

2021 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 (19) 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.

The 2021 SSAF survey is part of ongoing student consultation processes used to inform and determine priorities for SSAF funding in 2022.

METHODOLOGY

The Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor Students drafted and administered the online 2021 SSAF Survey. The SSAF Survey was open for two (2) weeks from 23 July to 6 August 2021. Every student eligible to pay SSAF received an email inviting them to complete the Survey.

As an incentive for students, those who completed the Survey automatically went into the draw to win one of ten (10) \$50 Coles-Myer gift vouchers. The survey completion time was estimated to take around three (3) minutes.

The Survey presented the 19 allowable categories and asked respondents to specify the level of importance of each category, on a 5-point scale from "Not at all Important" to "Extremely Important". The Survey could not be completed unless all 19 categories had a response. The responses were aggregated, and categories ranked using R package "likert" (version 1.3.5) with R version "R-4.1.0" software environment for statistical computing and graphics.

Students also had the opportunity to leave feedback at the end of the survey via three (3) optional questions.

COMMUNICATION

The SSAF Survey was promoted through the following channels:

- Email to all students in JCU Australia (except JCUB and JCUA)
- JCU and JCUSA Students Facebook pages
- Student Bulletin
- Market Day Stall.

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.



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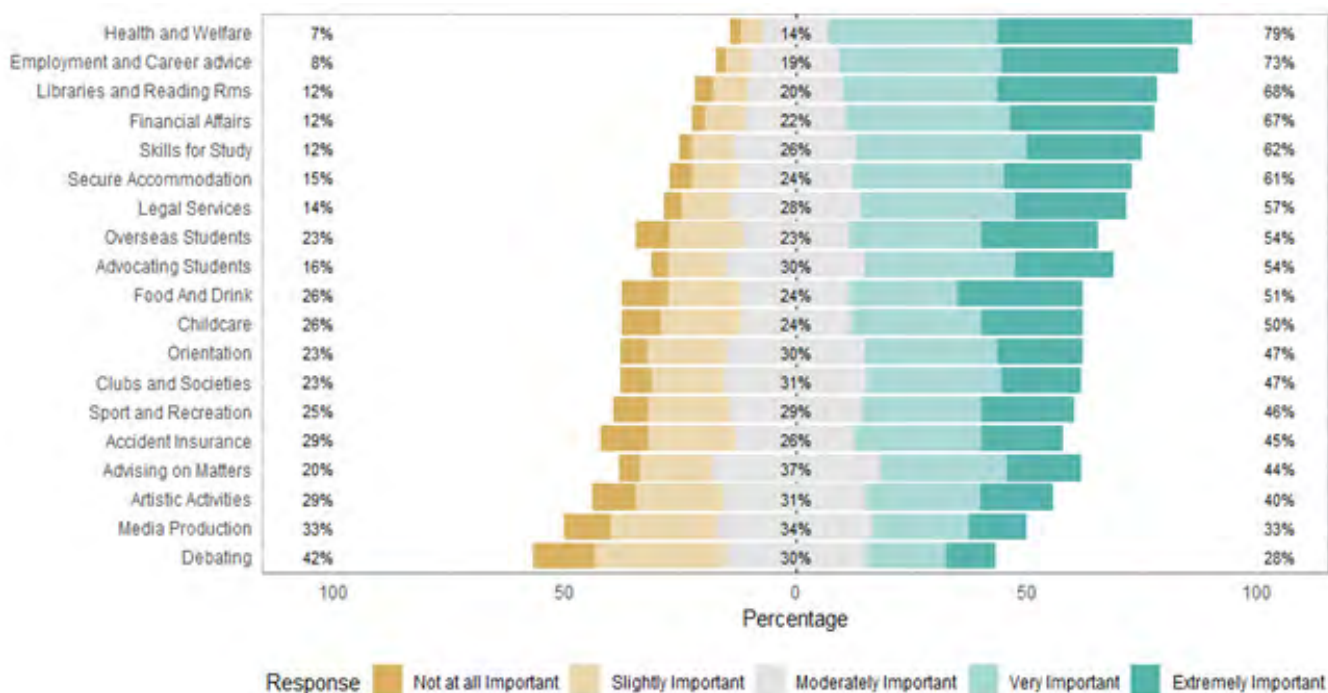
SURVEY RESULTS

TABLE 1: TOP 5 CATEGORIES OF IMPORTANCE AS RATED BY RESPONDENTS

SSAF CATEGORY	RANKING		
	2021	2019	DELTA
Health and Welfare	1	1	0
Employment and Career Advice	2	2	0
Libraries and Reading Rooms (peer to peer spaces)	3	4	1
Financial Affairs	4	3	-1
Skills for Study	5	5	0

Table 1 also shows that the top 5 have remained unchanged since the 2019 SSAF Survey, with only 3rd and 4th exchanging positions. The overall ranking of all 19 SSAF categories (abbreviated) is shown in Figure 1., along with the distribution of responses to each.

FIGURE 1: 2021 RANKING AND OVERALL DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES TO THE 19 SSAF CATEGORIES (ABBREVIATED)



The breakdown by campus (Table 2) shows that Townsville and Cairns are aligned with each other and the overall population, with some broader deviations from the overall top 5 apparent with the less populous campuses. There are only minor deviations from the overall top 5 when broken down by attendance mode.

