individual, they would be dealt with appropriately based on the unique circumstances of each particular incident. This would include notifying the appropriate government departments, if required.

### **2. What level of discussion have you had, if any, with your Chinese and Hong Kong students regarding how they can confidentially and anonymously report harassment or intimidation?**

All students at Monash are required to complete either the [Respect at Monash](#) or *Respectful Research at Monash* online module, to help our community understand what it means to be a respectful member of the Monash community and promote an inclusive and diverse culture on campus. The 'Rights & Responsibilities' chapter within the module provides detailed information for students on where and how to make a report, get support or seek advice on problem behaviour.

All Monash students have a variety of channels through which they can [report problem behaviour](#), or [get help and support](#). The University assists students who have experienced [threats](#) or [harassment](#), through support referrals, appropriate safety measures and assistance with making a report (including externally to police where the matter is a criminal offence). Unless the allegation is against another student or staff member (where they would need to be notified of the complaint if it required us to undertake a disciplinary process), these channels require confidentiality in reporting.

The University values and protects freedom of speech and academic freedom, and its approach is consistent across all student cohorts. Monash is committed to aligning its [Regulatory Framework](#) with the principles of the Model Code and has prepared a [Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom](#) policy for approval by the Monash Council that sets out this alignment.

### **3. What measures, if any, does your institution take to specifically protect the academic freedom of students from mainland China and Hong Kong studying in Australia?**

The University monitors its own environment, and provides appropriate channels and support services for our students to raise issues.

Academic freedom is a defining value of the University, and all academic staff have the right to academic freedom in their education and research activities. These freedoms also extend to freedom of speech/intellectual enquiry. Monash has recently published a [statement on its website](#) to this effect. These protections extend to all Monash students, regardless of citizenship, location of study, enrolment status or other factors.

**4. Does your university offer any guidance to staff teaching China-based students currently studying remotely online during Covid-19? What steps are taken to mitigate security risks?**

Monash is currently implementing measures to ensure it operates in accordance with the Commonwealth Government's *Foreign Relations Act 2020*. In addition, the University's risk management framework includes key controls to address potential security risks.

In relation to in-class teaching, or to the preparation of class materials and curriculum, academic staff would be aware of issues that may occur in relation to students who are based in China. However, in such instances (as per the example outlined below), the University's values on academic freedom prevail.

China-based students currently studying remotely online during COVID-19 are able to securely access Monash University systems via a Monash International VPN. This is a virtual private network created specifically for students in mainland China so they can access Monash University applications and services.

The University has established a [Cyber Safety website](#) and a number of cyber security [policies](#) to assist staff and students in mitigating any potential online security risks. These are complemented with resources including a [Remote Access Guide](#) (with cyber security considerations), [Cyber Safety Zoom Guidelines](#), and utilising internal channels such as Workplace to publish awareness content.

**5. Have you discussed with Hong Kong students and staff the implications of the extraterritorial reach of Hong Kong's new National Security Law and the potential impact it could have on students studying in Australia? How?**

Monash University has not conducted such discussions with our Hong Kong students and staff. The University values and protects freedom of speech and academic freedom, and its approach is consistent across all student cohorts.

As mentioned in Question 4, the same principles would apply.

**6. Is 'doxing' (the publication of personal information on the internet) and 'reporting on' students or staff to foreign embassies and consulates, a violation of your student code and grounds for disciplinary action? How many students have faced disciplinary**

**action for doxing? How many students have faced disciplinary action for ‘reporting on’ students or staff to foreign embassies?**

Monash’s [Student Charter](#) sets out the key expectations of students and by students to foster this learning community. It applies to all students of Monash University at the University or using its resources (including online), and outside the University where undertaking any official activity, whether course-related or not. The University also expects students to behave respectfully and responsibly in all communications, including the use of social media, as per the University’s [Student General Conduct policy](#) and [Ethics Statement policy](#).

**7. Has your university leadership ever publicly raised the issue of censorship pressures on Chinese-speaking students and academics? Has your university leadership ever privately raised the issue of censorship pressures with staff and on Chinese-speaking students and academics?**

Monash has not publicly or privately raised the issue of censorship pressures on Chinese-speaking students and academics.

**8. Your university has an account on WeChat. Do you track whether your content or responses to your content have been censored, removed, or restricted in distribution?**

The University has monitoring in place which would alert us to whether our content or responses to content on any social media platform have been censored, removed or restricted in distribution.

In the last year we have not been made aware of any social posts from the Monash WeChat account being censored or removed.

If we were to be notified of such instances occurring, these actions would be recorded through our rigorous social media monitoring processes and procedures which are all internally audited.

**9. What support services does your university provide to Chinese-speaking students? What kind of orientation do students receive in regard to issues of academic freedom in Australia?**

Monash supports our international students through a number of services. These include online learning resources, supporting student health (mental and physical) and wellbeing, financial support, networking and connectivity, personalised tutoring and language support, and assisting students who are concerned about the welfare of themselves or their families, as well as the complaint and advocacy services referred to in Question 2.

There are no specific orientation activities related to academic freedom, however our [statement](#) is publicly accessible to students via the Monash website.

**10. In January 2021, the Chinese language media outlet Today Melbourne featured the case of two Chinese students at Monash who complained after two articles assigned by their tutor for their Data in Society class referenced oppressive digital surveillance of Muslim citizens in China's Xinjiang province. Can you please confirm if these students participated in this course online from China, online in Australia or in person on campus at Monash?**

The course was offered on campus at Monash.

It was reported by the media that Chinese students in the class had contacted the publication voicing their concerns about the content being used.

The University responded in the following way, upholding academic freedom and freedom of speech:

“The articles were selected as they raised questions about issues of consent and other ethical dilemmas in using facial recognition technology.

As one of the world's top-100 universities, Monash University has a duty to ensure students have the vital critical thinking and emotional intelligence skills that are required for the jobs of today and tomorrow. It is important for students to consider a number of issues in our world today, and be able to analyse information from a number of sources and develop reasoned, critical and robust responses to each.

Regardless of whether our students are onshore or offshore, Monash University prides itself on providing an inclusive and welcoming educational culture for all its students and staff. As part of achieving this goal, and upholding a respectful approach to issues which are important to our diverse learning community, it's important that the University doesn't compromise on its values and protection of freedom of speech and academic [freedom](#).”





**Queensland University of Technology**

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**Professor Margaret Sheil AO**  
**Vice-Chancellor and President**

12 April 2021

Elaine Pearson  
Australian Director  
Human Rights Watch  
PO Box 4278  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Via email: [REDACTED]

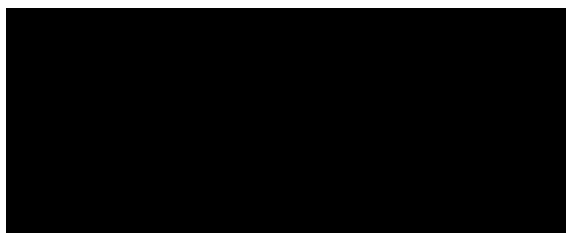
Dear Ms Pearson

Thank you for your letter of 31 March 2021 regarding your research project, 'Chinese Government Threats to Academic Freedom.'

I understand that your report will name QUT in the list of institutions at which the project's 50 anonymous interview subjects work or study. I trust that you will be careful to state that inferences about specific institutions cannot be drawn merely from their appearance on this list.

In that letter, you asked a number of questions relating to the project. I am pleased to provide the answers to those questions (attached). Should you have any further enquiries please contact my Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (International), Professor Scott Sheppard. He can be reached at [REDACTED] or on [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely



Professor Margaret Sheil AO  
Vice-Chancellor and President

Att.

- 1. Does your university actively track incidents of Chinese government harassment, surveillance, or threats on campuses? If it does, how many incidents have been reported in each calendar year for the past three years?**

QUT takes any threats against any students very seriously. QUT follows the Australian Government endorsed Guidelines to Counter Foreign Interference in the Australian University Sector devised by the University Foreign Interference Taskforce (UFIT) and has an active security program. There have been no reported incidents of any foreign government harassment or threats on QUT in the last three years.

- 2. What level of discussion have you had, if any, with your Chinese and Hong Kong students regarding how they can confidentially and anonymously report harassment or intimidation?**

All QUT students are reminded through our regular correspondence of the avenues available to them to report harassment or intimidation. We do not discriminate by focusing on any specific cohort as we recognise that there exists potential for harassment and intimidation across a wide range of contexts, of which the university administration may or may not be aware. Accordingly we remind all students of their rights on campus and in virtual settings, as valued members of the university community.

- 3. What measures, if any, does your institution take to specifically protect the academic freedom of students from mainland China and Hong Kong studying in Australia?**

QUT does not discriminate against individual international students, nor against students from particular countries of origin. We provide all students with the same protections of academic freedom and remind them of these rights through regular correspondence. QUT has recently adopted a single overview policy on the protection of academic freedom and freedom of speech that clarifies in one place the protections enjoyed by all students, including those from mainland China and Hong Kong.

- 4. Does your university offer any guidance to staff teaching China-based students currently studying remotely online during Covid-19? What steps are taken to mitigate security risks?**

All QUT staff work within a framework that prioritises the provision of academic support and guidance for all students. QUT's standards for academic integrity cover all forms of learning and in the recent additional moves to remote learning significant resources have been allocated to ensure that staff are provided with additional professional development in appropriate uses of technology, including cybersecurity.

- 5. Have you discussed with Hong Kong students and staff the implications of the extraterritorial reach of Hong Kong's new National Security Law and the potential impact it could have on students studying in Australia? How?**

QUT has not had discussions with Hong Kong students on this topic. All students, domestic and international, have available to them support and counselling through our student support services.

- 6. Is 'doxing' (the publication of personal information on the internet) and 'reporting on' students or staff to foreign embassies and consulates, a violation of your student code and grounds for disciplinary action? How many students have faced disciplinary action for doxing? How many students have faced disciplinary action for 'reporting on' students or staff to foreign embassies?**

Any violation of student or staff privacy would breach QUT's Staff and Student Codes of Conduct and would accordingly invoke relevant disciplinary measures. Disciplinary proceedings are confidential and are themselves a matter of student and staff privacy. Additionally, QUT operates under the purview of Commonwealth privacy law and the privacy provisions of the Queensland Human Rights Act 2019.

