



# Transition Plan template - guidance

## Requirement to allocate a minimum of 40 per cent of student services and amenities fee (SSAF) revenue to eligible student-led organisations

Section 19-39 of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (HESA) and the *Higher Education Support (Student Services, Amenities, Representation and Advocacy) Guidelines 2022* (SSARA Guidelines) require higher education providers that charge a SSAF to allocate a minimum of 40 per cent of their SSAF revenue to student-led organisations from 1 January 2025.

The definition of a student-led organisation is as follows and set out in Section 19-39(3) of the HESA:

(3) An organisation is a **student led organisation** that relates to a higher education provider for a particular calendar year if:

- (a) the majority of the persons constituting the governing body (however described) of the organisation are either or both of the following:
  - (i) students enrolled in a \*course of study with the higher education provider during the calendar year;
  - (ii) students who have been enrolled in a \*course of study with the higher education provider during any of the 3 immediately preceding calendar years; and
- (b) the majority of the persons constituting the governing body (however described) of the organisation have been democratically elected by students enrolled in a \*course of study with the higher education provider when the student votes in the election; and
- (c) the organisation satisfies the requirements (if any) specified in the SSARA Guidelines for the purposes of this paragraph.

As set out in Section 19-39(1) of the HESA, this only applies to student led organisations in receipt of 40 per cent of the SSAF revenue collected by providers; the remaining 60 per cent providers can continue to allocate under the existing requirements of the HESA.

Part 4, paragraph 20 of the SSARA Guidelines requires higher education providers to be satisfied that a student-led organisation in receipt of 40 per cent of the SSAF revenue collected by providers has appropriate governance arrangements, including that:

- (i) the governing body of the organisation makes decisions independently from the higher education provider; and
- (ii) the organisation keeps and publishes annual audited accounts that record the organisation's income and expenditure, including in relation to transactions between the higher education provider and the organisation; and

- (iii) the organisation has, and complies with, policies and procedures in place that relate to record keeping, risk management, fraud prevention and financial controls.

The student-led organisation must also provide the services set out in subsection 19-38(4) of the HESA to students using the SSAF revenue allocated to them in a calendar year.

Section 19-40 of the HESA provides for the Department of Education (the department) to make a determination in relation to transitional arrangements for up to three consecutive years for a Table A provider, and up to five consecutive years for a non-Table A provider.

To enable the department's decision-making, transition plans must:

- provide evidence of why the provider is not able to meet the new requirement and what the 'gap' is to meeting either or both the funding requirements or the governance requirements;
- demonstrate how the provider will achieve full compliance on both the funding and governance requirements of the measure by the conclusion of the transition timeframe, which is a maximum of three consecutive calendar years for Table A providers, and five consecutive calendar years for non-Table A providers, and earlier if possible; and
- be submitted and reported against annually.

Transition plans are:

- separate to the production of annual, public SSAF allocation reports released by the provider
- for the purposes of seeking agreement to the proposed transition plan and will not be proactively released by the department, though may become public through normal operation of government.

Additional supporting information can be provided to the department as needed, and the department may follow up for further information where issues are identified.

As each provider's arrangements are unique, it is expected that supporting information is likely to be required to enable the department to be satisfied the outcome of the policy would be achieved by the provider's intended approach.

## Responsibility for legislative compliance rests with the provider

As the responsible party under the HESA, the provider is required to have appropriate oversight of the arrangements within student-led organisations and SSAF expenditure to ensure compliance with the HESA.

Provided that a student-led organisation meets all the HESA and SSARA Guidelines requirements, providers have the discretion to determine the most appropriate mechanism to prioritise and fund the student-led organisations who are in receipt of 40 per cent of the allocated SSAF revenue as long as they are providing services consistent with Section 19-38 of the HESA. Providers may allocate SSAF revenue to one or more student-led organisation to comply with the HESA and SSARA Guidelines.

## Timing

Key annual dates from SSAF collection years from 2026 onwards:





<b>31 May (prior year)</b>	Providers submit transition plan for subsequent calendar year with required information
<b>July to August (prior year)</b>	Departmental assessment of transition plans, including requests for further information and support for revisions to ensure provider compliance.
<b>September (prior year)</b>	Approval from Department of Education
<b>1 January (SSAF collection year)</b>	Transition arrangements take effect



# La Trobe University

## Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF)

### 2025 Transition Plan\*

\*Whilst La Trobe submits a transition plan for 2025 (per the requirements), it will seek transition arrangements over the three-year period until 2027)

## Introduction

1. This Transition Plan is for La Trobe University 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.
2. Submission of this plan to the department does not constitute agreement to the plan. Providers will be notified of the status of their plan following assessment and consideration.

## Application

3. Provide an overarching summary of the current arrangements for the delivery of student services and the uses of the SSAF funding. For example, this may include information about how student services are delivered now, what future plans for service delivery may be, recent changes to engaging with student led organisations, information on the student population and information about campus arrangements e.g. multi-campus, regional campuses (**no more than 750 words**).