TABLE 2: TOP 5 SSAF CATEGORIES FOR 2021, BY CAMPUS AND ATTENDANCE MODE

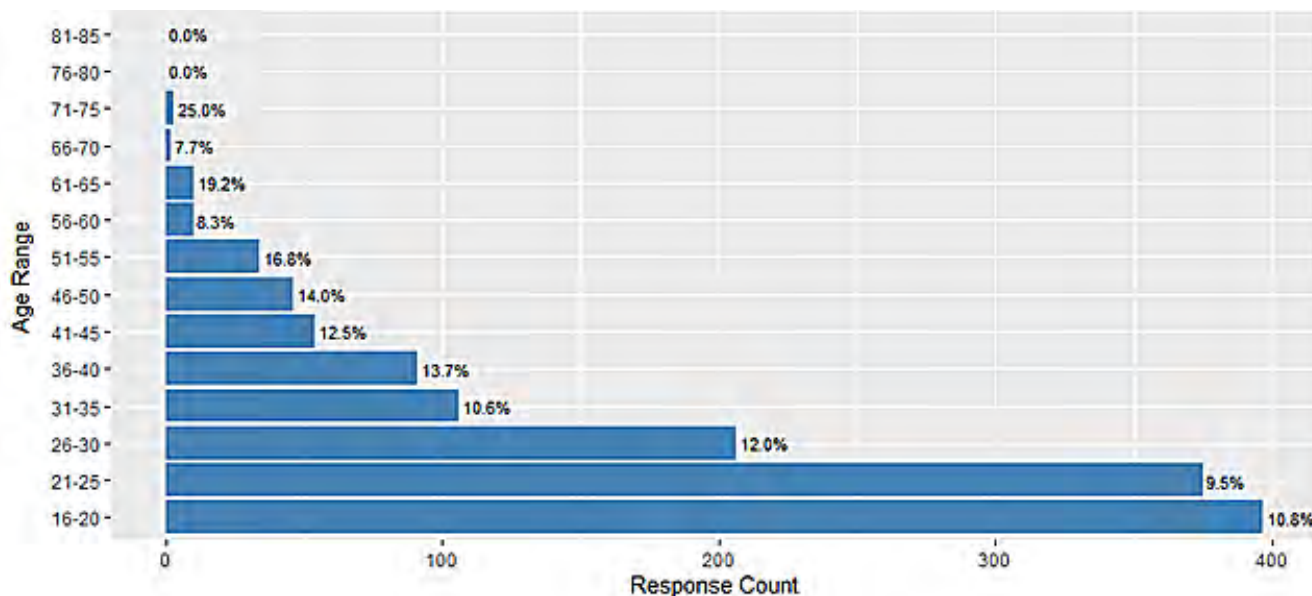
ITEM	POPULATION	BY CAMPUS					BY ATTENDANCE MODE		
		TOWNSVILLE	CAIRNS	BRISBANE	MACKAY	MT ISA	INTERNAL	EXTERNAL	MIXED
Health and Welfare	1	1	1	2			1	1	1
Employment and Career Advice	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	3	4
Libraries and Reading Rooms	3	3	3		4	2	3		3
Financial Affairs	4	4	4	1			4	4	5
Skills for Study	5	5	5		3			2	2
Secure Accommodation					1		5		
Legal Services								5	
Overseas Students				4		5			
Childcare						1			
Orientation					5				
Sport and Recreation						4			
Accident Insurance				5					

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

The 2021 SSAF Survey was distributed to 12,192 students, with 1,334 surveys completed, giving an overall response of 10.94%.

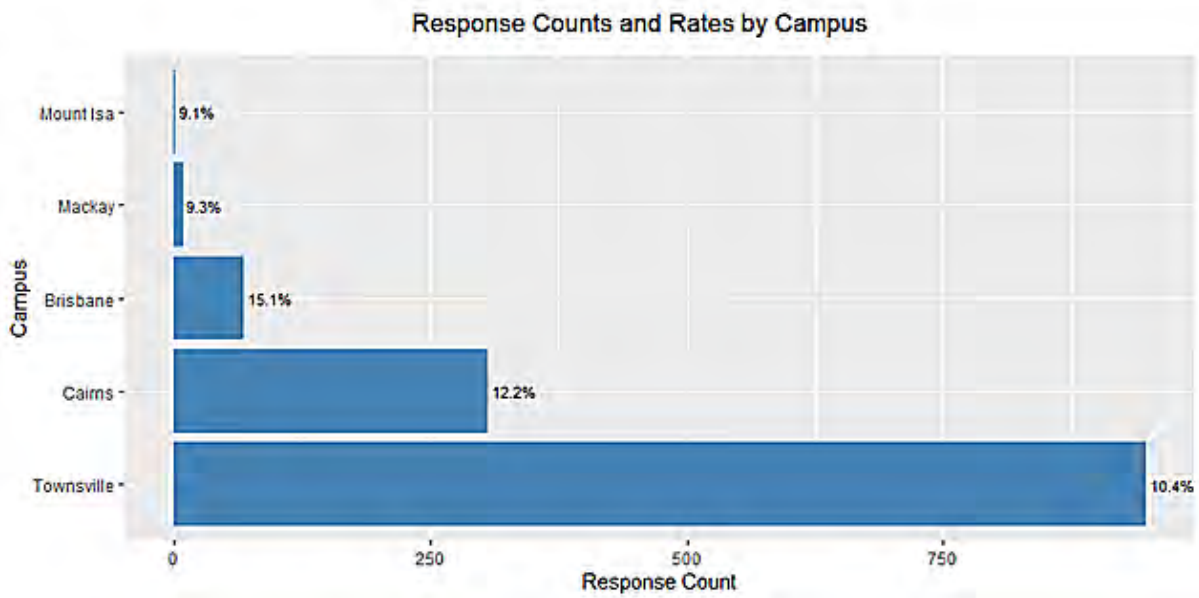
Response rates by age range (Fig. 2) show all groups generally achieving response rates between 9% and 14%, with some (expected) higher variation among the less populous groups. 57% of respondents were 25 and under.