- 7. Has your university leadership ever publicly raised the issue of censorship pressures on Chinese-speaking students and academics? Has your university leadership ever privately raised the issue of censorship pressures with staff and students on Chinese-speaking students and academics?**

QUT's position on academic freedom is in the public domain. Our Vice-Chancellor has, on a number of occasions (most recently on 31 March), reminded all QUT staff about our commitment to academic freedom as a basic tenet of the university.

- 8. Your university has an account on WeChat. Do you track whether your content or responses to your content have been censored, removed, or restricted in distribution?**

QUT's WeChat account is used for promotional purposes only and is closely managed. Comment is disabled. QUT has no knowledge of any tracking or removal of QUT posts.

- 9. What support services does your university provide to Chinese-speaking students? What kind of orientation do students receive in regard to issues of academic freedom in Australia?**

All QUT students are offered regular access to student support by trained professional Counsellors in our Student Services Office. A number of professionals in that Office are Chinese language speakers. Upon enrolment students are made aware of the policies and procedures applying to them, with particular reference to the Student Code of Conduct, which includes clauses regarding the protection of academic freedom.

**From:** [Tom McLeod](#)  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** HRW Letter - Research on Chinese Government Threats to Academic Freedom  
**Date:** Friday, April 23, 2021 6:16:25 AM  
**Attachments:** [image002.png](#)  
[image003.png](#)

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RMIT Classification: Trusted

Dear Elaine,

Vice-Chancellor, Professor Martin Bean, asked me to review your correspondence and respond on behalf of RMIT. Thank you for reaching out.

At RMIT we're passionate about preparing our students for the real world, giving them a voice and somewhere to turn when they need support along the way. Integral to that is our commitment to ensure every student and staff member feels safe and respected, so firm measures are in place to protect what we consider a baseline for our community.

We have [support services for all students](#) and staff to access if they experience threatening or concerning behaviour. This might include bullying, discrimination or victimisation. Our [Intellectual Freedom Policy](#) protects their academic freedom and [cyber security](#) is a priority. Our Critical Incident Management team also deals with significant incidents, threats or potential risks to our University and the community of staff and students we care for.

At RMIT we aim to educate and empower, so respectful freedom of expression and exploration is at our core and always will be. We wish you well in your endeavours.

Kind regards

Tom

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**Tom McLeod**  
**Chief Audit and Risk Officer | Internal Audit, Compliance, Risk & Regulation**  
P: [REDACTED] | E: [REDACTED]



28 April 2021

Ms Elaine Pearson  
Australia Director  
Human Rights Watch  
PO Box 4278  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

By email: [REDACTED]

Dear Ms Pearson,

Thank you for your letter of 31 March on behalf of Human Rights Watch, advising of your research on Chinese Government threats to academic freedom on Australian university campuses. Please find below responses to your questions.

**1. Does your university actively track incidents of Chinese government harassment, surveillance or threats on campuses? If it does, how many incidents have been reported in each calendar year for the past three years?**

The University of Melbourne takes allegations or complaints of bullying or harassment made by our staff or students extremely seriously. All allegations of bullying and harassment at the student level are tracked through the student complaints process. This process is detailed at the University's Student Complaints and Grievances [website](#).

**2. What level of discussion have you had, if any, with your Chinese and Hong Kong students regarding how they can confidentially and anonymously report harassment or intimidation?**

The University is committed to enabling a safe, inclusive and respectful community. This is enshrined in the University's [Respect](#) program which includes an articulation of rights and responsibilities of students and staff to feel safe and supported.

Complaints about bullying, harassment and intimidation by members of the University community can be made confidentially and anonymously through our Student Complaints and Grievances [website](#). The University has also established an anonymous register for inappropriate behaviour. In addition to reporting mechanisms, the University's [Safer Community Program](#) provides confidential advice and support to students and staff who feel threatened or unsafe on account of bullying, harassment or intimidation.

**3. What measures, if any, does your institution take to specifically protect the academic freedom of students from mainland China and Hong Kong studying in Australia?**

The University is committed to protecting the academic freedoms and right to free speech of all our staff and students, onshore and offshore. In 2021, the University introduced the module titled *Freedom of speech in education and research* that will be completed by all commencing undergraduate students from 2022 onwards. Through this module, students are introduced to the University's [Student Charter](#) – which details the rights to freedom of expression and individual freedoms within the law, as well as the shared responsibility for students and the University to uphold and acknowledge the rights of others.

In 2019, the University complemented its longstanding [Academic Freedom of Expression Policy](#) by implementing an additional [Freedom of Speech Policy](#) that makes explicit our commitment to lawful freedom of speech in all areas of University activity and operations. This policy is aligned with the

principles proposed by Justice Robert French in his Model Code. Together, these University policies set out the provisions under which all staff and students are supported in their engagement with critical enquiry, scholarly endeavour and public discourse without fear of favour.

The University also plays a global convening role in promoting the importance of academic freedom. For example, in February 2020, the University, together with the University of Chicago and Kings College London, hosted an international Freedom of Expression roundtable to share ideas and identify practical ways in which universities and colleges can engage with, promote and protect the principles of open inquiry and freedom of expression. The discussion brought together university leaders from Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States, New Zealand and Canada, and included sessions on building cultures of free expression and open inquiry, student views of freedom of expression and the influence of globalisation on freedom of expression.

**4. Does your university offer any guidance to staff teaching China-based students currently studying remotely online during Covid-19? What steps are taken to mitigate security risks?**

All University of Melbourne employees must comply with University policies, including our [Appropriate Workplace Behaviour Policy](#) and the Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech policies, and all Australian Government legislation and policies at all times.

The University educates staff and students about cybersecurity fundamentals and [appropriate behaviour on social media](#) through a mix of online mandatory training, web-based awareness campaign material, printed collateral and at events such as Orientation week, Stay Smart Online Week and internal professional development sessions.

University of Melbourne academic staff are supported through their individual teaching faculties as well as Chancellery in regard to the operating environments for many students studying offshore online. Teaching staff are cognisant that students may be located in overseas jurisdictions where local laws or regulations may restrict, or in some cases prohibit, the use of a Virtual Private Network (VPN) or access to University systems – including research data. Students are advised to check the applicable regulations for their location and if they are unable to proceed with elements of their subjects or research, to contact the University where practical alternative access can be discussed. Where students are unable to undertake subjects as a result of restricted access to essential resources or technology, the University provides support to find alternative options, including ensuring that the subject can be undertaken at a time when the student is able to study in Melbourne.

**5. Have you discussed with Hong Kong students and staff the implications of the extraterritorial reach of Hong Kong's new National Security Law and the potential impact it could have on students studying in Australia? How?**

There have not been specific discussions with students and staff from Hong Kong concerning the National Security Law, however several central committees with risk responsibilities are working on risk evaluation and management for all university activities. This includes a review of the University's activities in relation to Hong Kong, in order to support consistent, principles-based decision-making in respect of our Hong Kong related engagements.

**6. Is 'doxing' (the publication of personal information on the internet) and 'reporting on' students or staff to foreign embassies and consulates a violation of your student code and grounds for disciplinary action? How many students have faced disciplinary action for doxing? How many students have faced disciplinary action for 'reporting on' students or staff to foreign embassies?**

While the University does not have a specific policy on doxing, it is illegal under Australian law under section 474.17 of the Commonwealth Criminal Code. Doxing can be addressed as a breach under the University's Privacy Policy, the Student Conduct Policy and/or Appropriate Workplace Behaviour Policy. Where student conduct is also a criminal offence, the University's Safer Community Program supports students in raising allegations with Victoria Police.

The University also provides advice about online harassment and bullying in our staff social media guidelines which graduate research students, including those from and based in China during Covid-19, can

access. These guidelines provide advice on: how to delete, mute, block and report on social media; on how to seek assistance from authorities in serious cases of online abuse; advice around temporary deactivation of social media accounts and links to counselling and other assistance services at the University advising that these are confidential.

**7. Has your university leadership ever publicly raised the issue of censorship pressures on Chinese-speaking students and academics? Has your university leadership ever privately raised the issue of censorship pressures with staff and students on Chinese-speaking students and academics?**

Freedom of speech is a fundamental principle of our University. The University's Freedom of Speech policy promotes critical and free enquiry, informed intellectual discourse and public debate within the University and in the wider society. The policy safeguards students, staff and invited visitors on our campuses and ensures freedom of speech continues to flourish. Section 4 of the policy articulates that "*The University supports the exercise of lawful freedom of speech and recognises that the advancement of knowledge and learning requires: (a) University autonomy, academic freedom and freedom of speech as core values of the University; (b) An environment in which debate and criticism are a fundamental part of university life; and (c) A commitment to orthodoxies being challenged and ideas subject to debate and criticism.*"

The consideration and protection of academic freedom in our international engagements continues to be undertaken through central University committees. Through established forums, the University is firmly committed to developing institutional responses and appropriate policies that protect and promote academic freedom within the context of threats, risk and institutional capability. The University reviews and updates policies and practical measures needed to protect academic freedom in a changing environment.

**8. Your university has an account on WeChat. Do you track whether your content or responses to your content have been censored, removed or restricted in distribution?**

To the University's knowledge, neither our account nor its content has been censored.

**9. What support services does your university provide to Chinese-speaking students? What kind of orientation do students receive in regard to issues of academic freedom in Australia?**

The University has developed wide-ranging services for international students in-person and accessed remotely. These include developing academic skills, English language development, peer mentoring programs, counselling and psychological services as well as services focused on careers and employability. Commencing undergraduate students undertake First-Year Discovery subjects that assist students to explore their discipline and build skills that will help them succeed at University. In 2021, the University introduced a module titled *Freedom of speech in education and research* that will be completed by all commencing undergraduate students from 2022 onwards. The module aims to help new students to understand the intellectual environment of the University of Melbourne – where students are encouraged to engage with many different viewpoints, and to express their own.

As outlined in question 3, the University's [Student Charter](#) embodies the key principles protecting free speech and academic freedom of expression that underpin the relationship between students and the University.

