



Charles Sturt
University

Celebrating
30 years in 2019

SSAF Survey – 2019 Results

Division of Student Services

2019 SSAF Survey Results

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Executive Summary

The Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF) was part of the Division of Student Services (DSS) Survey (Wave3). Students who are identified as SSAF paying students during 2019 were asked a set of questions designed to gain more insight into their perceptions of the program. The set of SSAF questions asked in the survey is provided in Appendix 1. In 2019 an additional open ended response question (Q 15 - Do you have any further comments about SSAF?) was introduced to provide a qualitative analysis of students' feedback on SSAF.

The survey results indicate that initial awareness of the SSAF program is limited. Of students, 43.4% were aware of the SSAF which is about 10% increase from the last year. The mean level of benefits received from the SSAF funded programs is 2.45. Whilst this is a slight improvement from 2018, the average score is showing a negative outcome. The mean level of feelings towards the SSAF is 3.43.

Online students mostly assign the following sources responsible for their first SSAF awareness:

- Email
- Charles Sturt website
- Invoice
- Previous Study
- Enrolment procedure or enrolment document

Internal/mixed students mostly assign the following sources responsible for their first SSAF awareness:

- Email
- Previous university experience
- A friend told me

Five legislated areas that receive *maximum importance* remained unchanged from 2018:

1. Promoting the health or welfare of students;
2. Helping students obtain employment or advice on careers;
3. Providing libraries and reading rooms (other than those provided for academic purposes) for students;
4. Giving students information to help them in their orientation; and
5. Helping students develop skills for study, by means other than undertaking courses of study in which they are enrolled.

One legislated area that receives *minimum importance* is:

- Supporting debating by students

Recommendations

Students were asked about their initial awareness and how they became aware of SSAF however, there is no question to determine the level of awareness of SSAF post commencement – particularly awareness around SSAF funding rounds. It is recommended to include this question in future surveys to determine if awareness has improved post commencement and whether improved strategies should be implemented to further build the awareness, the benefits and process for applying for SSAF funding rounds.

Whilst students' feelings towards SSAF indicated a positive sentiment – mean level 3.43. This was contrasted by a lower indicator on the benefits of SSAF – mean level 2.45. This indicates, whilst students on average were open to the concept of paying for SSAF the lower understanding on how SSAF is of benefit particularly for online students could be creating a negative impact. It is recommended that a review of the communication strategies on how students benefit from SSAF, what projects have been funded by SSAF and how they can apply for SSAF funding be undertaken. The consistent theme emerging from the open responses highlighted a lack of direct awareness.

Example responses follow:

- *Don't really know what it is*
- *I don't think many people are made aware about this student initiative.*
- *I'm not sure what SSAF funded programs are.*
- *Small fee for a huge range of helpful services at universities. Happy to pay it.*
- *SSAF doesn't seem to offer any great benefit to students studying online.*
- *What is it?*
- *What services do distant students gain from it? Shouldn't the amount be less for distance students??*
- *Would like to hear more about how our SSAF is allocated and used. As a distance student I would like to know how my money is spent and whether I use any services or could use any services that the money supports.*

In reviewing the student ranking of the 19 legislated areas – in 2019 the top 5 ranked legislated areas of importance remained the same as in 2018 with a movement only of priority order. It is noted that the internal/mixed mode cohorts also ranked highly - *Helping students with their financial affairs (mean of 4.0) and Helping students secure accommodation (mean of 4.1)*. When considering future projects submitted for SSAF allocation of funds, these two new legislated areas of interest should be considered alongside:

1. Promoting the health or welfare of students (Total mean of 4.2);
2. Helping students obtain employment or advice on careers (Total mean of 4.2);
3. Providing libraries and reading rooms (other than those provided for academic purposes) for students (Total mean of 4.1);
4. Giving students information to help them in their orientation (Total mean of 4.0); and
5. Helping students develop skills for study, by means other than undertaking courses of study in which they are enrolled (Total mean of 4.0).

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About this Report

About SSAF

The Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF) helps provide funding for non-academic student services, support and facilities. Since 2012, this compulsory fee has allowed Charles Sturt to enhance the range and quality of support services available to both on campus and online students, helping to improve and enrich student life. In the Higher Education Legislation Amendment (Student Services and Amenities) Act 2011, the Commonwealth Government identified these 19 areas in which SSAF can be spent.

Table 1 Legislated areas for SSAF expenditure.

