



Student Council
UNESC

UNE Student Council
2025 Annual Report on the Student SSAF Survey
July 2025

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2025 Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF) Survey Report



Introduction

This report has been prepared by the UNE Student Council (UNESC) in conjunction with UNE Office of Strategy Management (OSM) for presentation to the UNE SSAF Committee (SSAFC). The purpose of this report is to provide recommendations to the UNE SSAF Committee on the expenditure of SSAF funds, based on the results of the 2025 SSAF Survey, including students' feedback therein.

Background

The Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF) is charged to university students for services and amenities of a non-academic nature with guidelines set by the Australian Government Department of Education.

Universities are required by law to provide students with access to several programs and services that are funded by SSAF, such as employment and career advice, counselling and support services, orientation programs, financial advice, and recreational and food services.

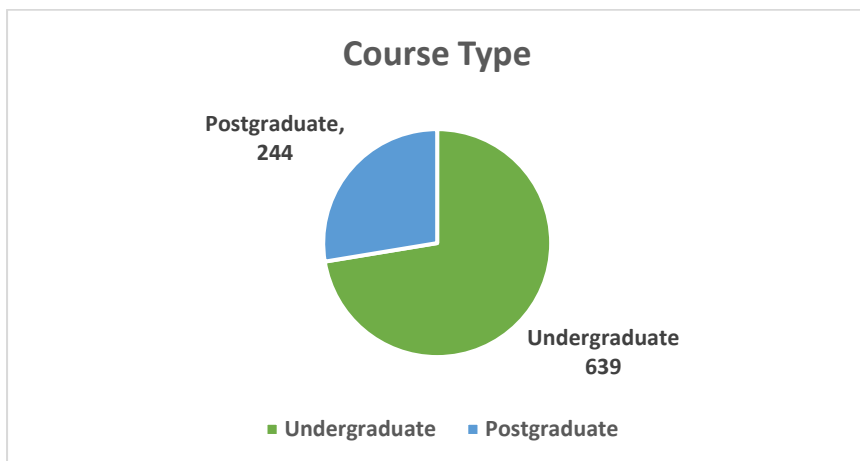
In April 2025, UNE students received an invitation from the UNESC to respond to a survey about the use of SSAF. The survey was designed to seek student opinion in relation to how UNE currently manages and administers SSAF funding and to understand what students feel should be considered in future for the allocation of SSAF funding at UNE.

New legislation was introduced on 1 January 2025 requiring SSAF funding allocations be made to student led organisation (SLO). Transition arrangements for 2025 include a SSAF allocation of 10% to an SLO. In order to identify consistent trends and enable targeted SSAF funding allocations for 2026 and beyond, the 2025 survey questions have remained the same as 2024.

Student Response Demographic

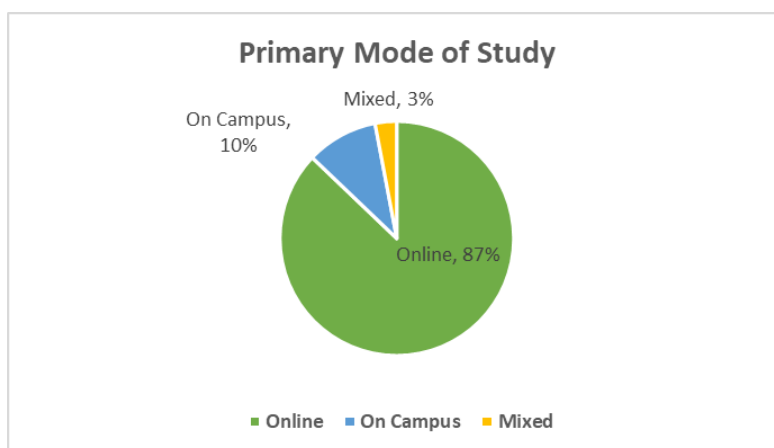
In 2025, the UNESC SSAF Survey received 883 responses (6.4%) from students, which is a steady decrease in response rate over the last 3 years (2024: 957; 2023: 1,301; 2022: 1,031).

Students were asked to provide basic demographic information to help identify different needs for different cohorts. As displayed below, the responses came from a broad cross-section of students reflecting the diverse cohorts of UNE. It should be noted that the 2025 survey has had an increased response rate from online students compared to previous years (80% in 2024).



