

ANUSA Student Assistance Report

Quarter 1, 2021 (Jan-March)

Overview

We continue to receive a steady number of ANUSA Emergency Grant applications in the first quarter of 2021. In Q1 2019 (pre-covid), we assessed a total of 16 ANUSA Emergency Grant applications, and we have assessed 115 applications so far this quarter. Similarly, we also issued a large number of grocery vouchers this quarter (123 applications) compared to 2019 (36 applications). We also restarted a few bursaries and programs such as the Eun Ju Bursary and the ANU Book Award (both funded by the University). Skill Up has also started again this semester and we have supported two students via this program so far.

Apart from the steady increase of financial assistance, we also assisted students with various academic-related issues. In particular, we have assisted students with Late Withdrawal, CRS/CRN, and course flexibility related queries. These are further elaborated on below.

As it is the start of the new year, we also took this opportunity to touch base with new and old stakeholders that we would be interacting with throughout the year. We also presented at various one-week events and were able to live-stream one of them for those off-campus.

We have had a busy start to the quarter, with unique issues stemming from remote learning. We envisage this to continue through the year.

Current quarter's highlights

ANUSA SAT Statistics	Jan-21	Feb-21	March-21
Evening meal vouchers issued	-	-	-
Lunch meal vouchers issued	0	6	78
Grocery vouchers (# of application processed)	7	26	90
Grocery vouchers (\$ amount granted)	\$700	\$2,600	\$5,800
Transport vouchers (currently suspended)	-	-	-
Emergency grants (# of application processed)	23	27	65
Emergency grants (\$ amount granted)	\$5,350	\$9,710	\$24,009
Medical Emergency Grant (8 application)	\$300	\$1,200	\$750
Carers Grant (0 application)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Accommodation Grant (3 applications processed)	\$150	\$ 210	\$ -
Skill Up (2 applications)	-	-	\$147

Casework spotlight areas

- Academic

We continue to assist students with a range of academic problems. COVID-19 has brought on a few complications which will be expanded upon below. In short, we are still receiving a high number of academic misconduct and late withdrawal queries due to the switch to online

learning and the challenges that come with it. We have also been advocating for more flexibility in the way courses are being run.

➤ Course flexibility

A few courses have been implementing compulsory/graded lecture attendance that is held at 9 am AEST. International students participating remotely have been unhappy that they would have to get up at 3 am local time to attend these lectures. Similarly, we have noted several supplementary exams being held in the early morning hours for those still not in Australia. We have raised these concerns with VP Christian, who has, in turn, raised these concerns with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

The issue with exams being held in the early hours of the morning for international students has also been raised with the Examinations office.

➤ Academic misconducts

A number of students have faced allegations of academic misconduct. Some of these allegations have stemmed from students' lack of experience with online learning/exams. The majority of these issues have been resolved equitably, and the implementation of the new Academic Integrity rule (expanded upon below) will continue to assist us with achieving equitable outcomes for students.

➤ Met Sue from ASQO regarding chronic CECS academic misconduct issues

There have been an ongoing issue with CECS and their mishandling of Academic Misconduct matters. Namely, course convenors would penalise students with a grade of 0 for their assessment when there has been an outcome of poor academic practice. This should not be allowed and has chronically been applied by course convenors due to a known loophole. This will no longer be possible under the new rule. However, it was important that it was raised with ASQO. In addition, convenors at CECS have in the past blindsided students at inquiry meetings. They would not provide students with all relevant information in their notification emails but will only show students the issue at the meeting when they are unprepared and have not had a chance to review the issue beforehand. There has also been a case with a course convenor has threatened a student with a harsher penalty if they were to involve ANUSA with the academic misconduct process. The issues with CECS came in to spotlight when one academic threaten to deduct the marks for the whole class and the news broke out in local media.

All of these issues were raised with the then-compliance office at ASQO, Sue Cosatto. Upon reviewing our information, ASQO will carry out a series of workshops and sessions with CECS academics to ensure that these issues do not happen again.

In addition to the re-education of CECS, the new integrity rule would prohibit some of these issues from recurring again.