1	Supporting the production and dissemination to students of media whose content is provided by the students
2	Supporting the administration of a club most of whose members are students
3	Supporting debating by students
4	Supporting an artistic activity by students
5	Supporting a sporting or other recreational activity by students
6	Providing libraries and reading rooms (other than those provided for academic purposes) for students
7	Providing legal services to students
8	Providing food or drink to students on a campus of the higher education provider
9	Promoting the health or welfare of students
10	Helping students with their financial affairs
11	Helping students secure accommodation
12	Helping students obtain insurance against personal accidents
13	Helping students obtain employment or advice on careers
14	Helping students develop skills for study, by means other than undertaking courses of study in which they are enrolled
15	Helping meet the specific needs of overseas students relating to their welfare, accommodation and employment
16	Giving students information to help them in their orientation
17	Caring for children of students
18	Advocating students interests in matters arising under the higher education providers rules (however described)
19	Advising on matters arising under the higher education providers rules (however described)

Methodology

The Division of Student Services (DSS) Wave 3 Survey was run during July and August 2019, in the first half of session 201960. In 2019, an email invitation to complete the DSS survey via Cvent was made to 6513 students, of whom 6457 were eligible to pay the SSAF. From the sample of 6457 students, 630 students answered all questions in this module (10%). A further 83 students commenced the SSAF module but did not complete it, dropping out after the first or second of the three questions relating to the 19 legislated areas for SSAF spending.

Of the 630 students who answered all SSAF questions, 75% were online students and 25% were internal or mixed mode students. Internal and mixed mode students have been combined into a single internal category throughout the report.

This survey utilised Cvent for the survey instrument. Students were sent a generic invitation to complete the survey via Talisma and asked to enter their Charles Sturt University username to verify their identity. Once responses were collected, the survey data was linked to student demographic information (mode, level, etc.) and loaded into SPSS for analysis.

Analysis was completed using SPSS, and responses to each question are reported by online and internal/mixed mode students. Most survey questions were measured on a 5-point scale, with each extreme labelled, and the middle values, 2, 3 and 4, unlabelled. All points on the scale were equidistant. Data is presented as mean levels for ease of comparing across quadrants, and where relevant, as nominal tables. Differences in responses across each quadrant were tested to a 95% confidence level, meaning that the probability that results were due to chance are less than 5%. Differences are only highlighted in the report where they were found to be statistical significant within a 5% margin of error.

Survey Results

SSAF Awareness

Students were asked if they were aware of the SSAF prior to receiving the SSAF invoice.

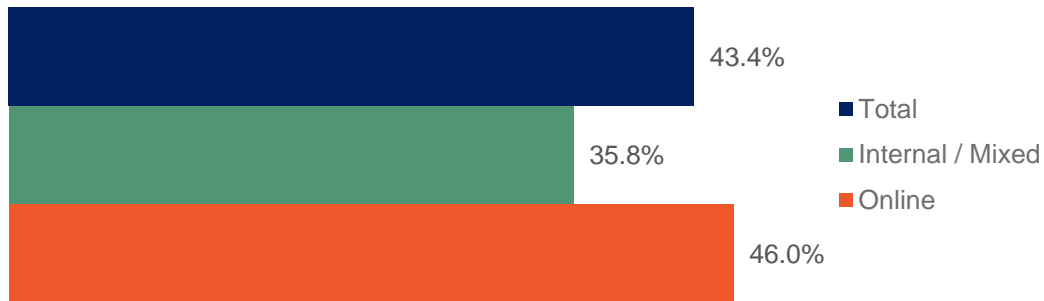
43.4% of students acknowledge that they were aware of the SSAF prior to receiving the SSAF invoice. The percentage of having awareness of the SSAF is significantly higher for online mode students than for internal/mixed mode students.

Students expressed a variety of means on how they became aware of SSAF indicating the variety of messaging was reaching students pre and post invoicing.

Sample of awareness responses received:

- *By going into my account and looking at the fees. Looking around the website was hard at first but once I knew where everything was I was able to find the things I was needing, like the SSAF.*
- *During O-week the first year I attended CSU*
- *Had to pay this fee last year at another university so expected it when reading through fees for my course this year*
- *I became first aware of the SSAF when initially applying for university, I was researching how much university would cost me and what different fees I would have to pay for during my university life. I found the information I needed on the CSU website.*
- *SSAF master lecture*
- *At Goulburn, though believe should not be now paying amenities fees studying at home.*
- *Discussion with an advisor about the services covered by the fee such as the gym and counselling services.*

Figure 1 Proportions of students who were aware of the SSAF prior to receiving their invoice.



