

Student Services and Amenities Fee Student Survey **2026 Report**





Background

The SSAF Survey of students was conducted in 2026 by the Office of the Vice President (Students) and Registrar to consult with students and collect feedback on student priorities for the allocation of Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF) revenue in 2027. The survey also aimed to measure student awareness of SSAF and gather feedback on services and activities currently supported by SSAF funding.

*SSAF exempt students: International Offshore, Preparing for Success, Transition to Uni, incoming cross institutional, incarcerated students, English language course.

†<https://www.scu.edu.au/current-students/student-administration/fees-and-charges/student-services-and-amenities-fee-ssaf/>

Communication

Students were invited to complete the survey between 1 July and 27 July 2026. A total of 16,897 students required to pay SSAF received a personalised email invitation with a unique survey link. This included:

- 7,230 commencing students
- 9,667 continuing students

To encourage participation, students who completed the survey could enter the draw to win one of five \$100 Visa gift cards.

The survey was promoted through multiple channels:

- Email invitations and reminders
- Blackboard login page announcements
- SMS notifications
- Student Associations, who actively supported promotion
- Support Services teams, who were reminded to encourage student participation

In addition to personalised email links, various promotions offered students an anonymous survey link, to facilitate easier survey participation.

Survey Design

The 2026 SSAF Survey consisted of two key sections: Part 1 asked students to indicate their SSAF funding priorities by allocating percentages across 19 allowable categories, and some further questions related to their chosen priorities. All Part 1 questions had to be completed to be included in the final analysis.

Part 2 questions related to feedback on SSAF-funded services and activities, including satisfaction ratings and open-text responses. Each question in part 2 was optional. Feedback from Part 2 was analysed where provided, (as long as the student had completed Part 1)

Students were also directed to the SSAF website, which provided examples of what can and cannot be funded with SSAF revenue. The full list of survey questions is available in Appendix 1 of this report.

Survey Response

A total of 1,199 responses were received. 863 respondents completed Part 1 and were included in the analysis; 336 responses were excluded, as they abandoned the survey before completing Part 1.

The delayed Blackboard announcement, partly offset by extra SMS, likely shifted responses toward anonymous link over personalised email links. Breakdown of the 863 included responses by distribution channel:

- Personalised email link: 148
- Anonymous link: 1,051

The effective response rate was 5.11%, based on 863 valid responses out of 16,897 students contacted.

SSAF Student Priority Results

The key question in the survey was framed as follows:

Under the Higher Education Support Act 2003 the University must spend SSAF on activity that aligns with Government guidelines.

In this activity please indicate the % of SSAF you think we should prioritize in allocation across the allowable spending areas. (Please choose at least 5 different priority areas totalling to 100%).

The response forced all students to allocate 100% between their chosen priority areas.

Table 1 shows the average % allocated by all student respondents to each of the priority areas in this year's survey. The 'Change from 25' column indicates the change in rank position from last year's results.

Table 1: Categories as allocated by overall student cohort in 2026

Rank	SSAF category	Average % Allocation	Change from 25
1	Promoting mental health and wellbeing	11.93	=
2	Supporting students to find employment when they complete their studies	9.85	=
3	Supporting students to find employment while studying	7.58	=
4	Promoting physical health	7.40	↑1
5	Providing food or drink	7.38	↓1
6	Support for overseas students	6.96	=
7	Providing students with spaces (reading rooms, student lounges) for non-academic purposes	6.33	=
8	Supporting student clubs, societies and sport recreation or artistic activities	5.54	↑1
9	Helping students develop skills for study	5.17	↓1
10	Supporting students to develop skills for the workplace (volunteering & leadership)	4.96	↑2
11	Advocacy services & assisting students to understand rules, policy and procedures	4.52	↑3
12	Childcare support while studying	4.23	↓2
13	Helping students manage their finances	4.16	↓2
14	Activities, services and information to help students commence their studies (orientation)	3.79	↑1
15	Supporting students to find accommodation	3.73	↓2
16	Student legal services and advice	2.71	=
17	Supporting student debating activities	1.76	=
18	Helping students obtain insurance against personal accidents	1.11	=
19	Student media and production	0.93	=

Table 2 shows relative importance among those who support each priority, by calculating the average only among those who allocated any percentage to that priority.

It gives an indication of the priorities students felt most strongly about.

