



ANUSA Student Assistance Team Report

Quarter 2, 2024 (April-June)

**** Content Warning: our report has mentions of SASH and suicidal ideation****

Overview

This quarter, the team had an increased uptake from students requiring financial and academic assistance due to the heavier academic workload typically seen by students in quarter 2.

The team advocated for big changes within the ECA space, and now students are able to defer a deferred exam should it be required. Alongside this advocacy work, the team also provided support to students who needed to access ECA due to issues they were experiencing during the exam period.

We also advocated for clearer guidelines and procedures for the Late Withdrawal process as it is experiencing an overhaul.

We saw a number of HDR candidates access our Carers Grant. The majority of the applicants were requesting support in caring for their child due to the increased cost of living and the rental crisis.

We have also seen an uptake in our Student Meal Vouchers (where students can get a free meal from the Food Co Op) which required us to put in restrictions of 5 tickets per student. If they require further meals, they can always access other forms of ANUSA programs and grants.

We have also provided support and advocacy for students undergoing the ANU disciplinary process.

The Student Assistance Team has also been considering a new case management system to help with our data entry process.

We observed a sharp increase in students experiencing critical mental health crises who require mental health and practical academic support. We will continue to support students throughout the year.

Lastly, the recruitment for the 4th member of the Student Assistance team concluded. As part of the major change process, the role of student assistance officer was replaced and a new role was created. We are glad to have Andy Fan join our team as the student assistance administrator.

Casework spotlight areas

We are starting to see the changes experienced over previous quarters settle into more consistent patterns, with our PGCW and HDR cohorts accounting for a similar percentage to last quarter (31% PGCW and 8.8% HDR). When combined, this puts our combined postgraduate cohort as a whole at just under 40% of our total student casework, with 59% being undergraduate.

As noted in previous quarters, this can be misleading in terms of the total allocation of our workload, as HDR matters in particular can often be more complex and require more engagement than their 8.8% representation may suggest.

The breakdown of matters has remained largely steady, with academic matters accounting for 67% of our casework with health matters (11.1%) and financial matters (8.1%) rounding out the top three categories of our casework.

Unfortunately, we are still consistently seeing critical cases that include disclosures of SASH, serious mental health concerns and/or suicidal ideation. We are pleased to be able to support students in these situations but are concerned about students' access to appropriate services on campus.

Case matter breakdown

Matter	Count	Percentage
Total Matters	655	
Academic Matters	447	67.2%
Disciplinary Matters	17	2.5%
Financial Matters	54	8.1%
SASH	11	1.6%
Health	74	11.1%
Suicidal Ideation	13	1.9%

Accommodation	14	2.1%
Others (incl. Tax help, legal referrals)	35	5.2%

Student cohort breakdown

UG	PG CWR	PG HDR	Unknown	Total
276	143	41	3	463
59.6%	30.8%	8.8%	0.6%	100%

** Most commonly in emails when they require on-off support but don't disclose their enrollment status.

These figures are from Jan 2024 (year to date figures)

Financial

Q2 2024 Financial grants & programs

Q 2 2024

<u>Grant/Program</u>	<u>UG Successful (# and \$)</u>	<u>PGCW Successful (# and \$)</u>	<u>PGHDR Successful (# and \$)</u>	<u>Total Successful</u>
<u>ANUSA Assistance Grant (AAG)</u>	<u>21 / \$6064</u>	<u>16 / \$6550</u>	<u>3 / \$1650</u>	<u>40 / \$14264</u>
<u>ANUSA Medical Grant (AMG)</u>	<u>10 / \$2114</u>	<u>4 / \$1100</u>	<u>1 / \$270</u>	<u>15 / \$3484</u>
<u>ANUSA Carers Grant (ACG)</u>	<u>1 / \$500</u>	<u>1 / \$1000</u>	<u>2 / \$1800</u>	<u>4 / \$3300</u>
<u>Accommodatio n Assistance Program (AAP)</u>	<u>2 / \$560</u>	<u>3 / \$1470</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>5 / \$1540</u>
<u>Grocery Voucher Program (GVP)</u>	<u>108 / \$5400</u>	<u>11 / \$550</u>	<u>5 / \$250</u>	<u>124 / \$6200</u>
<u>Transport Voucher Program (TVP)</u>	<u>11 / \$177.10</u>	<u>11 / \$177.10</u>	<u>3 / \$48.30</u>	<u>25 / \$402.50</u>
<u>Total amount spent</u>				<u>\$ 29,190.50</u>

Grants

We continued to support students in hardship through our three ANUSA grants (Assistance, Medical and Carers), as well as through our Emergency Accommodation Program. Despite tightening the criteria for some of our grants and programs to remain within budget, we have found that the cost of living crisis is taking its toll and students are in a greater need of financial assistance. This is reflected in the total amount awarded across all four programs, which remained stable at \$22,588.