Yours sincerely,



**Professor Duncan Maskell**  
**Vice-Chancellor**

cc: Professor Michael Wesley, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International), University of Melbourne



20 April 2021

**Ms Elaine Pearson**  
Australia Director  
Human Rights Watch  
PO Box 4278  
Sydney NSW 2001

By email: [REDACTED]

Dear Ms Pearson

**Re: Research on Chinese Government Threats to Academic Freedom**

Thank you for your letter dated 1 April 2020 and for the opportunity to provide some background for your upcoming report.

UNSW takes the issue of the safety and security of our students and staff extremely seriously. We want to ensure that all of our students enjoy a positive, safe and rewarding learning experience at our university.

UNSW is committed to upholding the highest levels of academic freedom and freedom of speech. We recently released an updated freedom of expression policy for consultation which has now been approved by our Academic Board and Council. A central tenet of that policy is that students and staff should be free to express their opinions on campus in accordance with the law of Australia, and express their disagreement respectfully through debate. We regard any threats to students for expressing an opinion as unacceptable.

We have a framework in place governing student behaviour on our campuses and an established complaints mechanisms to deal with any incidents between students. Components of this framework include the UNSW Student Code of Conduct, a central Conduct & Integrity Office and a Complaints Management System for managing, tracking and responding to formal complaints.

Section 4 of UNSW's Student Code of Conduct states that the principles of open and respectful discussion are key to fostering and preserving a safe and fair learning environment and a positive student experience at UNSW.

These principles include:

- UNSW encourages critical thought and open discussion, including of controversial ideas
- UNSW is a dynamic community where ideas can change, and there is a commitment to creating a safe space for exploring and debating changing perspectives
- Students should demonstrate respectful disagreement or feedback, expecting that they may be asked to explain or give evidence for their perspective or claims
- Students are committed to engaging in respectful and inclusive conversations and debates; turn-taking; and appreciation
- Students accept differences amongst each other – both seen and unseen
- Students must permit others to express disagreement without fear of reprisal.



Students who breach the Student Code of Conduct are subject to disciplinary action according to a specified Student Misconduct Procedure (section 7.1) and complaints about the University's obligations under the Student Code are handled under the UNSW Student Complaint Procedure (section 7.3).

Importantly, UNSW's Complaints Management System includes a web-based portal which is easily accessible from every UNSW corporate webpage. All students are advised that they can submit complaints **anonymously** through this portal.

The UNSW Student Code and our Complaints Management System do not distinguish between students based on ethnicity, race, gender or religion. Similarly, support services and orientation services also do not distinguish on these grounds.

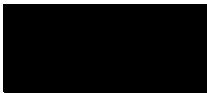
The University is not able to provide details of the complaints currently lodged in our Complaints Management System but can advise that we do not currently have any complaints registered based on the type of conduct described in your letter. Complaints raised following the Hong Kong article published on Twitter in August 2020 were of a general nature relating to UNSW's response to the incident and were not directed towards individual students. I have already made a public statement on UNSW's handling of that matter and have taken steps to ensure that such an incident will not happen again.

In relation to collaboration with international partners, UNSW has a consistent approach in assessing all research and development collaborations and protecting new IP and new technologies. We undertake external due diligence and comply with all relevant regulations, including defence export controls prior to commencing any project with an overseas partner. UNSW also works closely with relevant federal government agencies on sensitive matters.

We recently contributed to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security's inquiry into national security risks affecting the higher education and research sector. Our submission to that inquiry is attached. I have also attached a document outlining UNSW's framework to counter foreign interference for your information.

I look forward to receiving a copy of your report when finalised.

Yours sincerely,



**Professor Ian Jacobs**  
President and Vice-Chancellor  
UNSW Sydney



17 December 2020

Committee Secretary  
Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Chair

**Re: Inquiry into national security risks affecting the Australian higher education and research sector**

**Key points:**

- UNSW acknowledges the threat of foreign interference and works closely with a range of government agencies to address these issues.
- Notwithstanding these concerns, international engagement by Australian universities remains critical to the national interest. International education serves a vital soft power diplomacy purpose and is a significant export industry for the nation, while international research collaboration has allowed Australian researchers to address critical issues such as COVID-19, or underpin new, job-creating, industries.
- Following the release of the University Foreign Interference Guidelines (UFIG), UNSW has been updating our risk management policies and due diligence practices. This work is ongoing, and we seek government's input into these policies and practices.
- Before entering into new arrangements with international partners, we have engaged extensively with relevant government agencies as part of a broader due diligence process.

**Recommendations:**

1. That the Committee recognise the importance of international collaboration to advancing Australia's national interests, and that this needs to be considered when designing any regulation or policies to mitigate against foreign interference.
2. Any measures relating to foreign interference at Australian universities are most likely to be successful where they are developed in partnership between government and universities, rather than imposed on universities. Any new measures should not duplicate existing measures already in place.
3. Clear advice should be provided to universities by government agencies to assist with the evaluation of risk in any collaboration, while clear roles and responsibilities should be established between universities and government.

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UNSW Sydney welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this important inquiry into the national security risks affecting the higher education and research sector.

UNSW is proud of our standing as a world class university. We have educated hundreds of thousands of Australians, while our international education offering serves as an important bridge between Australia and the world. UNSW has also established a deep, trust-based relationship with the Department of Defence and the Australian Defence Force (ADF) for more than fifty years through the education of several generations of ADF leaders. Our contributions to both professional military education and defence-related research continue to be critical enablers of the ADF's readiness to defend Australia's sovereign interests.

UNSW's research output, meanwhile, continues to inform and contribute to Australia's response to important challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, while also offering the opportunity to develop new, job-creating industries. However, we also acknowledge the legitimate concerns of foreign interference that exist in the current rapidly changing geopolitical environment. UNSW is committed to continually improving our policies and processes to address these threats, and we look forward to working with the Committee on this issue.

### **Understanding the current operating environment**

UNSW recognises that foreign interference is a significant threat to Australia's national interests. In doing so, we have had the benefit of regular meetings with ASIO and we note ASIO's assessment that almost every sector of Australian society, including government, the intelligence community and academia, are potential targets of foreign interference. In particular, ASIO has stated that foreign governments seek information about leading research and technology.<sup>1</sup>

The university sector has been working proactively with government to respond to threats specific to the sector through the University Foreign Interference Taskforce (UFIT) established by Minister Tehan in 2019. The University Foreign Interference Guidelines (UFIG) developed by the Taskforce complement existing safeguards such as the Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme (FITS) and Defence Export Controls regimes to ensure that university operations are consistent with Australia's broader national security framework.

UNSW currently works closely with the Australian Government and its security agencies to actively identify and counter threats to national security, both collectively through the UFIT and other collaborative processes, and individually through briefings and issue specific engagement. We are committed to continuing this close and productive engagement.

### **International engagement and the national interest**

As a public institution, UNSW's over-riding purpose has always been a deep commitment to Australia's national interest. This includes providing high quality tertiary education to Australian students and undertaking research which underpins new technology and new industries, and which tackles domestic and global challenges.

Universities have a crucial role to play in advancing Australia's national interests. This is especially the case in critical areas such as defence and security where the government, universities and industry need to collaborate in order to accelerate our

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Government 2020, ASIO Annual Report 2019-20, Canberra 2020, available online at <https://www.asio.gov.au/asio-report-parliament.html>



sovereign capability and to sustain Australia's strategic and competitive advantage in the Indo-Pacific region.

Working in the national interest also means supporting Australia's soft power foreign policy objectives. The continuing importance of Australia's soft power diplomacy is reiterated in the 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper which notes that "our commitment to education, training and research exchanges will remain central to Australia's soft power".<sup>2</sup> UNSW's international engagement has always been consistent with, and in furtherance of, Australia's foreign policy objectives.

UNSW's support for Australia's international engagement agenda stretches back to the original Colombo Plan in 1952 when UNSW was the first Australian university to welcome international students. From the Colombo Plan to contributing to DFAT's Global Alumni Engagement Policy and accompanying federal ministers to countries across the world to advance Australia's trade agenda, UNSW's international engagement has been consistent with government policy over seven decades. The Foreign Policy White Paper further notes that partnerships and soft power diplomacy, such as science diplomacy and our joint research initiatives with China and India, strengthen bilateral relationships.<sup>3</sup> UNSW has followed the government's lead and actively supported the government's objective, outlined in the Foreign Policy White Paper, to strengthen Australia's Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with China for the benefit of both nations. Similarly, our efforts in India have actively contributed to the Australian Government's India Economic Strategy where we have collaborated with a range of agencies.

### **Consultation with the Australian Government on new initiatives**

UNSW has a long history of working cooperatively and productively with Australia's security agencies, including in the assessment of proposed new engagements with international partners.

For example, before entering into a \$100 million research partnership with the Qingdao International Academician Park (QIAP) in 2019, UNSW liaised closely with ASIO, DFAT, DESE and the Department of Home Affairs to explore national interest concerns about the focus and nature of the proposed partnership. We took advice from Minister Tehan and welcomed his counsel around conducting best practice due diligence. Through that process, we went to great lengths to ensure that the joint venture aligned with the UFIG and with Australia's national interest.

We undertook extensive third-party due diligence on our partners to explore and mitigate risks. In assessing the joint venture against criteria in the UFIG we were grateful for the assistance of representatives from ASIO, DFAT, DESE and the Department of Home Affairs. We also ensured that the proposed areas of research the partnership would cover included areas such as biomedical engineering and devices, renewable energy, and advanced manufacturing and did not include fields of research in the area of Defence, whilst also ensuring that the partnership fully complied with Defence Trade Controls.

In all of our dealings with ASIO, DFAT, Home Affairs and DESE, we were encouraged by the support expressed for our approach to exploring this opportunity and reassured by the input and advice we received. UNSW will continue that dialogue with government

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<sup>2</sup> The Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade), 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper, Canberra, November 2017, available online at <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/2017-foreign-policy-white-paper.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> The Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade), 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper, Canberra, November 2017

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as the venture proceeds and will follow this engagement approach before entering other similar agreements. UNSW will also continue to undertake our own ongoing assessments to ensure that this partnership, and other international engagements, continue to meet our objectives.

