

Report on SSAF Student Feedback 2023: Monash University



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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	6
SSAF at Monash	6
SSAF surveys.....	6
Disclaimer.....	7
SSAF service use and importance – at a glance	8
Undergraduate – Clayton (MSA - Clayton).....	9
Undergraduate – Caulfield (MONSU – Caulfield).....	10
Undergraduate – Peninsula (MONSU – Peninsula).....	11
Graduate coursework (MGA).....	12
Higher-degree by research (MGA)	13
SSAF service use and importance – analytics	14
Direct services	14
‘Rainy day’ services	15
Correlation between use and importance	17
International vs. domestic	18
Age	20
Student comments on SSAF.....	22
Appendix 1: <i>Higher Education Support Act (2003)</i> SSAF service areas.....	25
Appendix 2: Demographics	27
Campus.....	27
Citizenship.....	27
Study load	27
Parental status	27
Age	28

Executive Summary

In October and November 2023, the Monash Graduate Association (MGA), in collaboration with the Monash Student Association (MSA-Clayton) and the Monash University Student Union (MONSU-Peninsula), ran a survey of Monash students in regard to the Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF). The findings of this survey are presented in this report, for use by the participating student associations.

SSAF services

The *Higher Education Support Act (2003)* outlines nineteen service areas approved for SSAF expenditure; however, several of these are closely related to each other. As such, the related service areas were merged (see Appendix 1), reducing the list to fourteen service areas, to avoid confusion for students taking the survey.

During analysis, these fourteen service areas were assigned to two groups – direct services and ‘rainy day’ services.

The direct services relate to events and offerings that are more socially orientated and intended to boost a students’ cohesion and sense of belonging, while the ‘rainy day’ services relate to support that is or can be available to most, if not all students, but that is often only utilised by those whose circumstances require it.

Eight services were classified as direct services and six were classified as ‘rainy day’ services.

Direct services – use

Free food and drink on campus was, on average, the most used service overall, followed by student clubs and societies and student experience events. Childcare for student parents, legal services and accommodation support were the three least-used services overall.

On average, the younger the student, the more likely they were to use direct SSAF services. This was particularly noticeable in student clubs and societies, student experience events and non-academic library usage.

Likewise, international students across the course types, were more likely than their domestic counterparts to use direct services.

Direct service use was more common among undergraduates (UG) than graduate coursework (GPG) students, while use among higher-degree by research (HDR) students lagged behind both.

Free food and drink on campus was very popular across the groups, but particularly by Peninsula UG, while student clubs and societies were relatively popular among undergraduates from Caulfield and Clayton.

Caulfield and Clayton undergraduates were substantially more likely than other respondents to say they utilised non-academic student facilities.

Direct services - importance

Health and welfare support was, on average, the most important service overall, followed by employment or financial support and advocacy services for students.

The level of collective importance placed on these services was relatively consistent across UG cohorts across the three campuses.

Despite being less likely, on average, to have utilised these direct services, graduate coursework students placed greater importance on them than undergraduate students.

Across the three course types, international students placed greater importance on these services than domestic students.

'Rainy day' services – use

With the exception of HDR students, the average use of 'rainy day' services was relatively consistent across the groups.

Health and welfare support was the most-used 'rainy day' service of each group.

Undergraduates were more likely than GPG and HDR students to have used advocacy services.

'Rainy day' services – importance

Health and welfare support was universally the most important of these services to students.

Across the three course types, GPG students placed the greatest level of importance on 'rainy day' services.

Collectively, international students placed greater importance on rainy-day services than did domestic students.

Correlation between use and importance

There was a strong positive correlation between use and importance among UG for all but one direct service, while there was a moderate positive correlation among GPG students for all but one direct service.

The correlation between use and importance for 'rainy day' services was less significant; however, it was much stronger among UG than it was among GPG and HDR students.

Student comments on SSAF

The most-popular theme to emerge from the eighty-four comments left by students was in relation to the cost of SSAF being too high (17); however, perceived inconsistencies in service delivery across campuses was close behind (16).

Lack of access to services for those studying off-campus (11) was also a popular comment.

Introduction

The **Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF)** is a fee that universities across Australia charge their students for student services of a non-academic nature, such as sporting and recreational activities, employment and career advice, childcare, financial advice and food services.

SSAF at Monash

At Monash University, the rate of SSAF varies between \$326 for those enrolled full-time (for the whole year), \$244 for those studying part-time (enrolled in between 2 and 6 standard units per year) and \$0 for those enrolling in only one standard unit per year. The rate is the same whether a student is required to attend a campus or whether they study entirely online.

Monash University collects the SSAF and redistributes it as follows:

40% of SSAF is allocated to Monash Student Organisations - the MSA - Clayton, MONSU - Caulfield, MONSU - Peninsula and the Monash Parkville Student Association. The MGA receives 40% from all campuses except Clayton, where they receive 36.8%.

40% of SSAF is allocated to a University managed fund and distributed across a variety of areas covering health and welfare services, emergency student grants, sport, orientation and campus-specific activities.

