

STUDENT CONSULTATION REPORT 2016
February 2017

**STUDENT SERVICES &
AMENITIES FEE (SSAF):
Student Consultation
Report**
2016

ENQUIRIES

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Executive Summary

In 2016 La Trobe University implemented a SSAF Survey, to provide feedback and deliver a source of information that will continue to proactively initiate reform to the overall governance, compliance, consultation and engagement of the Student Services Amenities Fee collected from eligible enrolled students. As part of this strategy, students were invited to partake in a 2016 survey. This report serves as an overview of;

1. The consultation activities conducted in 2016
2. An indicator on what progress has been made
3. Identifying student priorities and informing 2017 SSAF spending

In June 2014 Student Services Advisory Group (SSAG) officially documented and endorsed the guidelines and basis of how La Trobe University will continue to effectively consult students regarding matters concerning SSAF and its expenditure.

In 2016 the consultation methodologies were submitted to the University Council in the form of a report (Appendix 1). The guidelines were collectively reviewed and approved by the University Council in June 2016.

The principle consultation mechanism for 2016 has been the online Student Census Survey that achieved a total of 4084 responses resulting in a confidence level of 95% +/- 1.4%. Students were asked to apportion significance to, and prioritise areas of SSAF spending. In response to this, students identified the following top five (5) priorities:

1. Health and Welfare
2. Employment
3. Food and Drink
4. Study Skills
5. Finance and Insurance

Introduction

BACKGROUND

In October 2011, the Australian Parliament passed legislation to allow Universities to charge a Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF) to all higher education students from 2012. The SSAF is intended to provide funding for the provision of important student services and amenities at tertiary institutions.

Nineteen allowable spending areas are identified under this legislation, including health and welfare services, careers advice, accommodation assistance, advocacy, sport, cultural and recreational activities.

The governing legislation; *Student Services, Amenities, Representation and Advocacy Guidelines of Higher Education Legislation Support Act 2003*, requires the University to consult with students, (including democratically elected student representatives) on how revenue from the fee is allocated and spent. Section 3.2.1 notes: *“HEP’s must establish and maintain a clearly defined and effective process by which students enrolled at the HEP are consulted that is reviewed and approved annually by the governing body of that HEP after being made available to the students enrolled at the HEP for comment”*.

La Trobe University is committed to ensuring the consultation with students is genuine, and that the student voice is considered when determining how revenue raised from the compulsory SSAF is spent. As a key part of the consultation process, La Trobe University formed the Student Services Advisory Group (SSAG), which consists of University representatives and student representatives nominated by the four student associations; La Trobe Student Union (LTSU), International Students Association (ISA), Bendigo Student Association (BSA) and Wodonga Student Association (WSA). SSAG meet at least twice a year to plan and review consultation methodology as well as the current and future allocations of SSAF monies.

2016 Consultation Process

Each year, La Trobe University reviews and updates the Terms of Reference and membership of SSAG. The Secretariat of SSAG will, in conjunction with the Executive Director, Student Services and Administration, review the student consultation process from the previous year and propose process improvements, based on the efficacy of previous consultation processes and strategies.

During the development phase of the coming year's strategy, the proposed consultation processes are submitted to SSAG for approval and endorsement before presenting to the Vice President Administration, Resources Committee and ultimately University Council.

Foundation of La Trobe University's SSAF consultation for 2016:

Review:

- SSAF allocation and associated consultation methodologies to identify areas of improvement. Recommend improvements to strengthen governance, consultation, engagement and compliance.
- Deliberate on key findings from the previous consultation survey, capital planning and allocation of funds with SSAG.
- Output and delivery of SSAF funded projects.

Consult:

- SSAG members formally at quarterly meetings (or more frequently if required) that have an agenda and are minuted.
- Vice President (Administration) to advise on all SSAF recommendations resulting from SSAG member consultation.
- Engage the University Infrastructure and Operations Group to deliver projects and outcomes that require their input.
- University Council to advise and seek approval of the 2016 student consultation process.
- Enrolled students to gauge current awareness, satisfaction and to identify key spending priorities through the 2016 Student Consultation Survey.