Table 2: Relative Importance: Average among students who allocated a particular priority

Rank	SSAF category	% Allocation
1	Promoting mental health and wellbeing	16.65%
2	Supporting students to find employment when they complete their studies	15.51%
3	Support for overseas students	14.46%
4	Providing food and drink	13.78%
5	Promoting physical health	13.44%
6	Supporting students to find employment while studying	13.35%
7	Providing students with spaces (reading rooms, student lounges) for non-academic purposes	12.39%
8	Supporting student clubs, societies and sport, recreational or artistic activities	11.69%
9	Childcare support while studying	11.41%
10	Advocacy services, and assisting students to understand university rules, policy and procedures	11.21%
11	Helping students develop skills for study	11.06%
12	Supporting students to develop skills for the workplace (e.g. through volunteering, leadership opportunities etc)	11.03%
13	Helping students manage their finances	10.82%
14	Supporting students to find accommodation	9.54%
15	Activities, services and information to help students commence their studies (e.g. orientation, induction)	9.52%
16	Supporting student debating activities	8.19%
17	Student legal services and advice	7.89%
18	Support students to obtain insurance against personal accidents	5.68%
19	Student media production (student paper, newsletters etc)	4.57%

Figure 1 compares how the overall average % allocations have varied from 2024-2026.

In 2025, the description of some of the priorities from the previous survey changed to better understand students priorities within the SSAF category description as follows.

*Promoting health and welfare was expanded to two options:

- Promoting mental health
- Promoting physical health

In Figure 1 promoting physical health has been compared to the previous results for health and welfare, and Promoting mental health has been added as a new category.

Supporting students to develop skills for the workplace was added as an additional category.

Supporting students to understand rules policy and procedures was combined with advocacy, and compared next to advocacy from previous years in Figure 1

Supporting student clubs, sport and recreation, or artistic activities was combined into a single category, and compared next to sport and recreation in Figure 1 from previous years.

Figure 1: Overall SAFF priority allocations comparison between 2024 - 2026 SSAF survey results