20% of SSAF is allocated to capital and service improvement projects, which funds student proposed projects such as student lounge refurbishments, new BBQs, and renovation of sporting facilities etc.

SSAF surveys

Five of the Group of Eight (Go8) members regularly survey their students on their priorities for SSAF, while the University of New South Wales (UNSW) plans on doing so next year. Of the Go8, only Monash University and University of Western Australia (UWA) do not regularly survey their students on the subject.

With the Universities Accord in the process of reviewing how SSAF is directed,¹ several of the Monash Student Organisations (MSOs) partnered together to collect data on Monash student participation and priorities in relation to SSAF.

Participants were asked to respond to *LIKERT*-scale questions examining their **use** of SSAF associated services and how **important** they feel those services are (regardless of whether they had used them). They were also provided with an opportunity to make any general comments on SSAF.

¹ Australian Federal Government, *Australian Universities Accord: Interim Report* (Canberra: Aust. Govt., 2023): 118.

318 students responded to the survey. A breakdown of responses on the basis of course type and campus are included below:

Campus	Undergraduate	Graduate Coursework	Higher Degree by Research
Caulfield	14	37	14
Clayton	101	61	34
Parkville	2	9	13
Peninsula	19	7	5
Other	0	7	26
<i>I do not regularly attend campus</i>	2	4	11

A further breakdown of response demographics is included in Appendix 2.

Disclaimer

In relation to the survey responses, it is important to note the following:

- Response rates are low, therefore the results are not statistically significant and can be used only as indicators of the student cohort position.
- Undergraduate international students are under-represented in responses. They make up approximately 36% of the undergraduate population, but account for only 19% of this survey's UG respondents.
- International graduate coursework students are over-represented in the responses. They make up approximately 47% of the GPG population; however, they account for 80% of this survey's GPG respondents.
- Domestic HDR students are over-represented in responses. Approximately half of Monash HDRs are domestic students; however, they account for two-thirds of this survey's HDR respondents.
- Part-time GPG students are under-represented in responses. Approximately 41% of GPG students at Monash are enrolled part-time, but they make up only 6% of this survey's GPG responses.

SSAF service use and importance – at a glance

Participants were asked to reflect on how often they had used any of fourteen specific services associated with SSAF. The *Higher Education Support Act* (2003) outlines nineteen service areas approved for SSAF expenditure; however, several of these are closely associated to each other. As such, the related service areas were merged (see Appendix 1), reducing the list to fourteen service areas, to avoid confusion for students taking the survey.²

On a five-point *Likert*-scale, participants were asked whether they never (1), rarely (2), occasionally (3), often (4) or frequently (5) used each specific service.

Regardless of whether they had actually used the service, participants were then asked to reflect on how important the fourteen specific services associated with SSAF were to them.

On a five-point *Likert*-scale, participants were asked whether they thought a service was not at all important (1), slightly important (2), moderately important (3), very important (4) or extremely important (5).

The following graphs provide an overview of use and importance of the fourteen services by course type and campus (where relevant). Services have been ranked by importance. Please note that responses from undergraduates in Parkville were too few to warrant further analysis.

² Undergraduates were not asked about “grad groups”, so this list included only thirteen services.

Undergraduate – Clayton (MSA - Clayton)

Service	Use (average)	rank	Importance (average)	rank
Health and welfare support	2.24	7	4.19	1
Student clubs and societies	3.21	1	4.04	2
Advocacy services for students	1.86	9	4.04	3
Employment or financial support	1.56	11	3.86	4
Non-academic student facilities	3.08	2	3.85	5
Free food and drink on campus	2.81	3	3.75	6
Legal services	1.24	12	3.64	7
Accommodation support	1.57	10	3.59	8
Student experience events	2.63	4	3.45	9
Sport and recreational activities	1.98	8	3.24	10
Childcare for student parents	1.06	13	3.12	11
Non-academic library	2.37	5	3.00	12
Student media	2.29	6	2.89	13
Overall average	2.15		3.59	
Responses	95			

Results of note:

- Health and welfare support was most important to Clayton UG; however, it ranked 7th for use.
- Student clubs and societies were both important (2nd) and well used (1st).
- Advocacy, while not widely used (9th), was important (3rd) to Clayton UG.
- Employment and financial support had a relatively wide gap between importance (4th) and use (11th).
- Student experience events were well used (4th), but didn't rank as high for importance (9th).

Undergraduate – Caulfield (MONSU – Caulfield)

Service	Use (average)	rank	Importance (average)	rank
Health and welfare support	2.23	5	4.33	1
Advocacy services for students	2.00	8	4.33	1
Student clubs and societies	3.31	2	4.17	3
Free food and drink on campus	2.77	3	4.17	3
Non-academic student facilities	3.54	1	4.00	5
Legal services	1.15	11	3.67	6
Employment or financial support	1.15	11	3.67	6
Childcare for student parents	1.08	13	3.67	6
Accommodation support	1.77	9	3.50	9
Sport and recreational activities	1.77	9	3.25	10
Student experience events	2.62	4	3.17	11
Non-academic library	2.15	7	2.92	12
Student media	2.23	5	2.75	13
Overall average	2.14		3.66	
Responses	13			

Results of note:

- Low response numbers do not encourage confidence in these results.
- Health and welfare support was most important to Caulfield UG; however, it ranked 5th for use.
- Non-academic student facilities were the most used SSAF service for Caulfield UG.