Update:

- Terms of Reference and membership of SSAG to include representation from; Students, La Trobe International, Student Enrichment, Student Services and Administration.
- Continually engage greater numbers of students to identify spending priorities, based on the formal review of the 2016 SSAF Student Consultation Survey.

- SSAF website regularly to increase available information, accessibility and usability.

Circulate:

- The annual Consultation Report and appendices online, encouraging additional feedback on key findings and recommendations.
- The SSAF Financial Allocation Report online annually (by end January each year). The report includes successful submissions from incorporated student organisations and other University service providers, operating and capital works proposals or strategic projects that are compliant with SSAF legislation.
- Information on SSAF related developments and projects in the 'Weekly student update' email to raise continuing awareness, including the SSAF channels of contact to encourage students to provide feedback and share their insights concerning SSAF.

2017 Consultation Timelines

- December** SSAG 2017 allocations approved by VP Admin.
- January** Compile 2016 survey findings (See Attachment 2).
- February** Initiate 2017 Student Consultation Planning.
Release 2016 Student Consultation Report and SSAF Survey Findings.
Release 2016 Report to Council.
- March** Hold first Student Services Advisory Group meeting.
Seek approval from SSAG members and VP Admin on proposed consultation strategy.
Finalise 2016 Consultation strategy and the 2015 Consultation report and submit to University Council for approval.
- June/July** Hold second Student Services Advisory Group meeting to discuss strategic direction.
- September** Release Student Census Survey to the SSAF paying student body.
Conduct consultation activities as determined and approved in April.
- October** Circulate Student Survey results to SSAG members and begin planning 2017 allocations and consultation mechanisms

Meet with Student Associations to discuss 2017 budget planning
- November** Review draft proposed budget allocations for 2017.
- December** Hold final SSAG meeting to finalise 2017 SSAF budget allocations.
Seek VP Admin approval of 2017 proposed SSAF budget.

2016 Census Survey

Snapshot – Comparison of 2015 and 2016

2015 vs. 2016		
2015		2016
1112	Total Responses	4084
1999	Verbatim Comments	2953
95% +/- 2.88%	Confidence Level	95% +/- 1.4%
73.4% 10.8%	Study Load Full Time Part Time	85% 15%
63.8% 12.9%	Degree Level Undergraduate Postgraduate (Coursework)	76% 24%

Part 1 – Overall understanding of SSAF

Initial questions assessed students' understanding of the purpose of SSAF and the allocation of the funds. Only 16% of respondents replied that they had a 'good' understanding of the purpose of the SSAF and only 5% had a 'good' understanding of where funds are spent. See Figure 1.

Furthermore, 50% had 'no' to 'a vague' understanding of the purpose of the SSAF, and 75% had 'no' to 'a vague' understanding of where funds are spent.