Another example of a major overseas agreement was the signing of a memorandum of understanding with the Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology's Torch High Industry Development Centre in 2016 (the TORCH partnership). UNSW consulted with the office of then Prime Minister Turnbull, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and DFAT. The signing ceremony in Beijing was attended by Prime Minister Turnbull, and we ensured that we had full Australian Government support before entering into this partnership. We have taken extensive steps to ensure that the arrangements with business and academic partners in the TORCH partnership comply with regulations and are in the national interest.

UNSW has been proactive in seeking advice from government whenever we have recognised the potential for a research collaboration to have a dual-use military application. During 2020, UNSW ceased an activity that we had proactively brought forward to Defence Export Controls after their review raised concerns.

### **The importance of international research collaboration**

With research undertakings, international collaboration is critical, allowing our academics and researchers to further develop their expertise through collaboration, and in some cases, commercialise their research to Australia's gain. University-led research is not only beneficial for the national economy - A 2018 London Economics study commissioned by the Group of Eight (Go8) found that every dollar invested in university research at a Go8 university such as UNSW returned \$10 to the economy<sup>4</sup> - it is critical to tackle pressing global challenges.

International collaboration is critical to university research, as ideas are exchanged and further developed. Many of the outstanding outputs arising from Australian university research have been possible because of knowledge gained from overseas partners. Advances in the development of solar photovoltaic cells at UNSW and world-leading research on HIV and Hepatitis C conducted by the Kirby Institute would not have been possible without the input of international partners.

International collaboration around COVID-19 has been critical to the work UNSW researchers continue to do to understand the disease and contribute to the development of a global solution.

UNSW is of course well aware that there are some areas where collaborative research partnerships should be encouraged, for example to tackle complex global challenges in areas such as climate, agriculture, medicine. We also understand there are other fields where all parties should be more cautious, such as defence or security related research that could potentially bring competitive military advantage to either party.

### **Engaging with government to manage national security risks**

With the rapidly changing nature of geopolitical relationships, it is now critical that we appropriately complement the value to Australia of our international engagement with appropriate safeguards against foreign interference.

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<sup>4</sup> London Economics, The Economic Impact of Group of Eight Universities (2018), available online at [https://www.go8.edu.au/Go8\\_London-Economics-Report.pdf](https://www.go8.edu.au/Go8_London-Economics-Report.pdf)



UNSW liaises with government agencies including ASIO, Department of Defence, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE), the National Counter Foreign Interference Division at the Department of Home Affairs and Austrade as well as directly with ministers to ensure that we act consistently with the national interest.

UNSW also conducts rigorous assessments as required by the Australian Government's Defence Export Controls framework. This includes commissioning external commercial and risk reports for overseas funders and obtaining approval from the Commonwealth Department of Defence. In addition, UNSW is undergoing accreditation under the Defence Industry Security Program for Defence-funded research activities.

UNSW has worked closely and constructively with the UFIT. We were pleased to actively contribute to the development of the UFIG with representatives from UNSW involved in three of the four working groups which developed the guidelines.

#### **UNSW's UFIG compliance work program**

Following the release of the UFIG and in recognition of the heightened security environment, UNSW is taking steps to update our risk management policies and strengthen our due diligence processes.

UNSW has established a new Division of Assurance and Planning, headed by Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor George Williams AO. We have also established a working party with senior representatives from across the university to ensure UNSW's policies, procedures and practices integrate foreign interference exposure considerations and adopt best practice responses. This includes a review of UNSW's key policies and practices including, but not limited to, procurement, third-party engagements, gifts and sponsorships, recruitment and cyber security framework. Strengthening our policies and procedures following the review will be one of UNSW's key priorities for 2021. Once our suite of UFIG controls are established we will also introduce regular internal audits.

We are in the process of developing a government liaison strategy to assist in sharing information with government agencies such as ASIO, DFAT, Defence Security & Vetting Service and the Department Home Affairs. While UNSW does meet with Australian government agencies such as DFAT, Home Affairs and ASIO and we have been reassured that UNSW is doing well, we are nonetheless always looking for ways to further strengthen our systems and processes. To this end, we would appreciate more information sharing and more targeted advice from ASIO regarding the thresholds for when issues need to be discussed and at what stage of the timeline of consultation with Australia's security apparatus is required.

The UNSW UFIG working party's comprehensive work schedule indicates that even though we still have some work to do to ensure that our systems and policies are as robust as possible to counter all potential security risks, we are firmly committed to the task.

#### **The need for continued collaboration**

UNSW understands that we are operating in a rapidly changing geopolitical environment and that greater scrutiny of universities' activities is necessary and to be expected. However, the optimal procedure to address Australia's security concerns is through a genuinely collaborative exercise, whereby policy, regulatory and legislative change are well-considered and evidence based. The UFIT model is a good example of government and universities working closely together on these issues. To be effective, any new regulations should also be developed in partnership with universities, underpinned by a

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collaborative approach whereby each party understands what is required, and what challenges the other faces.

**Conclusion**

UNSW welcomes this inquiry as an opportunity to further seek government's views as to how we can best address the risks inherent in the current strategic operating environment.

I welcome the opportunity to work with Committee members on this issue. If you wish to discuss any issue contained in this submission, please do not hesitate to contact our Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Assurance), Professor George Williams at [REDACTED] or our Head of Government Relations, Mr Robin Schuck, on [REDACTED] or at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

Ian Jacobs  
President and Vice-Chancellor  
UNSW Sydney



UNSW  
SYDNEY

## Framework to counter foreign interference

UNSW is proud of our global focus, and the benefits it brings to Australia.

The education we provide to students from overseas, our research partnerships and our global engagement all serve to grow the Australian economy and create jobs, while supporting Australia's foreign policy goals through soft diplomacy. Many of Australia's outstanding scientific and research advances would not have been possible without international collaboration. However, we also understand that with the rapidly changing geopolitical environment, UNSW needs to be vigilant against the growing threat of foreign interference.

UNSW is committed to acting consistently with the national interest at all times. Previously, we have undertaken risk assessments and consulted extensively with a range of national security agencies, including the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Department of Home Affairs, Austrade, Department of Defence, ASIO, and the Department of Education to seek their input as part of our due diligence before engaging with overseas partners. While we will continue to work with and seek the advice of these agencies, we're always looking to enhance our processes to align with the requirements of the geopolitical environment.

**To protect UNSW from foreign interference, and to strengthen our protections against national security risks, we have developed a new *Framework to Counter Foreign Interference*.**

**In summary this involves 8 key steps:**

- 1. Mandatory disclosures:** Annual and real-time mandatory disclosure will be required by all staff, relating to any possible conflict(s) of interest and/ or foreign affiliations. This process is underway.
- 2. Central registers:** Central registers to collate, assess and report conflicts of interest and foreign affiliations (such as under the foreign influence transparency scheme).
- 3. External risk assessment:** An independent and external review of UNSW staff to assess any foreign interference risk(s) arising from membership of talent recruitment programs.
- 4. Policy review:** Review and revision of key UNSW policies, such as those relating to conflicts of interest, to ensure they are fit for purpose, including compliance with government requirements and to provide high levels of internal transparency and accountability.
- 5. Advisory committee:** A foreign interference advisory committee will be established to provide a university wide point of response and coordination on all matters relating to foreign interference.
- 6. Boosting in-house capability:** A designated *Special Advisor (International Engagement and Compliance)* is being appointed to advise on national security matters, and to liaise with national defence and security agencies. They will be mandated to provide advice on foreign interference risks, to respond to emerging threats and build further responsiveness to the UFIT guidelines.
- 7. Ongoing engagement with national security agencies:** Regular engagement with national security agencies to discuss any proposed or ongoing international engagement, to receive advice relating to any risks, and to seek advice on how to address any risks that arise.
- 8. Further review and consultation:** UNSW is eager to seek feedback and input from a range of relevant stakeholders. To provide feedback or discuss any issue in this document, you are invited to contact our Head of Government Relations, Mr Robin Schuck at [REDACTED].



27 April 2021

Ms Elaine Pearson  
Australia Director  
Human Rights Watch  
PO Box 2278  
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Ms Pearson

I write in response to your correspondence seeking information from the University on a number of questions relating to Chinese Government threats to academic freedom. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide this information.

First, I would like to assure you that it would be unacceptable for any organisation or government to influence or threaten our students, staff, or the University.

We are cognisant of these concerns within our community and take these matters very seriously. We are committed to ensuring that our working and teaching environment, our partnerships and our engagements align with Australia's values, legal system and are in the national interest.


In recent years, we have undertaken a continuous program of work to strengthen our policies and processes in this area. We have established dedicated working groups to implement programs that educate and support our community and we proactively engage with government and the sector to understand the threat and develop best practice guidelines to mitigate it.

However, I understand there are staff and students who feel that more could be done. If there is any way you could provide de-identified information – protecting the privacy and security of those that have participated in your research – it could help us to better understand and address the risks.

I have provided details of groups at UQ that can provide confidential support and reporting mechanisms for our staff or students. And, if you feel it appropriate, I would be grateful if you could share these with the people from UQ you have spoken to.

If after reviewing the information provided you have any questions, or would like to discuss anything further, please get back in touch.

Yours sincerely



Professor Deborah Terry AO  
Vice-Chancellor and President

D21/77639-6

Response to Human Rights Watch (HRW)  
research on Chinese Government threats  
to academic freedom

**Representing the University**  
Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Deborah Terry AO

27 April 2021

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# Response to HRW research on Chinese Government threats to academic freedom

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**1. Does your university actively track incidents of Chinese government harassment, surveillance, or threats on campuses? If it does, how many incidents have been reported in each calendar year for the past three years?**

Our policies clearly set out our behavioural expectations for our staff and students. These are outlined in our [Student Integrity and Misconduct](#) policy, [Student Charter](#) and [Code of Conduct](#) policy.

In the past three years, we have not had any formal complaints from students or staff relating to the types of incidents referenced in the question.

Should such incidents occur, there are number of ways for staff and students to report them via our [complaints management systems](#). Reported incidents would then be recorded and the appropriate action taken in consultation with the complainant.

**2. What level of discussion have you had, if any, with your Chinese and Hong Kong students regarding how they can confidentially and anonymously report harassment or intimidation?**

UQ engages with international student leaders and associations across a number of topics. These engagements aim to build greater collaboration, provide support and guidance and co-design initiatives that build greater understanding and connections.

