UNSA SSAF Grants Program 2026

Grant Guidelines

About the Program

Supporting student-led ideas, student-focused programs and collaborative initiatives that enhance the University of Newcastle student experience.

UNSA believes Student Services and Amenities Fee (**SSAF**) funding should be invested in initiatives that create meaningful and lasting benefits for students. Wherever possible, UNSA is committed to investing student funding directly into the University community, empowering students, clubs and societies, and University departments to develop and deliver initiatives that respond to the needs, aspirations and challenges of University of Newcastle students.

To support this commitment, UNSA has established the **UNSA SSAF Grants Program**, providing more than **$100,000** in funding for projects, programs and services that enhance the student experience and deliver measurable outcomes for students.

As a student-led organisation, UNSA recognises that many of the most innovative and impactful ideas come from the people and groups working directly with students every day. Through this Program, UNSA seeks to support initiatives that strengthen wellbeing, leadership, volunteering, food security, connection and belonging across the University of Newcastle community.

These Guidelines outline the eligibility requirements, funding priorities, assessment process and obligations associated with the Program. All applicants are strongly encouraged to read these Guidelines in full before preparing and submitting an application.

Program Objectives

The UNSA SSAF Grants Program seeks to:

- Enhance the student experience at the University of Newcastle;
- Increase opportunities for student engagement and participation;
- Improve student wellbeing, success and sense of belonging;
- Build stronger and more connected student communities;
- Support innovative responses to current and emerging student needs;
- Deliver measurable benefits to University of Newcastle students; and
- Foster collaboration between students, clubs and societies, and University departments.

Priority Funding Themes

While all eligible applications will be considered, projects addressing one or more of the following priority areas will be viewed most favourably.

Area	Scope	Examples

Leadership	Projects that support the development of student leadership capability, governance skills, advocacy skills, professional development opportunities, mentoring or peer leadership.	• Leadership development programs • Student representative training • Mentoring initiatives • Governance and advocacy workshops • Student conferences and forums
Volunteering	Projects that create opportunities for students to volunteer, contribute to their communities and develop transferable skills.	• Volunteer programs • Community engagement initiatives • Student ambassador programs • Peer support initiatives • Volunteer recognition activities
Food Security	Projects that improve access to affordable, nutritious and culturally appropriate food for students.	• Student pantries • Food relief initiatives • Community meal programs • Community gardens • Food education programs
Wellbeing	Projects that promote physical, mental, emotional, social or financial wellbeing for students.	• Mental health initiatives • Physical activity programs • Wellbeing campaigns • Financial wellbeing programs • Peer wellbeing initiatives
Isolation and Connection	Projects that strengthen belonging, inclusion and social connection amongst students.	• Social connection programs • Community-building initiatives • Events that encourage student participation • International student engagement programs • Initiatives supporting equity student cohorts • Programs aimed at online, regional or postgraduate students

Funding Available

A funding pool of more than $100,000 is available through the Program, comprising of two funding streams:

Major Grants Stream

The Major Grants Scheme supports larger-scale projects and strategic initiatives that deliver significant benefits for University of Newcastle Students.

Opportunity Grants Stream

The Opportunity Grants Stream supports smaller projects, pilot initiatives, emerging opportunities and innovative responses to student needs.

Applicants must nominate their preferred funding stream when applying. UNSA reserves the right to transfer applications between streams where appropriate.

UNSA may:

- Fund applications in full or in part;

- Fund multiple projects;
- Apply conditions to approved grants;
- Decline applications that do not sufficiently meet the assessment criteria; and/or
- Choose not to allocate the full funding pool if suitable applications are not received.

Applicants should request an amount that is reasonable, proportionate and represents value for money.
on application quality, available funding and strategic priorities.

Funding Pool Management

The SSAF Grants Program is designed to maximise the benefit of available SSAF funding for students. If, following the completion of one or more grant rounds, funding remains available, UNSA reserves the right to assess and approve additional eligible projects, initiatives or grant applications to ensure the effective allocation of available funds. Any such funding decisions will be made at UNSA's discretion and in accordance with the Program objectives, available funding and applicable SSAF requirements.

Eligibility

Who Can Apply?

Applications are open to:

- Current University of Newcastle students;
- Student-led groups and initiatives;
- UNSA affiliated clubs and societies; and
- University of Newcastle faculties, schools, divisions and departments.

Collaborative applications and partnerships between eligible applicants are encouraged.

