LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

VP Administration
Student Services and Administration

STUDENT CONSULTATION REPORT 2017
February 2018

STUDENT SERVICES & AMENITIES FEE (SSAF): Student Consultation Report
2017

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November 2018

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Executive Summary

Since the introduction of the Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF) in 2011, La Trobe University has undertaken extensive, annual consultation with students to identify key priority areas for expenditure in the delivery of services and amenities for our students.

As part of this strategy, in 2017 students were invited to partake in the online Student Census Survey that achieved a total of 4721 responses (confidence level of 95% +/- 1.32%). 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 Support
3. Study Skills
4. Food and Drink
5. Non- academic libraries

The Annual SSAF Survey provides feedback and delivers a source of information that will continue to determine priorities for SSAF funding each year, the survey results will complement other consultation processes with students and assist in identifying student priorities and informing future SSAF spending.

Background

Introduced in 2011, the Australian Parliament passed amendment's to the *Services, Amenities, Representation and Advocacy Guidelines* of *Higher Education Legislation Support Act 2003* enabling universities and to charge a fee for student services and amenities of a non-academic nature.

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

Since the introduction of SSAF, funding has enabled a significant number of improvements to services, facilities and amenities used by students across all La Trobe University, Victorian campuses.

The legislation outlines the requirements for the University to consult with students, (including democratically elected student representatives) on how revenue from the fee is allocated and spent. *"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).

Reporting to the Vice President (Administration) SSAG acts as an advisory body for all items concerning SSAF, managing the process for ongoing consultation and budget allocations. SSAG meet at least four times a year to plan and review consultation methodology as proposing budget allocations for the following year.

2017 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.

In 2017 the consultation methodologies were submitted to the University Council in the form of a report. The guidelines were collectively reviewed and approved by the University Council in April 2017.

During the development phase of the 2018 strategy, the proposed consultation processes are submitted to SSAG for endorsement before presenting to the Vice President Administration, for submission and final approval to La Trobe University Council.

Foundation of La Trobe University's SSAF consultation for 2017:

Review Phase:

- Review SSAF allocation and associated consultation methodologies to identify areas of improvement.
- Recommend improvements to strengthen governance, consultation, engagement and compliance.
- Present and discuss key findings from the previous student consultation survey, capital planning and the allocation of funds with Student Services Advisory Group (SSAG).
- Report on outputs and delivery of SSAF funded projects.

Consult:

- Survey enrolled students to measure current awareness, satisfaction and to identify key spending priorities, ensuring SSAF funding allocations are responsive to student needs
- Consult with Student Associations and SSAG members; formally at a minimum of 4 meetings per year (or more frequently if required)
- Advise the Vice President (Administration) on all SSAF recommendations resulting from SSAG member and student consultations.
- Consult with University Council to advise and seek approval of the student consultation process.

Update:

- Update the previous SSAF Student Consultation Survey methodologies based on review and consultation.
- Revise the SSAF website to increase overall accessibility and usability and to better inform and engage students on SSAF.

Circulate:

- Circulate the Annual Consultation Report and appendices online, encouraging additional feedback on key findings and recommendations.
- Communicate SSAF Financial Allocation Report and Budget online annually (by end February). 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.
- Publish information on SSAF related developments and projects in the 'Weekly student update' email to raise continuing awareness including SSAF channels of contact to encourage students to provide feedback and share their insights concerning SSAF.

2017 Census Survey

Response & Engagement

The survey generated 4721 completed responses. This number of responses provides an overall confidence level of 95% +/- 1.32%. In terms of campus breakdowns, the largest responses were generated by *Bundoora (Melbourne)* (70%) and *Bendigo* (20%). *Full time* students contributed the largest response (86%) for study load, *undergraduate* (78%) for degree level and *20-24* (41%) for age range. See appendices 4 and 5 for more detail on responses by demographic and campus.

2016 v. 2017		
2017		**2016**
4721	**Total Responses**	4084
2648	**Verbatim Comments**	2353
95% +/- 1.32%	**Confidence Level**	95% +/- 1.4%
86% 14%	**Study Load** Full Time Part Time	85% 15%
78% 22%	**Degree Level** Undergraduate Postgraduate (Coursework)	76% 24%

Table 1. Response rates and high-level demographics 2016 and 2017

Key Findings – Spending Priorities

In 2017, students were presented with 14 areas of allowable spending, Appendix 3 illustrates the categories and logic of grouping key spending areas from 19 to 14.

