

SUMMARY REPORT: 2020 SSAF STUDENT SURVEY

BACKGROUND

The Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF) survey is a comprehensive survey that enables the University to obtain direct comment and feedback from across all student cohorts, campuses and study modes to inform decision making on service delivery and provision of non-academic amenity for students in 2020, and beyond. Through the Survey, the University also obtains a clear indication of student preferences for particular services.

This is the fourth year that a dedicated SSAF survey has formed part of the annual consultation process with students.

The survey was launched on Monday 29 April, 2019 and closed on Sunday 26 May, 2019. An invitation to participate was sent to 27,813 enrolled students who were eligible to pay the SSAF fee.

Design of the survey is coordinated through the SSAF office, with an invitation for input into the questions issued to student associations and other entities or areas involved in delivery of SSAF-compliant services and amenity to students.

There are three distinct sections to the Survey:

- Part A, which lists the 19 approved areas of expenditure under the legislation
- Part B, which identifies specific services for students at UON, or new projects or proposals, including proposed on-campus amenity projects for students
- An Open Comments section where students may provide any further detail or ideas for services

GENERAL SURVEY DATA

The total number of respondents to the survey this year was 3689 or 13.3% of eligible students. In last year's survey, 3480 students responded (12.4%).

Responses by gender, campus, faculty and academic level (ie. UG and PG) were generally representative of the proportion of students in each case.

Commencing students	37.68%	Continuing students	62.32%
Female	63.73%	Male	36.24%
Undergraduate	74.33%	Postgraduate & HDR	25.67%

Percentage of responses by campus:

Callaghan	57.39%	City	17.40%
Ourimbah	10.57%	Online ¹	9.62%
Sydney	2.06%	Port Macquarie	1.44%
Other	1.36%	Gosford	0.16%

¹ Online includes students enrolled and undertaking a program by distance

Percentage of responses by Faculty:

Education & Arts	26.54%	Health & Medicine	25.59%
Business & Law	18.89%	Engineering and Built Env	15.80%
Science	12.63%	Academic Division	0.54%

The percentage of students who indicated they were a parent or direct carer was 5.18%. The remainder (94.82%) indicated no caring responsibilities.

PART A: THE 19 ALLOWABLE SSAF CATEGORIES

The SSAF legislation defines 19 categories of allowable, non-academic expenditure.

In the first part of the survey, students were asked to identify the single category most important to them, to receive funding in 2020. The top five categories, which attracted 67.2% of all preferences from all students, are the same as those identified in last year's survey with a similar total percentage of preferences (last year 65.9%).

Table 1: 2020 SSAF Student Survey – ranking of the 19 allowable categories:

SSAF allowable category of expenditure ²	Rank	%	N
Helping students obtain employment or advice on careers	1	19.63%	724
Helping students develop skills for study, by means other than undertaking courses of study in which they are enrolled	2	14.56%	537
Promoting the health or welfare of students	3	13.74%	507
Helping students with their financial affairs	4	10.84%	400
Providing food or drink to students on a campus of the higher education provider	5	8.43%	311
Helping meet the specific needs of overseas students relating to their welfare, accommodation and employment	6	5.50%	203
Providing libraries and reading rooms (other than those provided for academic purposes) for students	7	4.91%	181
Advocating students' interests in matters arising under the higher education provider's rules (however described)	8	4.39%	162
Caring for children of students	9	3.52%	130
Supporting a sporting or other recreational activity by students	10	2.79%	103
Helping students secure accommodation	11	2.66%	98
Supporting the administration of a club most of whose members are students	12	2.20%	81
Giving students information to help them in their orientation	13	2.09%	77
Advising on matters arising under the higher education provider's rules (however described)	14	1.30%	48
Supporting an artistic activity by students	15	1.03%	38
Providing legal services to students	16	1.00%	37
Supporting the production and dissemination to students of media whose content is provided by students	17	0.68%	25
Helping students obtain insurance against personal accidents	18	0.38%	14
Supporting debating by students	19	0.35%	13

Across the top ranked 5 categories, there were several variations in ranking or response by academic level (there were no significant variations to the category 'Promoting the health or welfare of students' or 'Helping students with their financial affairs').