An example of this was following the student protest in July 2019, when our student support teams met regularly with impacted student groups to listen to their concerns and put in place protocols to ensure they felt supported and safe.

UQ actively operates its [Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment Policy](#), and offers a number of student support options to respond effectively to a broad range of issues. In addition, UQ operates a [Discrimination and Harassment Contact Officers](#) network for its community.

Anonymous complaints and reports of harassment are possible through a number of methods and information on reporting options are outlined in our [complaints management procedures](#).

Complaints and grievances can also be accepted as third party reports from any member of the UQ community.

- Support is offered, irrespective of whether a full report is made, and is accessible through Student Services.
- We advise all new students of harassment policies and support via orientation sessions and online modules. A [UQ Essentials Module](#) is promoted and strongly recommended.

**3. What measures, if any, does your institution take to specifically protect the academic freedom of students from mainland China and Hong Kong studying in Australia?**

UQ is committed to upholding freedom of speech and our [model code for the protection of freedom of speech and academic freedom was approved in February 2020](#), which gives confidence to our students to explore and debate a range of issues. There are numerous and wide-ranging examples of this taking place. We are one of nine universities recognised by the Walker Review for adopting the principles articulated in the model code put forward by the Honourable Robert French.

# Response to HRW research on Chinese Government threats to academic freedom

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If students advise they have concerns regarding their academic freedom we have culturally safe support services that will respond.

All Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students at UQ are provided with orientation and induction sessions, outlining their rights and responsibilities in line with the [UQ HDR Charter](#), including rights and protections of ethical conduct and research integrity. Policies governing the candidature, supervision and assessment of HDR students also include provisions that ensure students receive adequate support and advice. The HDR Examination policy specifically requires principles of academic freedom when the final thesis is provided and published.

#### **4. Does your university offer any guidance to staff teaching China-based students currently studying remotely online during Covid-19? What steps are taken to mitigate security risks?**

UQ has advised its students, including those studying remotely, to use proxy names, and turn off video if needed for privacy on Zoom. This information can be found [here](#).

Teaching staff are provided with [guidance on secure online teaching](#), as well as other [security considerations](#).

UQ currently supports a number of HDR students located in China who are unable to return to Australia. Supervisors are provided with advice and tools to support and help these students maintain progress, including options for access to software and data storage. UQ is also in regular contact with these students to provide support and advice.

#### **5. Have you discussed with Hong Kong students and staff the implications of the extraterritorial reach of Hong Kong's new National Security Law and the potential impact it could have on students studying in Australia? How?**

The University does not provide direct advice to international students about immigration or visa conditions. If students have concerns about these matters, we provide support and referral to the appropriate agencies and services.

#### **6. Is 'doxing' (the publication of personal information on the internet) and 'reporting on' students or staff to foreign embassies and consulates, a violation of your student code and grounds for disciplinary action? How many students have faced disciplinary action for doxing? How many students have faced disciplinary action for 'reporting on' students or staff to foreign embassies?**

Under [UQ's Student Integrity and Misconduct Policy](#), 'general misconduct' includes conduct where a student is harassing, vilifying, bullying, abusing, threatening, assaulting or endangering staff, students or other members of the University's community directly or by other means of communication.

If UQ received a complaint about staff or students 'doxing' or 'reporting on' staff or students to foreign embassies, this could potentially constitute 'general misconduct' under our policy.

UQ's records for the past 12 months indicate the University received four complaints making allegations about UQ students in relation to conduct broadly in the nature of 'doxing'. While disciplinary processes and outcomes are confidential, we can indicate that UQ did take action in respect to three complaints. The other complaint is still being investigated. The parties involved are from diverse countries of origin.

# Response to HRW research on Chinese Government threats to academic freedom

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UQ's records from the past 12 months indicate that no formal complaints in relation to reporting on students and staff to foreign embassies were made.

**7. Has your university leadership ever publicly raised the issue of censorship pressures on Chinese-speaking students and academics? Has your university leadership ever privately raised the issue of censorship pressures with staff and students on Chinese-speaking students and academics?**

UQ takes the risk of foreign interference and impediments to freedom of speech seriously.

As part of our commitment to upholding freedom of speech at UQ, Senate approved the [UQ Model Code for the Protection of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom](#) on 25 February 2020. This followed discussions at the Academic Board meeting in December 2018 and Academic Board input into the draft principles at the December 2019 meeting.

Over the past two years the University has also made several public statements that students should not be penalised for expressing their personal or political views.

In addition, [our 2019 Confucius Institute \(CI\) agreement](#) protects UQ's institutional autonomy and academic freedom, and stipulates all personnel involved in activities of UQ CI (including Chinese citizens) are subject to Australian laws and UQ's policies and procedures.

**8. Your university has an account on WeChat. Do you track whether your content or responses to your content have been censored, removed, or restricted in distribution?**

The University has managed its WeChat account since it was first established in late 2015. The account is focussed on providing information on study opportunities, student support and other key messages in relation to life at UQ. The UQ content published on this account is overseen by UQ staff in Australia with support from a locally appointed representative in China. Comments on posts in WeChat are not visible to the public. The University does not modify comments posted by community members on WeChat.

**9. What support services does your university provide to Chinese-speaking students? What kind of orientation do students receive in regard to issues of academic freedom in Australia?**

UQ's [support services](#) are available to all students and can be accessed in a number of ways including virtual and in person. Our teams are multilingual, including Mandarin.

Chinese students attend a number of compulsory and non-compulsory orientation sessions that cover information on University policies and what to do if experiencing bullying / harassment or feeling that their academic freedom or freedom of expression are restricted. This information is provided in English and Mandarin.

The University's English as an Additional Language and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Working Party is developing initiatives to improve the visibility of existing resources. We are partnering with student clubs and societies on some of this work. UQ also provides courses in academic research and writing skills for international students, via the edX.org platform and UQ's Edge platform.

# Response to HRW research on Chinese Government threats to academic freedom

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## **10. Was a May 2020 interview with the UQ Chancellor Peter Varghese in The Guardian the first public comment by the university in regards to the Chinese Consul General Xu Jie's praise of pro-Chinese Communist Party counter-protesters at a UQ protest in August 2019**

In October 2019, the then Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Høj commented in an interview recorded in September 2019 by the [ABC Four Corners program](#).

*Program extract from Professor Peter Høj: I'm not in the issue of debating with diplomats, and, but I made it very clear that, we don't endorse any violent acts in a peaceful demonstrate, and through that you can conclude that I would disagree with somebody who would endorse that type of behaviour.*

## **11. As a result of the university's investigation into the August 2019 protests on campus, were any students found to violate the UQ code of conduct? Were any students disciplined over this? Will UQ publicly release the findings of any such investigation?**

UQ's Integrity and Investigations Unit (IIU), together with the Academic Registrar, conducted a comprehensive investigation into the July 2019 protest. The investigation occurred between 26 July 2019 and 27 September 2019. Steps taken by the University included:

- reviewing social media publications around the protest;
- reviewing security reports;
- reviewing CCTV and video footage of the incident;
- reaching out to potential witnesses to invite them to come forward and provide information to the IIU;
- conducting witness interviews (with UQ students, staff and contractors);
- meeting with various student groups to talk about ways that the University could support both the Hong Kong and mainland Chinese students; and
- preparing a comprehensive report of the University's investigation.

The IIU made 29 requests to 10 different students to provide statements and other evidence about the protest, but very few of these requests were fulfilled. Only three UQ students came forward to the IIU to provide a statement about the incident.

Also, while the IIU had obtained photo, video and CCTV footage of the incident, there was no way of decisively cross-checking this footage against UQ's records of the roughly 55,000 students who attend UQ to determine whether any of the persons identified in the footage were UQ students.

In the end, UQ's investigation did not uncover sufficient information to indicate that any UQ students had engaged in inappropriate conduct. This meant that there was no basis under UQ's policies and procedures for UQ to take further disciplinary action in relation to what occurred.

UQ has previously made public comment about the outcome of its investigation, including providing a copy of the investigation report to the recent Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security Inquiry into national security risks affecting the Australian higher education and research sector.

The University also separately investigated a number of reported incidents of vandalism of protest display walls on campus subsequent to the July 2019 protests. Nine of these reports resulted in UQ students being identified and actions being taken by the University.



## Information for staff and students on confidential support and reporting mechanisms

The University's [complaints management procedures](#) provides a number of options for staff and students to anonymously report misconduct, grievances, privacy, integrity, discrimination and harassments concerns and complaints.

In addition for students, our [Student Life](#) teams provides a range of confidential services and support via email, phone, chat and online appointments.

Our staff can also confidentially contact our HR teams via [askhr@uq.edu.au](mailto:askhr@uq.edu.au) / + 61 (07) 3365 2623, and [Employee Assistance Program](#) (EAP) on 1300 360 364.

8 April 2021

Elaine Pearson  
Australia Director  
Human Rights Watch  
PO Box 4278  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Email: [REDACTED]  
cc: [REDACTED]

**Re: Research on Chinese Government Threats to Academic Freedom**

Dear Ms Pearson

Thank you for your letter of 31 March 2021, and your advice regarding a forthcoming report by Human Rights Watch.

With regard to the questions you raise in your letter, I provide the following information on behalf of the University of South Australia (UniSA):

**1. Student safety and wellbeing**

The University provides a range of counselling and support services for students, including specific support for international students, the detail of which can be found at: <https://i.unisa.edu.au/students/student-support-services/wellbeing-at-unisa/>

If students feel threatened or harassed on campus, we have a student complaints process, the detail of which can be found at: <https://i.unisa.edu.au/student-feedback-and-complaints/>

More immediately, UniSA also encourages students to access the SafeZone app (<https://i.unisa.edu.au/staff/facilities/security/safezone/>) should they need immediate assistance from the University's security team.

As you will see through these sites, student complaints and incidents on campus are managed and investigated to ensure appropriate procedural fairness and confidentiality.

