

2019 SSAF Survey Report



JAMES COOK
UNIVERSITY
AUSTRALIA



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BACKGROUND

In October 2011, the Government passed legislation (Guidelines) allowing universities to charge a fee for student services and amenities (SSAF) of a non-academic nature from January 2012. All JCU students are required to pay this fee (except for a small number of exempt students). The SSAF legislation permits nineteen allowable categories of expenditure and outlines the requirements for JCU to consult with students.

JCU actively seeks to consult with, and obtain feedback from its students in determining priorities for SSAF funding, engaging in a range of consultation processes with students including:

- Establishment and annual meetings of SSAF Income Allocation Working Group, consisting of membership across both JCU and the JCU Student Association;
- Bi-annual consultation with the broader student body through the SSAF survey;
- Attendance of the Vice Chancellor appointed nominee (Deputy Vice Chancellor Students) at JCU Student Association Council Meetings;
- Regular scheduled meetings between the Deputy Vice Chancellor Students (or nominee) and JCU Student Association President;
- Regular meetings between JCU Student Association and Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor Students;
- Annual JCU Student Association induction on SSAF process with incoming JCUSA Council members;
- Feedback from Student Advisory Forums.

METHODOLOGY

The Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor Students drafted and administered the online 2019 SSAF Survey, with assistance from the Student Services Communications Team. The SSAF survey is part of ongoing student consultation processes used to inform and determine priorities for SSAF funding in 2020 and 2021. The Student SSAF Survey was open for two weeks from 25 July to 8 August 2019. Every JCUA student (excluding JCUB and JCUS) who pays SSAF received an email inviting them to complete the Survey.

As an incentive for students to enter, they could elect to go into a draw to win a \$500 JB Hi-Fi Gift Voucher, or one of three \$50 Gift Vouchers at the Co-op Bookshop upon the completion of the survey. The Survey completion time was estimated to take around 8-10 minutes.

The SSAF Survey was distributed through the following channels:

- Email to all students in JCU Australia (except JCUB and JCUS)
- JCU and JCUSA Students Facebook pages
- Student Bulletins: 26 July and 2 August 2019
- SSAF Website
- Student email alias lists: Student Advisory Forum representatives, PASS Leaders and Student Mentors
- Market Day Stall

The survey consisted of 22 questions, broken into 3 sections:

1. General Information - student demographic
2. Ranking SSAF allowable categories on scale of importance
3. Feedback on students' awareness and understanding of SSAF and suggestions for future spending

Our commitment to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

James Cook University is committed to building strong and mutually beneficial partnerships that work towards closing the employment, health and education gap for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Our students come from many backgrounds, promoting rich cultural and experiential diversity on campus.

We acknowledge the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters where we operate our business. We honour the unique cultural and spiritual relationship to the land, waters and seas of First Australian peoples and their continuing and rich contribution to JCU and Australian society. We also pay respect to ancestors and Elders past, present and future.



*Kassandra Savage (JCU Alumni),
'Coming Together and Respecting Difference',
acrylic on canvas, 2014, 90cm x 90cm.*

SURVEY RESULTS

In total 904 students participated in the Survey, a decrease from 1427 students in 2017.

Similarly to 2017, students were asked to rank the 19 allowable categories of SSAF on a scale of importance to them ranging from "Not at all important" to "Somewhat important" up to "Extremely important". Whilst 904 students participated in the Survey, 26 skipped category preferences, resulting in 878 responses.

The top 5 student responses remain generally the same, apart from a slight reorder of preference between "Helping students to obtain employment or career advice" and "Promoting health and welfare of students".