The University currently delivers a range of student services across our campus network; this network spans regional and metropolitan Victoria, as well as online. La Trobe has more than 36,000 students across this network. As Victoria's state-wide university, there is a need to ensure efficient delivery of services, with the minimisation of administrative overheads. Since 2020, this has been achieved by allocating the delivery of services to a single provider. The forthcoming establishment of two Suburban University Study Hubs, led by La Trobe, will further necessitate consideration for how best to deliver services without incurring additional administrative overheads.

Services are regularly reviewed to ensure they remain effective and relevant to our student's needs. Service design and delivery are informed by regular student feedback, including through the La Trobe Student Experience Survey (more than 7,000 students participated in this in 2024) and ongoing engagement with our student led organisations and consultative forums.





Services delivered include, but are not limited to, sporting and recreational activities for students, supporting the administration of student clubs, promoting the health and welfare of students, and advising on matters arising under the higher education provider's rules.

Student services are currently delivered by a number of organisational units of the University and by student-led organisations across our campus network. This includes La Trobe Sport, the Student Experience and Employability Division, University Library, the La Trobe Student Union (LTSU) and La Trobe Student Association (LTSA). A number of services (student engagement activities, student representation and student advocacy) have been delivered by our independent and democratically elected student-led organisations for a number of years.

La Trobe has seen significant changes in our student led organisations over the past five years. The most significant change is the forthcoming establishment of our Student Council, comprising elected student members from across the breadth of our student body, representing diversity in student voice and representation. Alongside this, La Trobe has also seen the amalgamation of our regional campus (non-Bundoora) student organisations into a consolidated entity, the LTSA. 2023 saw this recognised student organisation operate for the first time in its current configuration.

The LTSU is the recognised student organisation at our Bundoora campus, representing the majority of our students. Over the past five years, this organisation has experienced a significant level of tumult, owing principally to apparent gaps in capacity around governance and financial management, including SSAF and the benefits for students. The University is currently taking steps to assure itself that SSAF expended in previous years was used in accordance with the relevant legislation and funding agreement(s). These steps have included, but are not limited to, reclaiming SSAF and removing service delivery from the organisation.

Future plans for the delivery of services will be aligned with the forthcoming La Trobe Education and Experience Plan. This plan seeks to increase flexibility for students in the way they study and access support, as well as strengthening La Trobe's partnership with students and continuing to embed their voice in the design and delivery of services.

Following the establishment of the National Student Ombudsman and recent approval of La Trobe's Equity Plan, La Trobe will continue to invest in a range of wellbeing, conduct, and sexual harm prevention functions. La Trobe also seeks to expand support for students from equity cohorts, including a significant expansion of our scholarships program.

4. Provide an overarching summary explanation and supporting evidence of (1) why your organisation is not yet able to meet the funding and/or governance requirements and which requirement you are seeking transition for e.g. it could be either funding or governance requirements, or both requirements; and (2) the period of transition you are seeking for each requirement, noting the maximum approval period is one year and that transition arrangements have to be agreed yearly – it is not possible to provide multi-year approval (no more than 300 words)

La Trobe operates across a diverse campus network and historically students at the regional campuses were not receiving equitable benefit from SSAF funded services delivered through recognised student organisations. After extensive consultation with students, and in light of





significant challenges in 2022, where the members of the LTSU sought to dissolve the LTSA, the University brought the delivery of a number of student services in-house. The attempted dissolution created high levels of disruption for the services delivered by the LTSA, threatening the ability of students across all of our campuses to rely on their continued delivery and receive support.

The current service distribution provides an efficient mechanism through which to deliver student engagement and support programs in an equitable manner across the campus network. The LTSU and LTSA remain as recognised student organisations with the University and operate across our 7-campus network (including online). However, the challenges noted above and the practice of allocating entire functions to a single organisation, inhibit our ability to allocate the breadth of services to one of our current student-led organisations, and meet the 40% requirement of the legislation.

In addition, the intent of the university is for the student advocacy services to be returned to a student-led organisation following a recent interim arrangement to ensure the continuity of this service for students. Recent concerns about the management of the providing student-led organisation resulted in the need to temporarily in-source the service by the University. We will shortly progress to tender for the management of this service, by our recognised student organisations. The University continues to take robust steps to assure itself that the student-led organisation that successfully tenders for the service will use SSAF according to the legislation.

The University is also currently supporting the student body to establish the La Trobe Student Council. Nominations for elections to this Student Council will occur in March/April 2025. The Student Council will comprise elected student representatives from across our campuses, drawing in a broad range of students (taking into account area of study, level of study and other cohort characteristics) to ensure it is genuinely representative of La Trobe's students. The University will support the Student Council to be in a position by mid-2025 to tender for SSAF funded services.

For these reasons, La Trobe is seeking approval for a transition plan for 2025 across both requirements, noting it will also look to request transition arrangements for 2026 and 2027. These primarily relate to the time it will take to support students to establish the La Trobe Student Council, but also consider the apparent gaps in governance and financial management capacity at our largest student organisation.