FIGURE 2: 2021 RESPONSE COUNTS AND RATES, BY AGE RANGE



All campuses achieved response rates of 9% or greater (Fig 3.)

FIGURE 3: 2021 RESPONSE COUNTS AND RATES, BY CAMPUS



By course level (Fig. 4), Postgraduate Research achieved the highest response rate. However, Undergraduates still comprised 71% of all respondents.

FIGURE 4. 2021 RESPONSE COUNTS AND RATES, BY COURSE LEVEL

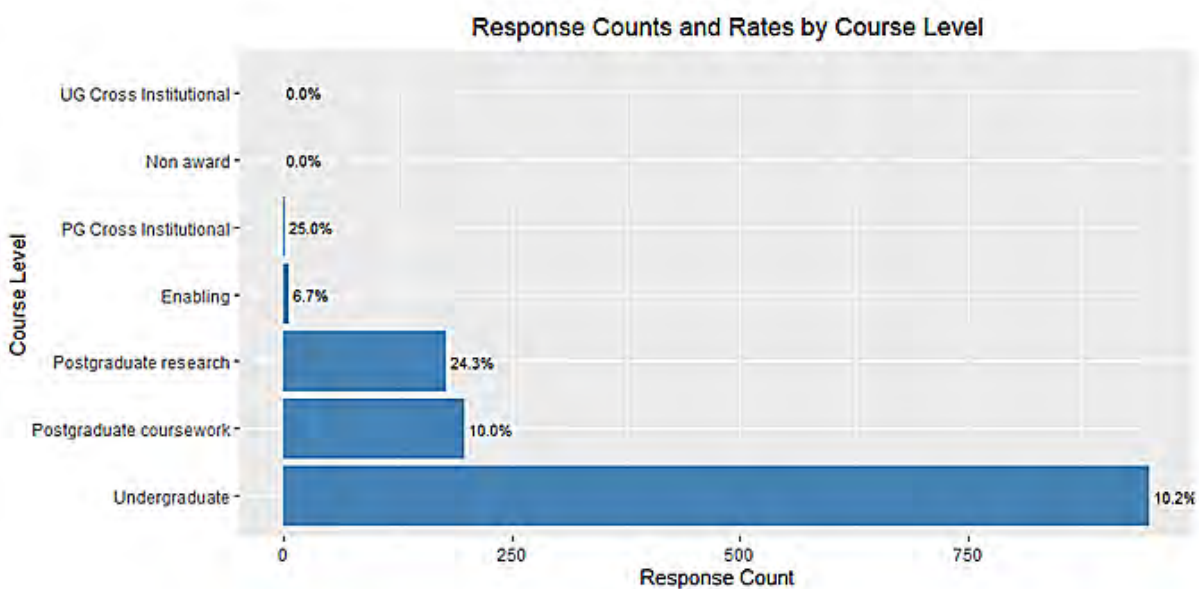


FIGURE 5: IDENTIFIES HAVING A DISABILITY (N = 110)

Observations:

- Compared to the full population - Advocating Students is up five places, Overseas Students is down five places.
- Four of the five top categories are the same. Advocating Students is now in position four, and Financial Affairs has dropped from 4th place to 7th.