Previous Year

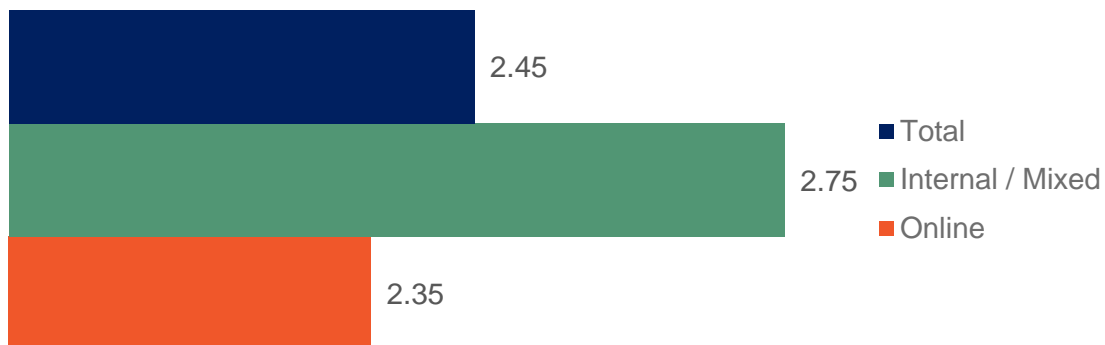
In 2018, the mean level of SSAF awareness (by averaging the online and internal mode) was 33.8%.

SSAF Benefits

Students were asked to rate their benefits received from the SSAF funded programs on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very negative and 5 is very positive.

- Mean level of benefits received from the SSAF funded programs is significantly (statistically) higher for internal/mixed mode students than online mode students.
- The average score (by averaging the online and internal/mixed mode) was 2.45 out of 5.

Figure 2 Mean level of benefit received from SSAF funded programs.



Previous Year

In 2018, the mean level of SSAF benefits score (by averaging the online and internal mode) was 2.40 out of 5.

SSAF Legislated Areas

Students were asked to rate the importance of the legislated areas of support in which SSAF funds can be spent on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very negative and 5 is very positive. The importance of each SSAF legislated area results are shown in Figure 3.

In reviewing the top 5 legislated areas of importance - the top five ranked legislated areas remained the same between 2018 and 2019 however, the order of ranking changed. The variance in responses between Internal/Mixed and Online determined the ranking of the legislated areas where the same total mean was achieved – noting the responses between the two study modes was very similar.

In 2019 it is noted that the Internal/Mixed mode students ranked highly: Helping students secure accommodation (mean of 4.1) and Helping students with their financial affairs (mean of 4.0).

In 2019 the five top legislated areas that receive *maximum importance* are:

1. Promoting the health or welfare of students (mean of 4.2);
2. Helping students obtain employment or advice on careers (mean of 4.2);
3. Providing libraries and reading rooms (other than those provided for academic purposes) for students (mean of 4.1);
4. Giving students information to help them in their orientation (mean of 4.0); and
5. Helping students develop skills for study, by means other than undertaking courses of study in which they are enrolled (mean of 4.0).