Undergraduate – Peninsula (MONSU – Peninsula)

Service	Use (average)	rank	Importance (average)	rank
Free food and drink on campus	3.65	1	4.53	1
Health and welfare support	2.29	5	4.07	2
Student clubs and societies	2.47	4	4.00	3
Employment or financial support	1.65	10	3.87	4
Student experience events	2.71	2	3.67	5
Non-academic student facilities	2.59	3	3.53	6
Advocacy services for students	1.94	7	3.47	7
Accommodation support	1.41	11	3.20	8
Sport and recreational activities	1.82	8	3.00	9
Legal services	1.18	12	2.80	10
Student media	2.00	6	2.67	11
Non-academic library	1.82	8	2.60	12
Childcare for student parents	1.00	13	2.60	12
Overall average	2.04		3.39	
Responses	17			

Results of note:

- Low response numbers do not encourage confidence in these results.
- Free food and drink on campus was both the most-used and most-important SSAF service for Peninsula UG.
- Health and welfare support ranked high (2nd) and was a relatively well-used service (5th).
- Employment and financial support had a relatively wide gap between importance (4th) and use (10th).

Graduate coursework (MGA)

Service	Use (average)	rank	Importance (average)	rank
Health and welfare support	2.08	7	4.26	1
Employment or financial support	1.62	10	4.19	2
Free food and drink on campus	3.04	1	4.03	3
Accommodation support	1.47	12	3.96	4
Student experience events	2.64	2	3.92	5
Advocacy services for students	1.59	11	3.89	6
Sport and recreational activities	2.01	8	3.84	7
Legal services	1.36	13	3.84	7
Non-academic student facilities	2.27	4	3.71	9
Student clubs and societies	2.52	3	3.64	10
Grad groups	1.98	9	3.54	11
Non-academic library	2.16	6	3.44	12
Childcare for student parents	1.23	14	3.18	13
Student media	2.23	5	3.12	14
Overall average	2.01		3.75	
Responses	97			

Results of note:

- Health and welfare support was very important (1st) to Monash GPG students; however, it ranked only 7th for use.
- Likewise, employment or financial support had a wide gap between importance (2nd) and use (10th).
- Accommodation support also had a wide gap between importance (4th) and use (12th) – potentially because of the large proportion of international GPG respondents (see *Disclaimer*).
- Student experience events were well used (2nd) and relatively important (5th) to GPG students.

Higher-degree by research (MGA)

Service	Use (average)	rank	Importance (average)	rank
Health and welfare support	1.69	7	4.24	1
Employment or financial support	1.41	9	3.96	2
Advocacy services for students	1.39	10	3.84	3
Sport and recreational activities	1.81	4	3.83	4
Free food and drink on campus	2.38	1	3.76	5
Legal services	1.13	13	3.67	6
Accommodation support	1.15	12	3.59	7
Grad groups	2.19	2	3.50	8
Non-academic student facilities	1.74	6	3.36	9
Student experience events	1.92	3	3.31	10
Student clubs and societies	1.75	5	3.29	11
Childcare for student parents	1.05	14	3.13	12
Non-academic library	1.38	11	2.84	13
Student media	1.48	8	2.51	14
Overall average	1.61		3.49	
Responses	85			

Results of note:

- Health and welfare support was very important (1st) to Monash HDR students; however, it ranked only 7th for use.
- Likewise, employment or financial support had a wide gap between importance (2nd) and use (9th).
- Advocacy, while not widely used (10th), was important (3rd) to Monash HDRs.
- Student experience events were well used (3rd), but didn't rank as high for importance (10th).
- Free food and drink on campus was the most used service and ranked 5th for importance.

SSAF service use and importance – analytics

While the ‘at a glance’ results of the previous section provide a useful entry-point to the data, this chapter will examine and contextualise the data in order to better understand it.

The fourteen service areas included in the SSAF survey can be assigned to two groups – direct services and ‘rainy day’ services. There is, of course, some overlap between them; however, as a loose structure it is serviceable.

The direct services relate to events and offerings that are more socially orientated and intended to boost a students’ cohesion and sense of belonging. These services include: free food and drink on campus, student clubs and societies, grad groups, student experience events, non-academic library, student media, sport and recreational activities and non-academic student facilities.

The ‘rainy day’ services relate to support that is or can be available to most, if not all students, but that is often only utilised by those whose circumstances require it. These services include: childcare for student parents, advocacy services for students, legal services, accommodation support, health and welfare support and employment or financial support.

On average, across each of the three groups of students surveyed – undergraduate, graduate coursework and higher-degree by research – respondents placed greater importance on the ‘rainy day’ services, but were more likely to use the direct services.