Through apportioning importance across the 14 categories, student responses identified the top 5 priority areas for funding. The top spending priorities remain the same as 2016, with a slight reorder of preference between *Study Skills* and *Food & Drink*.

Top 5 Areas of Importance				
Rank	**Funding area 2017**	**Mean (1 to 3)**	**Funding area 2016**	**Mean (1 to 3)**
1	Health & welfare	2.85	Health & welfare	2.54
2	Employment support	2.79	Employment support	2.40
3	Study skills	2.77	Food & drink	2.39
4	Food & drink	2.77	Study skills	2.38
5	Non-academic libraries	2.68	Non-academic libraries	2.21

Table 2. Top 5 areas of importance

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.

SSAF ALLOCATION - SATISFACTION

For the most part the top 5 reported as most important are also areas of greater satisfaction with the exception to Non-academic libraries (student recreational/multipurpose space), resulting in high levels of importance, but lacking in overall satisfaction.
Appendix 45provides greater detail of student responses by key demographics and campus.

Satisfaction Results				
Rank	**Funding area 2017**	**Mean (1 to 3)**	**Funding area 2016**	**Mean (1 to 3)**
1	Orientation information	2.67	Orientation information	2.71
2	Health & welfare	2.65	Food & drink	2.67
3	Study skills	2.60	Health & welfare	2.65
4	Advice & advocacy	2.58	Study skills	2.63
5	Food & drink	2.53	Advice & advocacy	2.62

Table 3. Top 5 areas of satisfaction

CAMPUS SPECIFIC – PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Students were presented with campus specific information and questions regarding their satisfaction and priorities for improvements, the following are key themes of improvement summarised using qualitative and/or qualitative responses.

Albury-Wodonga	**Melbourne (Bundoora)**
1. Student recreation spaces and lounges	1. Increasing awareness of services
2. More variety in food pantry	2. Facilities/Amenities
3. Student kitchenette and Microwave facilities	3. Improved study spaces/lounges
Bendigo	**Mildura**
1. Increased food and beverage options	1. Student facilities including kitchenette
2. More diverse events during semester	2. Increasing awareness of services
3. Access to nurse on campus	3. Improved food options
City Campus	**Shepparton**
1. Support services	1. Improved food options
2. Events and Entertainment	2. Student facilities including kitchenette
3. Facilities/Amenities	3. Support services

Table 4. Priorities for improvement (Campus Specific)

Overall understanding of SSAF

In 2017, 20% of respondents reported a 'good/very good' understanding of the *purpose* of SSAF with 8% a 'good/very good' understanding of where funds are spent. See Figure 1. These figures have increased slightly compared to the 2016.

Furthermore, 63% had 'a vague' to 'some' understanding of the purpose of the SSAF, and 42% had 'a vague' to 'some' understanding of where funds are spent.