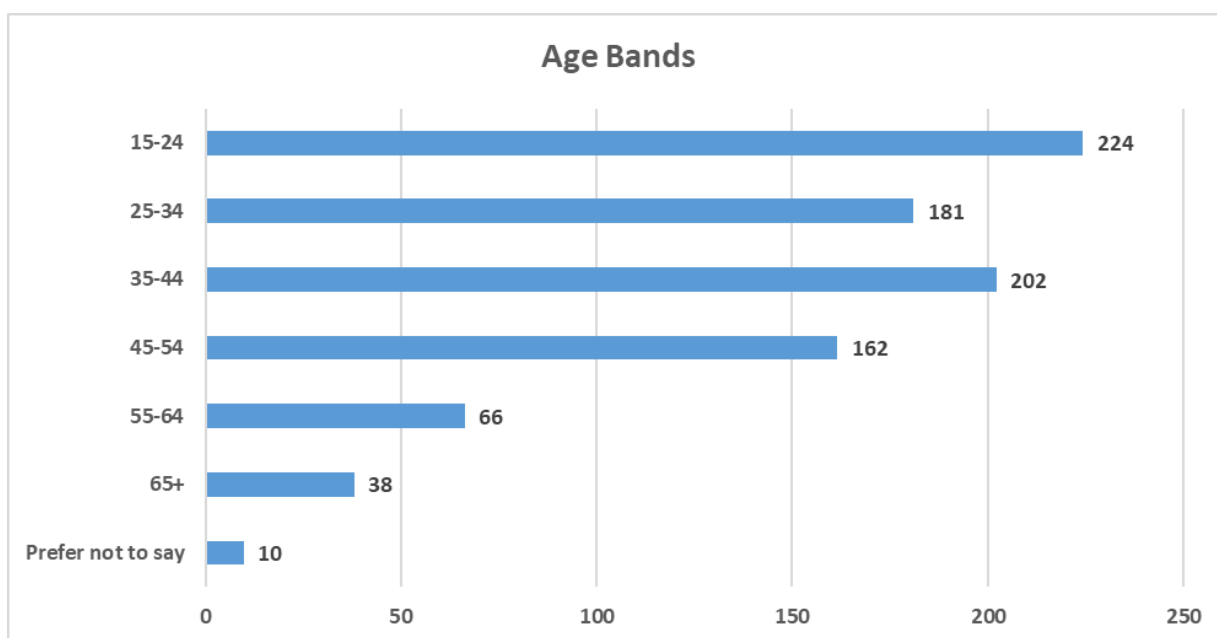
97% 🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠
 Domestic students (856 Domestic, 27 International)

69% 👤👤👤👤
 Continuing UNE Students (613 continuing, 270 Commencing)



24% 👤👤👤👤
 1st Year University (208 1st year University; 675 >1st year University)

5% 👤👤👤👤👤
 Identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (5% yes, 92% no, 3% prefer not to say)