Direct services

Both the frequency of use and the level of importance of the eight direct services included are presented below.

Direct service use

Service Area	Used (mean)					
	UG	UG - Caulfield	UG - Clayton	UG - Peninsula	GPG	HDR
Free food and drink on campus	2.92	2.77	2.81	3.65	3.04	2.38
Student clubs and societies	3.12	3.31	3.21	2.47	2.52	1.75
Grad groups	-	-	-	-	1.98	2.19
Student experience events	2.63	2.62	2.63	2.71	2.64	1.92
Non-academic library	2.29	2.15	2.37	1.82	2.16	1.38
Student media	2.23	2.23	2.29	2.00	2.23	1.48
Sport and recreational activities	1.90	1.77	1.98	1.82	2.01	1.81
Non-academic student facilities	2.97	3.54	3.08	2.59	2.27	1.74
<i>average</i>	2.58	2.63	2.62	2.44	2.36	1.83

- On average, direct service use is more common among undergraduates than graduate coursework students, while use among HDR students lags well behind both. This is largely because of differences in the use of student clubs and societies and non-academic student facilities.

- Free food and drink on campus was very popular. It was the most utilised direct service of Peninsula undergraduates, as well as graduate coursework and HDR students.
- Student clubs and societies were particularly popular among undergraduates from Caulfield and Clayton.
- Caulfield and Clayton undergraduates were also substantially more likely than other respondents to say they utilised non-academic student facilities.

Direct service importance

Service Area	Importance (mean)					
	UG	UG - Caulfield	UG - Clayton	UG - Peninsula	GPG	HDR
Free food and drink on campus	3.83	4.17	3.75	4.53	4.03	3.76
Student clubs and societies	4.00	4.17	4.04	4.00	3.64	3.29
Grad groups	-	-	-	-	3.54	3.50
Student experience events	3.44	3.17	3.45	3.67	3.92	3.31
Non-academic library	2.92	2.92	3.00	2.60	3.44	2.84
Student media	2.79	2.75	2.89	2.67	3.12	2.51
Sport and recreational activities	3.12	3.25	3.24	3.00	3.84	3.83
Non-academic student facilities	3.75	4.00	3.85	3.53	3.71	3.36
<i>average</i>	3.41	3.49	3.46	3.43	3.66	3.30

- Despite being less likely, on average, to have utilised these direct services, graduate coursework students placed greater importance on them than undergraduate students.
- On average, the level of importance placed on these collective services was relatively consistent across undergraduates across the three campuses.
- Student experience events were particularly important to graduate coursework respondents.

'Rainy day' services

Both the frequency of use and the level of importance of the six 'rainy day' services included are presented below.

'Rainy day' service use

Service Area	Used (mean)					
	UG	UG - Caulfield	UG - Clayton	UG - Peninsula	GPG	HDR
Childcare for student parents	1.05	1.08	1.06	1.00	1.23	1.05
Advocacy services for students	1.84	2.00	1.86	1.94	1.59	1.39
Legal services	1.22	1.15	1.24	1.18	1.36	1.13
Accommodation support	1.54	1.77	1.57	1.41	1.47	1.15
Health and welfare support	2.22	2.23	2.24	2.29	2.08	1.69
Employment or financial support	1.55	1.15	1.56	1.65	1.62	1.41
<i>average</i>	1.57	1.56	1.59	1.58	1.56	1.30

- With the exception of HDR students, the average use of ‘rainy day’ services was relatively consistent across the groups.
- Health and welfare support was the most-used service of each group.
- Undergraduates were more likely than graduate coursework and HDR students to use advocacy services.

‘Rainy day’ service importance

Service Area	Importance (mean)					
	UG	UG - Caulfield	UG - Clayton	UG - Peninsula	GPG	HDR
Childcare for student parents	3.02	3.67	3.12	2.60	3.18	3.13
Advocacy services for students	3.90	4.33	4.04	3.47	3.89	3.84
Legal services	3.45	3.67	3.64	2.80	3.84	3.67
Accommodation support	3.46	3.50	3.59	3.20	3.96	3.59
Health and welfare support	4.09	4.33	4.19	4.07	4.26	4.24
Employment or financial support	3.78	3.67	3.86	3.87	4.19	3.96
<i>average</i>	3.62	3.86	3.74	3.34	3.89	3.74

- On average, graduate coursework students placed the greatest level of importance on ‘rainy day’ services.
- Health and welfare support was universally the most important of these services to students.

Correlation between use and importance

Using the Pearson correlation coefficient, we measured the linear correlation between service use and importance. A strong correlation indicates a significant relationship between use and importance.

In the table below, a strong positive correlation (>0.5) is shown in green, a moderate positive correlation (0.3 – 0.49) is shown in orange and a weak positive correlation (0 – 0.29) or weak negative correlation (-0.3 – 0) is shown in red.