5. To agree to a transition plan, the department must be assured that key services would be maintained at an appropriate level for the calendar year in question, and that the plan will enable the provider to fully comply with all legislated requirements by the end of the plan.
  - a. Describe how service delivery of key services will be maintained at an appropriate level throughout the transition plan (no more than 300 words).

For 2025, we are proposing a modest transfer of the oversight of services and/or functions between the University and student-led organisations. The focus for 2025 will involve the allocation of the student voice and partnerships function, and a number of identified wellbeing and welfare services. We would also see the strengthening of the breadth of student-led organisations and representation through the establishment of the Student Council.





La Trobe is currently embarking on a tender process for our temporarily in-sourced student advocacy function. A requirement of any submission will require that the tendering organisation is student-led (aligned to the legislation).

Outside of these changes, La Trobe continues to retain its oversight and governance arrangements for supporting our recognised student-led organisations to deliver the services allocated to them.

6. For each year that the transition plan is intended to cover, describe how your organisation will achieve compliance with the funding and governance requirements below, populate the milestones/timeframes in achieving this, and how your organisation will be fully compliant by the end of the proposed transition period.
- a. **Funding requirement (no more than 300 words) regarding the allocation of 40 per cent of SSAF revenue should include information on the:**
- key activities to be delivered through expenditure of SSAF revenue across the provider, for both student-led organisations and other entities
  - stakeholder engagement and outcomes in determining SSAF allocation and implementing transition arrangements
  - the proposed allocations of the 40 per cent of SSAF revenue to student-led organisations on an annual basis
  - progress against any previous milestones or commitments in previous annual plans submitted to the department, including actual SSAF revenue collected, distributed and expensed for preceding years
  - provide the total SSAF revenue expected to be collected and the intended allocation amount and percentage to student-led organisation/s for each year that the transition plan is intended to cover. **Note: this information should align with the information provided in the SSAF Allocation Report.**

The table below sets out the proposed funding milestones for La Trobe, reaching 30% in 2025, and 40% in 2027.

The University has a consultation process, approved annually by the governing body, that guides our consultation with students. For 2025, consultation occurred with the entire student body, including elected representatives of recognised student organisations, which informed the delivery of these services by SSAF.

Following this consultation, for 2025, student voice and partnerships, student advocacy functions and a number of identified student wellbeing and welfare functions (e.g. financial counselling and legal aid) would see their oversight transferred to our Student Council. This oversight would see the staff delivering these functions remain employees of the University, with the Council directing their programs of work and budget allocation.

For 2026 and 2027, consultation would occur to validate the below transition arrangements (noting they are subject to a separate submission, considered on an annual basis).

For 2026 and 2027, the University proposes to increase the SSAF available to student-led organisations for engagement activities, as well as allocating SSAF for the purpose of expanding core



university wellbeing functions (e.g. psychological counselling, student voice, employability activities). This allocation would supplement existing university provision in this space, not leading to a decline in service provision. La Trobe would also see the transfer of the oversight of student engagement functions.

Throughout the transition arrangements, La Trobe would continue to use SSAF to directly deliver services aligned to the provision of advice around provider's rules, libraries, helping students develop study skills and promoting health and welfare of students.

Funding Milestones	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Estimated SSAF revenue	\$11,047,166.00	\$12,088,140.00	\$13,390,793.00
Allocation to student-led organisations	\$3,355,668	\$4,218,057	\$5,366,961
Percentage allocation to student-led organisation	30.38%	34.89%	40.08%

**b. Governance requirement (no more than 300 words) regarding student-led organisations which should include information on:**

- how the planned governance arrangements and timeframes to design, establish and implement by either the provider or its student-led organisation, will be achieved, and
- progress against any previous milestones or commitments in previous annual plans submitted to the department.





Transition Plan Governance Milestones <i>(examples, not definitive)</i>	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Establish Student Council and allocate oversight of specific functions	<i>Elect Members</i>  <i>Deliver training</i>  <i>Allocate appropriate staff support</i>  <i>Council to oversee and direct student voice and partnerships function</i>	<i>Council to oversee and direct student engagement function</i>	<i>Council to continue to direct student engagement function and be allocated SSAF for complementary wellbeing and inclusion activities</i>
Student Advocacy Function to be directly delivery by student-led organisation	<i>Invite recognised student organisations to tender for service (TBC – 1 year contract)</i>  <i>Function delivered by student led organisation</i>	<i>Invite recognised student organisations to tender for service (TBC – 2 year contract)</i>  <i>Function delivered by student led organisation</i>	<i>n/a - Function delivered by student led organisation</i>

## 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	s47F _____
Position title	s47F _____
Email address	s47F _____
Phone number(s)	s47F _____



## Transition Plan Owner

I, *[insert full name of Approver]*, *[Role description - Vice Chancellor or Chief Executive Officer equivalent]* of *[insert full name of higher education provider]*, 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	s47F
Full name of Owner	
Position title of Owner	
Date Approved	

Please submit your organisation's completed Transition Plan via email to [SSAF@education.gov.au](mailto:ssaf@education.gov.au).