TOP 5 AREAS OF IMPORTANCE

RANK	SSAF CATEGORY 2017	MEAN	SSAF CATEGORY 2019	MEAN
1	Helping students obtain employment or career advice	4.12	Promoting health and welfare of students	4.26
2	Promoting health and welfare of students	4.09	Helping students obtain employment or career advice	4.21
3	Helping students with financial affairs	3.98	Helping students with financial affairs	4.03
4	Providing libraries and reading rooms	3.89	Providing libraries and reading rooms	3.93
5	Helping students develop skills for study	3.80	Helping students develop skills for study	3.79

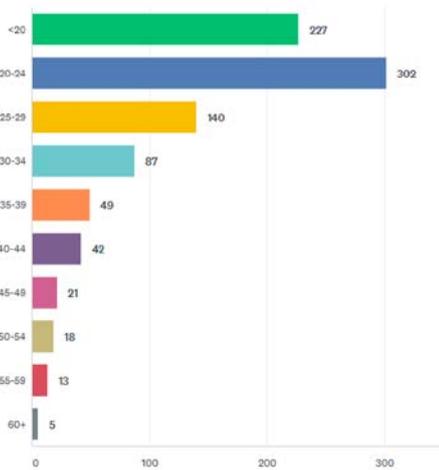
The top 5 priority categories by campus are generally the same, with some disparities which could be attributed to differences in location or study type e.g. students studying on larger campuses, external students and those in remote locations.

CAMPUS	RESPONSES	PREF 1	PREF 2	PREF 3	PREF 4	PREF 5
TOWNSVILLE	587	Health and welfare	Employment and career advice	Helping with financial affairs	Libraries and reading rooms	Helping find accommodation
CAIRNS	196	Employment and career advice	Health and welfare	Helping with financial affairs	Libraries and reading rooms	Study skills
EXTERNAL	80	Health and welfare	Employment and career advice	Helping with financial affairs	Study skills	Advocating for students
MACKAY	13	Libraries and reading rooms	Helping with financial affairs	Employment and career advice	Health and welfare	Helping find accommodation
MOUNT ISA	2	Employment and career advice, financial affairs & study skills (*rated equally)	Advising on HE rules & Advocating for students' interest (*rated equally)			

Student demographics

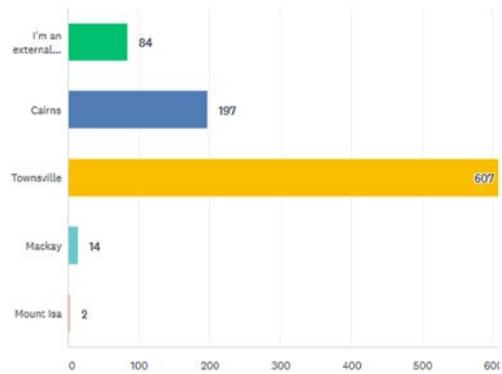
What is your age bracket?

Answered: 904 Skipped: 0



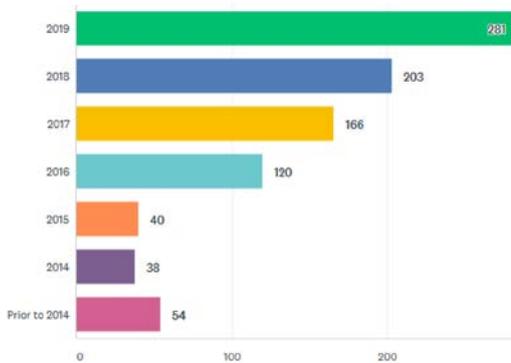
Which campus are you studying at?

Answered: 904 Skipped: 0



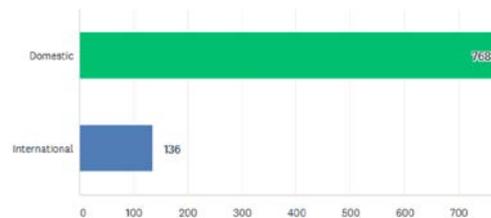
What year did you commence studying at JCU?

Answered: 902 Skipped: 2



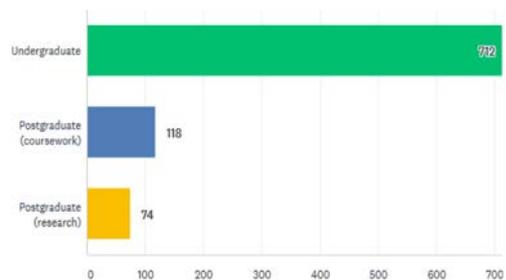
Are you a domestic or international student?

Answered: 904 Skipped: 0



What is your current level of study?