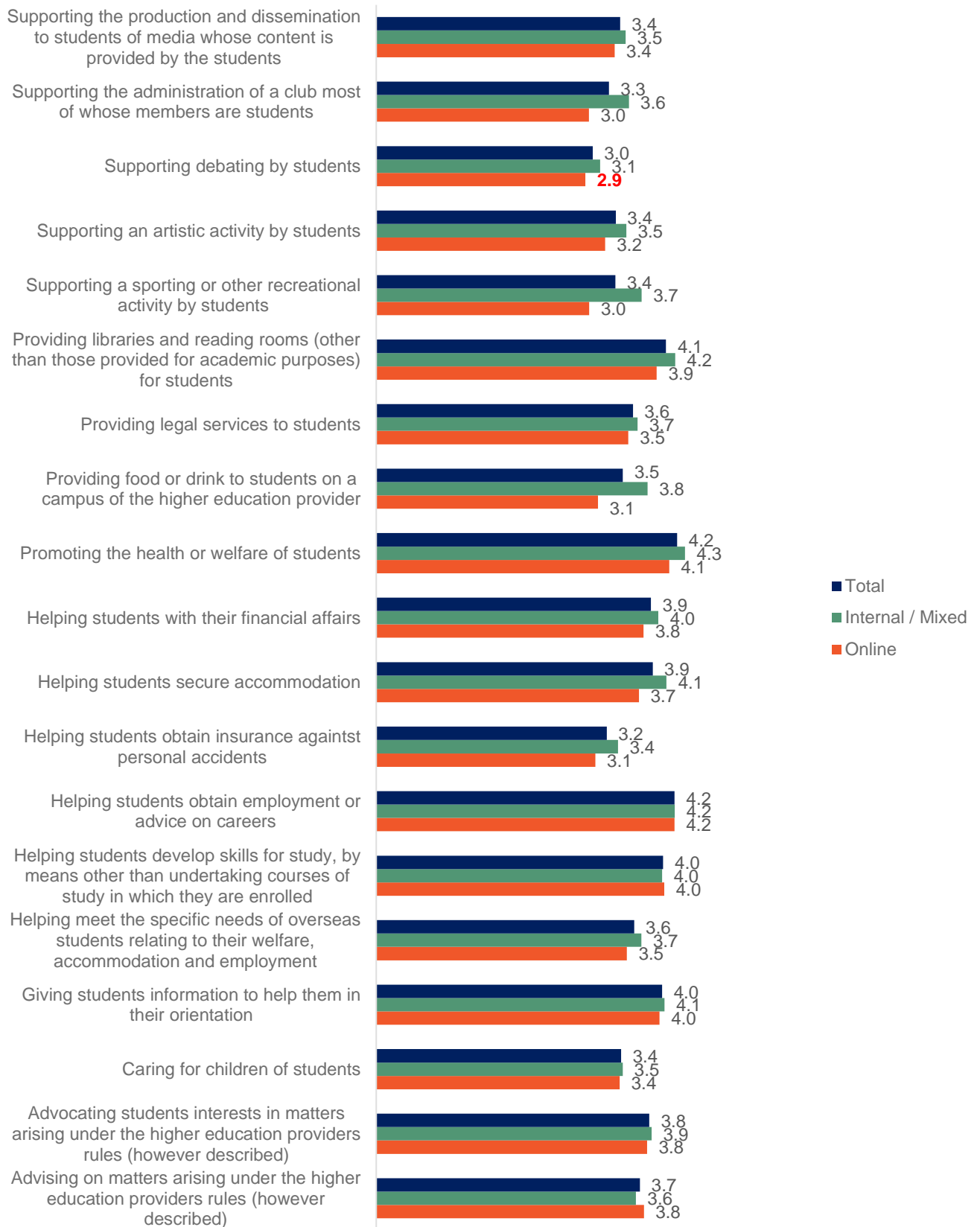
One legislated area that receives *minimum importance* is:

- Supporting debating by students (mean of 3.0).

In 2018 the 5 legislated areas that received *maximum importance* were:

1. Helping students obtain employment or advice on careers (mean of 4.17);
2. Promoting the health or welfare of students (mean of 4.08);
3. Helping students develop skills for study, by means other than undertaking courses of study in which they are enrolled (mean of 4.02);
4. Giving students information to help them in their orientation (mean of 4.02); and
5. Providing libraries and reading rooms (other than those provided for academic purposes) (mean of 3.92).

Figure 3 The importance of each SSAF legislated area of funding to students with online and internal student responses (n=630).



Previous Year

The comparative importance of the legislated areas survey results between 2019 and 2018 are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 The importance comparison of difference SSAF legislative areas.