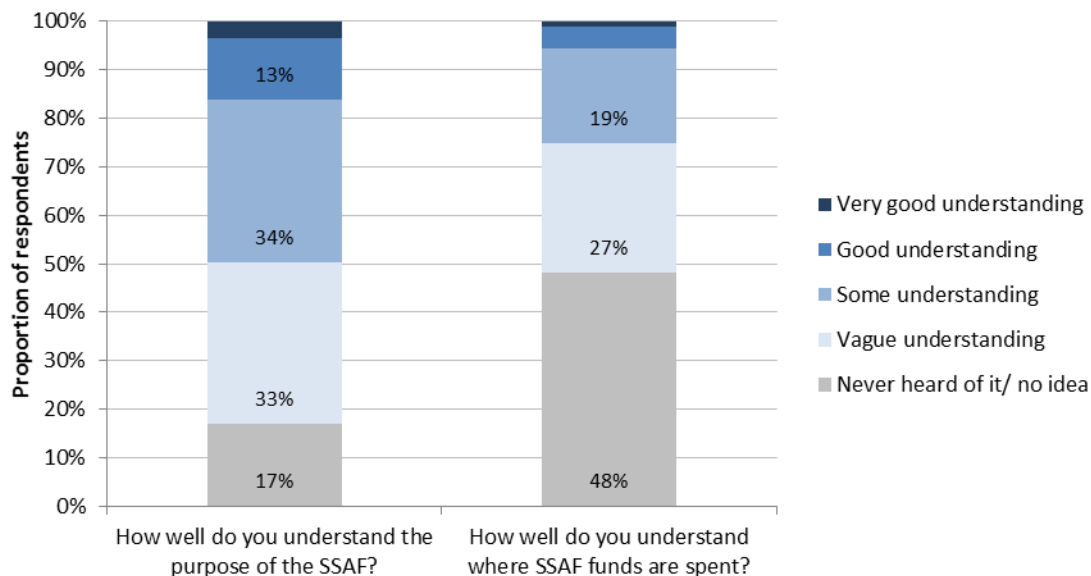
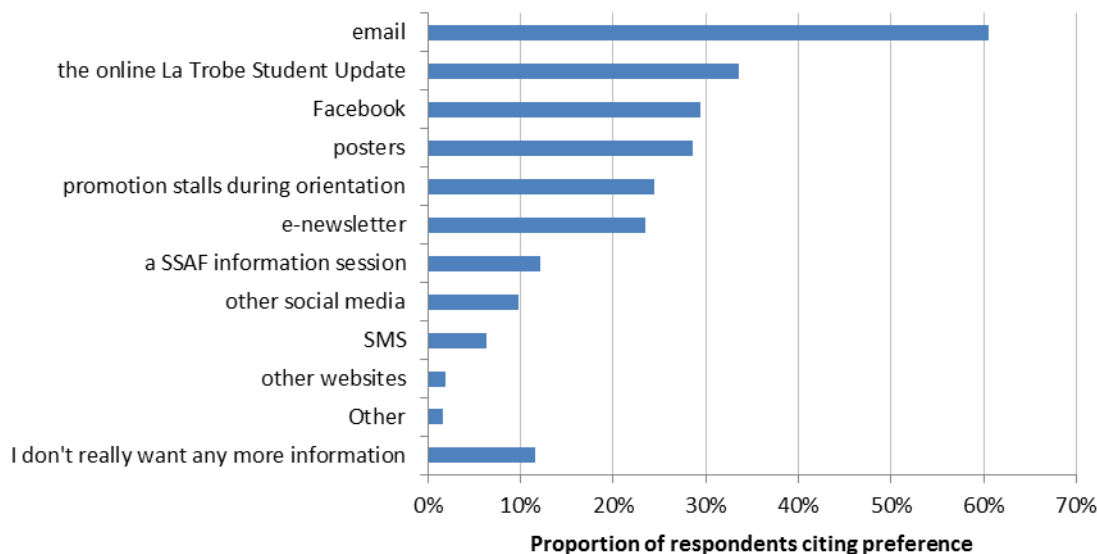


Figure 1. Respondents' rating of their understanding of the purpose of SSAF and of where SSAF funds are spent (n=4616)

Students were also asked how they would prefer to receive information about SSAF fees and the allocation of funding. If more information was provided about SSAF, 60% indicated they would like this to be done via email. Other online options were also popular.



Part 2 – SSAF Funding Areas of Importance

The key questions that were asked of all students focused on the 19 allowable funding areas. These were presented as 17 categories by combining some of the areas.

In the survey, the category “Advice and advocacy for students in relation to the University’s rules” was a combination of the funding areas:

- “Advice in relation to the University’s rules” and
- “Advocacy for students in relation to the University’s rules”

The survey category “Support around finances and insurance” was a combination of the funding areas:

- “Support around finances” and
- “Support around insurance”

Presented with the survey questions was a link to a webpage with an explanation of the 19 SSAF funding areas.

Table 1. represents how students ranked the importance of funding areas by categories.

When reviewing these results it should be kept in mind that the SSAF funding areas are not clearly understood by many students, as evidenced by the findings above. Even though definitions and examples were provided, many people did not refer to these and the categories themselves can be difficult to interpret. As a result, students may not know what services currently provided fit into those categories. When rating the importance of services and amenities it is possible that many students are not fully considering the value that is currently provided. The ongoing communication and engagement around SSAF is necessary if informed input is to be gained from students.