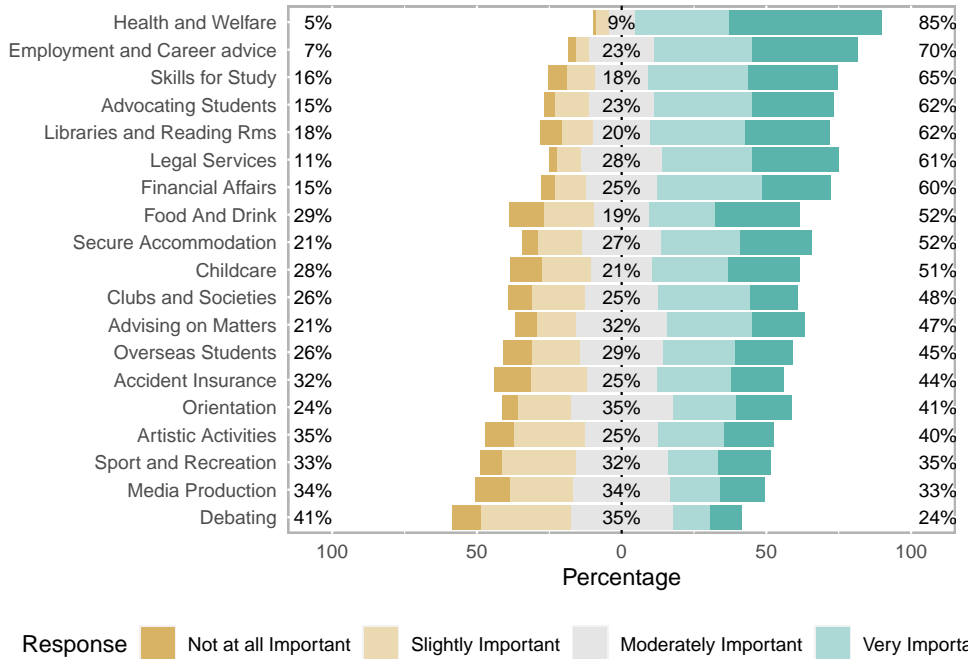


FIGURE 6: IDENTIFIES INDIGENOUS (N = 42)

Observations:

- Compared to the full population - Secure Accommodation replaces Skills for Study in top Five. Childcare and Financial Affairs tied for 5th place, so four of the top five are arguably the same. Childcare is up six places from 11th to 5th.
- Highest rating for Health and Welfare (88%) of any group excluding non-binary gender (2 respondents). Zero responses where Health and Welfare was rated only 'Slightly' or 'Not at all' Important.

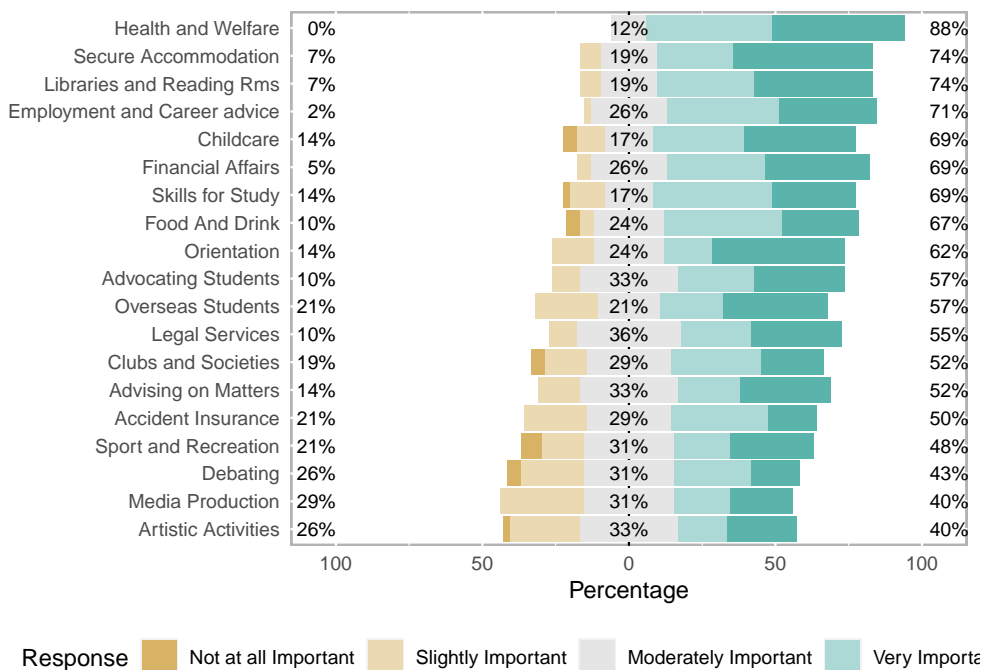


FIGURE 7: IDENTIFIES INTERNATIONAL (N = 276)

Observations:

- Compared to the full population - excluding Secure Accommodation, the top seven in the full population is the same as the top seven for International students.
- Overseas Students takes the top spot. Accident Insurance is up seven spots from 15th to 8th.