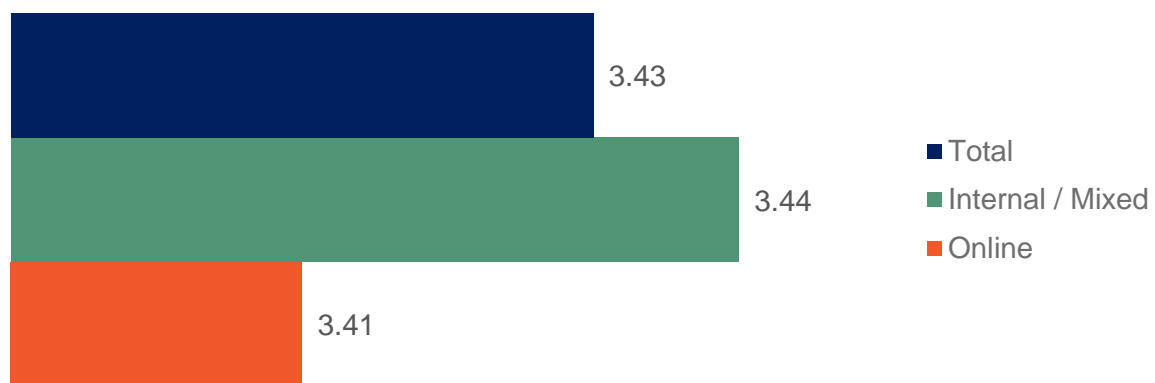
Legislated Areas	Mean level of Importance in	
	2019 (n = 630)	2018 (n= 759)
Supporting the production and dissemination to students of media whose content is provided by the students [SAME]	3.4	3.4
Supporting the administration of a club most of whose members are students [SAME]	3.3	3.3
Supporting debating by students [Decrease]	3.0	3.1
Supporting an artistic activity by students [Increase]	3.4	3.2
Supporting a sporting or other recreational activity by students [SAME]	3.4	3.4
Providing libraries and reading rooms (other than those provided for academic purposes) for students [Increase]	4.1	4.0
Providing legal services to students [SAME]	3.6	3.6
Providing food or drink to students on a campus of the higher education provider [Increase]	3.5	3.4
Promoting the health or welfare of students [Increase]	4.2	4.1
Helping students with their financial affairs [Increase]	3.9	3.7
Helping students secure accommodation [Increase]	3.9	3.8
Helping students obtain insurance against personal accidents [SAME]	3.2	3.2
Helping students obtain employment or advice on careers [SAME]	4.2	4.2
Helping students develop skills for study, by means other than undertaking courses of study in which they are enrolled [Decrease]	4.0	4.1
Helping meet the specific needs of overseas students relating to their welfare, accommodation and employment [SAME]	3.6	3.6
Giving students information to help them in their orientation [Decrease]	4.0	4.1
Caring for children of students [Decrease]	3.4	3.5
Advocating students interests in matters arising under the higher education providers rules (however described) [SAME]	3.8	3.8
Advising on matters arising under the higher education providers rules (however described) [Decrease]	3.7	3.8

Feelings towards SSAF

Students were asked to rate their feelings towards the SSAF on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very negative and 5 is very positive.

- Mean level of feelings towards the SSAF is slightly higher for internal/mixed mode students than online mode students.
- The total score (by averaging the online and internal/mixed mode) was 3.43 out of 5.

Figure 4 Mean level of students feelings towards SSAF.



Previous Year

In 2018, the mean level of SSAF feelings score (by averaging the online and internal mode) was 3.36 out of 5.

First Awareness towards SSAF

Students were asked to provide a free text answer regarding their first awareness of the SSAF.

Online students mostly assign the following sources responsible for their first SSAF awareness:

- Email
- Charles Sturt website
- Invoice
- Previous Study
- Enrolment procedure or enrolment document

Internal/mixed students mostly assign the following sources responsible for their first SSAF awareness:

- Email
- Previous university experience
- A friend told me

SSAF Comments

Students were also asked to provide an optional free text response on whether they had any further comments about SSAF. A sample of the responses are provided in Tables 3 and 4. In general the responses were closely aligned to the mean levels to the questions on awareness and benefits, with online students showing a higher level of dissatisfaction in the benefits attributed to SSAF compared to being an internal student and that the awareness of the use and funding of SSAF initiatives was limited. The lack of understanding of where SSAF is being used can contribute to the lower satisfaction on the benefits attributed to SSAF.

Online Mode Students

Table 3 Major SSAF Comments made by Online Mode Students.

No.	Comments
1	As a distance education student I don't feel well served by the SSAF. I think on-campus students receive significantly more benefits for the payment. I have made use of online orientation seminars and found these very useful.
2	Distance students should be exempt. It's of little use to us.
3	This semester I was surprised to find that as a distance education student, because I've chosen to do two subjects, my SSAF is double. I'm not sure that I'm receiving twice as much from CSU.
4	SSAF is a good idea just need more time to pay for it.
5	The SSAF funded facilities are very poor in CSU Goulburn.
6	For the associate degree in police which is not on campus for session 3, 4, 5 I do not believe we get any benefit from SSAF. I'm not sure where the money goes
7	Leadership activities for women, particularly Gen X and Y. Too much effort going to leadership activities for Millennials and not enough to Gen X and Y - we have different needs and some decent research needs to be done to identify our needs
8	Too much money!
9	Would like to hear more about how our SSAF is allocated and used. As a distance student I would like to know how my money is spent and whether I use any services or could use any services that the money supports.
10	I am still unsure about whether I have been benefitted by SSAF funded programs. I know there is a report about what it is being used for but perhaps it would be more helpful to indicate which programs are SSAF funded when they are being used.
11	As a distance student, I don't believe the majority of those points apply to me. They seem to be there to benefit on-campus students. Such as: * Caring for children of students * Providing food or drink to students on a campus of the higher education
12	Home delivery books – a great service!