As a response to the increased demand, the limit of ANUSA assistance grant will increase to \$750/semester in July.

School of Art & Design Financial Hardship Bursary

ANUSA continued to administer the SoAD bursary this quarter. 5 out of 7 applicants studying a School of Art and Design program were granted financial support, with a total amount of \$4,870.

Transport Vouchers

These vouchers have continued to be popular this quarter, with 25 transport vouchers distributed to as many individuals. This is a light decrease from Q1 as some of the eligible students have to wait for semester 2 to re-apply for the program.

Grocery Vouchers

Demand for grocery vouchers declined this quarter. A total of 124 vouchers were provided to students, which is a 39% decrease on the 206 vouchers granted last quarter (Jan-March 2024). This is consistent with the cost-of-living pressures that students report experiencing.

The students are eligible for 1 grocery voucher per semester (6-month period). Most of the deserving students applied for the grocery voucher in Q1 and were ineligible to apply again in Q2. We anticipate the utilisation of grocery vouchers in Q3 to go up significantly.

ANU Book Bursary

As this program is focused towards the start of the semester, only 2 applications were processed this quarter and a student was helped with a book for their open book exam. ‘

Eun Ju Bursary

ANU Advancement engages with us each year to disburse the Eun Ju Bursary. Eun Ju was a student at the ANU, who has since passed on. This bursary honours Eun Ju's deep care for people by supporting students in difficult times. Information on the Eun Ju bursary can be found [here](#). A recipient for this year's bursary has not yet been identified.

Food Co-op Vouchers

After very high utilisation of food co-op vouchers in previous quarters, we introduced a limit of 5 vouchers per student per annum. This has brought the Food voucher budget under control. The student who were relying on regular use of food vouchers have been provided more resources and information about other ANSUA programs such as BKSS free breakfast, ANUSA grocery vouchers etc. The introduction of BKSS Lunch Express has also helped in managing the use of Food Co-op vouchers. BKSS Lunch Express is a new food rescue initiative piloted by ANUSA. In partnership with Chartwells and Residential Experience, BKSS Lunch Express brings a range of quality meal options to students free of charge every day for lunch.

Equity Tickets

We provided Equity Ticket support for the following:

1. NUS EdCon Equity ticket
2. BIPOC Palestine Fundraiser event equity ticket

We will continue to provide equity ticket support to all clubs and society as needed.

Academic

Academic matters continue to account for the largest portion of SAT's work, with almost exactly two-thirds (66%) of students accessing SAT services seeking some form of academic support. Changes to graduation ceremonies were a low-point in the academic space, while

we were happy to have contributed to the reinstatement of ECAs for deferred exams. Changes to the late withdrawal policy and procedures were another key area of focus for SAT.

Show cause notices

Show Cause notices came out on the 15th of July and we anticipate some later in August as well, after the conclusion of deferred and supplementary exams from Semester 1 being held between 22-26 July. We have already started assisting a number of students in responding to these notices and anticipate this may increase workload in the late withdrawal space as well, as students seek assistance to retrospectively go under the exclusion threshold of course failures.

ECA issues

We have seen some progress as a result of ANUSA's advocacy towards increasing students' rights with the ECA process. The main achievement has been restoring the ability for students to submit an ECA for a deferred exam, where an unexpected exacerbation of an existing condition occurs, or a new circumstance arises that requires adjustment via ECA.

There is still work to do around the appeals process and other adjustments (supplementary examinations as a possible adjustment, for example) but we are pleased to be able to advise students that they can submit an ECA for a deferred exam where extenuating circumstances arise.

Graduation changes

The changes to both the frequency and timing of graduation ceremonies announced for 2025 onwards caused considerable angst among students. The SAT team responded to numerous enquiries around this issue and how it impacts students. While some minor changes were made around the timing of the now sole ceremony for 2025, this remains a focus for advocacy and we will be alert to its impacts on students.

Late Withdrawal concerns

Changes have officially been made to the ANU late withdrawal policy and procedure. Many of these changes do not greatly change ANUSA's work in this space as we had already been providing advice in-line with what the policy now explicitly states. An example of this is specifically addressing whether other adjustments (like ECA or extensions) could/could not

have been implemented prior to a late withdrawal, and specifically isolating reasons why a course was failed if others were passed in the same time period. We noted that the official processing time has increased from 28 to 30 working days, among other changes.