➤ Late Withdrawals

There have been some applications of Late Withdrawal following the conclusion of the previous semester. Some of the late withdrawal applications stem from ill mental health following the impact of COVID-19, namely, the ill health of family members and the stress of being apart from loved ones.

➤ Discontinuation of CRS/CRN

CRS/CRN will not be continuing in semester 1, 2021. Despite this, students have been requesting its continuation. The requests are primarily from international students stuck overseas who do not believe much has changed since the previous semester. We have raised this concern with Christian and with Brendon at exams.

- [Financial](#)

Following on from exceptional circumstances in 2020, there is still a high uptake of ANUSA's grants and programs. 115 AEG applications were processed this quarter as compared to just 16 in the same quarter in 2019. More than \$39,000 were granted to the eligible students. \$2,250 was given out in Medical grants and \$9,100 worth of Grocery Vouchers were handed out to 123 students. A direct correlation was observed between the promotion of grocery vouchers through the ANUSA newsletter and the number of applications received. This suggests that our promotional activities are reaching the right audience and are an effective tool in increasing the awareness of ANUSA's services.

Evening meal vouchers were suspended while BKSS was not operational. Now, after BKSS re-opening, admin staff will be issuing evening meal vouchers too.

- [Skill Up relaunch](#)

Skill Up, the program aimed at increasing the students' employability while studying, was relaunched after the disruption caused by COVID19 and funding issues. The format of the program has been changed to remain open throughout the year. Previously, it was run once or twice a year for a short period. The prospect applicants are identified from the emergency grant applications.

- [ANU Book Award](#)

ANU Book Award continued to be administered by ANUSA and funded by ANU scholarships. 6 students were assisted in getting textbooks via this program.

- [Eun Ju bursary](#)

The Eun Ju bursary is awarded every year. The amount is up to \$850 per year. The recipient of this grant is selected by the SAT. Generally, students would have to access our ANUSA Emergency Grant to be able to access this bursary. We have nominated a student to receive this bursary. However, we have yet to grant the amount as we are waiting for their confirmation.

- [ANUSA strategic plan](#)

SAT is working with Eleanor on ANUSA's first strategic plan. The idea is to document ANUSA's key values and strategic priorities for upcoming years. For this, initial consultations with staff and execs are ongoing, and 1st draft of the document is ready.

- [Website review](#)

We have been continuing our work with Kate to update the ANUSA website, specifically the Student Assistance page. This is an ongoing project which we hope to continue going forward.

- [Annual planning – SAT and ANU](#)

Continuing the practice of start of the year planning, annual planning for Student assistance was done in which the team determined key focus areas. It included reaching out to stakeholders and forecasting the workload where COVID impacted university setting has become a business as usual.

- [Streamlining meal vouchers](#)

The admin team took the initiative of streamlining the meal voucher program, which was assisted by the SAT. Last year, the issuance of meal vouchers was moved from SAT to the admin team, with SAT still keeping an oversight of the program. Instead of emailing, the students can now fill in a form and get the vouchers via email. This arrangement has reduced the number of email exchanges.

- [Feedback on Integrity rules](#)

For the last five years, we have been pushing for the Academic Misconduct Rules to change. The SAT has been sending feedback on the rule to ASQO every time an issue arises. Finally, in 2021 the rule will be updated to reflect the changes we have been pushing for. Namely, students would no longer be given a zero for their assessment for the outcome of poor academic practice. This has been problematic as this would potentially allow the student to fail their entire course despite only committing a minor error. The new rule will also solidify the ability for students not to attend reviews in person if they are unable to/ not willing to. This has always been the case, but it was never formalised.

There are still a few outstanding issues in the draft version of the new rule, and these issues have been sent to Christian for review at AQAC. These outstanding issues are minor (mostly the broadness of some terms which can potentially be exploited). Should you want to look at the complete list of the outstanding problems, please let us know. Overall, we are happy with the changes that will be reflected in the new rule.

- [BKSS/ new staff induction](#)

SAT participated in the induction of new staff (admin, paralegal and BKSS) and explained the SAT services and the referral process.