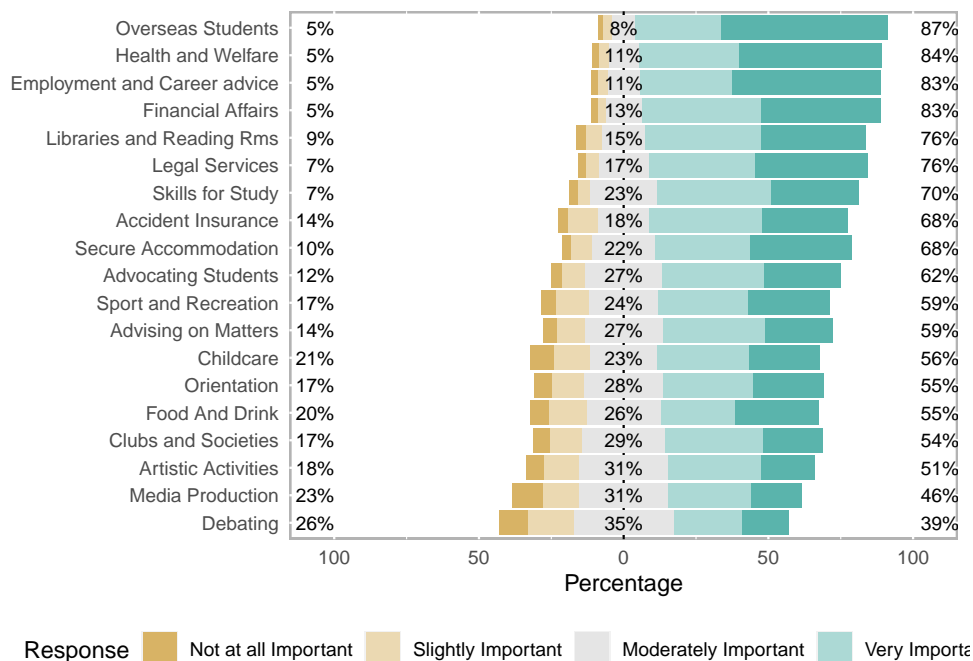


FIGURE 8: IDENTIFIES AS NON-ENGLISH AT HOME (N=297)

Observations:

- Compared to the full population - top eight are the same, just in a different order.
- Very little variance between Non-English and International Students results. Overseas Students is in 4th instead of 1st, Orientation is in 11th place instead of 14th and most other relative movements are only by one or two positions.

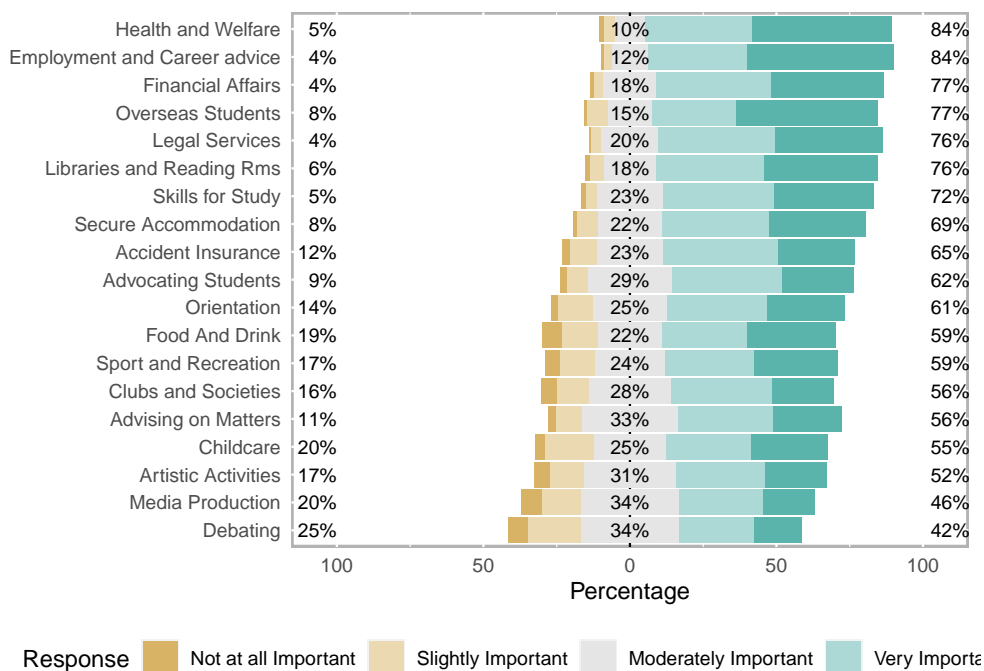


FIGURE 9: IDENTIFIES NON-BINARY GENDER (N = 2)

Observations:

- Difficult to draw any conclusions with such a small sample size.
- Libraries and Reading Rooms in the bottom two places, whereas in all other groups it is in the top six.

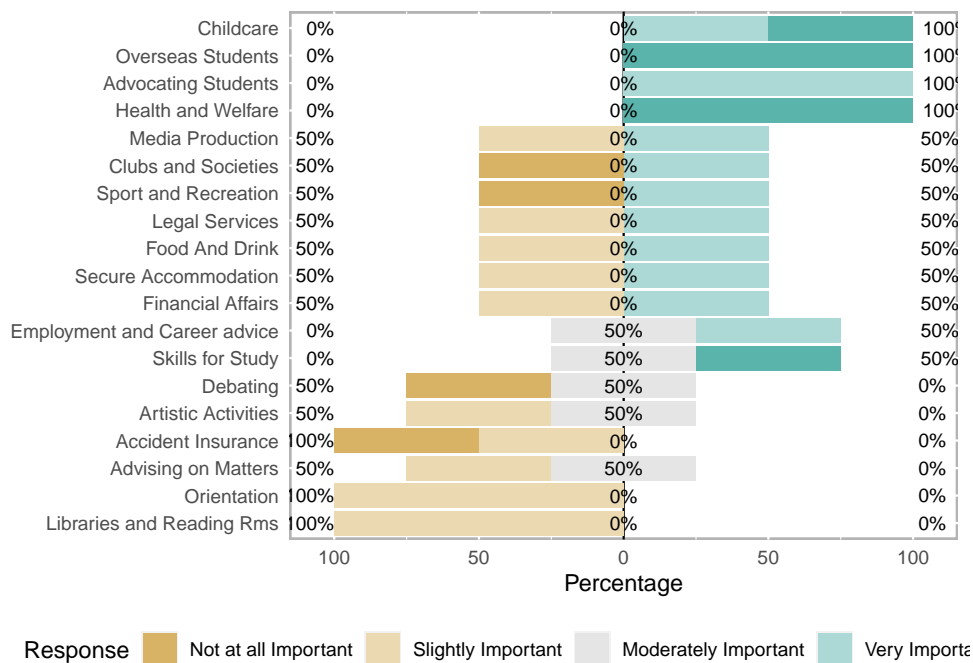


FIGURE 10: IDENTIFIES AS FEMALE (N=947)

