

Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities

Questions on Notice



THE UNIVERSITY
of ADELAIDE

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights

Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities

Public Hearing - 12 December 2024

Response to Questions on Notice

1: How many times have Jewish students at the University of Adelaide requested to meet with the University and specifically with the Vice-Chancellor?

The University of Adelaide engages with its students in relation to university, national, and international matters. Before and since 7 October 2023 the University has engaged with its Jewish students. This engagement includes the period during the 1 May 2024 and 29 May 2024 encampment.¹

Since August 2022, the University received one request from Jewish students² to meet with the Vice-Chancellor. The one request was received by the Office of the Vice-Chancellor on 31 August 2022 and did not reach the Vice-Chancellor himself due to this being his last day before commencing annual leave. This request was raised in relation to a complaint made in August 2022 regarding an article in the student-run magazine *On Dit*³. The Office of the Vice-Chancellor confirmed receipt of this email request on the next day, 1 September 2022, and later that day received a follow-up email from the same students. Due to the Vice-Chancellor being on annual leave, an Acting Vice-Chancellor was in place from 1 September 2022 to 18 September 2022. The request to have a meeting was actioned within 5 business days on 7 September 2022 when a letter was sent to the students from the Acting Vice-Chancellor acknowledging the correspondence received and offering an opportunity for the students to meet with senior management. As a result of this correspondence, the students met with University senior leadership represented by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic.

In addition to the correspondence referenced above, a complaint was raised by the same Jewish students who wrote to the Vice-Chancellor on 31 August 2022 through the University's complaints process. Staff involved in the complaints process engaged in meetings with these students. From the date of receipt of the complaint and concurrently while the request to the Office of the Vice-Chancellor to meet was being actioned, these students were provided with counselling and wellbeing support services by the University. The University's support services communicated with these students following their initial correspondence throughout the process.

¹ In May 2024, the University experienced a Gaza Solidarity Encampment. The encampment was established on 1 May 2024 and was peacefully disbanded after 28 days at the direction of the protest organisers on 29 May 2024. The encampment was disbanded without any of the protesters' demands being acceded to by the University.

² In accordance with the University's [Privacy Policy](#), the University will collect sensitive information only: (i) with the individual's consent; or (ii) if required or authorised by Australian law or court/tribunal order; or (iii) an exemption exists under the Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988. Sensitive information includes religious beliefs or affiliations, therefore unless this information is self-disclosed, the University is unable to ascertain the religious beliefs or affiliations of students who request meetings with the University.

³ *On Dit* is a student publication controlled by elected student editors who have independent editorial responsibility for its content. *On Dit* is not a University of Adelaide publication. YouX, student union, has authority over the rules that govern Student Media, including *On Dit* magazine. YouX, is the student union, and is independent from the University of Adelaide, with its own board of directors and management team. The University has no operational or executive control of YouX.

Further information or queries

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2: Since 7 October 2023, how many complaints have Jewish students at the University of Adelaide made? What were the outcomes of those complaints?

The University does not ask students to identify their religion or faith as part of the complaints process. Unless this information is self-disclosed, the University is unable to ascertain whether a complaint has been raised by a Jewish student.

To uphold the University's responsibility to maintain student privacy in accordance with its Privacy Policy, even when a student self-discloses their religion or faith, this detail is not included in reports.¹

Since the establishment of the Integrity Unit in November 2022 to the present, the University has received a total of 18 complaints referring to allegations of antisemitism. This includes eight complaints made during the period of the encampment between 1 May 2024 to 29 May 2024.

Reported concerns of antisemitism during the period of the encampment related to the activity of protesters and their use of contested phrases in peaceful protests. There was no evidence of Jewish students or staff being directly targeted by protesters. The University found that while this activity may have caused distress and discomfort, it was not found to be unlawful. In all cases, the context in which words or phrases are used is instrumental in determining whether the conduct could reasonably be found to be harmful. Where some speech may be considered antisemitic in certain contexts, the University determined this was not the case when these phrases were used on campus at that time.

The University's Integrity Unit made preliminary inquiries with regard to each complaint and considered the following for each complaint:

- Whether the alleged conduct could be related to an individual or explicitly to a University student club, or whether it related to an external group.
- Whether the alleged conduct was University-related conduct or private conduct; and
- Whether the alleged conduct would, if substantiated and if connected to the University, amount to antisemitism or some other form of student misconduct.

Following investigation by the Integrity Unit, none of the 18 complaints referring to allegations of antisemitism were substantiated.

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3: How does the University publish data on complaints made to the Integrity Unit?

The University prepares a series of reports regarding behaviour and conduct for a range of internal purposes.

An annual report on student complaints related to behaviour and conduct is prepared for the University's Academic Board and Council. This report assists in identifying patterns and trends and ensuring University leadership has oversight of these issues.

The University will, subject to privacy considerations, ensure that the Integrity Unit complaints process is made public.

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