Table 2: Variations by student cohort:

	UG	PG
Employment and careers advice	20.57%	16.90%
Food and drink on campus	9.7%	4.12%
Helping meet specific needs of overseas students	3.50%	11.30%

Students in the City campus and Sydney campus, rated 'Helping meet the specific needs of overseas students relating to their welfare, accommodation and employment' significantly higher than undergraduate students, or those at Callaghan or Ourimbah campuses (City 9.50%, Sydney 14.47%).

² Wording as per legislation

However, note that overseas students have full access to SSAF-funded welfare, accommodation and employment services, and this category relates only to specific services required for overseas students. An example would be visa advice in the context of employment either during the student's study, or upon graduation.

There were no other significant variations by campus.

PART B: SERVICES THEMES

The survey seeks student preferences across a range of specific services aligned with the 19 eligible categories and divides these services into three broad themes:

- Student Support Services
- Student Recreation and Sport
- Student Social and Cultural Services

In each of these themes, questions related to specific services already offered through an entity or an internal UON area, and new services or projects, are identified. Students can select and rank up to 50% of the services most important to them in each theme. They can also select 'none of the above' as their only, or one of their choices.

The limitation on the total number of services students can select and rank in any one theme, is important in determining priorities and preferences. The SSAF is a finite fund source and thus decisions need to be made about which services may receive funding, where funding may be reduced or increased in line with student preferences, or which new services might be introduced. Each option has an impact on the allocation of funds.

The tables compile data for the % of first preferences received for each service and the percentage of all preferences that service received (regardless of ranking). From the response numbers and preference data, a weighting for each service is determined, and this then gives the overall ranking of services in that theme.

THEME: STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

In the Support Services theme, there were seventeen services/activities which align with one or more of the 19 SSAF categories, and students could select and rank up to eight from the 17, including 'none of the above'.

Table 3: Rank and preferences for Support Services

Rank	Question – Service/Project descriptor	% first prefs
1	Student Counselling and Crisis Support	19.65
2	Health Promotion and Wellbeing	15.51
3	Students in financial or other hardship - emergency support	15.20
4	Employment Support Services	8.90
5	PASS Sessions (including Online PASS)	8.70
6	Careers Counselling and Advice	7.43
7	Legal Services - UON Legal Centre clinics on campus	4.62
8	Study Skills for Online students	3.63
9	Postgraduate & HDR study skills workshops	3.04
10	Student Advocacy (including OSA and student organisations)	2.70
11	Accommodation advice and assistance	2.28
12	Financial services and financial literacy	2.17
13	Social Program during Orientation	1.80
14	None of the above	1.55
15	Volunteering, including Student Mentors	1.35
16	Study Rovers	1.13
17	Honoraria for elected student representatives	0.34

A NOTE ABOUT CHILD CARE SERVICES

Since the introduction of the SSAF, UON has not provided any direct SSAF funding for Child Care Services.

In 2016, with assistance of an external consultant, investigations occurred regarding potential support for students-as parents or carers, but with no clear strategies identified. Complications arise in terms of potential overlap in Commonwealth subsidies or payments to parents/carers for child care, or prohibitive administrative costs would arise for UON to process a student refund or subsidy request, for minimal benefit paid.

Child Care services will remain an area that is monitored for what may be relevant and equitable from a funding perspective.

THEME: STUDENT SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

There were nine services/activities in this theme, and students could rank up to four from the nine, including 'none of the above'.

Table 4: Rank and preferences for Student Social and Cultural Activities

Rank	Question – Service/Project descriptor	% first prefs
1	On-campus food events and services	42.46
2	Social and cultural on-campus events	14.80
3	End of year formal celebrations and awards	14.63
4	Student Clubs and club activities	10.62
5	Artistic Activities and Events	5.20
6	Student Media and Publications	3.84
7	None of the above	3.76
8	Social and Recreational activities at regional locations	3.70
9	Student Debating including inter-university and law 'moot' debates	0.99

The significant variation by academic level was 'On-campus food events' which attracted much higher first preferences for undergraduate students (47.2%) than postgraduate & HDR (28.41%), although it ranked first overall across both cohorts. At Ourimbah campus, food events and services were ranked first by 53.05% of all students.