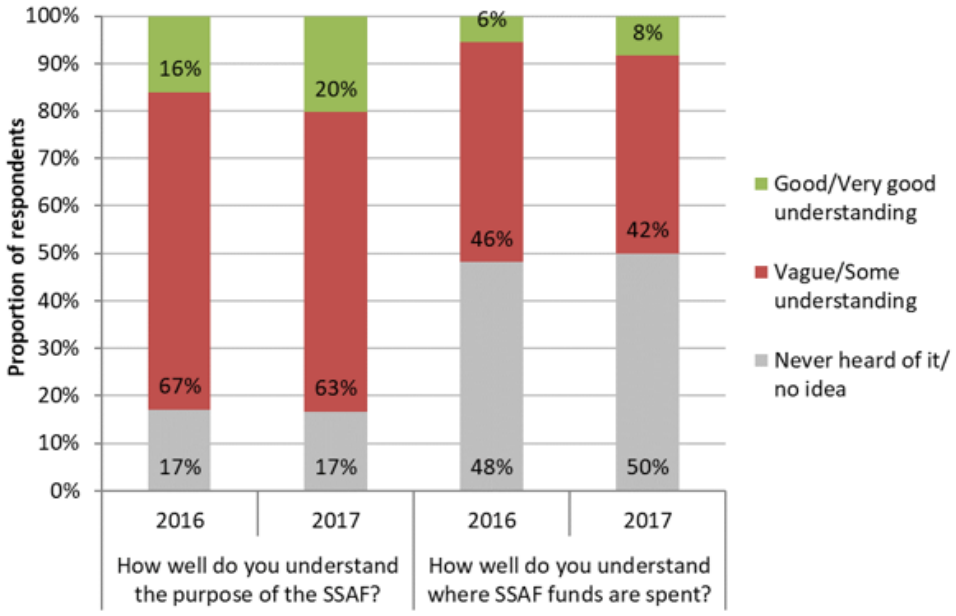


Figure 1. 2016/2017 SSAF Survey comparison - Respondents' rating of their understanding of the purpose of SSAF and of where SSAF funds are spent.

Preference of how to share information and send correspondence regarding SSAF was surveyed, resulting in the top 3 preferences of; email, posters and then Facebook.

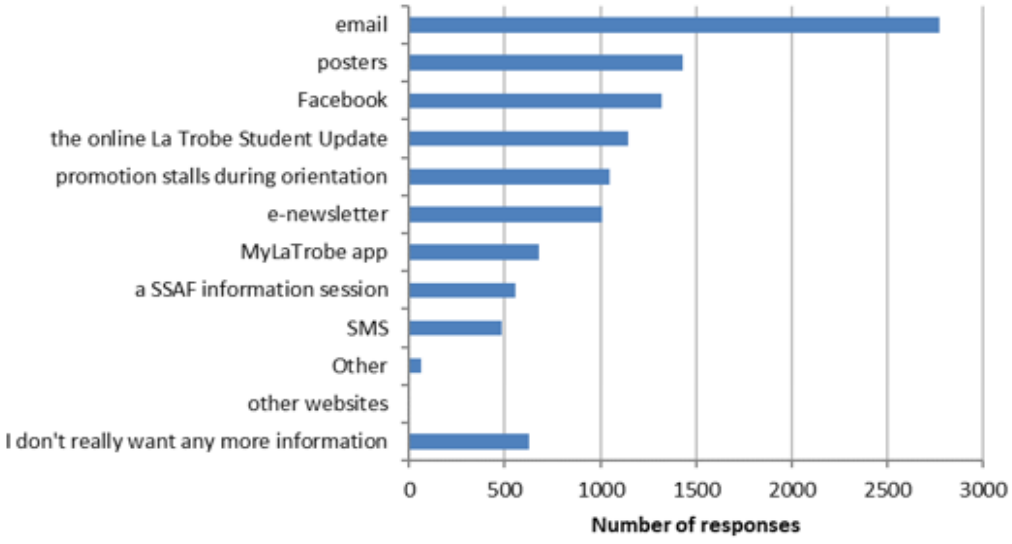


Figure 2. Respondents' preferred method for receiving more information about SSAF

Key Findings – Qualitative Data

After providing quantitative responses regarding satisfaction and importance, students were invited to provide qualitative responses with the following 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?"*.

All verbatim responses were reviewed and collated into key themes. The analysis in this instance generated 10 key themes incorporating 2648 responses (excluding any responses classed as uncategorized or No comment/not applicable).

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 the full analysis report (Appendix 2)

Number of responses 2017	Number of responses 2016	Major themes (more than 100 responses)
2648	**2353**	**Total number of comments**
597	512	**Increasing Awareness** - of services and SSAF funding and more awareness in general needed
470	287	**Support Services** – Provide more or improved services such as academic mentoring/support and employment assistance/industry networking opportunities
428	214	**Activities and events** – requesting more in general (most did not specify what kind of activities); Arts Activities/Spaces; and After Hours Activities
395	395	**Spaces** – Provide more or improved areas such as Study/Quiet Areas; Informal/Social/Lounge Spaces; and Outdoor Spaces
253	54	**Promotion/Advertising** (Specific methods to improve awareness)
224	282	**Facilities/Resources -** including more facilities, maintenance, greater affordability and accessibility. Specific examples included parking, and food preparation areas.
218	217	**Food** - including better or more options, greater affordability, and healthier choices
171	166	**Representation/Inclusiveness** – of all students or specific groups such as International or Mature Age students
146	130	**Student Participation/Input** - in SSAF funding or generally, and the use of these survey results
109	109	**Sports/Recreation** - more activities, better facilities, more events, subsidised fees

