

VU Student Services & Amenities Fee Governance and Management Framework 2023



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Introduction

On 11 October 2011, the Australian Parliament passed legislation allowing universities and other higher education providers to charge a fee for student services and amenities of a non-academic nature. The fees collected may be spent by higher education providers on items such as sporting and recreational activities, employment and career advice, childcare, supporting student representation, financial advice and other areas that benefit students. Victoria University (VU) has been collecting the fees since the start of 2012.

At VU, Student Services Amenities Fee (SSAF) is allocated towards items such as:

- Maintaining the existing student services that include: Student Life (including Clubs & Societies), Campus Events, Student Advocacy, Student Welfare, Student Success Programs, Student-led Media and Student Sport and Health, the Student Union (and affiliated College Societies and Associations) and the Postgraduate Association,
- Funding and supporting the formation of College Societies and Student Representation,
- Providing essential services like Student Welcome and Orientation; and
- Improving the student experience.

For more information see <https://www.education.gov.au/student-services-and-amenities-fee>.

Victoria University's Strategic Plan

The VU SSAF Governance and Management Framework provides an approach to the implementation and management of SSAF funded initiatives which is congruent with VU's overarching Strategic Plan 2022-2028...

VU's Purpose and Vision states 'Victoria University emboldens its people to design their future and has a deep commitment to protecting country. Our vision is to be a global leader in dual sector learning and research by 2028.'

SSAF Objective:

To support the achievement of Victoria University's purpose and vision through the effective use of SSAF fees to enhance the quality of the student experience in a dual sector institution; with an emphasis on student engagement, career preparedness and development, employability and entrepreneurship, and leadership.

Strategic Plan priorities aligned to SSAF:

- Doing Dual differently - Enhance the overall student experience and create opportunities for student engagement and consultation in relation to SSAF.
A thriving place to work and study - Develop and improve resources that are dedicated to student opportunity and success, employment and entrepreneurship and leadership and support initiatives that will encourage student wellbeing, health, inclusiveness and diversity.\
- Protecting country - support initiatives that honour our deep diversity as a foundation for collaboration and social progress

Governance Framework

The Student Services and Amenities Fees are charged strictly in accordance with the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* and the Administration Guidelines made under the Act. Revenue from the fee is spent strictly in accordance with the Act and only on services and amenities allowable under the guidelines.

The SSAF fee is managed by VU's Students Portfolio, led by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, People & Organisation who oversees the governance and management of the fee.

SSAF Consultative Committee

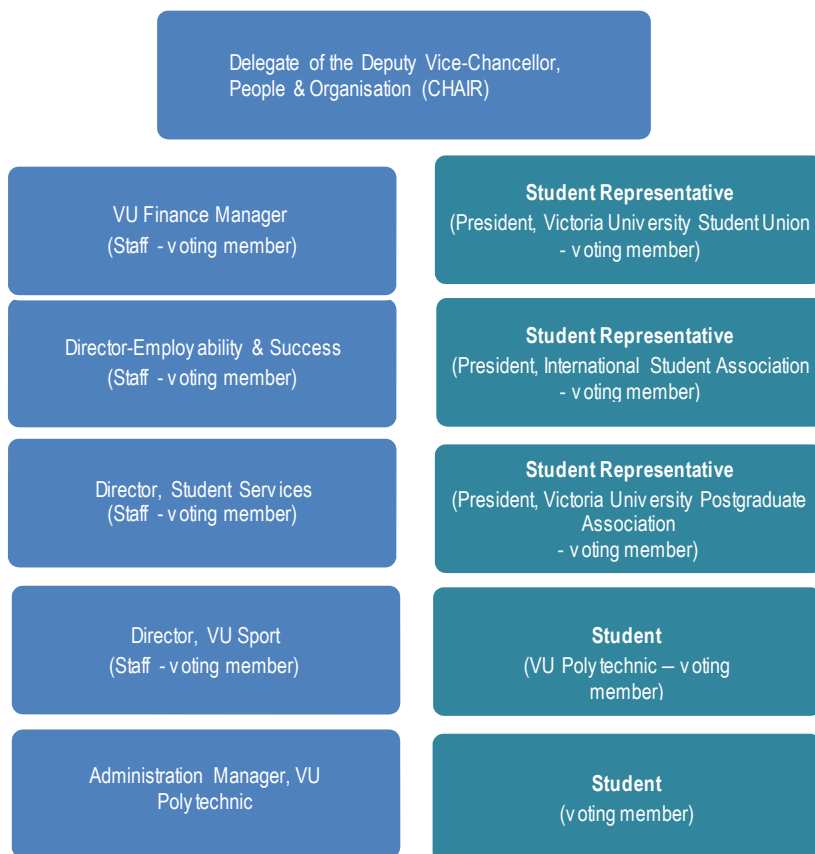
The SSAF Consultative Committee provides feedback and a point of consultation for the annual schedule of funded activities that benefit students. The Committee also has responsibility to champion and communicate the benefits of SSAF to students, assist with SSAF grant panels, report against funded activities (if recipients), assist with governance oversight, provide feedback on SSAF priorities and assist with continuous improvement activities. The SSAF Consultative Committee ensures the continuous improvement to SSAF funded service provisions to students. Individual members and funding recipients are required to act within the compliance requirements of legislative frameworks related to SSAF and VU activities. The Committee aims to provide transparent communications to students around the use of their SSAF funds, ensuring the fund allocation and expenditure is open and transparent and is aligned with the strategic goals of VU.