**2. Academic Freedom**

The University's statement on academic freedom can be found at: <https://i.unisa.edu.au/policies-and-procedures/statement-on-academic-freedom/>

Information can also be found in our Student Code of Conduct which sets out both the rights and responsibilities of UniSA students: <https://i.unisa.edu.au/policies-and-procedures/codes/students/>

Adrienne Nieuwenhuis  
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CRICOS Provider Number 00121B



### 3. Security

UniSA's framework of controls to reduce risk of Information and Cyber Security breach is informed by the ISO 27001, NIST (National Institute of Standards and Technology) and the ASD Essential 8 Cyber Security frameworks. These controls are continuously reviewed, refined and adjusted in connection with intelligence gained from various organisations (i.e. Auscert, Cert, ASD, ASIO, multiple Cyber Security Communities of Practice and Industry Partners) and through various management, internal and external audits.

The University also provides a range of information to staff and students on cyber risks:  
<https://i.unisa.edu.au/askit/CyberSecurity/>

See also: <https://i.unisa.edu.au/policies-and-procedures/university-policies/corporate/c-22/#p9>  
<https://i.unisa.edu.au/siteassets/askit/ists/it-policies/information-security-policy.pdf> and  
<https://i.unisa.edu.au/siteassets/askit/ists/it-policies/information-security-policy---appendix-a.pdf>

In setting up its online teaching in China during COVID, the University paid particular attention to the security requirements associated with that teaching including provision of our own VPN services rather than using a China-based partner. This is then managed within the University's broader security framework.

### 4. Regulatory responsibility

The University's international activities are framed within its obligations under legislation such as the *Defence Trade Controls Act 2012*, the *Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act 2018*, the *Autonomous Sanctions Act 2011* and *Australia's Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Act 2020*. Staff and research degree students receive training and support regarding our obligations under these Acts, see for example:

<https://www.unisa.edu.au/research/degrees/how-to-apply/un-and-australian-autonomous-sanctions/>  
<https://i.unisa.edu.au/staff/research/biosafety-and-permits/defence-export-controls/>  
<https://i.unisa.edu.au/policies-and-procedures/university-policies/research/res-22/>  
<https://i.unisa.edu.au/policies-and-procedures/university-policies/corporate/c-36/>

As you will note above, the University's website provides a range of resources for students and staff. This is backed up with information sessions during student orientation, including specific orientation sessions for our international students. As a result of COVID, orientation sessions have also been held online. Campus Central, our one stop student support service, is also available on each of our campuses.

I hope the above information is of use in the finalisation of your report.

Yours sincerely



Adrienne Nieuwenhuis  
Director: Office of the Vice Chancellor



**Professor Stephen Garton AM**  
Vice-Chancellor and Principal

21 April 2021

Elaine Pearson  
Australia Director  
Human Rights Watch

Via email: [REDACTED]

Dear Ms Pearson,

Thank you for your letter of 31 March 2021 advising of a pending Human Rights Watch report concerning alleged threats to academic freedom on Australian university campuses.

Please find below our responses to your nine questions.

**1. Does your university actively track incidents of Chinese government harassment, surveillance, or threats on campuses? If it does, how many incidents have been reported in each calendar year for the past three years?**

The University tracks all complaints and all incidents of harassment of, and threats to, students and staff according to specific categories. Instances of alleged bullying and harassment are routinely tracked although there is currently no standard categorisation according to the source of the bullying or harassment. No incidents of harassment or surveillance of students or threats against students by the Chinese Government have been reported in the past three years.

**2. What level of discussion have you had, if any, with your Chinese and Hong Kong students regarding how they can confidentially and anonymously report harassment or intimidation?**

Please see our response to question 3 for an overview of the University's approach to communicating with students and regarding providing them with access to advice and other support services.

Information on the University's complaints process, including how to make complaints or discuss matters confidentially, is provided to all students via the [current students website](#).

We also draw Human Rights Watch's attention to the 'Your Wellbeing', 'Your Safety' and 'Know Your Rights' sections (from page 16) of our [welcome guide](#) provided and made accessible to all commencing international students. We acknowledge that our student welcome guides for domestic and international students currently do not include explicit advice about how students can lodge complaints about bullying, harassment or intimidation and we will review how best to include this information in future editions.

**3. What measures, if any, does your institution take to specifically protect the academic freedom of students from mainland China and Hong Kong studying in Australia?**

The University of Sydney attracts students from some 130 countries and actively seeks to treat all students equally and to provide support services to them consistently.

Targeted advice and other support services are provided to student cohorts based not on their citizenship but, for example, on factors including their domestic or international status, English language proficiency, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage, religious background, gender, socio-economic status, physical and mental health etc.

The University's [Charter of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom](#) includes principles for the protection of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom at the University (see Part 2), including the right to free speech, academic freedom and to protest (within the law and subject to limitations to protect the rights of others). The freedoms apply to all students studying in Australia.

During 2019, the University responded comprehensively to the report of the independent review of freedom of speech and academic freedom in Australian higher education conducted by former High Court Chief Justice, the Hon. Robert French AC. The University's resulting Charter of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom took effect on 1 January 2020. In December 2020, an independent review of Australian universities' adoption of the Model Code recommended by Mr French evaluated the University's approach as exemplary.

The [Student Charter 2020](#) (7(f) and 8(1)(f)) places a joint obligation on all students and the University to protect freedom of speech and academic freedom. Welcome guides for both international and domestic students inform students about their rights, contain links to the Student Charter and list support options available to students.

As part of our response to the French Review, we have reintroduced the following question in our regular survey of student life: *'The University of Sydney is a place where diverse ideas and views can be freely expressed.'* In Semester 1, 2021 70.5 per cent of respondents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with the statement, 21.6 per cent were neutral and 7.9 per cent *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed*. The outcomes of this survey, which is conducted four times a year, will be monitored to inform the University's ongoing strategies to promote a culture of freedom of speech and academic freedom.

The University's leadership meets regularly with our affiliated independent student representative bodies, which represent the interests of all students. These meetings provide valuable opportunities for sharing of concerns and information between the student representative bodies and the University. Students also have elected representatives on the University's Senate and Academic Board. If the University were to receive formal complaints about bullying and harassment from students of any common background, or have concerns about such issues raised by the students' elected representatives, it would take appropriate steps to investigate and provide support to ensure the safety and wellbeing of affected students. Disciplinary action would also be taken as appropriate in accordance with our policies.

**4. Does your university offer any guidance to staff teaching China-based students currently studying remotely online during Covid-19? What steps are taken to mitigate security risks?**

The University has provided and continues to provide extensive assistance to staff - through workshops, webinars and support networks within faculties - in relation to fostering engagement in online learning, negotiating 'HyFlex' teaching, assessment and other challenges transpiring from the need to teach students studying remotely (the majority of students studying remotely are China-based) through its [Teaching @ Sydney](#) portal.

All software used in teaching at the University of Sydney undergoes a risk-based approval process, which includes cyber security, disability and privacy evaluations, as appropriate.

In response to increased security threats, the University has instituted multi-factor authentication for University systems, including for access to enrolment, student records, the learning management system and assessment, and this is currently being rolled out to all staff and students.

**5. Have you discussed with Hong Kong students and staff the implications of the extraterritorial reach of Hong Kong's new National Security Law and the potential impact it could have on students studying in Australia? How?**

No.

**6. Is 'doxing' (the publication of personal information on the internet) and 'reporting on' students or staff to foreign embassies and consulates, a violation of your student code and grounds for disciplinary action? How many students have faced disciplinary action for doxing? How many students have faced disciplinary action for 'reporting on' students or staff to foreign embassies?**

Any breach of privacy is a breach of the University's [Privacy Policy](#) and of NSW privacy legislation and would, if proven, constitute misconduct, if committed by a staff member or student. The University also has an obligation to report suspected serious indictable offences and works closely with the NSW Police over any breach of the law we become aware of. The University has not received any complaints or evidence of doxing by or in connection with students, or reporting on students or staff to foreign embassies but would take action under existing policy if a case came to light.

**7. Has your university leadership ever publicly raised the issue of censorship pressures on Chinese-speaking students and academics? Has your university leadership ever privately raised the issue of censorship pressures with staff and students on Chinese-speaking students and academics?**

The University makes public and internal statements intermittently about the importance of freedom of speech and academic freedom. This occurs periodically when the University receives informal or formal complaints about curriculum content and its delivery. It also occurs when the University determines it is necessary to publicly defend the rights of its staff and students to exercise these freedoms. For example, in August 2020, then Vice-Chancellor Dr Michael Spence released a statement to staff and students that asked them to familiarise themselves with the University's [Charter of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom](#) and reminded them that the University is a place where ideas can always be freely discussed, including controversial or unpopular views. "It is a place where people are free to express themselves and to protest or disagree, so long as they do so respectfully and in accordance with the law," Dr Spence said.

**8. Your university has an account on WeChat. Do you track whether your content or responses to your content have been censored, removed, or restricted in distribution?**

We are not aware of any instances where content has been removed or restricted by Tencent, the owner and developer of WeChat, after being posted on the University's WeChat account.

**9. What support services does your university provide to Chinese-speaking students? What kind of orientation do students receive in regard to issues of academic freedom in Australia?**

Please see our response to questions 2 and 3 above.

The University of Sydney offers an extensive program of academic learning support delivered by our academic enrichment team and the Office of the Student Life – within the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education Portfolio – along with a range of support programs offered by our faculties. These services are available to all students.

Our academic enrichment team offers a wide range of support programs, accessible for all students (domestic and international, UG, PG and HDR) at the University. In the area of academic skills and language support, the University offers academic writing skills workshops, 1:1 consultations, and online self-access resources. Writing workshops cater specifically to non-English speaking background students. Further, peer-facilitated workshops that support students to develop conversational confidence communicating in English are offered specifically to international students in their first and second years of study. In the area of mathematics learning support, the University offers workshops for first-year students, drop-in sessions and online self-access resources.

To ensure that students are able to both access the information they need and navigate the support services available, the University has a team of peer support advisors – students who are fluent in English and Mandarin and trained in referring students to relevant information, University units and support services. They support students via 1:1 Zoom calls, facilitation of WeChat groups, and weekly group workshops.

The University's [Student Charter 2020](#) (see 7 (f) and 8 (1) (f)) clearly articulates the expectation that all students will uphold Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech for themselves and for others, and may expect the University to do the same.

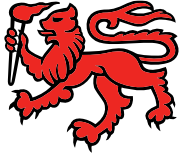
Thank you for the opportunity to have our responses reflected in your report.