Projects benefiting students across any University of Newcastle campus or study mode, including Online (Cloud) students, are eligible for funding. Preference may be given to initiatives that activate University campuses and create opportunities for students to engage within the University community.

Applicants must demonstrate they have the capacity, resources and approvals required to successfully deliver the proposed project.

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for funding, applicants must demonstrate that their project:

1. Primarily benefits University of Newcastle students;
2. Is submitted by an eligible applicant;
3. Aligns with one or more permitted Student Services and Amenities Fee ('**SSAF**') expenditure categories;
4. Complies with the requirements of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003 (Cth)* and all relevant SSAF legislation;
5. Delivers outcomes within the approved project period specified by UNSA;
6. Is achievable within the proposed budget and timeframe;
7. Represents value for money;
8. Includes an evaluation approach;
9. Can meet all funding agreement, reporting and acquittal requirements;
10. Identifies a responsible project lead; and

11. Has obtained any required University approvals necessary to deliver the project.

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a Funding Agreement with UNSA prior to receiving funding.

Ineligible Activities

Funding will not be provided for:

- Activities prohibited under SSAF legislation;
- Academic teaching, coursework delivery, or activities ordinarily funded through tuition fees;
- Political party activities, political campaigns or election campaigning;
- Activities that primarily benefit individuals, staff or organisations rather than students;
- Retrospective funding for activities already completed;
- Activities that do not comply with applicable legislation or University policies;
- Projects that do not demonstrate a clear student benefit; and/or

Key Dates & Timeframes

Applications

Milestone	Date
Applications Open	9am | 1 October 2026
Applications Close	10am | 8 October 2026
Assessment Period	8 October 2026 – 14 October 2026
Successful Applicants Notified	14 October 2026

Project Timeframes

Projects must:

- Commence following approval and execution of a Funding Agreement;
- Be delivered within the approved project period specified by UNSA;
- Comply with all milestone, reporting and acquittal requirements; and
- Submit all required documentation by the dates specified in the Funding Agreement.

Unless otherwise approved by UNSA, applicants should plan for project delivery to occur within the current funding period.

Projects Extending Beyond the Current Calendar Year

While applicants are encouraged to propose projects that can be delivered promptly, UNSA recognises that some initiatives may require planning or delivery beyond the current calendar year to maximise student benefit.

Applicants may propose projects with delivery extending beyond the current calendar year; however, approval of such arrangements will be at UNSA's discretion and subject to funding availability, governance requirements and the terms of the Funding Agreement.

Any approved project extending beyond the current calendar year will be subject to specific conditions outlined in the Funding Agreement, including milestone reporting, project completion requirements and financial acquittal obligations.

Assessment & Outcomes

Assessment Process

Applications will be assessed by a panel convened by UNSA.

Applications will be assessed against:

- Student need and impact;
- Alignment with SSAF requirements;
- Alignment with Priority Funding Themes;
- Project feasibility and delivery capability;
- Value for money;
- Evaluation approach and KPIs.

The assessment panel may:

- Seek clarification regarding applications;
- Request additional information;
- Recommend full or partial funding; and/or
- Apply conditions to funding approvals.

Funding allocations will be determined across the Major Grants Stream and Opportunity Grants Stream.

All funding decisions are final.

Successful Applicants

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a Funding Agreement with UNSA.

Funding will not be released until all required documentation has been completed.

The Funding Agreement will include provisions relating to:

- Approved use of funds;
- Project delivery;
- Reporting requirements;
- Financial management;
- Record keeping;
- Branding and acknowledgement;
- Compliance;
- Audit rights; and
- Acquittal obligations.

Financial Management

Grant recipients must:

- Use funds solely for approved purposes;
- Maintain accurate financial records associated with the project;
- Retain invoices, receipts and supporting documentation;
- Comply with all funding conditions; and

- Provide information and records to UNSA upon request.

UNSA reserves the right to review expenditure and undertake audits where required.

Reporting and Acquittal

All funded projects must complete a formal acquittal process.

Project Outcomes Report

Successful applicants must provide a report outlining:

- Activities delivered;
- Student participation and engagement;
- Outcomes achieved;
- Evaluation findings; and
- Evidence of student benefit.

Financial Acquittal

Successful applicants must provide:

a) A summary of project expenditure;
b) Supporting documentation where requested;
c) Details of any funding variances; and
d) Details of any unspent funds.

Failure to provide satisfactory acquittal documentation may result in:

- Repayment of grant funds;
- Ineligibility for future UNSA grant opportunities; and/or
- Additional compliance requirements.