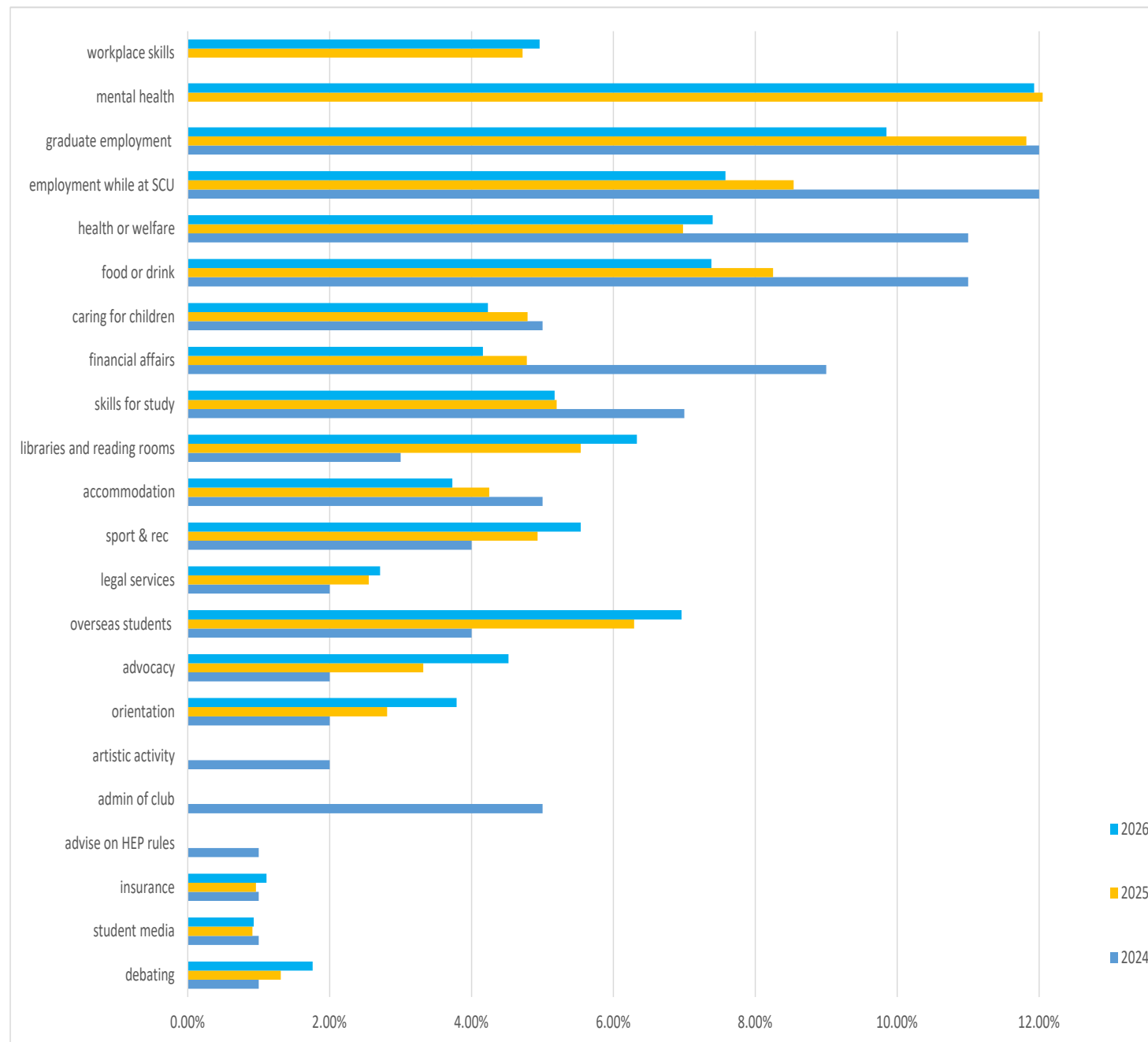


Table 3 shows the top-ranked location, preferred timing, and target cohort for each of the 19 SSAF priority areas, based on student responses.

- Top 5: mental health, employment support (completion & while studying), physical health, food/drink.
- On-Campus preferred: physical health, food/drink, student spaces, clubs/societies/sport & recreation. All else: Both.
- Timing: term-long, except orientation (pre-term).
- Cohort: all stages, except post-study employment support (final-year).

Table 3: SSAF priority allocations preferred location and timing.

Rank	SSAF category	Top Location	Preferred time	Cohort of students
1	Promoting mental health and wellbeing	Both	Throughout Term	All stages
2	Supporting students to find employment at completion of studies	Both	Throughout Term	Final year
3	Supporting students to find employment while studying	Both	Throughout Term	All stages
4	Promoting physical health	On-Campus	Throughout Term	All stages
5	Providing food or drink	On-Campus	Throughout Term	All stages
6	Support for overseas students	Both	Throughout Term	All stages
7	Providing students with spaces (reading rooms, student lounges) for non-academic purposes	On-Campus	Throughout Term	All stages
8	Supporting student clubs, societies and sport recreation or artistic activities	On-Campus	Throughout Term	All stages
9	Helping students develop skills for study	Both	Throughout Term	All stages
10	Supporting to develop workplace skills (volunteering & leadership)	Both	Throughout Term	All stages
11	Advocacy services & assisting students to understand rules, policy and procedures	Both	Throughout Term	All stages
12	Childcare support while studying	On-Campus	Throughout Term	All stages
13	Helping students manage their finances	Both	Throughout Term	All stages
14	Activities, services and information to help students commence their studies (orientation)	Both	Prior to Term start	All stages
15	Supporting students to find accommodation	Both	Throughout Term	All stages
16	Student legal services and advice	Both	Throughout Term	All stages
17	Supporting student debating activities	Both	Throughout Term	All stages
18	Helping students obtain insurance against personal accidents	Both	Throughout Term	All stages
19	Student media and production	Both	Throughout Term	All stages

Table 4: Top 5 SAFF priority allocations compared across course locations

Priority Rank	Coffs Harbour & NMSC (CH)	Gold Coast & Coomera (GC)	Lismore (L)	Online (O)	Other	Hotel Schools (HS)
1	Providing food and drink	Promoting mental health and wellbeing	Providing food and drink	Promoting mental health and wellbeing	Supporting students to find employment when they complete their studies	Supporting students to find employment while studying
2	Promoting mental health and wellbeing	Supporting students to find employment when they complete their studies	Promoting mental health and wellbeing	Supporting students to find employment when they complete their studies	Supporting students to find employment while studying	Supporting students to find employment when they complete their studies
3	Supporting students to find employment when they complete their studies	Providing food and drink	Supporting student clubs, societies & sport, rec. or artistic activities	Supporting students to find employment while studying	Support for overseas students	Promoting mental health and wellbeing
4	Support for overseas students	Providing non-academic spaces	Providing non-academic spaces	Promoting physical health	Promoting mental health and wellbeing	Support for overseas students
5	Promoting physical health	Promoting physical health	Supporting students to find employment when they complete their studies	developing workplace skills (e.g. volunteering, leadership opportunities)	developing workplace skills (e.g. volunteering, leadership opportunities)	Providing food and drink

Note: responses for some locations have been combined



SSAF Awareness

Approximately two thirds of student respondents indicated they are aware of the services and activities funded or supported by SSAF, a 16% increase in awareness from the 2025 SAFF survey.