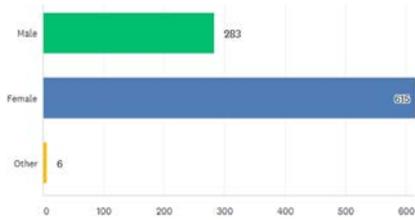
Answered: 904 Skipped: 0



Student demographics

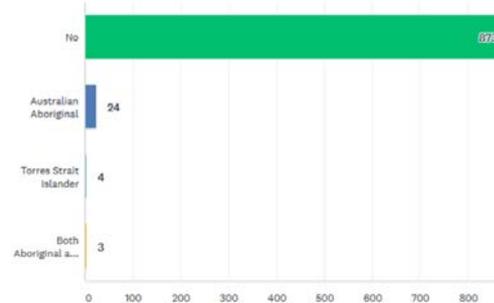
What gender do you identify as?

Answered: 904 Skipped: 0



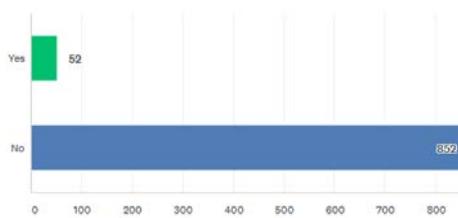
Do you identify as Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

Answered: 904 Skipped: 0



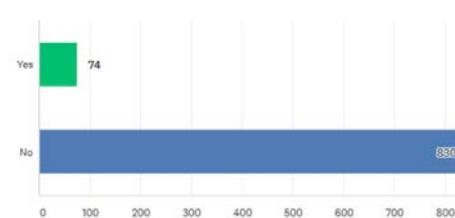
Do you have a disability?

Answered: 902 Skipped: 2



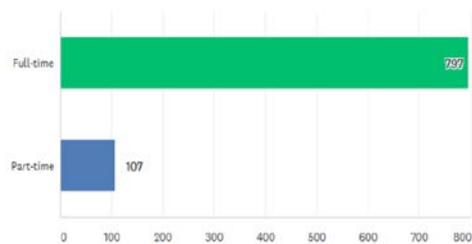
Do you require childcare while studying?

Answered: 904 Skipped: 0



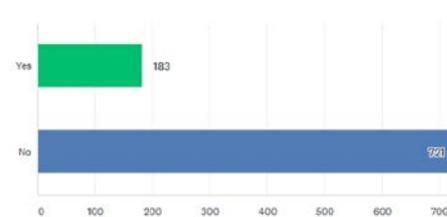
What is your study load?

Answered: 904 Skipped: 0



Are you from a non-English speaking background?

Answered: 904 Skipped: 0



Categories ranked in order of scale of importance as per survey results (overall weighted average):

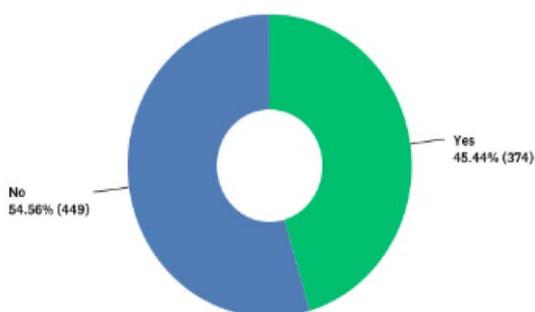
878 students responded; 26 skipped

RANK	CATEGORY	MEAN
1	Promoting health and welfare of students	4.26
2	Helping students obtain employment or career advice	4.21
3	Helping students with financial affairs	4.03
4	Providing libraries and reading rooms	3.93
5	Helping students develop skills for study	3.79
6	Providing food and drink to students on campus	3.78
7	Helping students find and secure accommodation	3.73
8	Providing legal services to students	3.44
9	Advocating students' interests in matters arising under the higher education providers' rules	3.42
10	Supporting the administration club	3.33
11	Giving students information to help with orientation	3.31
12	Helping meet the specific needs of overseas students regarding welfare, accommodation and employment	3.30
13	Supporting sport or other recreational activity	3.25
14	Caring for children of students	3.25
15	Helping students obtain insurance against personal accidents	3.12
16	Supporting artistic activities by students	3.11
17	Advising on matters arising under the higher education providers' rules	3.04
18	Supporting the production and distribution of media created by students, to students	3.02
19	Supporting debating by students	2.81