Service Area <i>direct services</i>	Correlation		
	UG	GPG	HDR
Free food and drink on campus	0.66	0.47	0.44
Student clubs and societies	0.63	0.49	0.32
Grad groups	-	0.39	0.47
Student experience events	0.61	0.46	0.28
Non-academic library	0.58	0.17	0.27
Student media	0.56	0.41	0.39
Sport and recreational activities	0.54	0.33	0.22
Non-academic student facilities	0.38	0.34	0.21
<i>average</i>	0.57	0.38	0.33

Service Area <i>rainy day services</i>	Correlation		
	UG	GPG	HDR
Childcare for student parents	0.12	0.19	-0.12
Advocacy services for students	0.33	0.10	0.14
Legal services	0.23	0.04	0.13
Accommodation support	0.38	0.13	0.09
Health and welfare support	0.38	0.21	0.23
Employment or financial support	0.26	0.10	0.27
<i>average</i>	0.28	0.13	0.12

- There was a strong positive correlation between use and importance among UG for all but one direct service, while there was a moderate positive correlation among GPG students for all but one direct service.
- The correlation between use and importance for 'rainy day' services was less significant; however, it was much stronger among UG than it was among GPG and HDR students.

Given it was only a brief survey, one can only speculate on the reasons for the differences in correlation between UG, GPG and HDR students; however, possible reasons include:

- UG have more time to access direct services and perhaps more interest doing so. As such, they are more inclined to value the services that they use.

- Postgraduate students often have work commitments that limit their study and leisure time. In 2021, 55% of postgraduate students worked full-time compared to 26% of undergraduates.³
- UG students are often younger and transitioning from high school to university life and use direct services to help adapt and feel like they belong. GPG and HDR students are usually older and predominantly transitioning from undergraduate to graduate study, from the workforce to graduate study or incorporating their study around work and life commitments. As such, it is more challenging to provide them with opportunities to attend services they want.
- As seen in the higher levels of importance GPG and HDR respondents place on ‘rainy day’ services, they are perhaps more inclined to value services that they may not necessarily use than are UG students.

International vs. domestic

On the whole, international students were more likely to value and use services than their domestic counterparts across all three course types – UG, GPG and HDR.

Service Area		Used (mean)					
		UG - INTL	UG - Dom	GPG - INTL	GPG - Dom	HDR - INTL	HDR - Dom
<i>direct services</i>							
Free food and drink on campus		3.24	2.84	3.14	2.63	2.79	2.18
Student clubs and societies		3.14	3.11	2.51	2.53	1.68	1.79
Grad groups		-	-	2.09	1.53	2.29	2.14
Student experience events		3.24	2.49	2.78	2.05	2.00	1.88
Non-academic library		2.71	2.19	2.19	2.05	1.39	1.38
Student media		2.62	2.14	2.26	2.11	1.54	1.46
Sport and recreational activities		2.52	1.76	2.05	1.84	2.07	1.68
Non-academic student facilities		2.76	3.02	2.22	2.47	1.75	1.74
<i>average</i>		2.89	2.51	2.41	2.15	1.94	1.78
<i>rainy day services</i>							
Childcare for student parents		1.00	1.07	1.23	1.21	1.11	1.02
Advocacy services for students		2.05	1.79	1.58	1.63	1.36	1.40
Legal services		1.43	1.17	1.36	1.37	1.21	1.09
Accommodation support		2.52	1.31	1.54	1.21	1.32	1.07
Health and welfare support		2.57	2.13	2.09	2.05	1.68	1.70
Employment or financial support		1.86	1.48	1.59	1.74	1.39	1.42
<i>average</i>		1.91	1.49	1.57	1.54	1.35	1.28

- On average, international UG respondents were the most likely to use SSAF services, while domestic HDR respondents were least likely to use SSAF services.
- In relation to direct services, free food and drink events are more frequented by international students, as are student experience events and sport and recreational events. Student clubs and societies have a more even participation rate across citizenship groups.
- In relation to ‘rainy day’ services, the gap in participation is significant among UG citizenship groups, but less so among GPG and HDR citizenship groups.

³ Andrew Norton, *Mapping Australian Higher Education 2023* (ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods, 2023), 45.

Service Area	Importance (mean)					
	UG - INTL	UG - Dom	GPG -INTL	GPG - Dom	HDR - INTL	HDR - Dom
<i>direct services</i>						
Free food and drink on campus	4.00	3.79	4.10	3.76	4.00	3.66
Student clubs and societies	3.85	4.04	3.75	3.18	3.50	3.20
Grad groups	-	-	3.69	2.88	3.83	3.36
Student experience events	3.80	3.35	4.04	3.41	3.79	3.11
Non-academic library	3.00	2.90	3.63	2.65	3.46	2.57
Student media	3.10	2.71	3.32	2.29	3.13	2.25
Sport and recreational activities	3.75	2.96	3.93	3.47	4.25	3.64
Non-academic student facilities	3.70	3.76	3.79	3.35	3.79	3.18
<i>average</i>	3.60	3.36	3.78	3.12	3.72	3.12
<i>rainy day services</i>						
Childcare for student parents	3.10	3.00	3.36	2.41	3.38	3.02
Advocacy services for students	4.05	3.86	3.96	3.59	3.83	3.84
Legal services	3.90	3.34	4.01	3.12	4.04	3.53
Accommodation support	4.00	3.33	4.19	2.94	4.17	3.54
Health and welfare support	4.25	4.05	4.38	3.76	4.29	4.21
Employment or financial support	4.25	3.66	4.36	3.47	4.29	3.82
<i>average</i>	3.93	3.54	4.04	3.22	4.00	3.66