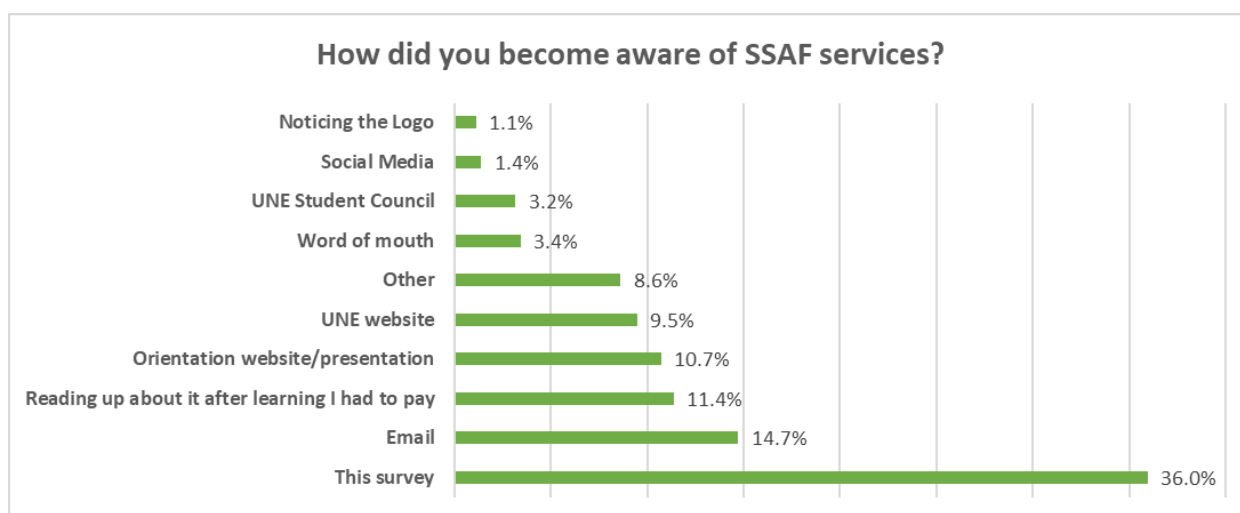
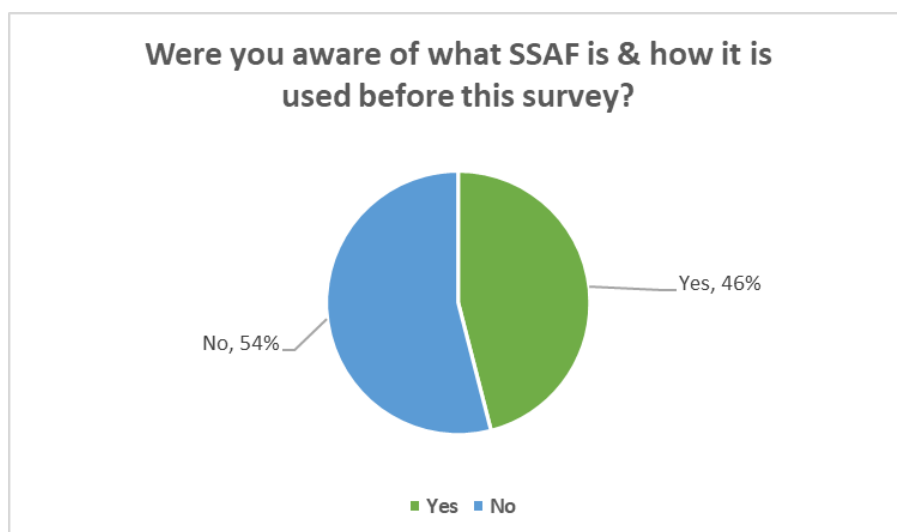


Results

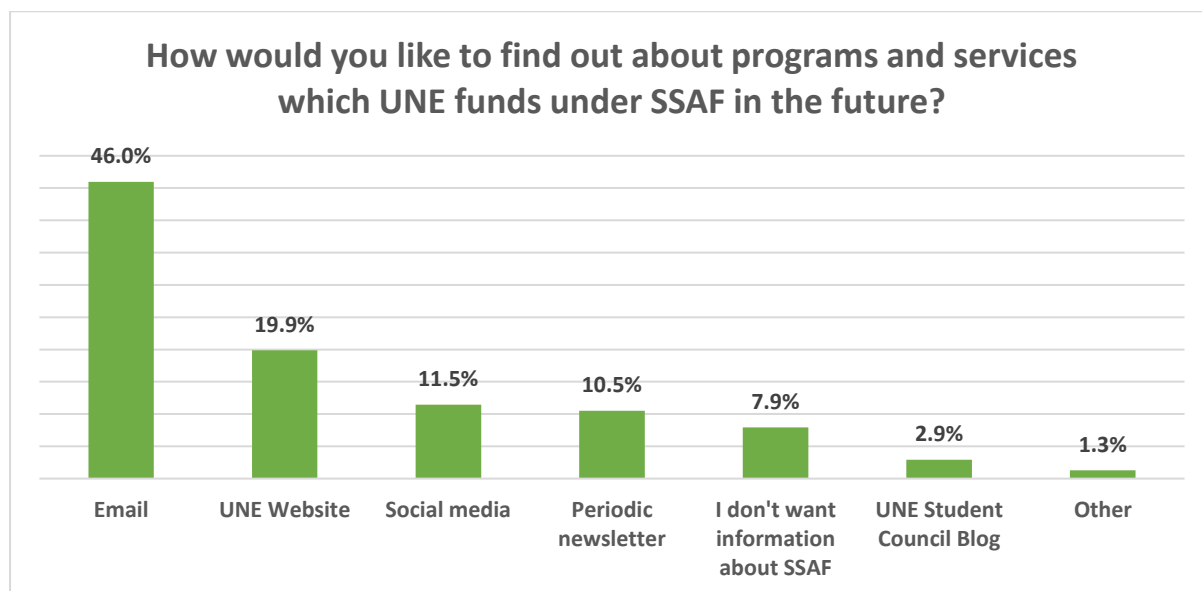
The results of the 2025 Survey are divided across the following main areas: Promotion and Awareness, Online Students, SSAF Focus Areas and Use of Services.