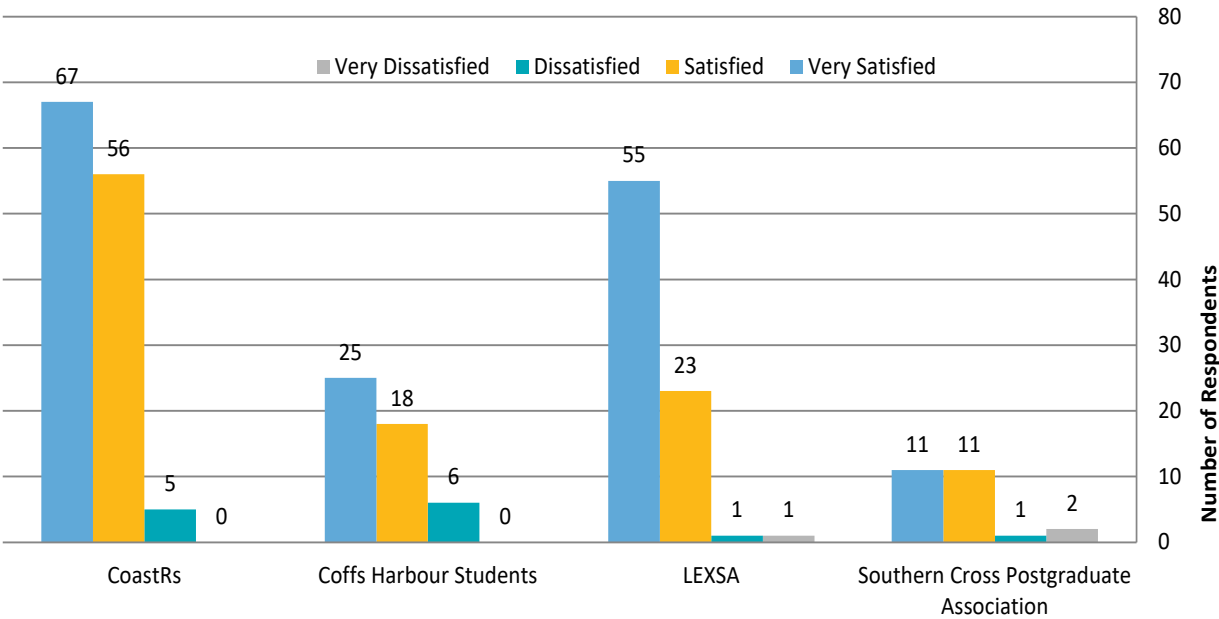
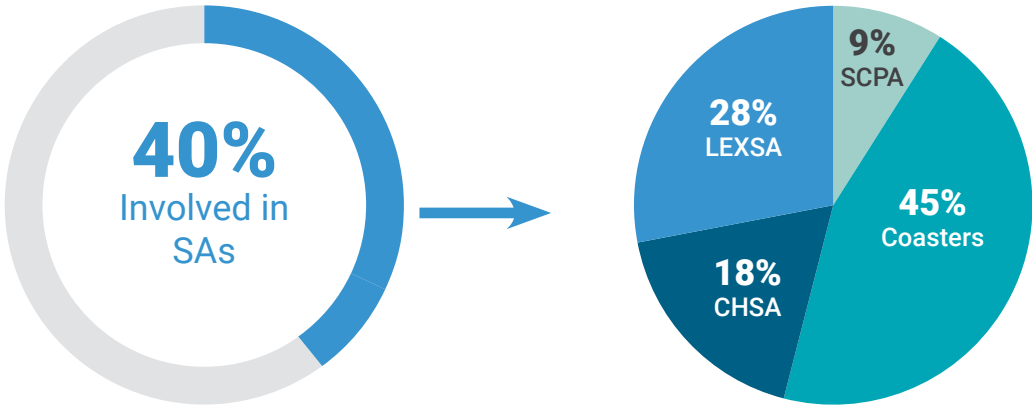
Student Association satisfaction

Overall most students are either very satisfied or satisfied with their Student Association.



Student Association membership

40% of respondents indicated they are involved in a Student Association or club, a 30% increase from 2025. The breakdown for these students into each association is also shown. CoastRs (Gold Coast Students Association) accounts for the largest share of involvement (45%), followed by LEXSA (Lismore & External Student Association) (28%), the Coffs Harbour Students Association (CHSA) (18%) and the Southern Cross Postgraduate Association (SCPA) (9%).