Table 1. Importance of funding areas by categories (1 = Not at all important to 4 = Very important)

	Health & Welfare	Employment	Food & Drink	Study Skills	Finance & Insurance	Overseas Student Support	Libraries & Reading Rooms	Orientation	Sport & Recreation	Securing Housing	Legal Services	Clubs & Societies	Advice & Advocacy	Childcare Services	Artistic Activities	Student Media	Debating
Grand Total	3.53	3.39	3.37	3.37	3.18	3.18	3.18	3.15	3.11	3.10	3.07	3.01	2.99	2.97	2.76	2.73	2.49
Albury-Wodonga	3.58	3.34	3.41	3.49	3.16	3.10	2.96	3.35	3.04	3.17	3.03	3.01	3.11	3.16	2.67	2.69	2.45
Bendigo	3.57	3.33	3.43	3.40	3.19	3.12	3.15	3.15	3.13	3.13	2.96	3.06	2.94	2.92	2.68	2.66	2.42
Bundoora	3.53	3.41	3.36	3.35	3.18	3.21	3.19	3.13	3.11	3.10	3.11	3.00	3.00	2.96	2.77	2.74	2.50
City Collins St.	3.42	3.35	3.25	3.40	3.16	3.24	3.22	3.19	3.18	2.94	3.01	3.04	3.01	2.97	2.94	2.89	2.80
City Franklin St.	3.53	3.22	3.05	3.39	3.07	3.20	2.97	3.00	3.14	3.02	3.12	2.93	3.12	3.14	2.65	2.61	2.63
Mildura	3.49	3.33	3.45	3.51	3.08	2.90	3.20	3.24	2.95	3.12	3.01	2.96	3.00	3.23	2.70	2.78	2.44
Shepparton	3.41	3.46	3.43	3.42	3.23	2.93	3.28	3.33	3.13	2.99	2.84	2.93	2.88	2.99	2.72	2.69	2.46
Domestic	3.54	3.37	3.38	3.35	3.15	3.10	3.16	3.12	3.07	3.09	3.02	2.99	2.96	2.97	2.71	2.68	2.41
International	3.49	3.46	3.33	3.44	3.34	3.53	3.27	3.28	3.28	3.20	3.29	3.10	3.15	2.98	2.95	2.96	2.86
Postgraduate	3.51	3.41	3.27	3.44	3.17	3.27	3.10	3.21	3.15	3.12	3.19	2.99	3.14	3.10	2.83	2.80	2.62
Undergraduate	3.54	3.38	3.40	3.35	3.18	3.15	3.20	3.13	3.10	3.10	3.04	3.02	2.95	2.93	2.73	2.71	2.45
<20	3.56	3.41	3.43	3.35	3.32	3.19	3.27	3.19	3.20	3.21	3.08	3.12	2.95	2.91	2.80	2.78	2.53
20-24	3.51	3.40	3.38	3.32	3.13	3.14	3.18	3.10	3.09	3.05	3.02	3.01	2.90	2.84	2.70	2.71	2.43
25-29	3.51	3.43	3.27	3.38	3.15	3.18	3.14	3.12	3.10	3.04	3.10	2.93	3.05	3.06	2.78	2.71	2.54
30-39	3.52	3.33	3.33	3.47	3.12	3.24	3.04	3.19	3.05	3.08	3.11	2.90	3.16	3.24	2.75	2.62	2.50
40-50	3.57	3.27	3.33	3.53	3.08	3.22	3.12	3.31	3.05	3.15	3.17	2.90	3.24	3.26	2.85	2.78	2.49
>50	3.65	3.30	3.40	3.56	3.18	3.43	3.06	3.32	2.98	3.31	3.24	3.04	3.23	3.37	2.94	2.90	2.69
Most important	Middle																Least important
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

- The funding areas that were rated as more important are shown in green (generally towards the left of the table).