Table 5. Summary of verbatim Reponses, identifying key themes

Recommendations

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

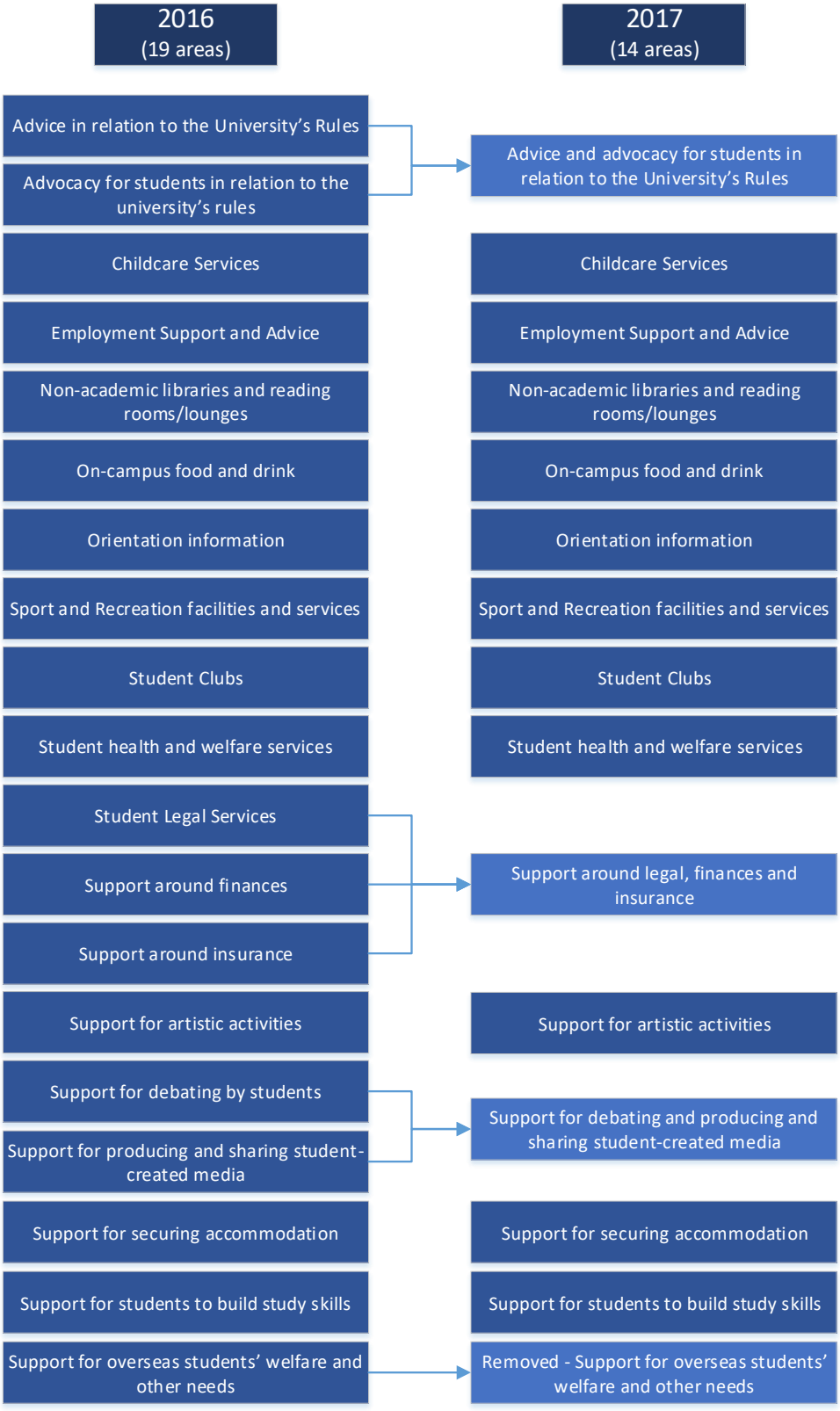
1. The 2018 SSAF budget allocations to be aligned with these priorities.
2. Carry out the 2018 census survey earlier in the year (proposed to be May 2018) to ensure there are no conflicts with exam period, student elections and the Student Experience survey. This new timeframe also provides a greater lead time to ensure the following year budget is as responsive to student priorities as possible.
3. Continue to work with First Person Consulting in 2018 (third year) to enable us to accurately compare 3 years of historical data, with the view of sourcing a new vendor to revamp the SSAF survey for 2019.
4. Continued review of the student survey to improve student understanding and rate of response through consultation and feedback from key stakeholders including SSAG.
5. Outcomes of student consultation to be shared with key decision makers to better inform planning from the student perspective including but not limited to ICT, I&O and LTLT.
6. Continue to partner with the student associations to strengthen planning, reporting and overall approach of the administration and allocation of SSAF funding.
7. Ensure reports of SSAF funding are advertised and easily accessible on the SSAF website.
8. Review and implement a strategic communication plan to increase student consultation engagement, SSAF awareness and satisfaction.