Any unspent funds or funds used outside the approved purpose may be required to be returned to UNSA.

Further Information

For further information regarding the UNSA SSAF Grants Program, please contact:

University of Newcastle Students' Association (UNSA)

Email: UNSA-GOV@newcastle.edu.au

Phone: 02 4921 6006

Funding Statement

The UNSA SSAF Grants Program is funded through Student Services and Amenities Fee ('**SSAF**') revenue allocated to UNSA to support services, programs and initiatives that enhance the student experience at the University of Newcastle. All funded projects must comply with applicable legislative requirements governing the use of SSAF funding.

Applicant Checklist

Before submitting your application, please ensure you have:

- ☐ Read these Guidelines in full.
- ☐ Confirmed you are an eligible applicant.
- ☐ Confirmed your project primarily benefits University of Newcastle students.
- ☐ Identified the relevant SSAF category/categories your project aligns with.
- ☐ Demonstrated alignment with one or more Priority Funding Themes.
- ☐ Developed a clear project plan outlining activities, outcomes and timelines.
- ☐ Prepared a detailed and realistic project budget.
- ☐ Demonstrated value for money and effective use of grant funding.
- ☐ Identified how project success and student impact will be measured.
- ☐ Confirmed you have the capacity, resources and approvals required to deliver the project.
- ☐ Identified a responsible project lead.
- ☐ Confirmed you can comply with all funding agreement, reporting and acquittal requirements.
- ☐ Attached all required supporting documentation.
- ☐ Completed all sections of the application form.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Who can apply?

1. Current University of Newcastle Students
2. UNSA Affiliated Club or Society
3. University of Newcastle Faculties, Schools, Divisions and Departments
4. Other Student-Led Groups at the University of Newcastle.

Can I make a joint application with another party?

Yes. Collaborative applications are encouraged. Applications involving partnerships between students, clubs and societies, and University departments may strengthen project outcomes and reach.

Do projects need to be delivered on campus?

Not necessarily. However, preference may be given to initiatives that activate University of Newcastle campuses and create opportunities for students to engage with their physical communities.

Is there a minimum or maximum funding amount?

There is no set grant amount for each stream. Applicants should request funding that is reasonable, proportionate to the scale of the project and represents value for money.

What funding stream should I choose?

The Major Grants Stream is intended for larger-scale or strategic initiatives whilst the Opportunity Grants Stream is intended for smaller projects, pilot initiatives and emerging opportunities. You should consider the specific requirements and goals of your project before applying.

Can funding be used to purchase equipment?

Potentially. Equipment purchases may be considered where they are necessary to deliver an eligible SSAF-funded project and demonstrate a clear benefit to University of Newcastle students.

Can funding be used to pay staff or student wages?

Potentially. Reasonable staffing or contractor costs may be considered where they are directly related to delivering the approved project and represent value for money.

Can funding be used to purchase food?

Yes. Projects aligned with SSAF requirements and the Program's Food Security priority theme may include reasonable expenditure on food and refreshments where it directly supports the delivery of project outcomes.

Can funding be used to purchase alcohol?

No.

Can projects extend beyond the current calendar year?

Potentially. Applicants may propose projects that extend beyond the current calendar year. Any such arrangements will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and, if approved, will be subject to conditions outlined in the Funding Agreement.

What happens if my project changes after funding is approved?

Successful applicants must seek approval from UNSA before making significant changes to the approved scope, budget or delivery arrangements.

What happens if my project is delayed?

Applicants should notify UNSA as soon as possible if project delivery is impacted by unforeseen circumstances. Any changes to approved project timelines, activities or budgets must be approved by UNSA.

Do funded projects need to comply with UNSA branding requirements?

Yes. Successful applicants may be required to acknowledge UNSA funding and include approved UNSA branding on promotional materials, publications, event collateral and communications, as outlined in the Funding Agreement.

What evidence should I provide to demonstrate student need?

Evidence may include student feedback, survey results, service utilisation data, consultation outcomes, research findings, previous program outcomes or other information demonstrating a genuine student need or opportunity.

What are KPIs?

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are measurable indicators used to assess project success. Examples include:

- Number of students participating;
- Event attendance;
- Student satisfaction rates;
- Volunteer hours generated;
- Students accessing a service or support program; or
- Improvements in wellbeing, connection or engagement.

Will I receive feedback on my application?

UNSA may provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants at its discretion. Due to the volume of applications received, detailed feedback may not always be available.