Part 3 – Additional Comments & Feedback

Qualitative data was also gathered in the survey. Students were invited to:

1. *Thinking about the services and amenities that the SSAF funds, how can student support, student engagement or the student experience (outside of classes) be improved?*

The comments were analysed and responses were quantified into themes. The analysis in this instance generated 9 major themes, incorporating 2953 responses (excluding any responses classed as uncategorized or No comment/not applicable).

Appendix 3 provides an in-depth analysis of the qualitative data.

Response Statistics

The survey generated 4084 responses. This number of responses provides an overall confidence level of 95% +/- 1.4%. In terms of campus breakdowns, the largest responses were generated by *Bundoora (Melbourne)* (73%) and *Bendigo* (17%). *Full time* students contributed the largest response (85%) for study load, *undergraduate* (76%) for degree level and *20-24* (41%) for age range.

Appendix 1 provides an in-depth analysis of response statistics.

Key Findings – Spending Priorities

1. SSAF ALLOCATION – TOP 5 OVERALL

In terms of overall responses, students identified the following five priority areas for funding:

1. *Health & Welfare (M=3.53 out of 4)*
2. *Employment (M=3.39)*
3. *Food & Drink (M=3.37)*
4. *Study Skills (M=3.37)*
5. *Finance & Insurance (M=3.18)*

An outline of the top 5 spending areas for each demographic group may be found in Appendix 1.

2. SSAF ALLOCATION - SATISFACTION

The survey identified the following satisfaction rankings for funding areas:

1. *Orientation (M=3.98 out of 5)*
2. *Food & Drink (M=3.97)*
3. *Health & Welfare (M=3.88)*
4. *Sport & Recreation (M=3.85)*
5. *Study Skills (M=3.84)*

Table 2 represents student's satisfaction with funding areas by categories.

Table 2. Satisfaction with funding areas by categories (1 = Very dissatisfied to 5 = Very satisfied)

	Orientation	Food & Drink	Health & Welfare	Sport & Recreation	Study Skills	Libraries & Reading Rooms	Clubs & Societies	Advice & Advocacy	Securing Housing	Student Media	Legal Services	Overseas Student Support	Artistic Activities	Finance & Insurance	Debating	Employment	Childcare Services
% used service*	63%	90%	42%	50%	54%	72%	49%	41%	27%	38%	20%	25%	32%	31%	25%	36%	15%
Grand Total	3.98	3.97	3.88	3.85	3.84	3.84	3.82	3.78	3.72	3.72	3.68	3.61	3.56	3.53	3.52	3.49	3.44
Albury-Wodonga	3.99	3.93	3.96	3.54	3.72	3.51	3.65	3.81	3.79	3.76	3.86	4.24	3.66	3.23	3.18	3.55	3.42
Bendigo	4.00	4.04	4.04	3.81	3.92	3.86	3.83	3.82	3.94	3.71	3.75	3.66	3.47	3.54	3.41	3.66	3.41
Bundoora	3.97	3.97	3.84	3.93	3.83	3.85	3.85	3.77	3.68	3.73	3.67	3.60	3.59	3.54	3.56	3.46	3.49
City Collins St.	3.93	3.90	3.75	3.59	3.93	4.05	3.70	3.91	3.54	3.96	3.73	3.64	3.67	3.65	3.65	3.27	3.10
City Franklin St.	3.97	3.65	3.93	3.61	3.89	3.79	3.54	3.88	3.64	3.31	4.14	3.61	3.50	3.53	3.18	3.08	3.71
Mildura	4.00	3.43	4.17	3.03	4.02	3.88	3.26	3.68	3.55	3.63	3.57	3.56	3.24	3.80	3.19	3.64	2.80
Shepparton	4.00	3.86	3.81	2.77	3.92	3.52	3.14	3.74	3.00	3.55	3.07	3.27	3.45	3.09	3.55	3.56	2.69
Domestic	3.94	3.96	3.88	3.84	3.84	3.78	3.79	3.73	3.68	3.65	3.58	3.54	3.50	3.50	3.39	3.47	3.31
International	4.11	4.00	3.88	3.91	3.86	4.10	3.92	3.94	3.83	3.95	3.86	3.70	3.78	3.61	3.81	3.55	3.69
Postgraduate	4.01	3.89	3.89	3.89	3.88	3.96	3.90	3.82	3.73	3.79	3.82	3.69	3.73	3.56	3.69	3.46	3.54
Undergraduate	3.96	3.99	3.88	3.85	3.83	3.81	3.80	3.77	3.72	3.70	3.63	3.57	3.52	3.52	3.47	3.50	3.40
<20	4.03	4.19	3.99	4.00	3.91	3.97	3.91	3.88	3.90	3.85	3.69	3.69	3.66	3.64	3.53	3.60	3.50
20-24	3.96	3.95	3.87	3.81	3.81	3.81	3.83	3.76	3.71	3.72	3.74	3.66	3.55	3.51	3.58	3.47	3.52
25-29	3.92	3.80	3.75	3.77	3.78	3.73	3.66	3.71	3.56	3.59	3.63	3.46	3.55	3.38	3.49	3.42	3.40
30-39	3.84	3.79	3.69	3.68	3.80	3.78	3.68	3.67	3.44	3.60	3.63	3.47	3.55	3.46	3.41	3.37	3.21
40-50	4.07	3.75	3.99	3.86	3.91	3.76	3.75	3.78	3.34	3.51	3.49	3.50	3.19	3.41	3.19	3.45	3.23
>50	4.06	3.97	4.17	3.72	3.85	3.71	3.70	3.67	3.63	3.48	3.00	3.80	3.52	3.70	3.08	3.86	2.80
Most satisfied	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