Table 5: Food and drink services, variations by campus. First preferences:

Callaghan	City	Ourimbah	Online	Sydney	Port Mq
46.04%	40.26%	53.05%	17.89%	30.77%	38.46%

Student clubs were preferred by only half as many students at Ourimbah campus, at 5.57% compared to Callaghan (11.99%) and City (11.13%).

THEME: STUDENT SPORTING AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

There were seven services/activities in this theme which align predominantly with category 2 and category 3, and students could rank up to three from the seven, including 'none of the above'.

Table 6: Rank and preferences for Student Sporting and Recreational Activities

Rank	Question – Service/Project descriptor	% first prefs
1	On-campus student gyms - discounted student membership	49.60
2	Social sport, health and fitness	17.51
3	Inter-university sports events	8.75
4	UON non-competitive sports and physical recreation clubs	8.49
5	None of the above	6.37
6	UON student competitive sports clubs (eg. rugby, cricket, hockey etc)	5.57
7	Sport and fitness activities at regional locations	3.71

Preferences were similar to last year with no significant variations by academic level or campus.

The overwhelming preference for all students is for gym membership subsidies or recreational and social sport, health and fitness activities.

SSAF-FUNDED CAPITAL WORKS FOR 2020

Students could select one only of the three proposed 2020 SSAF-funded capital projects as their preference. Students could also select none of the above as their preference.

Table 7: Capital work proposals for student amenity

Project	Student cohort - % of preferences				
	All students	Callaghan	City	Ourimbah	Online
Renewal of student association facilities, Callaghan	38.03	55.50	15.11	2.56	23.94
City campus social spaces	24.73	15.54	71.03	2.05	18.59
Millery and other student space upgrade, Ourimbah	17.67	10.06	5.14	87.95	14.37
None of the above	19.92	18.89	8.72	7.44	43.10

The focus of all three projects was on renewal or development of student-centred social spaces on the larger campuses, including designated space for the student association.

The selection of 'None of the above' should not necessarily be interpreted as a lack of support for use of SSAF funds for capital works. Comments from some students in the open comments section, note that none of the projects interested them. For students at smaller campuses, there were no projects identified in this year's survey that were focused on those locations.

Based on this survey response, the UON Infrastructure and Facilities Services (IFS) team will include planning for renewal of these student spaces over the next three years, as part of the overall redevelopment planned across the campuses.

OPEN COMMENTS

Students have an opportunity to provide further input through the open comments section, with 1714 students doing so this year (894 in last year's survey). At this stage the open comments have not been fully reviewed or categorised. Initial review of the comments identify similar themes to prior years, including a large number of non-SSAF issues such as security and car parking issues on campus, or access to public transport.

There are several general comments from students at campuses other than Callaghan-City, regarding lack of comparable facilities or amenity, or no options to select a capital works project at their campus. There are a number related to upgrade of teaching and learning spaces, which are non-SSAF compliant matters.

As in prior year surveys, many comments express an expectation that the University is responsible to establish clubs for students, rather than these being student-led.

Many comments online students (and some from students at smaller campuses) that the level of fee is the same for all students at all campuses or modes of study (it is not) and consequently, the fee is therefore unfair. Students who are studying solely online pay only 30% of the full SSAF fee.

ACTIONS AND DECISION MAKING ARISING FROM THE SURVEY

A copy of the key data tables included in this paper, has been made available to the student associations, NUsport and key internal areas responsible for delivery of services compliant with SSAF. The data therein will assist those entities in identifying any material changes in student preferences that would require a commensurate shift in the funding through SSAF in 2020.

Matters identified in Open Comments that are not SSAF-compliant nonetheless identify key issues of concern to students will be communicated to the relevant internal area responsible (eg. IFS for infrastructure and safety & security issues).

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23 August 2019