- Across the three course types, on average, international students placed greater importance on services than their domestic counterparts. In relation to direct services, the gap was widest among GPG and HDR respondents. In relation to 'rainy day' services, the gap was widest among GPG respondents.
- The only services that domestic students placed a greater level of importance on than international students were student clubs and societies (UG) and advocacy services for students (HDR).

Age

On average, the younger the student, the more likely they were to use SSAF services – particularly with direct services; however, importance was relatively consistent across age groups.

Service Area	Used (mean)				
	-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40+
<i>direct services</i>					
Free food and drink on campus	3.50	2.75	2.75	2.71	1.92
Student clubs and societies	3.19	2.72	2.27	2.18	1.46
Grad groups	-	2.00	2.20	1.94	1.69
Student experience events	2.78	2.52	2.29	2.32	1.77
Non-academic library	2.56	2.10	1.82	1.59	1.46
Student media	2.33	2.12	1.89	1.88	1.31
Sport and recreational activities	2.06	1.79	2.00	2.15	1.46
Non-academic student facilities	3.44	2.51	2.00	1.97	1.92
<i>average</i>	2.84	2.31	2.15	2.09	1.62
<i>rainy day services</i>					
Childcare for student parents	1.14	1.06	1.12	1.26	1.00
Advocacy services for students	2.03	1.54	1.61	1.71	1.23
Legal services	1.39	1.17	1.26	1.38	1.00
Accommodation support	1.89	1.40	1.31	1.26	1.08
Health and welfare support	2.33	1.98	2.03	2.00	1.54
Employment or financial support	1.72	1.47	1.60	1.53	1.15
<i>average</i>	1.75	1.44	1.49	1.52	1.17

- On average, direct service use trends down as students age. This was particularly noticeable in student clubs and societies, student experience events and non-academic library usage.
- While the gap between use of 'rainy day' services among the youngest (19 or less) and oldest (40 or older) is significant, those aged between 20 and 24, 25 and 29, and 30 and 39, reported similar use rates.

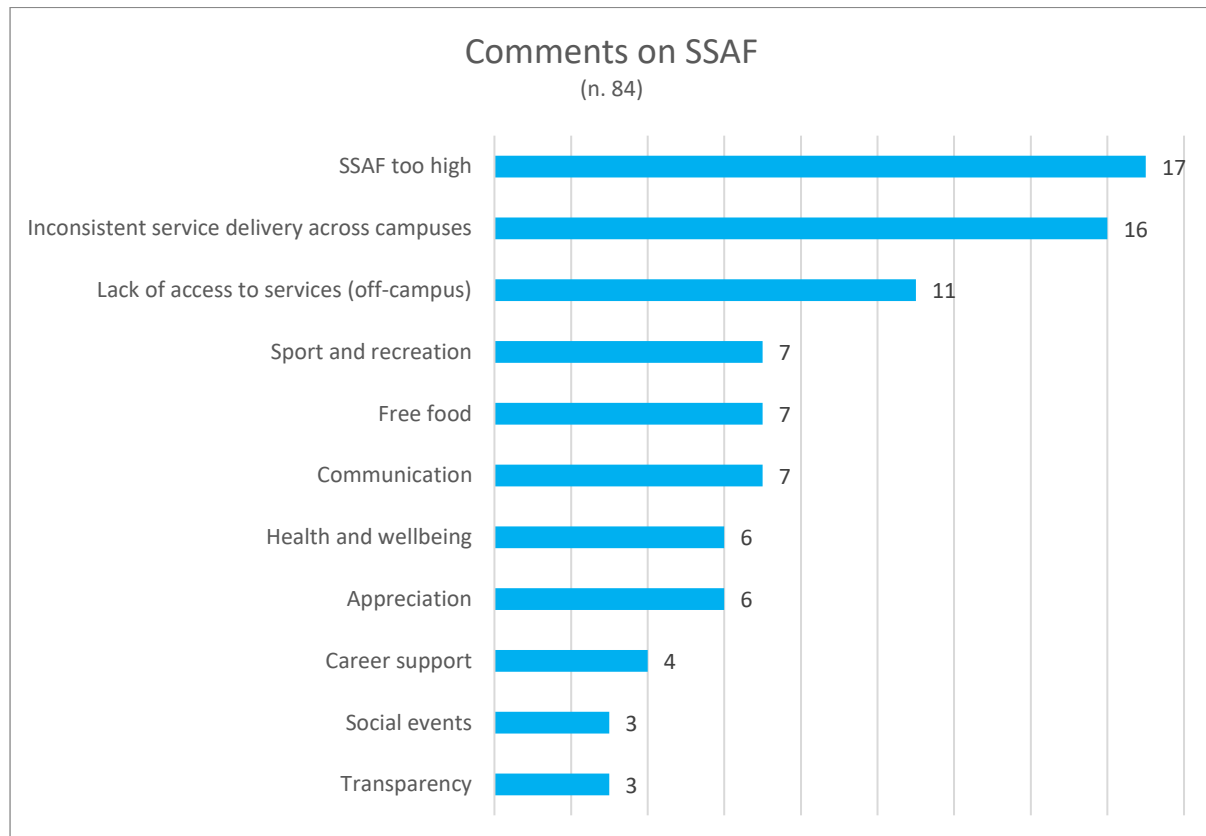
Service Area	Importance (mean)				
	-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40+
<i>direct services</i>					
Free food and drink on campus	4.26	3.67	4.11	3.78	3.54
Student clubs and societies	4.16	3.68	3.56	3.59	3.31
Grad groups	-	3.20	3.75	3.47	3.46
Student experience events	3.61	3.48	3.65	3.66	3.31
Non-academic library	2.81	3.00	3.23	3.22	2.85
Student media	2.77	2.76	2.81	3.22	2.46
Sport and recreational activities	2.90	3.36	3.94	3.88	3.92
Non-academic student facilities	4.06	3.57	3.60	3.53	3.31
<i>average</i>	3.51	3.34	3.58	3.54	3.27
<i>rainy day services</i>					
Childcare for student parents	3.10	2.80	3.28	3.53	3.54
Advocacy services for students	4.00	3.76	3.94	3.78	4.46
Legal services	3.68	3.35	3.89	3.81	4.23
Accommodation support	3.68	3.44	3.99	3.69	3.46
Health and welfare support	4.19	4.06	4.35	4.06	4.62
Employment or financial support	3.94	3.80	4.16	4.09	4.00
<i>average</i>	3.77	3.54	3.94	3.83	4.05