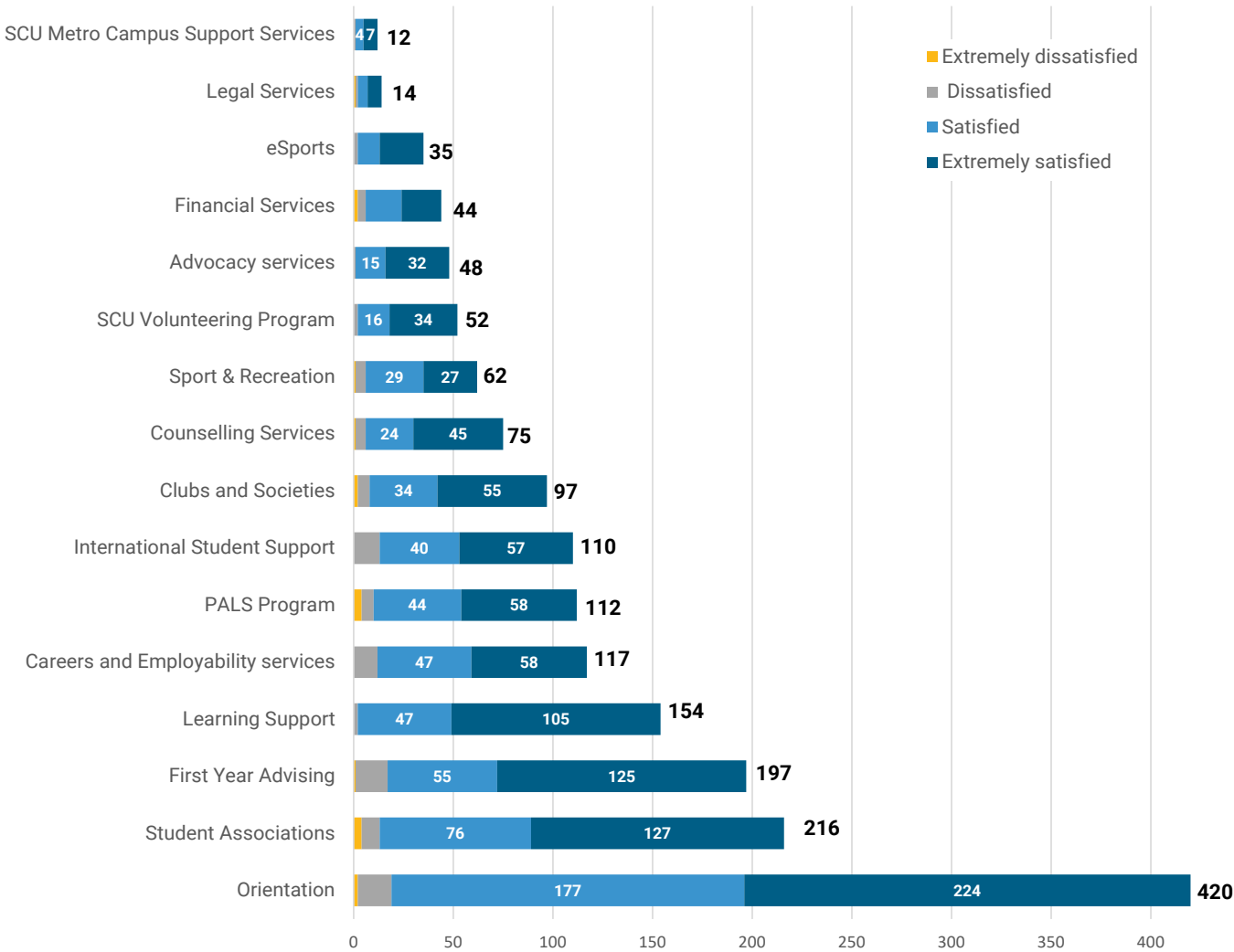
SSAF Service Usage and Satisfaction Results

Figure 2 shows the number of respondents who indicated they used a service and the satisfaction rating they gave the service. (Students could select multiple services.)

93% of survey participants reported satisfaction with the services funded through SSAF, with Orientation and Student Association-led services and activities being the most widely used of these.



Figure 2 SAFF Service usage and satisfaction



SSAF Service feedback sample/ summarised positive and negative feedback

Summaries of the free-text responses for each service are given below.

Orientation

I was extremely satisfied with the orientation program as the events were highly engaging and very well-organized. So please keep using SSAF funds to support these excellent events for future students.

The activities need to be more age-appropriate. They seem to be for high school kids.

First Year Advisers

I feel very supported in my studies and my neurodivergencies have not been treated like a hindrance, I have been given a confidence and understanding that I haven't yet felt in tertiary education.

Felt like they were palming me off when I made contact seeking support



Student Associations

Activities run by LEXSA have always been fantastic, free meals, cafe vouchers, CPR and childcare rebate, free bag of groceries and the friendly faces always happy to chat and have suggestions when uni becomes overwhelming, a huge help.