Appendices

1. **2018 SSAF Student Consultation Mechanisms – Report to Council**
2. **2017 SSAF Survey Results – Final Report Attachment 2**

Appedix 3: Grouping of allowable spending areas.

Note the category 'Support overseas students welfare and other needs' as the allowable propvison of support and welfare services is sufficently covered in the other categories.



Appedix 4: 2017 Importance by funding area and key demographics.

	Health & welfare	Employment support	Study skills	Food & drink	Non-academic libraries	Advice & advocacy	Legal, finances and insurance	Orientation information	Sport & recreation	Securing housing	Student clubs	Childcare services	Artistic activities	Debating and student media
Grand Total*	**2.85**	**2.79**	**2.77**	**2.77**	**2.68**	**2.67**	**2.66**	**2.64**	**2.62**	**2.59**	**2.55**	**2.49**	**2.39**	**2.32**
Albury-Wodonga	2.86	2.73	2.88	2.84	2.71	2.66	2.62	2.68	2.55	2.61	2.56	2.63	2.40	2.29
Bendigo	2.86	2.75	2.77	2.80	2.65	2.65	2.62	2.66	2.65	2.63	2.59	2.50	2.35	2.29
Bundoora	2.85	2.81	2.77	2.76	2.69	2.67	2.67	2.62	2.62	2.58	2.54	2.48	2.40	2.32
City	2.73	2.78	2.76	2.64	2.65	2.68	2.62	2.67	2.67	2.55	2.54	2.41	2.44	2.36
Mildura	2.87	2.79	2.79	2.75	2.58	2.73	2.73	2.71	2.46	2.71	2.40	2.68	2.38	2.34
Shepparton	2.85	2.78	2.84	2.78	2.69	2.70	2.66	2.72	2.54	2.60	2.49	2.49	2.41	2.39
<20	2.87	2.81	2.75	2.78	2.73	2.65	2.72	2.67	2.64	2.63	2.56	2.43	2.38	2.32
20-24	2.86	2.81	2.76	2.75	2.67	2.65	2.64	2.60	2.61	2.57	2.55	2.44	2.38	2.28
25-29	2.82	2.81	2.79	2.76	2.66	2.71	2.65	2.62	2.57	2.53	2.51	2.52	2.39	2.31
30-39	2.84	2.76	2.81	2.69	2.60	2.72	2.64	2.64	2.54	2.58	2.48	2.58	2.38	2.26
40-50	2.83	2.74	2.84	2.74	2.68	2.76	2.62	2.75	2.63	2.61	2.54	2.62	2.46	2.38
>50	2.82	2.71	2.82	2.73	2.51	2.76	2.55	2.71	2.60	2.65	2.52	2.59	2.51	2.22
Domestic	2.85	2.79	2.76	2.74	2.66	2.66	2.63	2.62	2.58	2.56	2.50	2.47	2.34	2.24
International	2.86	2.86	2.82	2.82	2.78	2.76	2.79	2.72	2.78	2.71	2.74	2.52	2.64	2.60
Postgraduate	2.82	2.80	2.79	2.72	2.62	2.69	2.65	2.67	2.64	2.58	2.53	2.50	2.42	2.32
Undergraduate	2.86	2.80	2.76	2.76	2.69	2.67	2.66	2.62	2.60	2.59	2.54	2.47	2.38	2.29