Promotion and Awareness

As in previous years, the lack of student awareness of SSAF continues to be an ongoing issue. More than half of respondents indicated that, before taking the survey, they were unaware of what SSAF is and what services are offered. This survey indicates that UNE and UNESC need to improve communication to promote awareness of available SSAF services, particularly for online students. Continue improvements in tailoring services for online students, increasing visibility during orientation and communication via email or through MyLearn to provide clear, regular information about available services and how to access them.



Nearly half of students indicated that email continues to be the preferred method of finding out about programs and services which UNE funds under SSAF.



Representative comments:

- *“I didn’t realise how much SSAF provided for, and I believe it should be more advertised especially for new students coming to university that have no idea what they are doing.”*
- *“Very little promotion for online students nor value offered to them. I would have thought as a leader in online education these offerings would have linked in better with the online experience.”*
- *“Would be great to have information at the start of each trimester about what services are available and how to access them.”*
- *“Maybe an email pack or something, a flyer with info, sent to intensive students...”*

Online Students

Again, a significant number of online students feel that SSAF does not benefit them directly, with many of the services provided by UNE geared towards on-campus students. The University needs to continue towards ensuring that there is a more equitable distribution of SSAF between on-campus and online students.

Access to online mental health services were again a priority. Online students attending intensives, again highlighting the need for affordable accommodation and access to food services throughout the entire intensive period. Clearer information regarding SSAF services was again requested to be provided to online students. Other SSAF priorities identified included employment and career advice provided by the careers team, with study skills also providing crucial positive student outcomes.

Representative comments:

- *“As an online student, I often feel I don’t get as much benefit from SSAF resources as students who attend university in person, despite paying the same amount of money.”*
- *“As an online student from a different state, I think we should contribute less financially to SSAF since we rarely access campus facilities but still pay the same fee.”*
- *“I have been at UNE for 4 years and have never known these services existed but still had to pay large sums of money every year for them even though I never used them.”*
- *“Many of these services are only available for on-campus students even though the same fee is applied on both study modes.”*
- *“More support for online students attending intensives...”*
- *“Need clearer information about what services are available to online students and how we can actually access them from different locations.”*

Value for Money Ranking	%	Total of Respondents
1 – Zero value	20%	188
2 – Very little value	20%	186
3 – Some value	34%	313
4 – Good value	20%	184
5 – Exceptional value	6%	58

Focus Areas

Based on the survey results, students were asked to choose up to five of the 19 Government defined SSAF categories, highlighting their preferences for SSAF funding. Again, health, welfare, employment support and study skills, as shown in the following table, were identified as the main priorities:

Government Category	%	Number of students
Promoting the health or welfare of students	14.57%	581
Helping students obtain employment or advice on careers	12.67%	505
Helping students develop skills for study, by means other than undertaking courses of study in which they are enrolled	11.67%	465
Helping students with their financial affairs	8.30%	331
Advocating students' interests in matters arising from under the higher education provider's rules (however described)	6.58%	262
Helping students secure accommodation	6.44%	257
Giving students information to help them in their orientation	6.24%	249
Providing libraries and reading rooms (other than those provided for academic purposes) for students	5.36%	214
Providing legal services to students	4.94%	197
Providing food or drink to students on campus of the higher education provider	4.81%	192
Caring for children of students	4.05%	162
Advising on matters arising under the higher education provider's rules (however described)	4.03%	161
Helping meet the specific needs of overseas students relating to their welfare, accommodation and employment	2.72%	109
Supporting a sporting or other recreational activity by students	2.52%	101
Supporting the administration of a club most of whose members are students	1.57%	63
Supporting an artistic activity by students	1.35%	54
Helping students obtain insurance against personal accidents	1.02%	41
Supporting the production and dissemination to students of media whose content is provided by students	0.75%	30
Supporting debating by students	0.40%	16
Total	100.00%	3,988

Use of Services

The survey shows that two-thirds of students that accessed services funded by SSAF at UNE were either somewhat or very satisfied with the use of services, whilst just over 10% were dissatisfied.