The purpose of the SSAF Consultative Committee is to:

- Ensure the use of the SSAF is in accordance with the legislation and is aligned with funding criteria, as well as VU priorities;
- Provide feedback on the priorities of monies for future funding;
- Provide approval for the allocation of SSAF Grant initiatives;
- Ensure the use of SSAF funds remains focused on improving the student experience and delivers benefits to students in-line with their expectations.

The Terms of Reference and current Membership of the SSAF Consultative Committee is available at: <https://www.vu.edu.au/current-students/your-course/fees/your-ssaf-contribution/ssaf-student-consultation-fee-management>

Membership & Voting Structure



Principles for the allocation of SSAF Funds

VU follows the following principles for the allocation of funds collected from SSAF. The allocation of funds will:

1. Comply with the Student Services, Amenities, Representation and Advocacy Guidelines;
2. Be informed by students (data driven) and deliver funds where priorities are identified by students;
3. Continuously improve service provision to students in the areas specified by the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*;
4. Ensure internal financial controls, management accounting, efficiency and effectiveness; and
5. Align funds allocation and expenditure with VU's strategic plan 2022-2028.

SSAF Allocation of Funds and Grants Model

VU takes a formula approach to the allocation of SSAF funds and grants each year. This represents flexible funding arrangements to ensure some fixed funds, as well as the ability to access short-term funds to pilot initiatives and/or meet a short-term need. This approach accommodates need and demand and allows for greater flexibility in the delivery of SSAF funded student services and activities.

The model is centrally governed, managed and administered by the Students Portfolio on behalf of VU with direction from VU Finance and includes the following:

- Base allocation funding for all services currently approved for SSAF; the amount related to activity /service based costings (the allocation and funding value reviewed annually via Funding Applications and in line with VU budget forecasts and business planning)
- An allocation for initiative grants
- Capital allowance for the improvement of student amenities
- Funding to support student representative organisations and associated infrastructure; and
- Contingency for unexpected growth in usage and/or emerging needs allocation for services not currently funded by SSAF (where annual budgets permit).

The review of applications for funding and grants each year considers feedback from students provided through data collection, engagement and consultation, feedback from VU's community, and VU's organisational budget priorities to ascertain allocation priorities each year. Final allocation is determined by VU's annual budget processes.

Financial Management and Administration

Funding Forecasting & Applications

Each SSAF recipient is required to submit a SSAF Funding Application form. Applicants submit: their proposed income and expenditure of SSAF for the following year outlining, key deliverables, activities, benefits to students and risks. The activities are to state clear benefits to students and meet the [eligibility criteria](#) for SSAF.

The applications are reviewed by the Director, Student Services who manages the central internal VU budget and once finalised, the recommendations are proposed to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, People & Organisation for endorsement.

For external funding arrangements, a Funding Agreement is established between VU and the external organisation for the year ahead.