Observations:

- All categories within one or two positions of full population, not surprising as this is two-thirds of the total population.

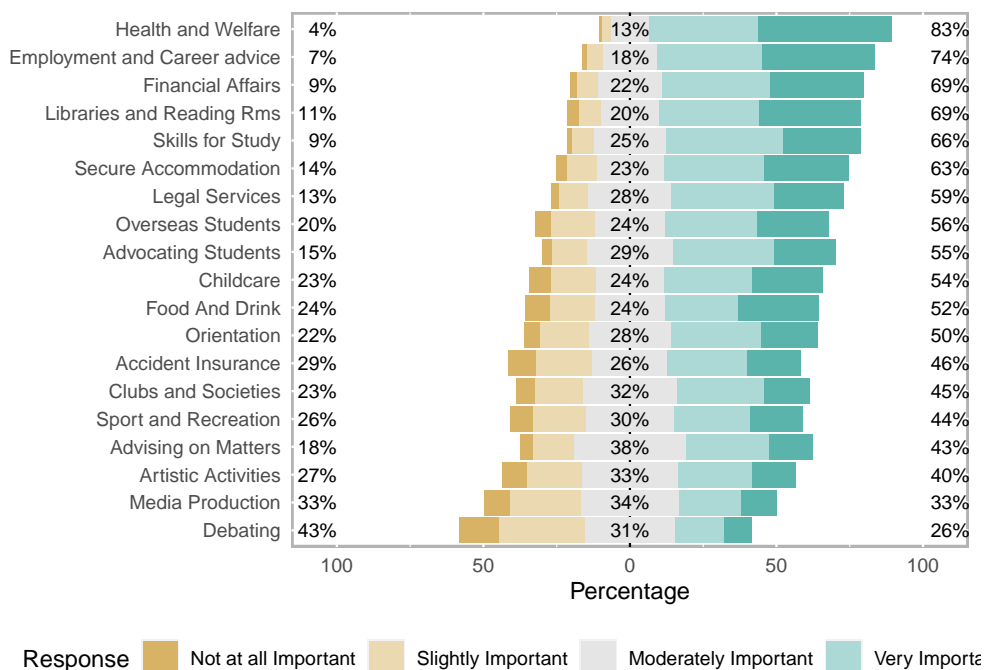
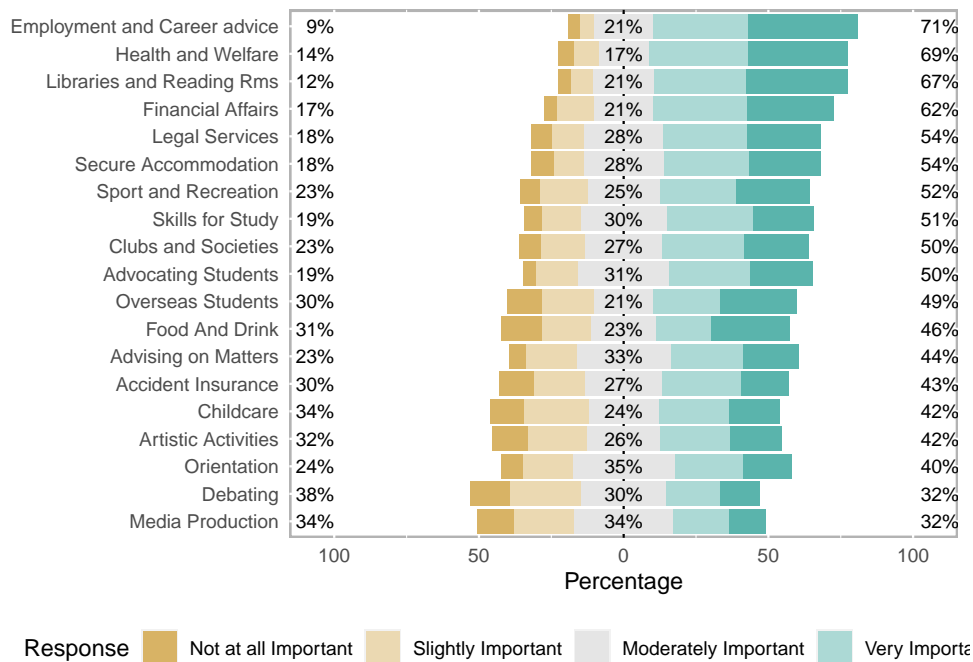


FIGURE 11: IDENTIFIES AS MALE (N = 385)

Observations:

- In the first two positions for Males, Employment and Career Advice is only ahead of Health and Welfare by two points; whereas for Females Health and Welfare is nine points ahead of Employment and Career Advice.
- Compared to Females - Legal Services swaps with Skills for Study; Sports and Recreation is up eight places; Clubs and Societies is up five places and Orientation and Childcare are down five places.