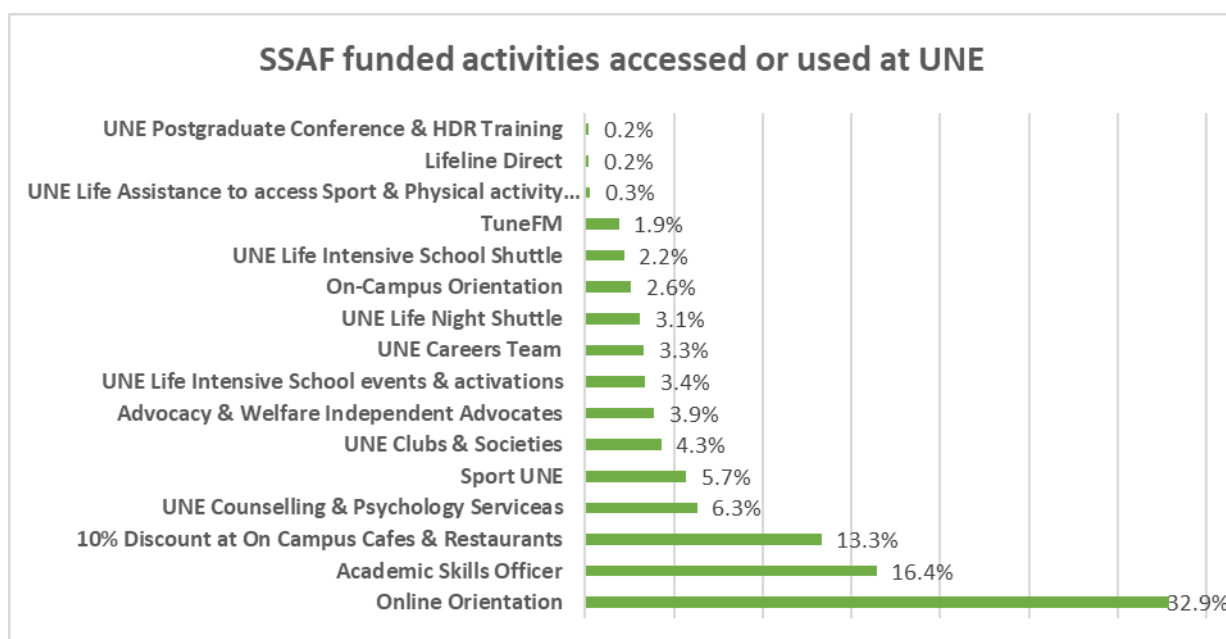
Service Satisfaction	%	Number of students
Very satisfied	33.3%	294
Somewhat satisfied	26.8%	237
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	27.8%	245
Somewhat dissatisfied	5.7%	50
Very dissatisfied	6.4%	57

The survey indicates that many online students feel that there needs to be a better balance of the SSAF service delivery between online and on-campus students, and that the fee structure should reflect this. Students indicated an increasing need for counselling and wellbeing services. However, feedback highlighted that current wait times were too long to access these services. Positive feedback was received regarding the intensive school shuttle, the 10% discount at campus cafes, the Advocacy team, and the Academic Skills Support team.

Representative comments:

- *“As an online student, I would like to see SSAF money spent on services that directly support our remote learning.”*
- *“Spend more on orientating online students....we need to know how things work as an online student.”*
- *“During intensives....extended shuttle services including weekends.”*
- *“More online spaces for student connection.”*

The four highest priorities which students selected included accessing Online Orientation (32.9%), support by the Academic Skills Office (16.4%) and 10% discount at on-campus cafes (13.3%).