The process is as follows and is aligned with VU's annual budget planning cycle:

August	Notice of Government Maximum Fee Determination for SSAF
September	Year ahead budget review and planning Potential Applicants informed of VU's budget determinations
October – November	SSAF Funding Applications invited to be submitted using the SSAF Funding Application form
November – December	Director, Student Services reviews and recommends Funding Applications for endorsement by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, People & Organisation in line with budget forecast and determinations
December – January	Funding confirmation is provided by the Director, Student Services (mid- December) and any Funding Agreements to be established with external organisations are executed (late December / early January depending on availability)

Delays may occur in this annual schedule where VU's budget preparation and planning cycle is changed, for whatever reason, in any given year.

Reporting on expenditure and benefits to students

Quarterly reporting on activities, expenditure and the benefits to students is completed by each SSAF recipient following the end of each quarter of the financial year. Timing is scheduled to align with one (1) week after the release of VU Finance Department monthly reports. Reporting dates for 2023 will be available in January 2023.

Quarterly meetings with the Director of Student Services and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, People & Organisation or delegate are held with each SSAF recipient. Quarterly meetings occur two weeks after - the reportable quarter's activity and expenditure report has been submitted. This allows for timely actions to be taken when issues arise and for the Director of Student Services to consider redirecting final funding where underspends in SSAF are forecast.

Any non-compliance with SSAF will be addressed at the quarterly meetings or earlier where risk is identified or reported.

At meetings of the SSAF Consultative Committee, SSAF recipients submit or present activity reports.

SSAF recipients are required to provide an annual Expenditure and Activity Report which highlights the actual spend and activities for the year and details benefit to students by expense item. This information forms part of VU's yearly review of SSAF. Recipient final reports must be submitted by the end of the second week of January, or on closure of VU's accounts for the year prior.

SSAF Student Experience Initiative Grants (SEI grants)

Since 2013, SSAF Student Experience Initiatives funding has been made available to support the provision of student amenities, services and activities that provide for a positive student experience of a non-academic nature.

To ensure a fair and transparent allocation of SSAF Student Experience Initiative funding, the SSAF Consultative Committee oversees a competitive grants process annually each calendar year.

The grants open in the first teaching week of the traditional Higher Education Semester One (Feb) and close approximately six weeks later (April). An annual grant pool is allocated each year and the amount of monies is determined through the budget and priority setting cycle.

SEI Grant recipients will be invited to present their project plans and the outcomes of their projects at two meetings of the Consultative Committee.

The total amount of funds available varies each year. Projects must be completed and reported on in the calendar year in which the grant is awarded, and must not carry over into the next year. SEI Grant recipients provide their final report on the SEI Grant Reporting template.

For a full overview of the SSAF Student Experience Initiative Grant Scheme application process, please visit <https://www.vu.edu.au/current-students/your-course/fees/your-ssaf-contribution/ssaf-student-experience-initiative-grant>

Student Consultation

The SSAF legislation requires Universities to have a formal process of student consultation regarding the allocation of funds and expenditure of the SSAF fee. We provide a range of consultation points for our students to provide input and feedback on how they want their SSAF spent.

VU has an annual schedule of consultation activities where students have the opportunity to voice their opinions on SSAF and where their SSAF fees should be spent. Consultation occurs via online feedback forms, surveys, at campus events, student led events, Student Leadership Council and via the SSAF Consultative Committee.

SSAF Consultative Committee:

The SSAF Consultative Committee consists of staff and student representatives who attend meetings scheduled for a minimum of twice yearly. Student members of the Committee are provided with clear oversight into the proposed spending of SSAF and contribute their ideas on where they believe SSAF should be spent. All members ratify decisions and also approve the annual SEI grant release.

Student Leadership Council:

Members of the Students Portfolio consult with students at Student Leadership Council throughout the year on SSAF matters. Council meets monthly and at least one meeting per year is dedicated to the topic of SSAF and student feedback. Student Leadership Council meetings provide students with the opportunity to hold discussions with their peers and staff about matters within the VU community, including SSAF. Student Leadership Council ensures consultation with students from a wide range of student cohorts, as well as student representative groups.

For more information regarding the Student Leadership Council, including meeting dates, please visit <https://www.vu.edu.au/current-students/careers-opportunities/leadership-skills-development/student-leadership-council>

Student Focus Groups:

As required, members of the Students Portfolio consult with students throughout the year via Focus Groups.

Victoria University Student Union (VUSU) Forums:

These student representative forums provide a platform for feedback and debate on issues that are of priority to VUSU, Victoria University Post-graduate Association (VUPA) and their members.