Internal / Mixed Mode Students

Table 4 Major SSAF Comments made by Internal / Mixed Mode Students.

No.	Comments
1	I don't like having to pay an extra fee despite putting thousands of dollars on my hex each semester. I know it is amenities fee, but do not know where that money goes.
2	More free BBQs and food, the cafe is ridiculously expensive and most people eat over at Safeway, less focus on making maximum profit for the University shareholders and more freebies and support for students, staff and academics alike.
3	The SSAF should be included alongside all fee information given to prospective and current students.
4	Perhaps making it obvious where the money is going- having posters displayed around the campus breaking down how the SSAF is spent.
5	The sport that I choose to play isn't supported by SSAF. This means that we have to pay for the use of the University's equine centre facilities which I feel isn't fair at all.
6	There needs to be further information to what it is about before giving out the bill to students.
7	I think more services need to be made available or maintained on university grounds - including working amenities in residences I.e. washing machines or enough car parks. I would also like to see more free water refill points and better care taken of those.
8	Would like to see the fee fix up the deteriorating gym as a lot of equipment is poor condition e.g. handles have come off machines
9	I have raised an issue with SSAF, I am continually contacting them to see where things are up to. I am not sure what they really do and how much they can assist, more on them at orientation would be a benefit. I only learnt about them 6-8 weeks ago.
10	SSAF fund in campus yoga once a week on Orange campus which is great, I hope it continues
11	SSAF funding could be used more wisely and needs to differ from campus to campus based on each campus needs and degrees offered.

Appendix 1. 'SSAF' Questions

The following questions ask about your awareness of the fee, how you would like the University to spend SSAF funds, and your feelings towards the fee.

*9. Were you aware of the SSAF prior to receiving your SSAF invoice? (Select One)

- Yes (Answer question number 9.1.)
- No

9.1 How did you first become aware of the SSAF?

*10. The following are the legislated areas of support in which SSAF funds can be spent. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not at all important and 5 is very important, please rate the importance of providing the following types of support to Charles Sturt students. (Select one per row.)

	1 - Not at all important	2	3	4	5 - Very important
*Providing food or drink to students on a campus of the higher education provider	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Helping students secure accommodation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Caring for children of students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Providing legal services to students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Supporting the administration of a club most of whose members are students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Promoting the health or welfare of students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Supporting a sporting or other recreational activity by students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*11. The following are the legislated areas of support in which SSAF funds can be spent. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not at all important and 5 is very important, please rate the importance of providing the following types of support to Charles Sturt students.(Select one per row.)

	1 - Not at all important	2	3	4	5 - Very important
*Helping students obtain employment or advice on careers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Supporting an artistic activity by students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Supporting debating by students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Providing libraries and reading rooms (other than those provided for academic purposes) for students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Helping students with their financial affairs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Helping students obtain insurance against personal accidents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*12. The following are the legislated areas of support in which SSAF funds can be spent. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not at all important and 5 is very important, please rate the importance of providing the following types of support to Charles Sturt students. (Select one per row.)

	1 - Not at all important	2	3	4	5 - Very important
*Supporting the production and dissemination to students of media whose content is provided by the students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Helping meet the specific needs of overseas students relating to their welfare, accommodation and employment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Advocating students' interests in matters arising under the higher education provider's rules (however described)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Giving students information to help them in their orientation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Helping students develop skills for study, by means other than undertaking courses of study in which they are enrolled	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Advising on matters arising under the higher education provider's rules (however described)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*13. Please rate your feelings towards the SSAF on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very negative and 5 is very positive (Select one.)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 - Very negative • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 - Very positive

*14. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is no benefit at all and 5 is a great deal of benefit, how much benefit have you received from SSAF funded programs during your time at Charles Sturt University?(*Required)

- 1 - Very negative
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 - Very positive

15. Do you have any further comments about SSAF?

* Required