Yours sincerely,



Stephen Garton





UNIVERSITYof  
TASMANIA

*Division of Future Students*

Attn: Elaine Pearson  
Australia Director  
Human Rights Watch

*Via email* [REDACTED]

Dear Elaine

**RESEARCH ON CHINESE GOVERNMENT THREATS TO ACADEMIC FREEDOM**

Thank you for your letter of March 31 regarding our approach to academic freedom and freedom of speech on our campuses.

These principles are central to how we operate as a University community. They are at the heart of our values and [our governance as an organisation](#).

You will see our approach is consistent with the principles articulated in the Model Code of the *Report of the Independent Review of the Freedom of Speech in Australian Higher Education Providers*.

Our policy enshrines the importance of academic freedom and freedom of speech to a healthy, pluralistic and democratic society.

This policy also commits us to take active measures to prevent academic freedom or freedom of speech “*being impeded in any way by foreign interference*”.

Among a range of measures to support this principle, we have clear guidance in our staff materials and student induction so that people are aware of their rights and obligations as members of our community.

We have clear [processes to support people](#) should issues arise.

The misuse of personal information would constitute misconduct under the University’s Behaviour Policy and Staff Agreement, along with breaching the UTAS Privacy Statement and state Tasmanian legislation.

Elaine, critically, the safety and wellbeing of our staff and students is our priority first and always. If you are aware of concerns specific to the University of Tasmania, we would appreciate any insight you could provide which would help us address them.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

Rob Wilson  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor - International  
23 April 2021



**Mr Iain Watt**  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International)  
15 Broadway, Ultimo NSW 2007  
T: +61 2 9514 1599

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UTS CRICOS PROVIDER CODE 00099F

21 April 2021

Elaine Pearson  
Australia Director  
Human Rights Watch  
P.O. Box 4278  
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Ms Pearson

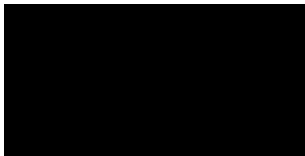
Thank you for your letter of March 31 regarding the Human Rights Watch research project and for the collaborative and consultative approach your organisation is taking. I have taken you up on your kind offer of discussing the project with Sophie McNeill in Perth, and we had an extensive conversation, which I believe was valuable to both our understandings.

In responding to your specific questions, I would like to reiterate the key point I made in my discussion with Sophie that freedom of speech, academic freedom and duty of care to our students and staff are core values of UTS. We are committed to continuing to evolve our approach and respond to new developments that might not have been envisaged when policies and processes were first designed, and are keen to work with your organisation and other like-minded universities on any improvements we can adopt or learn from.

As part of this, we are engaging an external consultant to provide an expert review by fresh eyes of our current approach, to identify and improve our policies and processes where they might not be fit for purpose to look after and protect our students and staff.

Please feel free to contact me at any time if you have questions or concerns.

Kind regards



Mr Iain Watt  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International)

**1. Does your university actively track incidents of Chinese government harassment, surveillance, or threats on campuses? If it does, how many incidents have been reported in each calendar year for the past three years?**

UTS has a variety of systems, policies and processes to protect staff and students from incidents of a bullying or threatening nature, from its [Student Rules](#) and [Staff Code of Conduct](#), to the [Equity, Inclusion and Respect Policy](#), a student complaints portal and the operations of the [Concerning Behaviour Assessment and Intervention Team](#).

The university does not actively monitor the activities of China or of any other foreign government, and investigation of incidents of harassment or threats against individual students or staff by state-based actors would rely upon the students or staff members reporting such activities to the university.

UTS is considering regular tailored training sessions for students from countries whose governments are likely to be monitoring their activities, designed to help those students with their own security in cyberspace.

We've had no reported incidents of this nature in the past three years.

**2. What level of discussion have you had, if any, with your Chinese and Hong Kong students regarding how they can confidentially and anonymously report harassment or intimidation?**

UTS attracts students from more than 140 countries around the world. While we are aware of the potential for tensions between students of various ethnicities and nation-states, we very deliberately do not single out students of a particular ethnicity. Rather, we clearly outline the behaviours expected of our entire student body, including an emphasis on tolerance and respect, provide education on the cultural, legal and political settings we enjoy in Australia (including freedom of speech) and provide opportunities for students to report to us any concerns or issues.

At Orientation sessions, for example, all students, but particularly internationals, are informed of the processes (see Question 1) for confidentially reporting threats or harassment.

We are aware of the specific potential risks in relation to mainland Chinese and Hong Kong students. Many of our International student support staff speak Chinese and are available to talk to students about any concerns they have.

In 2019 senior staff of the university met with members of the UTS Hong Kong Students Group and, at their request, established a poster wall whereby any student could post a message – within strictly enforced rules drawn from the UTS [Equity, Inclusion and Respect Policy](#). Given reports of similar messages being torn down at other Australian universities, UTS established its poster wall in a high-traffic and well-lit area, with extensive CCTV coverage and regular Security attendance, to ensure students could safely post, without fear of physical intimidation or threatening behaviour. This enabled opposing views to be respectfully expressed.

University staff also meet regularly with the UTS Branch of the Chinese Students and Scholars Association and discussions include what is acceptable behaviour for students. We also maintain a working relationship with the Chinese Consulate.



**3. What measures, if any, does your institution take to specifically protect the academic freedom of students from mainland China and Hong Kong studying in Australia?**

As described by [this website](#), academic freedom and freedom of speech are paramount values at UTS.

It lists a number of governance instruments that enshrine this commitment. For example, the UTS [Equity, Inclusion and Respect Policy](#) states that staff and students are free to express and discuss political, religious, cultural and related beliefs and ideas (section 4.2).

We understand that the risk of suppression of academic freedoms of students is likely to be greater for students of disciplines such as history and politics which UTS does not offer to international students. Nonetheless, we are conscious of the potential for abuses to take place and are interested in working collaboratively with other universities and Human Rights Watch on any initiatives in this area.

**4. Does your university offer any guidance to staff teaching China-based students currently studying remotely online during Covid-19? What steps are taken to mitigate security risks?**

UTS' teaching-focused website [lx.uts.edu.au](http://lx.uts.edu.au) includes a section aimed at academic staff on [supporting students studying remotely](#). UTS also provides a guide for teaching staff in [working with technology in China](#). These guides are practical in nature, focusing on how to ensure UTS students can continue to access their learning materials despite limitations due to technical and accessibility issues, and restrictions on internet access in China. No guidance is provided to staff on the content of their courses, as that is a matter of academic freedom.

The Institute for Interactive Media and Learning (IML) at UTS have also run two sessions of a foundation course in teaching for Chinese academics of partner universities who are supporting UTS students who are in China. These academics are working at universities in China, where our students are accommodated. The program, delivered on the Canvas platform and supported with four synchronous webinar sessions, focused on introducing these academics to teaching that reflects the UTS model of learning and teaching. We held no discussion concerning the identification or mitigation of security risks, nor are we aware of any security risks in this process.

There is a self-organising UTS Microsoft Teams site where general questions from staff assisting our students in China can be canvassed.

**5. Have you discussed with Hong Kong students and staff the implications of the extraterritorial reach of Hong Kong's new National Security Law and the potential impact it could have on students studying in Australia? How?**

We would be interested in learning more from other Australian universities and Human Rights Watch about any initiatives in this area.

**6. Is 'doxing' (the publication of personal information on the internet) and 'reporting on' students or staff to foreign embassies and consulates, a violation of your student code and grounds for disciplinary action? How many students have faced disciplinary action for doxing? How many students have faced disciplinary action for 'reporting on' students or staff to foreign embassies?**

We are not aware of any incidents of 'doxing' or 'reporting on' at UTS. Whilst not describing the behaviours using those specific terms, they would be considered a violation of the UTS Student Code of Conduct and potentially attract disciplinary action provided those involved were UTS students and the incident took place either in a UTS context or in relation to a UTS activity. UTS is not an investigative organisation, and therefore does not have capacity or jurisdiction to monitor or prosecute incidents that occur in the wider community unrelated to UTS. A new project on cyberbullying led by our Students Services Unit is currently underway, based on the e-safety Toolkit for Universities, with the Director having attended a webinar by staff of the e-Safety Commissioner. The consultant we are employing will look specifically at whether we should update the student rules to reflect newly emerging forms of online bullying and intimidation.

**7. Has your university leadership ever publicly raised the issue of censorship pressures on Chinese-speaking students and academics? Has your university leadership ever privately raised the issue of censorship pressures with staff and students on Chinese-speaking students and academics?**

While UTS does meet regularly with its staff of Chinese heritage we have not met to specifically discuss censorship pressures. The university regularly communicates within its broader community about UTS's commitment to freedom of speech and academic freedom.

The university has produced a public, online guide to teaching technologies in China: <https://lx.uts.edu.au/resources/technology-guide/>. A specific page of the guide relates to preparing subjects to be taught to students in China or elsewhere overseas: <https://lx.uts.edu.au/collections/teaching-during-covid19/resources/prepare-your-subject-for-students-travel-restrictions/> and includes a section on dealing with 'sensitive content' that specifically calls out the university's commitment to academic freedom and includes the following information

**Sensitive content**

It's important to be aware of the sensitive political climate that surrounds access to online material in China. While it's important to consider the implications for the safety of students and staff accessing and/or posting content viewed as controversial in China, UTS fully supports academic freedom and enquiry and will not compromise its course content. If you think your subject might contain content which directly addresses areas of political, historical or economic dispute, speak to your Associate Dean Teaching & Learning.

**8. Your university has an account on WeChat. Do you track whether your content or responses to your content have been censored, removed, or restricted in distribution?**

UTS closely monitors its WeChat account and can report no evidence of our content ever being censored, removed, or restricted in distribution.

**9. What support services does your university provide to Chinese-speaking students? What kind of orientation do students receive in regard to issues of academic freedom in Australia?**

Chinese-speaking students at UTS have access to an extensive list of support services, in fact all that our domestic and international students have (see Appendix below). However, of particular relevance are:

**International Students Unit**

UTS has an established International Students Unit as part of our support services within which we have a dedicated team working towards continued improvements to supporting our international students. In addition to this, there is a range of services embedded within the university support infrastructure available to all students, and these services are particularly beneficial to students from overseas.

