Proposed Student-led organisation model

UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE AUSTRALIA

From 2027, a new independent, student-led organisation will focus on service delivery, operating alongside existing student organisations. The model would initially operate for two years, followed by a review.

Need for change

- Delivery of student services needs to reflect the way our University has evolved.
- Students now study across multiple campuses and ways of study - approx 39,000 students across Callaghan, Newcastle City/NUspace, Central Coast, Tamworth and online.
- 2026 consultation with students, in addition to annual SFUN, identified service gaps, identified priority areas of affordability, wellbeing, recreation, employability, community connection and more support needed beyond Callaghan.
- UNSA's reported student membership is 2-3% of the 39,000-student cohort; current service delivery and staffing are concentrated at Callaghan. Despite efforts over several years, limited progress made in UNSA strengthening and expanding its reach.

Proposed model

The proposed diversified student-led model is about enhancing service capacity.

- Complements existing organisations: the new SLO would operate alongside UNSA and UNLSA.
- UNSA will remain the University's sole student representative body and will continue to play a critical role in student advocacy and representation.
- The new organisation will be service-delivery focused, dedicated to addressing identified gaps across campuses, study modes and cohorts.

Financial context

- UNSA 2027 allocation: proposed $2.3m - remaining the largest individual student-led funding recipient.
- Projected allocation is consistent with UNSA's historic SSAF allocations:

2023	$1.7m
2024	$1.7m
2025	$2.3m
2026	$2.9m
2027	$2.3m (proposed)

How SSAF funding works

- SSAF is a compulsory student fee used for specified non-academic services and amenities. Universities are responsible for its administration, expenditure and governance, including ensuring spending is on allowable activities and considers different student types and locations.

45.4% in 2027	Approx $500K above the legislated 40% minimum. More than 45% of SSAF funding will be in student hands.

Governance and accountability

- Students would hold a majority of positions on the new organisation's Board.
- The Board would set priorities and oversee operations independently.
- University will have required financial oversight, reporting and accountability but will not influence day to day management.
- The SLO will meet all student-majority, independence, governance, financial and service-delivery requirements.
- Multiple student-led organisations is not new to the University. Prior to the establishment of UNSA, the University operated with three student-led organisations.

Implementation and review

- Transition and establishment work continues through late 2026 - commencement expected January 2027.
- Student elections: expected in the coming months.
- The model will be reviewed after two years, with continuation subject to demonstrated outcomes and student benefit.
- The University will continue to work with UNSA, including supporting its capability and organisational development throughout the initial two-year implementation period.

Student feedback called for greater support for postgraduate and online students, including affordable food, sport and recreation, health and wellbeing, career readiness and day-to-day support.