

University of Wollongong

Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF)

2025 Transition Plan

Introduction

This Transition Plan is for the University of Wollongong (UOW) to seek approval from the Department of Education (the department) to enter into a transition arrangement [for up to three consecutive years for Table A providers, and five years for non-Table A providers], consistent with Section 19-39 of the Higher Education Support Act 2003 and the Higher Education Support (Student Services, Amenities, Representation and Advocacy) Guidelines 2022.

Application

1. UOW Context and Current Arrangements

UOW has 25,813 enrolled students across nine (9) onshore campuses in NSW. It has a distinctive student-led organisation landscape, whereby the **student voice currently informs 100% of SSAF expenditure**.

Current practice

UOW's primary vehicle of formal engagement with its student body is through the Student Advisory Council ([SAC](#)). SAC is a 40-student Council and was established as an advisory group to the Vice-Chancellor in 2014. It consists of representatives from the broad cross-section of students, including the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Associations, the UOW Pulse Student Director, clubs, elected faculty representatives, campus representatives and diversity representatives (see Terms of Reference [here](#)). The SAC ensures a broad and inclusive student voice has a key role in matters of importance to students and the University, including SSAF expenditure.

The SAC receives a substantial onboarding and orientation program and meets for six formal meetings per year, plus two meetings with the University Executive. Informal meetings with a university representative are also held more frequently, and there is regular dialog between UOW staff and SAC executive on matters as they arise.

The SAC is the vehicle through which prioritisation and allocation of SSAF is managed. The UOW [SSAF consultation process](#) begins with student engagement via an annual SSAF Student Survey, which is issued to the entire UOW student body, seeking their input on awareness and engagement with existing SSAF funded activities and their individual priorities for future services and amenities. A broad call for proposals to utilise SSAF is then made, sharing the student feedback from the survey as a guide to priorities. Submissions must detail how SSAF is proposed to be spent (noting legislative requirements), key deliverables and milestones, and how student consultation was incorporated into the submission.

Submissions can be received from students, staff, and student groups and associations. This means that the student voice informs all SSAF expenditure, and ensures that the university does not inadvertently prioritise one student group over another. The SAC has a [SSAF Subcommittee](#) who is mandated to review survey results and SSAF submissions, in line with priorities established by the SSAF Student Survey Results. The SAC SSAF Subcommittee (SSC) provides recommendations to the SAC on the merit and value of each submission, makes recommendations about whether each submission should be funded by SSAF, and the relative priority of the project. This provides a comprehensive, prioritised assessment of proposed SSAF expenditure. SSC recommendations (including commentary) are forwarded to the full SAC for endorsement, and then to UOW delegated authorities, DVCA and COO, for final approval of the funding allocation.

Written commentary from the SSC is provided to project managers to inform ongoing refinement of services and amenities. SSC also receives mid-year reports for the funded SSAF initiatives to inform a monitoring and review process.

UOW provides extensive support for the SSC processes. This includes survey maintenance and sending, collation and presentation of survey results, advice on compliant expenditure, documenting SSC outcomes, preparing packs for SAC and delegated authorities, and feedback and notices of outcomes to those making submissions for SSAF. UOW staff also support the management of expenditure in accounts, address any concerns related to SSAF funding, create guidelines/resources for SSAF branding and communications to ensure students know where their SSAF monies are directed, coordinate review processes, and manage acquittal of funds, government reporting and gazetting of SSAF expenditure in line with reporting requirements.

Other student groups and organisations

The Undergraduate and Postgraduate Student Associations are constituted by University Council and are supported to make submissions for SSAF to supplement their longstanding annual Council budget allocation. A SSAF-funded Student Representation Assistant, reporting to UOW, works alongside these student led organisations to support their navigation of university systems and processes.

Student service delivery

Student services and amenities are provided by various departments and groups in alignment with specific areas of expertise and student demand, such as the mental health and wellbeing, careers, facilities, and academic support teams. Significant shifts to SSAF funded services or amenities may necessitate changes to team structures and employment arrangements. Any such changes must be managed under the UOW Enterprise Agreement (EA), in accordance with its established timeframes and processes.

There are a variety of delivery models, team and employment arrangements, and project/service durations. Some services have been or are in the process of being progressively shifted away SSAF funding, for example housing support, study support, communications, and careers activities.

UOW Pulse is established as a not-for-profit entity, and delivers the [UniClubs program](#), a [SSAF funded food pantry](#), childcare, and other key services across UOW.

2. Current limitations in meeting requirements

While 100% of SSAF expenditure is effectively allocated by a SLO, the SLO governance arrangements are not currently compliant with the requirement for independence.

Governance Requirements

No SLO at UOW meets the governance requirements under the revised legislation.

Challenges are:

- Governing documents do not establish any SLOs at UOW as independent. Operations of the SAC are heavily dependent on university-enabled systems and processes.
- Constitutions of student associations are outdated.
- Appointment mechanisms to the SSC means that election requirements are not met.
- Existing systems and processes to allocate SSAF and financial approval delegations within the university mean that independence thresholds are not met.
- Financial management and reporting is embedded within UOW systems, and therefore requirements for independent reporting, auditing, and fraud prevention measure are not met.

- Student representatives from various groups have noted concerns about managing significant funding without sufficient training, support and direction from UOW.

Funding Requirements

SSSC and SAC will continue to prioritise and endorse recommendations for 100% of SSAF throughout transition.

Time is needed to monitor whether any shifts may necessitate changes to personnel, employment arrangements, quality of service provision or other aspects of the work environment requiring change under the Enterprise Agreement as increasingly independent decisions are reached.