Not much active associations

Peer Assisted Learning Program

given me ideas and options to be able to branch out and meet new people. it has also allowed me to be able to keep updated with what other students in my class are doing and meet them if ever i need anything and vise versa

Too many emails!



Sporting activities

Good way to meet people, stay active and have something to look forward to outside of studying.

Very limited sports promotion in lismore

Careers and Employability services

I have been to another uni and never had a service you could book in with to talk about next steps in a real, logistical way! joseph and the whole team are incredible!

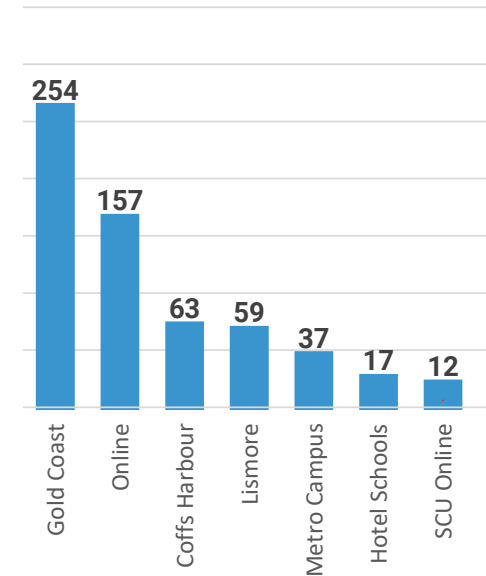
Needs more emphasis, should be biggest priority for university to get students a job



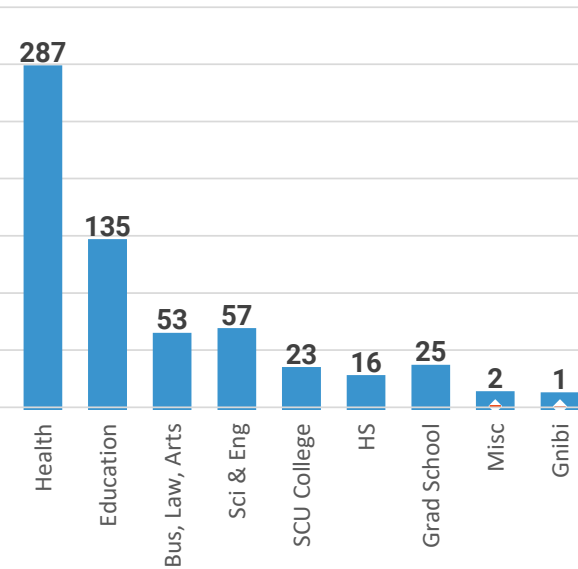
Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographics of the known survey respondents are shown below.