Suggested Improvements

Potential options for future funding of SSAF expenditure suggested by students included discounted textbooks being the most popular response (17.33%), followed by free postage from the UNE bookstore (14.91%). Suggestions for coffee or transport vouchers which could be enjoyed by both on-campus and online students were again raised.

Preference for other options for SSAF Expenditure	%	Number of students
Discounts for all students to purchase textbooks & study material from UNE bookshop	17.33%	153
Free postage with books borrowed from UNE Library	9.95%	88
Expand mental health services - online and on-campus support	12.26%	108
Coffee or transport vouchers to online students for use in local area	12.16%	107
Assistance with accommodation for intensive schools	10.80%	95
Assistance with accommodation for students travelling for placements	9.59%	85
Free postage with books purchased from UNE bookshop	14.91%	132
Shuttle and feed services extended to weekends over intensive schools	5.99%	53
Investment in services at regional study centres	4.19%	37
Providing snacks to students sitting exams	2.83%	25

Themes and Recommendations

1. Promotion and Transparency

Out of the 883 students who responded, 477 indicated that they were not aware of SSAF services until completing the survey, which is an increase of 8% compared to 2024. Both online and on-campus students are generally unaware of SSAF activities offered by UNE and would like more targeted communication outlining available services. A number of students are only made aware of SSAF when making payment, with those students utilising government assistance more than likely having little to no knowledge of SSAF.

To improve student's understanding of SSAF's services provided by UNE, it is recommended to improve online communication and increase SSAF's profile during orientation for new students. Nearly 50% of students would prefer future communication via email, however due to the volume of emails, this may not result in improved awareness outcomes.

To promote transparency between the student body and UNE, we continue to advocate that the results of the survey be made available to the student community. This is especially important during the transition of the new SSAF legislation requiring funding allocations to student led organisations from 1 January 2025.

2. Online Students

The 2025 survey identifies the need to balance the needs of on-campus and online students at UNE. While UNE acknowledges that all SSAF services are available to online students, not all online students are able to utilise and benefit from the majority of these services. As a result, a number of online students question why they are required to pay the same amount of SSAF as on-campus students. This is especially relevant during cost-of-living pressures.

Research and relevant enquiries will be made regarding how to support the online cohort. As a starting point consideration of an online discount portal (similar to that used at TAFE) is being looked into to determine the viability of the service. Further it is recommended to enquire as to whether it would be viable to subsidise any items for the online students.

3. Health and Wellbeing

Students continue to voice their concerns regarding the long waiting times to access mental health services.

We would like to reiterate the importance of the need to institute viable counselling and psychological services. Additional funding for the CAPS program or an equivalent service is recommended so that they are able to expand their staff and provision of service for both online and on campus students.

4. Intensive Schools

A continuing theme from last year's survey was students' attendance on campus for intensive schools. Students again raised issues with accommodation, travel costs, and transportation. The free meals during the intensive schools were greatly appreciated and requests for this to continue have been made.

We acknowledge the recent refurbishment of parts of the residential colleges and would support ongoing improvements in support of the students who travel for intensives.

We thank UNE for implementing free parking from 1 May 2025.

We again suggest research, and subsequent actions be taken, relating to the following:

1. Investigate ways to make accommodation for intensive schools more accessible to students in terms of availability, booking, and costs.
2. Make enquiries to provide better supports for students travelling with a family, and/or living with a disability. This is particularly important for the students who are primary/only carers of children and those having to navigate accessibility issues around campus.
3. Funding a shuttle bus to/from the airport and train station for those students attending without transportation.

5. Positive Experiences

On a positive note, survey responses, although down from the previous year, indicated success with, and ongoing support for, services currently being used. Of note, respondents were particularly thankful for online orientation service, Academic Skills officers and the 10% discount from the onsite café and restaurant.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, we continue to see a decrease in participation rates ever year and we continue to make enquiries to ascertain the root cause and see if we can drive improvements for the coming year.

We acknowledge the efforts made by UNE regarding implementation of some new initiatives and a continued focus of increasing awareness of SSAF and its intended purpose. We had hoped that due to these initiatives being implemented that this would drive a better participation in the survey but unfortunately this was not the end result.

The UNESC will continue to investigate further options regarding promoting SSAF and the 2026 SSAF survey in the coming year.