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

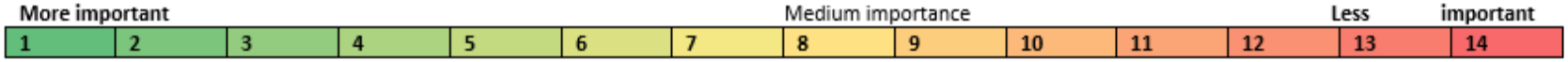


Table 6. Importance of funding areas by categories (1 = Not at all important, 2= somewhat important, 3= Important)

Appedix 5: 2017 Satisfaction by funding area and key demographics.

	Orientation information	Health & welfare	Study skills	Advice & advocacy	Food & drink	Student clubs	Sport & recreation	Securing housing	Legal, finances and insurance	Non-academic libraries	Employment support	Debating and student media	Childcare services	Artistic activities
Grand Total	2.67	2.65	2.60	2.58	2.53	2.52	2.51	2.47	2.46	2.46	2.42	2.38	2.36	2.33
Albury-Wodonga	2.62	2.61	2.50	2.47	2.58	2.35	2.41	2.42	2.34	2.52	2.41	2.37	2.32	2.17
Bendigo	2.71	2.75	2.64	2.62	2.57	2.57	2.43	2.52	2.52	2.48	2.44	2.35	2.31	2.30
Bundoora	2.66	2.61	2.59	2.57	2.54	2.52	2.57	2.47	2.45	2.45	2.41	2.38	2.38	2.34
City	2.67	2.62	2.59	2.55	2.36	2.38	2.23	2.37	2.55	2.47	2.37	2.31	2.25	2.21
Mildura	2.77	2.76	2.75	2.67	2.35	2.00	1.92	2.25	2.52	2.53	2.61	2.32	2.46	2.10
Shepparton	2.67	2.60	2.56	2.52	1.71	2.26	1.91	2.22	2.41	2.44	2.59	2.23	2.15	2.18
<20	2.68	2.69	2.64	2.60	2.61	2.49	2.54	2.60	2.45	2.49	2.44	2.31	2.38	2.33
20-24	2.66	2.60	2.58	2.56	2.53	2.52	2.49	2.40	2.47	2.41	2.40	2.37	2.42	2.32
25-29	2.62	2.62	2.56	2.55	2.44	2.42	2.41	2.40	2.46	2.44	2.41	2.33	2.37	2.23
30-39	2.62	2.54	2.58	2.53	2.37	2.40	2.33	2.33	2.36	2.53	2.39	2.24	2.15	2.10
40-50	2.69	2.71	2.65	2.65	2.47	2.37	2.48	2.11	2.44	2.57	2.48	2.30	2.31	2.13
>50	2.71	2.58	2.65	2.63	2.57	2.36	2.71	2.25	2.22	2.52	2.35	2.31	2.50	2.28
Domestic	2.65	2.62	2.59	2.56	2.52	2.45	2.47	2.45	2.42	2.42	2.41	2.28	2.30	2.23
International	2.72	2.64	2.65	2.64	2.50	2.62	2.52	2.49	2.53	2.63	2.42	2.49	2.48	2.47
Postgraduate	2.67	2.60	2.63	2.59	2.49	2.54	2.47	2.40	2.46	2.58	2.32	2.41	2.39	2.34
Undergraduate	2.66	2.63	2.59	2.57	2.53	2.47	2.49	2.48	2.45	2.42	2.44	2.31	2.35	2.27

Medium satisfaction

More satisfied ... Less satisfied

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14

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

Table 7. Satisfaction with funding areas (1 = Dissatisfied, 2 = neither, 3 Satisfied)