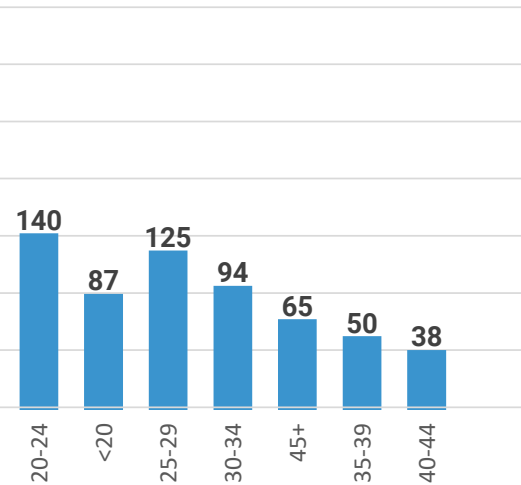
Number of respondents by location



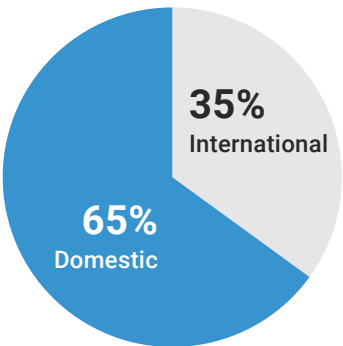
Number of respondents by faculty



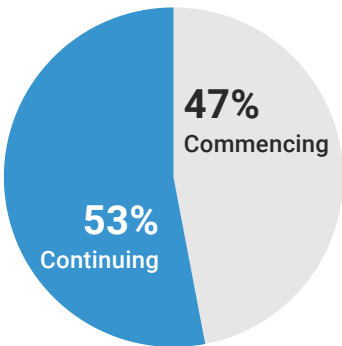
Number of respondents by age group



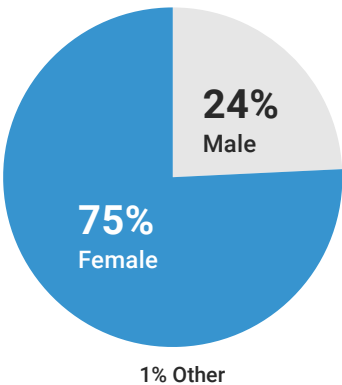
Residency



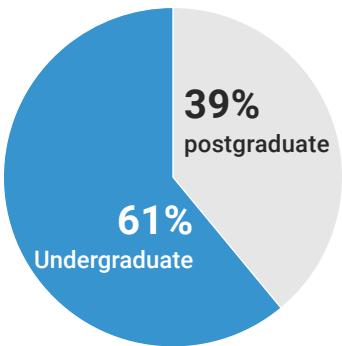
Cohort



Gender



Course Level

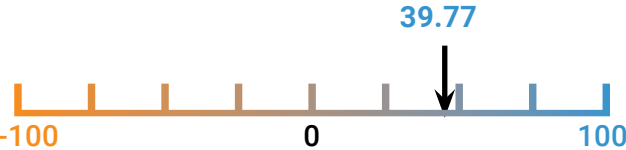


Summary of Qualitative Feedback

A sentiment analysis of the responses for Q11:

Please provide any suggestions or comments about the SSAF at Southern Cross University.

returned an overall positive/enthusiastic sentiment.



68% positive

Feedback indicated general satisfaction with the range of services provided and a reported sense of being supported, with orientation, career development, and community-building events specifically noted.



10% negative

Negative feedback centred mainly on fee fairness for online, regional, and mature-age students, who feel they pay the same SSAF without equivalent access to services. Service cuts and a lack of transparency around SSAF spending were also raised.



22% neutral/suggestions

Mostly requests for more events and connection (isolation was the top theme), plus career support, food/study spaces, and clearer comms.

Table 5 shows the responses to Question 11:

Table 5: Suggestions and Comments about SSAF at SCU

"I would like to say SSAF funding continues to focus on improving student wellbeing, academic success, career development, and student connection. More awareness should be created about the services available so that all students, including online and regional students, know how to access support."
"I'm not entirely sure how SSAF support students with food/drink vouchers or accommodation, but I think these should be openly promoted/advertised. I think a lot of shame comes from asking for help... Obviously not comments about how to improve what you already do, but my opinion. I appreciate what's available!"
"I'm a mature aged student you offer no services and exclusion is real"
"Building infrastructure that supports socialisation among students would enhance the student experience at SCU Gold Coast... I believe investing SSAF funding into building infrastructure that supports social connection and conversation would add to the experience of university students and enhance satisfaction to a greater extent than services that remain unused by many students."
"Mental health and well-being support: more free or low-cost counselling sessions, mindfulness workshops, and access to quiet relaxation or meditation spaces. Career preparation: additional resume review sessions, mock interviews, and networking events for both domestic and international students. Legal and visa support: free or subsidised consultations to help students understand visa conditions, workplace rights, and how to handle issues like unfair dismissal or housing disputes."
"SSAF funds should prioritize boosting on-campus vibrant life and events across all campuses through campus student associations. Expanding free/subsidized food initiatives, mental health support, and flexible virtual engagement options for online and part-time students would ensure every student feels connected and supported regardless of how or where they study."
"More options for online students are needed. We pay the same fees as everyone else but don't seem to have equal benefits."
"I LOVE YOU GUYS!!!!"
"As a new student only in my 3rd term I am sure I will use more of the services provided. I may not be aware of some support for jobs etc that is already available. I do feel like there are lots of student support services provided and feel supported. Thank you."
"By being compassionate and helpful"

Feedback and Suggestions on Top 5 Priorities

1. Promoting mental health and wellbeing

"Increase access to free counselling with shorter wait times. Run regular wellbeing workshops on stress management, burnout, and work-life balance, and create more opportunities for students to connect through social events and peer support programs."

"Added back in the counselling service which was removed. Over the past 18 months it has really been non-existent."

"I think universities are really good at responding once someone is already in crisis, but I'd rather see more effort put into stopping people from getting to that point in the first place. More workshops throughout semester, peer support, therapy dogs during exams, quiet sensory-friendly rooms, and events that actually encourage people to leave their room and connect with others."

2. Supporting students to find employment when they complete their studies

"Many jobs require '2 years experience' – the university needs to promote their students for employment to local employers"

"SCU hardly selects their own graduates for work! It has happened to me numerous times."