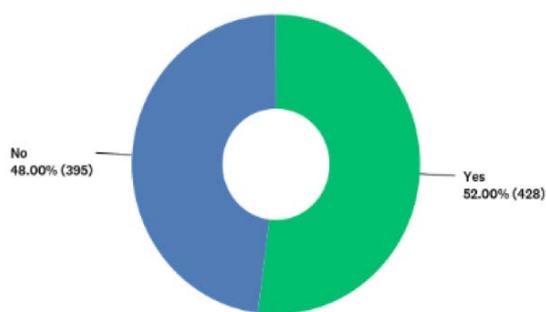
Overall communication and awareness of SSAF

823 students responded to the below questions:

Prior to today, did JCU Student Association communicate sufficiently to make you are of the Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF)?



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When asked to provide reasons for the importance/non-importance of their priorities, student responses were collated into key themes:

427 students responded; 26 skipped

NO. OF RESPONSES (427)	MAJOR THEMES (MORE THAN 20)
	<i>More important..</i>
108	Library and study spaces are important for study and networking activities and services offered are extremely helpful.
60	Health and wellbeing is important and services that alleviate stress allow students to focus on their studies.
51	Clubs, sport and other recreational activities are an important way to help students with their mental and physical health, and to make new friends.
42	Activities and social events are important for social interaction between students across academic disciplines and promotes a community feel
30	Employment and career advice – students want assistance in identifying and improving career paths and prospects.
27	Childcare – students with children often struggle with costs of childcare, timetabling clashes with school and achieving a study/life balance.
24	Food can be expensive and limited options available.
21	Financial assistance – students are under increasing financial pressure.
	<i>Less important..</i>
9	Debating – seems a bit less important than other priorities.
	<i>General comments..</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most categories don't apply to external students.• A lot of extra-curricular activities do not appeal to mature age students.

Students were asked to provide a suggestion for a project to be funded by the SSA Fee in 2020—2021?

325 students responded

CATEGORY/THEME	SUGGESTION
SUPPORTING SPORT, CLUBS AND SOCIETIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More sports carnivals and talent competitions. • Dedicate a space for musical arts. • Wider range of clubs for people to join. • Upgrade the pool in Townsville. • Introduce a range of interfaculty competitions e.g. sports/art/debating etc. • More governance support and financial aid for clubs and societies. • Make gym membership free or discounted for students. • Indoor sports stadium.
LIBRARIES AND STUDENT SPACES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beautify the campuses with more art. • Construct a 'motivational/stress' wall where students are allowed to write motivational slogans etc. • Revamp engineering building in Townsville. • Larger 24 hour section in the library with quiet areas and possibly sleeping areas. • More group study spaces with power points for charging. • Build BBQ areas for social activities and collaboration. • A purpose built bicycle area and more bicycle racks around campus. • Establish parent rooms for those with babies. • More bitumen carparks and remove car parking fees. • Introduce a parking subsidy. • Promote better waste management for students e.g. compost bins. • Raise awareness of environmental and climate issues. • Improve walking and running tracks around the campus. • Outdoor BBQ areas for student and work group facilitation.
STUDY SKILLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional subject tutors and dedicated labs rather than Studiosity. • Increase PASS for all year levels.
FOOD AND DRINK ON CAMPUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More free food. • Increase variety of food options available e.g. vegetarian • Source cheaper food options.
SOCIAL ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekend markets at Cairns and Townsville. • Dedicated media/entertainment rooms for students to play games after hours. • Networking events between students and academic staff. • Increase the community feel around uni for those students who have relocated and are living away from family and friends. • Discounts on social activities for external students. • More social activities including live bands, waterslide etc., so students will want to stay after class.
STUDENT ADVOCACY AND REPRESENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a fair and strongly developed student body and a more open forum for every category of student (Postgraduate, Undergraduate, External, Internal, etc.) where each respective field (Arts, Medicine, Veterinary Sciences, Law, Engineering to name but a few) have panels held solely by students for students, who act on their behalf and maintain an intrinsically linked and strong relationship with University Management to best reflect the attitudes and values of the staff and students- to further provide a sense of connection and unity with all students who are on and off JCU campuses.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- Push bikes or bike sharing for travel across campus.
- Discount for students with JCU Dental.
- Increase mental health programs such e.g. mental health days throughout the semester, not just the beginning and then SWOTVAC, Mental Health Alliance (MMHA) – a new club to increase social connectedness and alleviate stressors, pets on campus.
- Free yoga classes.
- More for mature aged students.
- Sponsor and organize “surprise days” on campus with random activities such as free snow cones, petting zoos, arts and crafts etc.
- Introduce a crèche system for single or working parents.
- Safe spaces for Queer Society.