GENERAL FEEDBACK

Students were asked to provide general comments that help to understand their priorities and to provide suggestions for projects that could be funded by SSA Fee in 2022.

General Comments – 549 responses

Suggestions – 398 responses

The following themes were identified from responses:

STUDENT FEEDBACK

GENDER EQUALITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring back the mental health alliance LGBTQIA • First Nations and LGBTQIA+ social events • LGBTQI+ representation, visibility and support • GEAR film screening aiding gender equality
CAREER ASSISTANCE AND LIFE SKILLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career development workshops • Career Fair with recruiting employers • Make available online Career Advisors • Job placements in all areas specially in Law and Marine Science are needed • A project that could assist in developing life skills like driving especially for International students • Prepare students for life after uni by providing more options to develop skillsets that make one employable above and beyond core knowledge obtained from course content
STUDENT ADVOCACY & REPRESENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A return to student advocacy • Any role of the student association in political action and lobbying on behalf of students, for example cuts to tertiary education funding and impact on students from diverse populations • Financial and advisory expert support for the student association and students • Having more counsellors available to students especially during this time with the pandemic ongoing especially for internationals.
LEARNING RESOURCES AND SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing for more online classes, support and allow a more flexible timetable • Updated lecture recordings • More face to face classes • More assistance with HDR students in dealing with their advisors, specially what are their rights and the adequate professional conduct • Dissatisfaction with trimester implementation • More access to presentations by academics • Improve external exam technology • More educational and industrial field trips • Mock exam portal • Increase PASS and provide for all year levels and more information on PASS • Promote rural studying • Book and textbook exchange and academic writing classes • Increase staffing at JCU library to support both students and academics teaching students • Brainstorming for research ideas and proposals across all disciplines - research ideas • Discussion on broader research and finding of research fund and investment on research activity rather not only providing the scholarship to complete the degree

STUDENT FEEDBACK

LEARNING RESOURCES AND SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tutoring services for specific subjects that are shared among degrees • Support for academic skills especially writing skill to complete assignments • More Indigenous Support Workers and Tutors • More industry oriented program and software training • Students need to be checked weekly on their academic progress as well as more carrier pathways
CULTURAL EXCHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support students to learn a new language • An educational trip to a different state/country to meet with others in the same field and learn from their cultures • professional development workshops • Cultural Fair / Multicultural days • International foods and cultural market
AWARENESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion and awareness surrounding what JCUSA do and how they can help students needs • Get lecturers to tell students about the resources that are provided by JCU • Need to have clearer communication and easier access to support • Climate change activism options such as local rallies and reef awareness • Consent based activities that ring awareness to sexual harassment /assault • Awareness of where to seek help can be promoted more, or student help groups could be formed • Information sessions on where to obtain various certificates, licenses • Immigration affairs specialist/agent to help students with visa inquiries/issues • Programs about healthy consent to prevent sexual assault • COVID vaccination awareness drive and efforts must be put to get entire student community fully vaccinated ASAP
LIBRARY & STUDENT SPACES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ergonomic work spaces for HDR students in need • Available help for longer hours with assessments in library • A bookshop and a refectory • Put the ATM back on campus • A convenience store / newsagent on campus • Better study areas around campus for students • Improvements to Engineering facilities. A large scale renovation of the Med Labs to increase computer number, add a kitchen facility and collaborative spaces • More books for the library • Access to lockers for students that ride to Uni to encourage more students to ride as it provides an area to leave a bag of spare clothes and shower essentials instead of carrying them around all day • Add coffee and snack vending machines to more locations around campus. There are no food options past 1:30pm most days • Better furniture and buildings • Better parking spaces, less dirt parks, fix potholes • Expansion on prayer room • Get the pool working again • Media space with games • More storage facilities for club equipment • Improve access to existing medical services on campus • Transportation to and from Uni, courtesy services in peak hours

