



ANUSA Student Assistance Team Report

Quarter 1, 2024 (January-March)

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

Overview

Q1 2024 started off with a change in how we capture our data. We moved from calculating student visits (an interaction with a student) to capturing student matters (e.g academic, financial etc.). We also developed our intake and feedback forms to keep track of how our service is being accessed and what current students feel about the service.

Q1 always has O week as a major activity which means multiple presentations and stalls from our team. We supported students with deferred exams, late withdrawals and show cause notices. High cost of living kept impacting ANU students, which was visible from our grants and programs uptake.

In the advocacy space, we effectively engaged the stakeholders to improve the Extenuating Circumstances Application's policy and its implementation. This will have a positive impact on hundreds of students who rely on adjustments like these to successfully complete their journey at ANU.

We are steadily increasing our engagement in HDR space by participating in HDR inductions, introducing a HDR-specific grant and meeting more stakeholders in this space. This will be our area of growth in the coming quarters.

Casework spotlight areas

After expanding our membership to postgraduates in July 2023, we have steadily seen a rise in postgraduates using SAT service. This quarter, almost 40% of the students accessing our service were postgraduates, including 10% HDR candidates.

However, the breakdown of matters remained similar to the past quarters, with Academic matters forming the majority of matters students come to us for assistance.

Please note that the breakdown in the following table does not include the students who have just applied for financial assistance, without having a chat with us. This would explain relatively lower percentage of students discussing financial matters.

One disturbing observation was the increase in critical cases. We classify critical cases as where someone's safety is at risk. This could be because of severe mental health condition, suicide ideation or any other such matter. We saw a trend that international postgraduate students are specifically more vulnerable in these critical cases.

Some of the HDR matters, although smaller in number, are more complex than their coursework counterparts. We do collaborate with the dean of Students' office and other stakeholders in the university to support our HDR members.

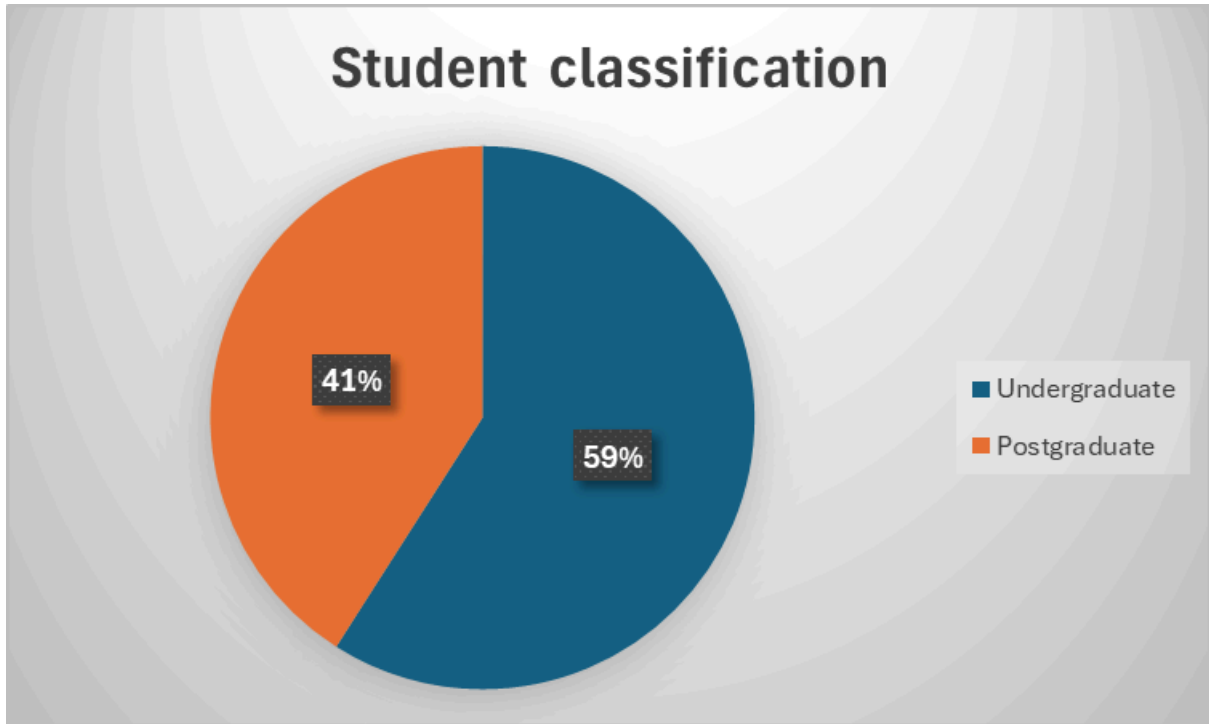
Case matter breakdown

Matter	Count	Percentage
Total Matters	353	100%
Academic Matters	225	63.7%
Disciplinary Matters	10	2.8%
Financial Matters	29	8.2%
SASH	7	1.9%
Health	43	12.1%
Suicidal Ideation	6	1.6%
Accommodation	10	2.8%
Others (incl. Tax help, legal referrals)	23	6.5%

*Each case could pertain to multiple matters, hence there are more matters compared to the total number of interactions. (ie. a student can come in for Late

Withdrawal support and financial hardship in the same appointment, so this student would be considered one interaction, with multiple matters)

Student cohort breakdown



UG	134	58.26%
PG CW	53	23.04%
PG HDR	23	10%
PG*	17	7.39%
Unknown**	3	1.30%
Total	230	100%

* We are aware that these students are postgraduate but we are not sure if they are coursework or research students.