Some of the more contentious changes relate to documentation, including the university saying that online consultations should only be considered valid if there is a pre-existing face-to-face relationship between a student and a medical professional. We believe that this should be an area of focus for advocacy, as it does not account for the difficulties faced by international students in particular when accessing timely and appropriate healthcare in the ACT.

Academic integrity

Academic integrity matters in Q2 followed a fairly predictable trajectory, based on the academic calendar. While the use of generative AI has featured in integrity matters in Q2, we have not seen a return of the sharp increases in this space that we saw in the back half of 2023.

HDR uptake

We continued to see a steady amount of HDR students seeking assistance from SAT in Q2, 2024.

While many of these cases have been in regards to general concerns about their supervisory relationship and dynamics, we have also seen several cases of formal termination of candidature proceedings being instigated by colleges. These cases can be complex, as HDR candidates' projects are often deeply personal to them and termination of candidature can cause significant distress. This means in practice that SAT support may span several appointments and require vigilance of students' mental health. We have also found that these cases can often include collaboration with ANU Counselling, Student Safety and Wellbeing and the Dean of Students' office, as appropriate.

We are looking to recommence our regular HDR-specific meetings within SAT as we continue refining our casework with the HDR cohort. We are also engaging with the ANUSA HDR Officer in relation to HDR wellbeing changes at the ANU.

Accommodation

[ANUSA Accommodation Assistance Program](#)

We processed 5 emergency accommodation applications and provided students 22 nights' assistance this quarter.

[ANU Accommodation Bursary](#)

SAT is part of the committee that reviews the ANU accommodation bursaries. As part of the committee, we reviewed applications and provided our recommendations on each. We assessed 32 applications this quarter as compared to 34 last quarter.

Disciplinary & Critical cases (** Content Warning: This section mentions SASH and suicidal ideation**)

Students with a number of appeals and disciplinary cases were assisted by SAT. The majority of these cases relate to forged documents, encampment and SASH.

At least 10 students with suicide ideation and 2 with SASH matters were assisted. There were some other complex matters with severe mental health conditions, domestic violence and supervisory relationship breakdowns. These were quite complex cases and required a combination of academic, financial, accommodation support along with referrals to support services on campus and across Canberra.

Other Activities

[Exploring case management systems](#)

We are in touch with multiple case management system providers to streamline our grant processing and to improve our data management.

[Skill Up 2024](#)

In May 2024, we also hosted our Skill Up program, providing free training to students to upskill and enable them to find casual jobs while studying. This semester we opted to offer 52 spots to complete CIT's Coffee Basics Training course which teaches students how to make coffee. This should make students attending this course more desirable when applying for hospitality jobs. We received a total of 427 applications for this program.

We previously offered three different kinds of courses (Coffee Basics, WWVP reimbursement, and Responsible Service of Alcohol). However, there was an overwhelming interest from students to complete the Coffee Basics training; hence, we only offered this course this semester. Please see below for figures.

Course Offered	Cost Per Student	Total Students	Total Cost
CIT Coffee Basics	\$95	52	\$4,940

Some Wins

Email 18/04/2024

Hi Emily

Thanks again for your guidance and kind comforting which rescued me from the stress during the review. It is so helpful that ANUSA help students facing similar issues like me. You're doing a fantastic job!

Email from 15/04/2024:

I can't wait to share this with you. Just received this today. If there is any vocabulary in English that could express 100 times of thanks, I am saying that word to you Casey.

Email from 18/04/2024

Hi Casey, Thanks so much for your persistence and hard work in this case, I am very grateful for your willingness to act on my behalf. Please let me know if there's anything further that you need, I would be more than happy to provide it.

Email from a student on 23rd May

Thank you so much for today's advice. Your support and understanding really helped me. I now understand the whole case better and will wait for the decision from the course convener before deciding what to do next.

Thank you so much again, and I hope you have a good day!

Email from a student on 3rd July

Thank you for accompanying with me to handle with my deferred exam application. I am very sorry to take up you too much time. I have received the approved outcome of FINM7008 from ECA, and waiting for the other course outcome. At now, I have relieved my pressure.

You are kindness and patient, I am glad to meet you.

Community connections, networking and training

Presentations & Panels

- HDR Induction 4-8th April

Community connections:

- 29th May - Community Connect meeting with Ash Dowling (Dep Manager) and Darren (Project officer - Community Connect)
- Met with Finn, new Student Safety & Wellbeing Team staff, to discuss ANUSA financial grants and other supports on 11th April

Training

- SENCOM 2024 - Casey & Hassan
- In-house Research Award Rule (HDR) training session

Future goals and focus areas

- Focus on data management
 - Better feedback collection from students
 - Finalising a case management system for SAT
- Roll out Skill Up for sem 2, 2024
- Train Andy (new staff member) on the functions of the new role.