**Club International**

Club International offers a community to practice English and explore other cultures. Club International celebrates diversity, with the aim of providing social and academic support to UTS international and local students through events and referral to HELPS.

**Network Café**

Network Café is a free program that brings new students from overseas together with experienced UTS students (Peer Networkers) to help them settle into Sydney and the UTS community. During main teaching sessions weekly catchups with free coffee are held at an on campus café. Besides making new friends, students practise their English skills, learn more about the Australian culture and find answers to their questions about student life at UTS.

**Essential International Advice**

All international students must attend the Essential International Advice session as part of Orientation, including information access to support services, complying with university and student visa requirements and Australia's legal and cultural system. Students receive all of the important information they need as an international student at UTS, and they meet the student advisers.

**Peer Network**

The Peer Network is a program to welcome new students to UTS, during Orientation and the first two weeks beyond. There are Chinese nationals among the Peer Networkers.

**Outreach**

Outreach is a retention activity. Current students make contact with first year students twice a session to ensure students know about the census date and services including English Language support.

**Free counselling including Chinese speaking counsellor**

**On campus doctors including Chinese speaking GP**

**TalkCampus 24 hour online peer support**

## **Appendix – International student support services at UTS**

### CO-CURRICULAR ENGLISH LANGUAGE SUPPORT

#### **HELPS**

The Higher Education Language & Presentation Support (HELPS) service has extended student access to a wide range of English language support services. Figures and brief explanations follow:

**Drop-in consultations** - 30 minute drop in

**One-to-one consultations** - Bookable 30-minute appointments

**Skills Workshops** - Free workshops on academic writing, speaking and presentation skills

**WriteNow (Writing Clinics)** - Advisors circulate while students work on assignments

**Orientation workshops** - Free workshops on academic writing, speaking and presentation skills

**Intensive courses** - 10-20 hour short courses delivered between sessions

#### **Conversations@UTS**

Free sessions for students to practise effective ways of speaking in social and professional environments. Students join UTS staff and alumni volunteers in relaxed, friendly and supportive conversations.

#### **Talkfest**

Weekly 2 hour group informal language learning through games and quizzes.

HELPS also run:

#### **UPASS**

UTS Peer Assisted Study Sessions (U:PASS) is a free program designed to assist students in subjects that are perceived as difficult or historically have a high failure rate. Trained senior students lead weekly study sessions to improve student learning and development in the targeted subjects. Students with less English language confidence are assisted to develop that confidence through these sessions. Approximately 27,000 contact hours annually

#### **Club International**

Club International offers a community to practice English and explore other cultures. Club International celebrates diversity, with the aim of providing social and academic support to UTS international and local students through events and referral to HELPS.

#### **Network Café**

Network Cafe is a free program that brings new students from overseas together with experienced UTS students (Peer Networkers) to help them settle into Sydney and the UTS community. During main teaching sessions weekly catchups with free coffee are held at an on campus café. Besides making new friends, students practise their English skills, learn more about the Australian culture and find answers to their questions about student life at UTS.

## **Exam conditions**

Students from a non-English speaking background may be eligible to apply for special exam conditions, including extra time and use of a dictionary.

## **ORIENTATION & PROMOTION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE SUPPORT**

### **Essential International Advice**

All international students must attend the Essential International Advice session as part of Orientation. Student receive all of the important information they need as an international student at UTS and meet the student advisors. HELPS are present on stage on the panel to present the English language support services.

### **Library Orientation**

#### Library Tours on Multiple Dates

Students learn about all the services the Library offers and the variety of ways it can help them succeed while at university (available in English & Mandarin).

#### Quick Start Workshop on Multiple Dates

The workshop covers how students can find the required readings for their subjects and how to use the Library to find journal articles and books for their assignments (available in English & Mandarin).

#### Tools for English Language Improvement

This session discusses online English learning systems, academic language resources and online tools such as Grammarly.

### **Study Success**

#### Studying at UTS: Preparing for University

This hands-on session helps students use essential online resources and ask key staff questions

#### Writing in Academic Style

What is academic writing? How can students adapt their writing style for UTS?

#### Giving a Presentation

To help students prepare, present and overcome the challenges of giving a presentation in front of a group.

#### Avoiding Plagiarism

This workshop uses real life scenarios to discuss what plagiarism is, what its consequences are, and how to avoid it. This session introduces UTS referencing styles and online referencing resources.

### **Peer Network**

A program to welcome new students to UTS, during Orientation and the first two weeks beyond. There are Chinese nationals among the Peer Networkers.

### **Outreach**

Outreach is a retention activity. Current students make contact with first year students twice a session to ensure students know about the census date and services including English Language support.

## SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY

### **Whole of University approach**

Orientation focuses on employability

Employability focus within some subjects

Internships and Work Integrated Learning

Comprehensive careers support offering:

**Range** of face to face best practice employer and student services

- Industry-specific Careers Fairs
- International recruiters at Careers Fairs
- Mock interviewing with multi-national employers
- Networking events with employers
- Hackathons and team-based projects

**Range** of UTS-designed and coordinated 24hr online Services

- Highly focused webinars on employment preparation
- Career Assessments
- Artificial Intelligence Resume Reviewing
- Easy on-boarding for industry recruiters
- Curated LinkedIn Training
- Flash mentoring via video chat, messaging

## SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT UTS HOUSING:

- Academic support in-house
- Welfare support in-house
- Access to free events for UTS residents
- Referrals to supporting UTS services such as UTS Counselling, UTS Medical Service and UTS Financial Assistance
- Peer-to-peer support via UTS Housing Resident Networkers (senior UTS residents)
- Complimentary apartment/studio cleaning
- In-house maintenance
- Security across UTS residences
- Shuttle bus service between residences and campus
- Off-campus accommodation search support (also provided to UTS international students and UTS Insearch students not living at UTS Housing)
- Access to UTS Studystays accommodation listing website (also provided to UTS international students and UTS Insearch students not living at UTS Housing)
- Covid-related support:
  - Regular high grade cleaning across all residences in common areas and high touch points
  - 24/7 on-site nurse during community transmission
  - Self-isolation rooms if required
  - Food provided for self-isolating residents
  - Food vouchers handed out valid at UTS food retailers

- Free frozen meals handed out (4,000 meals handed out over 8 weeks)
- Flexible applications for Spring 2020
  - No application fee
  - One month flexible check-in period to assist residents overseas or residents waiting to see if classes stay on-line; no cancellation penalties
  - Applications open to UTS Insearch students transferring to UTS
- Access to the UTS International hardship fund; eligible expenses include:
  - Accommodation cost
  - Self-isolation costs
  - Flights
  - Changes costs
  - Additional IT costs
- Access to the UTS Student Support package:
  - Interest-free loan up to A\$3,000
  - Grants up to A\$1,500 to assist with education-related expenses
  - UTS Housing rental subsidies up to A\$2,000
- NSW Crisis accommodation support:
 

UTS Housing is part of the Study NSW Crisis accommodation support program, providing accommodation to international students who are facing accommodation crisis and who are studying at a NSW educational institution (so non-UTS students accepted under this scheme)

  - Numbers at UTS Housing
    - 250+
  - Reduced rent paid by NSW
  - 3 months contract
  - Support provided to find next accommodation
  - Access to in-house social, academic and welfare support
  - Access to self-isolation if need be + access to food provision
  - Access to complimentary cleaning, maintenance and wi-fi

## WELFARE

- Fortnightly, 120x 10kg free non-perishable food hampers for distribution to international students in need under this new NSW Govt Scheme.
- Free counselling including Chinese speaking counsellor
- On campus doctors including Chinese speaking GP
- Financial advice and [Short-term loans](#) capped at \$3000 to assist with living expenses
- Student Legal Service
- UTS Security
- Multi-faith Chaplaincy
- Disability support
- TalkCampus 24 hour online peer support
- Batyr on campus peer support
- Activate gym
- Emergency accommodation support

Our Ref: 21/24371

Ms Elaine Pearson  
Australia Director  
Human Rights Watch

Dear Ms Pearson

Thank you for your correspondence of 31 March and the opportunity to respond on behalf of The University of Western Australia to your enquiry about foreign interference issues affecting our students from China and Hong Kong.

You reference your anonymous interviewees and share that these include students and/or academics from UWA. The University has not had such concerns raised through our formal complaints processes. Students have a range of options for making a formal complaint and this includes the option of making an anonymous complaint.

The University of Western Australia does take foreign interference issues very seriously, and is engaging with the Federal Government through the University Foreign Interference Taskforce process to strengthen our protection of students and staff. A committee comprising of senior staff and executive is dedicated to the ongoing review and strengthening of policies and measures to safeguard the University's security — and that of students and staff — while preserving the openness of learning and teaching programs and the international collaboration that is necessary in much high-quality research.

As a university with a strong international student body, we are constantly mindful of the diverse political, cultural and religious sensitivities that affect our students and staff.

We provide a wide range of academic, health and wellbeing services to support all our international students, including Chinese-speaking students. We regularly review and update these services and policies to ensure that we are providing the best possible support for our students.

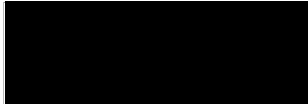
These services include:

- The **International Student Support Office** - provides personalised information and services for current international students on personal, financial and academic issues, questions related to enrolment and student visas. Chinese-speaking staff provide language assistance and support students who are new to the country.
- **Academic Skills Development** - students are encouraged to participate in academic skills development programs to improve their English language, academic writing, oral communication, study techniques, maths, stats and research skills. The program demonstrates ways to meet UWA academic integrity expectations as outlined in codes of Student Conduct, and to exercise their intellectual freedom in a safe, secure learning environment.



- **Transition support** – this includes airport pick-up service, orientation and welcome activities, connecting new students with mentors and helping them to settle into university life. Orientation includes a dedicated international student welcome, in which students are informed of UWA expectations that they act in a kind, respectful manner towards each other, and are introduced to values that underpin the University Charter of Student Rights.
- **UWA Student Guild** - international students are automatically members of this not-for-profit organisation run by UWA students to enhance their student experience. The Guild offers assistance to international students who are facing academic, welfare and financial issues during their time at UWA.

Yours sincerely



**Professor Amit Chakma**  
Vice-Chancellor