PROVIDING LEGAL SERVICES AND HELPING STUDENTS WITH FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

- Utilise law students to provide free advice to students (under supervision).
- Personal financial literacy program e.g. Financial Peace University (USA).
- Provide more financial support for students on placement.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- All international students receive a phone call before arriving in Australia.
- Improve Global Lounge facilities.
- Help international students to relocate.
- Subsidies for international students.

MACKAY, MOUNT ISA

- More quiet areas for students to study and car parking.
- Build BBQ areas.

CAIRNS

- More kitchenette areas on Cairns Campus
 - More sporting events and facilities at Cairns and help in forming JCU Cairns teams in local sporting competitions
 - Two projects need initiating and funding for Cairns campus for students to be educated in active professional participation in Campus life – 1. JCU Cairns Students’ Movement for Constitutional Recognition of Australian Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people 2. Climate Change JCU Cairns Students’ Education and Action Project
 - Provide childcare at Cairns Campus.
 - Better parking for Cairns City Campus.
 - Funding for JCU Cairns end of year party.
 - Upgrade Cairns library (apart from ground floor).
 - More social activities during week days and on weekends.
 - Pool table at Cairns campus.
 - More weekend group day trips.
 - Increase food options with cheaper prices.
 - Outdoor auditorium.
-

Suggestions on new ways to deliver on priorities...

CATEGORY/THEME	SUGGESTION
INCREASING AWARENESS OF SSAF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase notification and education around what SSAF is and why it's needed. • Advertise and promote SSAF services more broadly e.g. explanatory videos, more regular surveys and stalls. • Having tables set up during the day for students to stop and ask questions are always really helpful. The parking info tables were helpful and things like market day and free lunch days are always great.
FINANCIAL AND LEGAL ASSISTANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run workshops for things like financial help and legal services. • Employ more students. • Introduce free printing (within limits) for students. • Offer a book bursary
STUDENT ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More student events.
FOOD AND DRINK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer cheaper/subsidised food and drink services e.g. discounted vouchers for coffee/tea and snacks. • Have a food bank – rather than free breakfasts.
STUDENT SPACES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less "administrative" costs funded by the SSA fee and use it for fixing up the student facilities on campus, as they are quickly becoming outdated in some neglected areas. • More free parking. • Reopen the Refect as a space for students to meet and study. • Improve awareness of kitchens around campus e.g. JCU App.
ORIENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a team specifically for new people at uni to help and support. • Support new external students through enrolment and during orientation.
EXTERNAL STUDENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement more SSAF funded projects/programs for external students.
POSTGRADUATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer more support to Postgraduate students.
SMALLER STUDY CAMPUSES E.G. MACKAY AND MOUNT ISA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend more on SSAF projects at smaller study campuses such as Mackay and Mount Isa.
CAIRNS CAMPUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a social space and/or information hub on the Cairns Campus which supports social engagement and encourages a sense of community. • Ensure Cairns students have equal representation on boards and committees. • Increase Career Advisors to help with student demand. • New gym.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Through the analysis of student responses the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The SSAF Budget allocations for 2020 and 2021 be aligned with these priorities.
2. That JCU continue to partner with the JCU Student Association and through other consultation mechanisms such as the Student Advisory Forum, on how best to distribute the SSAF allocation.
3. That feedback gained through the SSAF survey be distributed to University Services and Divisions for consideration.
4. Increase and promote student awareness of SSAF.
5. Ensure SSAF is easily accessible on the SSAF website.
6. Continue to review the student survey to improve student understanding and increase rate of response for future surveys and consultation processes.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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