STUDENT FEEDBACK

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A big day out for all students • Annual NAIDOC events • A live event, music, comedy, spoken word, dance, circus...to raise money for a local charities • A fun social gathering, could be a monochromatic brunch or lunch, where attendees would bring a serving of food in which the food must match the colour of their attire • JCU student conference as an annual/biennial event across all campuses and disciplines/study areas • Market days on-campus or online to promote uni talent and help raise money for worthy cause • Tree planting day • Facilitating a shuttle bus to clubs in town
SOCIAL SPORT, CLUBS & SOCIETIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A debating club • Arty hours - paint, draw, craft etc for free, all sports, and meditation sessions • Bicycle hire • Cooking sessions where students are taught to make a fun and easy meal • Provide safe traveling nearby Townville for social experience for HDR students • A dedicated and permanent Queer Space for students in Townsville and Cairns. • A dedicated staff member to support clubs and societies • Environmental awareness and "loving and hugging nature" program
FOOD & DRINKS ON CAMPUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly free breakfasts/lunches • dietician on campus/ better food on campus/ awareness of healthy food while studying • Student pantry
CHILD CARE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child minding periods to allow for study for parents without access to childcare • Uni Child Care Subsidy
FINANCIAL SUPPORT & SERVICES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give JCUSA 100% of the SSAF. Stop funding core university programs and staff with SSAF • Being mostly online, the fee should be reduced as there is less reason to go on campus • Exemption for SSA fees to offshore who are studying online and HDR students • Either replace the lost funding to student unions at a 1:1 parity with pre-SSA fee levels, or fund a new and identical student unionisation body to the same pre-SSA fee levels of funding • Ensuring that financially disadvantaged students are able to access study • Exclusively use the funds for students not based in Townsville, for improvement of their home campus (e.g. If based in Mackay, Cairns, then SSA fee of those students should only be spent to improve the Mackay/Cairns experience - not subsidising Townsville) • Financial assistance for travel and accommodation for students on placement for Veterinary Science, especially if in a rural or remote area • Fund printing and fuel expenses • Funding for a moderate-to-large sized gym, which can accommodate for indoor sports, and social events when the weather conditions are not ideal/safe • Funding shaded walkways around the campus (currently there are large areas of the campus where it's impossible to walk between buildings out of the sun) • Offer startup grants to new student clubs starting up • Improve HDR student community

STUDENT FEEDBACK

FINANCIAL SUPPORT & SERVICES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All student associations should be funded by the SSAF regardless their minimum number of members • Quarantine fees for international students • Provide financial assistance and scholarships available for more students • Proper funding of AccessAbility services • The library services (copying, printing, workshops), stationery used at the college, and outdoor activities for international students should be spent more by SSA fee • Either more SSA funds should be dedicated to assisting postgraduate students, or we shouldn't have to pay hundreds for something we don't benefit much from
HEALTH AND WELLBEING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JCU counselling service needs much more funding and staffing to reduce ongoing waiting times • Yoga and meditation sessions • Having puppies/ cats/ cute animals at the university once a fortnight/month to help with students mental wellbeing • Bright and engaging campus design to support mental health and well-being day / event • Canine Support Program for mental health and wellbeing • Mental health access and accessibility support • Mental health first aid training • Prioritise student mental health and welfare • Provision of information on health insurance • It would be good to have some more post-grad specific service
ACCOMMODATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation, housing, and food for students • Accommodation for placement • Assistance with locating off-campus accommodation
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A weekly or monthly lottery where international students can win a Coles or Woolworths gift voucher • Support international students as they pay the highest fees and deserve better
CAIRNS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Cairns library has so many lights out, it's not an inspiring space at all • Need more space for group work or discussions. • A small convenient store • A bar to meet other students and movie nights at the Cairns Campus • Reopen the cafes - hold some fun events and make students more aware of any events on campus • Child care on Cairns campus • Cultural groups in JCU Cairns • Hire a second student advocate in Cairns to support our current advocate • Pool at Cairns campus • Restore and refurbish the existent piano, or provide a new piano, on campus at JCU, Cairns and a couple of table pool tables • Add more psychologists to cope with students needing mental health assistance • Balance the disparity between how much students from Cairns and Townsville campus pay in fees and what it is provided to them in terms of facilities • Options to meet on campus in the afternoon and evening to have discussions about subject choice



STUDENT FEEDBACK

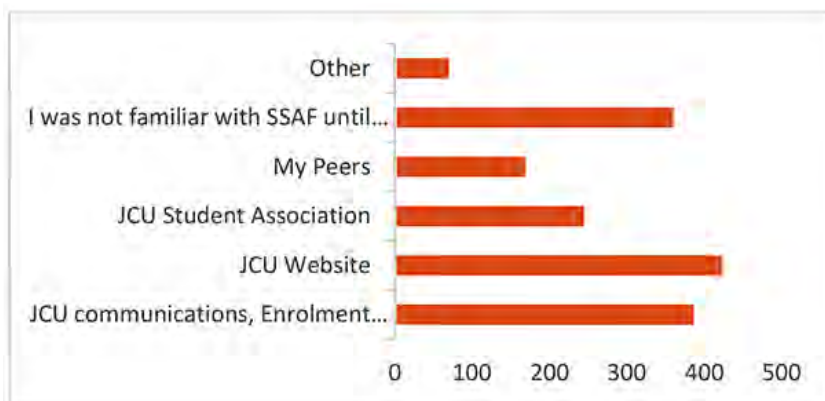
MACKAY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There does not seem to be any allocation of funds to the JCU Mackay campus- what are students in Mackay paying the fees for?• Bringing equity and equality to campuses such as Mackay• Need more study spaces• Need a library
SUSTAINABILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sustainable agriculture based projects for example start composting, reducing the single use plastics used by restaurants on campus, hatchery, etc• Investing in research technology such as solar-powered cars

Do you have any suggestions for projects that could be funded by the SSA Fee in 2022?

The accompanying word cloud was constructed from the responses to the open question.



Finally, what have you found to be the best source of information on the SSA Fee? Choose however many apply.



Other comments included: SSAF logo on stickers, signs and uniforms, website.



FURTHER INFORMATION

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