Period of Transition

The plan will achieve compliance over three years **s 47G**

UOW's distinctive model and intention to maintain the current, wholly student-led approach to SSAF expenditure demands careful curation of relationships with student associations and other groups. **s 47G**

Building capacity for financial decision-making and management is also a priority, and continuity across the annual SSC membership shifts must be assured before independence is reached.

3. Maintaining key services throughout transition

Existing mid-year and end of year reporting and monitoring processes with the SSC will continue.

In 2025, UOW has ensured that the delivery of key services will be maintained at an appropriate level by implementing a staggered fund allocation process. The initial, intentionally conservative first-round allocation prior to 1 Jan 2025 for the 2025 calendar year saw funds confirmed for the most critical student priorities. Service delivery will be ensured via business-as-usual mechanisms such as monitoring student access to, demand for, and feedback about service provision and levels. A second consultation and funding round will be undertaken with the incoming SAC and SSC, to address other priorities and supplement the first-round funding where needed.

Careful monitoring will inform whether a staged funding allocation approach will be required each year, as increasingly independent decision-making comes into play. The current mid-year and end of year reporting practices to SSC and SAC lends itself well to this assurance process.

4. Compliance with the funding and governance requirements

UOW is seeking a three-year transition in total, with the understanding that progress against defined milestones will need to be reported annually.

The plan will achieve compliance over three years **s 47G**

will avoid erosion of the current practice that ensures that a whole-of-institution student voice informs 100% SSAF expenditure. Importantly, it also positions UOW's most broadly represented cross-section of the student body themselves to govern

prioritisation and allocation among various student groups rather than the University doing so on the student's behalf.

A risk-management approach will be adopted to achieve compliance over three years.

Capability and processes to support independent financial management will be developed and implemented as a priority, while governance arrangements are developed implemented progressively. The three-year process will conclude with the finance and governance streams merging, so that the financial allocation can be independently managed by the SLO using a tested and refined process.

a) Funding requirements

Focus during transition period will be on developing capabilities and processes to upskill s 47G and enable independent and compliant management of SSAF. Clear processes, protocols, and training for the SLO governing body and members related to responsible fiscal management will be developed. This will cover permissible expenditure, end-to-end decision-making processes including project costing and evaluation, monitoring, and reporting s 47G onboarding processes and education will be designed and tested to ensure continuity in s 47G capability ear-to-year. The University's assistance and advisory role will be tapered accordingly throughout the transition.

At the conclusion of the plan:

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- The remaining 60% will continue to be based on recommendations from the SAC SSAF Sub Committee and subject to endorsement of the DVCA and COO.

Funding Milestones	2025	2026	2027
Estimated SSAF revenue*	\$5,756,617	\$5,929,316	\$6,107,195
Allocation to student-led organisations**	\$5,756,617	\$5,929,316	\$6,107,195
Percentage allocation to student-led organisation**	100%	100%	100%

**This is an estimate only, actual SSAF revenue paid to the provider may differ*

*** Students prioritise and allocate 100% of SSAF expenditure already – governance compliance needs to be achieved.*

b) Governance Requirements

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By 2028, upon completion of the transition arrangement, UOW will be fully compliant with the legislation. All efforts will be made to expedite this process where possible, and progress will be reflected in reporting and subsequent transition plan requests.

Transition Plan Governance Milestones	2025	2026	2027
Governance Framework	Governance structures and related documentation established with SLO	Implement, review, refine	Implement, review, refine
Majority student-led	Compliant	Compliant	Compliant
Democratically elected leaders	SLO elections procedure reviewed and refined	Implementation of outcomes from review to enhance SLO elections	Full implementation and continuous improvement
Governing body of the organisation makes decisions independently from the higher education provider	Pilot phase, simulation of independent decision-making processes whilst core governing documents being revised and updated, and corporate governance structures being established.	Gradual increase in independent decision-making authority	Full independent decision-making authority
Keeping and publication of annual audited accounts	Review and agreement around accounts and auditing established with SLO	Implementation of agreed process	Continuous review and improvement
Policies and procedures for record keeping, risk management, fraud prevention and financial controls	Review undertaken and agreement confirmed with SLO on policies and procedures for record keeping, risk management, fraud prevention and financial controls	Implementation of agreed policies and procedures	Continuous review and improvement
Induction and Training processes developed to build capacity of SLO executive and members	Development of induction and training processes in partnership with student SLO representatives.	Implementation of revised induction and training processes. Evaluation undertaken.	Enhanced induction and training delivered. Continuous review and improvement.

Contact information


Please nominate one relevant individual to be a SSAF Contact Officer for your organisation. The Department of Education may follow up for additional supporting information or may follow up for further information where issues are identified.

Please provide the following details for your nominated SSAF Contact Officer:

Full name	Melissa Zaccagnini
Position title	Senior Manager, Student Experience and Projects
Email address	melissaz@uow.edu.au
Phone number(s)	s 47F

Transition Plan Owner

I, *Senior Professor Sue Bennett, Interim Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic and Student Life) of the University of Wollongong*, seek approval of this Transition Plan and declare that the information provided in the Transition Plan is to the best of my knowledge true, complete and correct and meets the requirements of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* and the Higher Education Support (Student Services, Amenities, Representation and Advocacy) Guidelines 2022.

Signature of Owner	
Full name of Owner	Senior Professor Sue Bennett
Position title of Owner	Interim Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic and Student Life)
Date Approved	26 February 2025

Please submit your organisation's completed Transition Plan via email to SSAF@education.gov.au.