- The level of importance respondents placed on both direct and ‘rainy day’ services was inconsistent across the age groups.

Student comments on SSAF

Participants were provided with an opportunity to make a general comment on SSAF. Eighty-four students took this opportunity.

The top 10 themes to emerge from these comments can be summarised as such:



Many students took this opportunity to express that the **SSAF fee was too high**. These included:

"The fee should be cheaper - particularly for students who are not based on the main campuses (we do not have access to the same benefits or make use of the amenities funneled into the main campus)."

"Waste of money."

"I do not think that external students should have to pay for capital facilities - as we don't use them. Further, I think there should be flat rate that you pay per subject. Such that if you are studying full time, you pay 1. But if you are studying 2 subjects each semester (weighted 0.125) then you only pay 0.5."

"It's unfair to charge such high SSAF for students who do not attend campus at all."

"This fee should be incorporated in the already exorbitant course fees."

Several students raised their belief that **delivery of services was inconsistent across the campuses** and study locations of students. Comments included:

“Bring the free food grocery to the chambers. Offered at different times as a lot of classes are after business hours.”

“As someone doing their PhD full time within the Central Clinical School (Alfred Hospital), I barely ever see any benefit from paying the SSAF as the vast majority of events are (understandably) held on the main campus. Perhaps an alternative or reduced fee for off-campus students would be appropriate, or more effort to provide equivalent services.”

“Extremely few of the services listed in the previous questions even exist in any meaningful way at Parkville so it's very difficult to feel as though the SSAF is even important at all.”

“As I am at the Alfred campus, we have had minimal opportunities for facilities and student experience events despite paying the full-time SSAF rate, which is incredibly costly since we are not receiving the benefits that Clayton campus students receive.”

Other interesting comments included:

“More SSAF funding should be spent on long term events to support students rather than one of food deliveries. Career programming to get students jobs, housing support, etc.”

“It's unfair to charge such high SSAF for students who do not attend campus at all.”

“Annoyed that I had to pay it during a placement unit where I was hardly on campus at all.”

“Flexibility and transparency on how the funds are spent. More funding for long term impact and less on tokenistic tick a box activities.”

“Would be great to have more information on how we can use the services listed. Also I think a major focus should be on implementing more sustainable practices on campus like removing single use plastics etc.”

“Don't actually benefit from what it's spent on.”

“Sports and recreational facilities should be free! Gym should be cheaper! Students should be able to book dance and rehearsal studios without any fee!!!!”

“Sports should be free! For the fee we international students pay. We shouldn't have to pay to hire sports rooms like basketball! It's a lot given that we already pay so much fees. The fee for clubs discourages people from participating. It should already be included within the fees that we pay.”

“Tailored support according to individual student needs, especially for international students who are parents, better support should be offered to them.”

“The subsidies to Monash Sport are insanely high. Most people who use it are reasonably wealthy, residential students. Spend more on things that benefit the whole student body.”