"Once a month, a session about how to find jobs, where to apply and techniques to get selected in interviews"

"Lots of career paths in modern day are increasingly becoming harder to achieve due to unfair competition, selection, and lack of care for graduates. Students should feel safe and comfortable with their degree and be able to have a guaranteed pathway into their career so long as they graduate and meet the necessary requirements."

3. Supporting students to find employment while studying

"More paid internships and industry placements. On-campus casual job opportunities. Resume, LinkedIn and interview workshops. Networking events with local employers. Career mentoring by alumni. Part-time job board specifically for students."

"Once a month, a session about how to find jobs, where to apply and techniques to get selected in interviews"

On-campus jobs to be increased, and other employment opportunities should be presented"

4. Promoting physical health

"Having a professional functional gym for students to study and use would be amazing. The Gold Coast campus is a busy uni but the gym space is very disappointing compared to Lismore I believe it is."

"A lot of the social sports are too male focused and hard for overseas students. Please promote more sports."

"I think universities sometimes assume everyone already likes exercise. Give people beginner stuff. Walking groups, social sport, gym inductions where you don't feel judged for having no idea what you're doing, discounts with local gyms, healthy cooking workshops... make it feel accessible instead of intimidating."

5. Providing food or drink to students on campus

"Change the days around so everyone has access. Cover vegan/allergy safe food, change the Paella stand and Subway!!! There's so many other options."

"More food days, or even changing the days Oz Harvest and food days are applied. Some of my classes aren't held on those specific days and I miss out on the opportunity."

"Food vouchers through statewide organisations like Anglicare for on campus or online students"

Feedback and Suggestions for Student Associations

What could Student Associations do differently or better to improve your experience?

"I have no complaints. They are doing a great job"

"More local recreational trips like camping, snorkelling, hiking for overseas students please."

"Make newcomers easy and comfortable first"

"Have more opportunities for exposure and let everyone know about the existence of the student association."

"Student associations should not rely only on Facebook to share information because not everyone has a Facebook account. This can cause some students to miss important updates, events, and opportunities"

"Sent an email monthly how student association can assist as most of the students are not aware of it."

"more conventional time usage towards student associations"

"Just better advertising i dont really understand the benefits enough for me to go out of my way to participate"

"Help mature age students to meet"

"They could provide a wider range of services and improve the variety of products available at Health Harvest. Otherwise, the support and services provided are great."

Appendix 1: Survey Questions

Survey Introduction

Student SSAF Survey This brief survey is your opportunity to tell the University about which services you see as the most important to receive an allocation of funding from the Student Services and Amenities Fee. What is SSAF?. This information will be used to inform spending priorities across Southern Cross University in 2027.

Your responses are entirely confidential. The results will be made available after the survey has been completed. No results will be reported which will identify individuals.

Questions

Q1: Are you aware of the services and activities that are funded or supported by SSAF?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q8: Under the Higher Education Support Act 2003 the University must spend SSAF on activity that aligns with Government guidelines. Click here to see examples of what could be funded under each guideline. In this activity please indicate the % of SSAF you choose to allocate across the allowable spending areas. (Please choose at least 5 different priority areas).

Enter percentage next to each spending area category

Q7 In relation to your top priorities selected: which of the following is your preferred location to access these services?

Drop down carry forward for each spending area category

Q25 In relation to your top priorities selected in the question previously when should these services be offered:

Drop down carry forward for each spending area category

Q38 In relation to your top priorities selected in the question previously for which group of students should these services be offered:

Drop down carry forward for each spending area category

Q9: In relation to your top priorities selected in the question above: do you have any ideas or suggestions on new ways the priorities could be delivered?

Free text box provided for each spending area category

Q11: Please provide any suggestions or comments about the SSAF at Southern Cross University.

Free text

Q2: Which services have you used during the course of your study at SCU? (select all that apply)

- ☐ Orientation
- ☐ Student Associations
- ☐ International Student Support
- ☐ Careers and Employability services
- ☐ Advocacy services
- ☐ First Year Advising
- ☐ Clubs and Societies
- ☐ Learning Support
- ☐ SCU Metro Campus Support Services
- ☐ Sport & Recreation
- ☐ eSports
- ☐ PALS Program
- ☐ SCU Volunteering Program
- ☐ Counselling Services
- ☐ Legal Services
- ☐ Financial Services
- ☐ I No I haven't used any of these services

Q3 How satisfied are you currently with the services and activities provided?

Drop down carry forward for each service in Q2 0= Very dissatisfied 5= Very Satisfied.

Q4: Please provide reasons for the satisfaction / dissatisfaction you indicated above.

Free text box for each service in Q2

Appendix 1: Survey Questions

Q6: Are you involved in any associations or clubs?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q7:What could student associations do differently or better to improve your experience?

Free text