* Note that students could rate their satisfaction out of 5 or respond "Haven't used it". A number of the funding areas had very low rates of use, particularly when broken down by the categories above. For many areas, only the total or Bundoora have a substantial number of responses. Care should be taken in interpreting the results from other groups

Key Findings – Qualitative Data

After answering scaled questions on satisfaction and importance (above), respondents were asked to give written responses to the question: “Thinking about the services and amenities that the SSAF funds, how can student support, student engagement or the student experience (outside of classes) be improved?”

The most common themes are listed in Table 3. along with some examples of the types of suggestions for each.

The following diagram illustrates the stages in the analytical process:



Note: a comment may contain multiple responses

A full list of themes and subthemes can be found in Appendix 2.

Table 3. Summary of major qualitative themes for general improvements

Number of responses	Major themes (more than 100 responses)
512	Increasing Awareness - of services and SSAF funding and more awareness in general needed
395	Spaces – Provide more or improved areas such as Study/Quiet Areas; Informal/Social/Lounge Spaces; and Outdoor Spaces
287	Support Services – Provide more or improved services such as academic mentoring/support and employment assistance/industry networking opportunities
282	Facilities/Resources - including more facilities, maintenance, greater affordability and accessibility. Specific examples included parking, and food preparation areas.
217	Food - including better or more options, greater affordability, and healthier choices
214	Activities and events – requesting more in general (most did not specify what kind of activities); Arts Activities/Spaces; and After Hours Activities
166	Representation/Inclusiveness – of all students or specific groups such as International or Mature Age students
130	Student Participation/Input - in SSAF funding or generally, and the use of these survey results
109	Sports/Recreation - more activities, better facilities, more events, subsidised fees

Recommendations

Through the considered analysis of student responses the following seven recommendations are proposed;

1. The 2016 SSAF allocations will be aligned with these priorities. An articulation of the activities will form part of the feedback to the student community.
2. Students will continue to be consulted and their priorities identified and considered for future allocations of SSAF.
3. Explore the feasibility of consulting students on a more regular basis.
4. Source a new vendor to revamp the SSAF survey and provide improved data solutions.
5. Continued review of the student survey to improve student understanding and rate of response through consultation and feedback from key stakeholders including SSAG.
6. Outcomes of student consultation will be shared with key decision makers to better inform planning from the student perspective e.g. I&O.
7. Align with strategic vision for La Trobe e.g. FFR - Optimising Student Support Services.
8. Strengthen planning, reporting and overall approach of the administration and allocation of SSAF funding.
9. Ensure reports of SSAF funding are advertised and easily accessible.
10. Increase overall response rate.