“Please increase the budget and expenditures for free food, drinks and activities for students!! It is the one thing that made my year brighter and made the long uni days easier

to get through. I love how things like food, groceries were things offered by the university that were able to make a positive impact beyond simply the duration of being on campus.”

“While the current allocation of the Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF) at Monash University covers a wide range of services beneficial to the student body, there appears to be a gap in offerings pertaining to both recreational and mental health activities. Specifically, the inclusion of more diverse recreational events such as swimming could not only improve physical well-being but also serve as a form of stress relief for students. Additionally, increased investment in programs that directly address mental health and support mechanisms could provide critical resources for students, many of whom may be dealing with stress, anxiety, or other mental health conditions. A more targeted allocation of SSAF funds towards these areas could contribute significantly to enriching the overall student experience, by creating a more balanced and supportive environment for both academic and personal growth.”

“Last year, MUST received funding to have an administrative support person employed to help manage the admin side of the department - as a student at MUST, I could see what a massive difference this made to the efficiency and effectiveness with which MUST was able to support me and fellow students. It would be awesome if this funding could be reinstated, it would make such a difference to the 100s of students who find community at MUST each year.”

“The SSAF fees for students is far too high for PhD students to afford. Our stipend is not enough for us to afford basic necessities like food and healthcare, let alone a \$300 fee for facilities that we don't even use. I have no specific comments about the SSAF, but just that we are in DESPERATE need for an increase to our stipends because we are all experiencing significant financial hardship at the moment and we simply need more money. I've had to delay paying my SSAF until the very last minute, simply because I don't have the money (because we are not paid adequately). Thank you for your tireless efforts in advocating for us.”

“We need to be aware of the programs being ran. We often miss out on them because we are not notified. Emails would be great.”

“The greatest stress in my life right now is how I am going to pay my uni fees since the FEE-HELP was capped. The added SSAF is 5 cents in comparison to these fees, however the thought that even more money is going towards fees makes me want to cry. The free food is a life-changer though.”

Appendix 1: Higher Education Support Act (2003) SSAF service areas

“19-38 Higher education providers’ expenditure of student services and amenities fees” (subsection 4) of the *Higher Education Support Act* (2003)⁴ outlines the services approved for SSAF expenditure.

- a) providing food or drink to students on a campus of the higher education provider;
- b) supporting a sporting or other recreational activity by students;
- c) supporting the administration of a club most of whose members are students;
- d) caring for children of students;
- e) providing legal services to students;
- f) promoting the health or welfare of students;
- g) helping students secure accommodation;
- h) helping students obtain employment or advice on careers;
- i) helping students with their financial affairs;
- j) helping students obtain insurance against personal accidents;
- k) supporting debating by students;
- l) providing libraries and reading rooms (other than those provided for academic purposes) for students;
- m) supporting an artistic activity by students;
- n) supporting the production and dissemination to students of media whose content is provided by students;
- o) helping students develop skills for study, by means other than undertaking *courses of study or *accelerator program courses in which they are enrolled;
- p) advising on matters arising under the higher education provider’s rules (however described);
- q) advocating students’ interests in matters arising under the higher education provider’s rules (however described);
- r) giving students information to help them in their orientation;
- s) helping meet the specific needs of *overseas students relating to their welfare, accommodation and employment.

To ensure the service area was identifiable to Monash students, these nineteen areas were merged into fourteen. This took place as follows:

- 1. free food and drink on campus (a)
- 2. student clubs and societies (c – undergraduate and postgraduate) (k) (m)
- 3. grad groups (c - postgraduate)
- 4. student experience events (r)
- 5. Non-academic library (l)
- 6. Student media (n)
- 7. Childcare for student parents (d)
- 8. Advocacy services for students (p) (q)
- 9. Legal services (e)
- 10. Accommodation support (g) (s)
- 11. Sport and recreational facilities (b)
- 12. Health and welfare support (f) (j) (s)
- 13. Employment or financial support (h) (i) (o) (s)

⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2023C00386>

14. Non-academic student facilities (I)

Appendix 2: Demographics

This section provides greater detail into the demographic data from respondents.

Campus

Campus	Undergraduate	Graduate Coursework	Higher Degree by Research
Caulfield	14	37	14
Clayton	101	61	34
Parkville	2	9	13
Peninsula	19	7	5
Other	0	7	26
<i>I do not regularly attend campus</i>	2	4	11

Citizenship

Citizenship status	Undergraduate	Graduate Coursework	Higher Degree by Research
Domestic student	97	19	59
International student	23	88	32

Study load

Study load	Undergraduate	Graduate Coursework	Higher Degree by Research
Full-time	111	101	82
Part-time	9	6	9

Parental status

Parental status	Undergraduate	Graduate Coursework	Higher Degree by Research
Parent	1	9	16
Non-parent	119	98	75

Age

Age	Undergraduate	Graduate Coursework	Higher Degree by Research
19 or under	40	1	0
20-24	72	45	13
25 – 29	6	45	44
30 – 39	2	13	24
40 and over	0	3	10