Data Collection

VU distributes an annual Student Services and Amenities Fee Survey to students for their feedback. The survey aims to measure the following:

- level of general awareness of what SSAF is;
- the most effective ways to communicate about SSAF;
- suggestions to improve the SSAF consultation process;
- innovative ideas for SSAF spending; and
- which aspects of university/study life are most important to students.

The survey also gathers open feedback, Thematic analysis of this feedback provides an additional layer of understanding of the student experience. Information on the results of this survey is published online at <https://www.vu.edu.au/current-students/your-course/fees/your-ssaf-contribution/tell-us-how-to-invest-your-ssaf>

Online Feedback

A year round online SSAF feedback form is open to students on VU's website. Students are encouraged to provide open-ended feedback and suggestions on how they would like to see their SSAF fees invested. Government guidelines and SSAF compliant items are clearly listed to allow students to comprehend the extent to where their SSAF fees can be spent.

To view the online form, please visit the following web link: <https://www.vu.edu.au/current-students/your-course/fees/your-ssaf-contribution/tell-us-how-to-invest-your-ssaf>

Review of SSAF Governance and Management Framework

The Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, People & Organisation reviews the SSAF Governance and Management Framework for the commencement of each academic year, in consultation with the SSAF Consultative Committee.

If endorsed by the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, People & Organisation revisions to improve the framework may be made throughout the term of the SSAF Consultative Committee.

Version Control Schedule

Version	Date Modified	By Whom	Purpose
1.0	20 October 2017	SSAF Improvement Project Officer	Document updated for consultation and endorsement with the Committee
2.0	1 February 2018	Director Student Services	Document updated with changes to grant rounds for the 2018 financial year, updated web links and information on the publication of survey results.
3.0	5 January 2019	Office of the PVC (Students)	<p>Updated document to reflect close out of 2018 financial and education year, making the document for generic for year on year use now it has been in implementation for a number of years and there has been no feedback on annual review period for changes (by students or annual Consultative Committees and other internal key stakeholders. Annual reviews of the document will still continue but it will not be for a specific year.</p> <p>Changes made throughout to reflect VU's new organisational structure.</p> <p>Changes made to reflect changing organisational and student representation structures, with benefit to the work of SSAF for students.</p> <p>As with all revisions and updates, consultation has taken place with students, internal key stakeholders at VU and one independent reviewer.</p> <p>SSAF Grants updated to reflect current practice, endorsed by SSAF Consultative Committee.</p> <p>Reference to VU's transformational agenda included.</p> <p>Annual Schedule of Key Dates reformatted so that it is clear, with VU budget cycle made clearer and usual timing of max. fee determination notice from Government.</p> <p>Committee membership reviewed to reflect the changed structure for 2019, in favour of students and to return a VU Finance officer to the membership for governance, as was in place in previous years.</p> <p>Funding Application process updated to reflect current VU practice, from top- down budget process.</p> <p>Reporting on expenditure and benefits to students made clearer with quarterly meetings now required for all funding recipients.</p> <p>Explicit timings added on quarterly and annual reporting and meetings.</p>

			Made references to “university” more inclusive of our Polytechnic and other cohorts of students.
4.0	3 April 2019	Office of the PVC (Students)	Closing Date Amendment
5.0	29 May 2019	Office of the PVC (Students)	SSAF SEI Grant funds expenditure timeline updated to reflect current grant application process
6.0	16 December 2019	Office of the PVC (Students)	Review and updates
7.0	18 November	Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students)	Edited for readability Changed reporting for recipient quarterly meetings to align with Finance (P7) Clarified VU Finance as decision maker in budget allocation Updated titles to Pro Vice-Chancellor & Director Employability and Success
8.0	17 January 2022	Office of the PVC (Students)	Edited to reflect Purpose, Vision and principles of Victoria University Strategic Plan 2022-2028 Updated Associate Provost to Pro Vice-Chancellor Update footer etc to 2022
9.00	19 December 2022	Office of the Chief Student Officer	Updated reference to PVC to Chief Student Officer Deletion P9 Endorsed by SSAF CC 14/12/22
9.01	13 March 2023	Robyn Shilton Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, People & Organisation	Updated references to Chief Student Officer changed to Deputy Vice-Chancellor, People & Organisation