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

Financial

Q1 2024 Financial grants & programs

Grant/ Program	Total Successful	Total Unsuccessful	Total Pending	Total
ANUSA Assistance Grant (AAG)	41 \$13,766	16	3	60
ANUSA Medical Grant (AMG)	13 \$3510	1	0	14
ANUSA Carers Grant (ACG)	4 \$3724	2	0	6
Accommodation Assistance Program (AAP)	4 \$1960	3	0	7
GVP	206 \$10,300	-	-	-
TVP	45 \$724.50			
Total amount granted	\$33,984.5			

Breakdown of financial assistance by cohort

Grant/ Program	UG Successful (# and \$)	PGCW Successful (# and \$)	PGHDR Successful (# and \$)
AAG	30 \$9616	5 \$2000	6 \$2150
AMG	8 \$2010	3 \$900	2 \$600
ACG	2 \$1724	0	2 \$2000
AAP	2 \$980	0	2 \$980
GVP	165 \$8250	33 \$1650	8 \$400
TVP*	23 \$370.30	18 \$289.80	4 \$64.40

. *some of these have not been picked up.

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. Although there were a similar number of applicants and recipients when compared to our Sept-Nov 2023 quarter, we have found that successful applicants were in greater financial need this current quarter. This is reflected in the total amount awarded across all four programs, which increased by 59% to \$22,960.

School of Art & Design Financial Hardship Bursary

ANUSA continued to administer the SoAD bursary this quarter. All seven applicants who are studying a School of Art and Design program were granted financial support, with a total amount of \$7,237.

Transport Vouchers

These vouchers have continued to be popular this quarter, with 45 transport vouchers being distributed to a total of 41 individuals. This is more than double the number of vouchers awarded in the final quarter of 2023 (21 vouchers, Oct-Dec 2023).

Grocery Vouchers

Demand for grocery vouchers also grew this quarter. A total of 206 vouchers were provided to students, which is a 33% increase on the 155 vouchers granted last quarter (Oct-Dec 2024). This is consistent with the cost-of-living pressures that students report experiencing.

We also investigated options to provide vouchers for Aldi or Daily Market, in order to offer more affordable or convenient options, respectively. Unfortunately, these options are not viable or practical, so haven't been implemented.

ANU Book Bursary

This quarter, in collaboration with the ANU Coursework Scholarships team, we expanded the eligibility of the Book Bursary to include all ANU students, rather than only undergraduate students. In addition, we began working with Hayden Merrell (Deputy Manager, Student Communications and Events, Student Life) as Chair of the Book Bursary selection committee to approve our decisions.

The book bursary allowed us to provide required books for 12 students this quarter, which is a significant uptake compared to the only 7 applicants for all of 2023.

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

The very high utilisation of food co-op vouchers continued this quarter. However, with the introduction of BKSS Lunch Express and limiting the lunch vouchers a student can access in a term, we anticipate the use of Food Co-op vouchers to go down, 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.

Academic

Academic matters continue to form the largest portion of SAT's work with more than 60% students accessing SAT services seeking some form of academic support. This quarter was relatively quiet in academic space as the semester started in mid-Feb only. However, the matters related to deferred exams, late enrolments, late withdrawals, ECAs, HDR milestones/extensions kept impacting students and we were able to assist them these challenges.

Show cause notices

Show Cause notices came out in mid January and some later in March after the referred exams were conducted. We helped a number of students in responding to these notices and to Late Withdrawal from some courses to nullify the impact of show cause, at least temporarily.

ECA issues

Extenuating Circumstance Application (ECA) is a process introduced in July 2023 which replaces deferred exams and special consideration processes.

There have been multiple issues with this process, including

- vagueness to which assessment qualifies for ECA as compared to assessment extensions.
- Challenges with the appeal process - as currently students have to wait for the final result to appeal an ECA outcome
- No second deferred exam is allowed as part of this process. This is massive change from the pre-2023 process and has had a significant negative impact on current ANU students.
- Some academic adjustments, such as offering a supplementary assessment have been taken away as a possible academic adjustment for an ECA application.
- HDR students specifically feel that their supervisor is in a better position to understand their challenges, and given the longer commitment they have with the university, they are frustrated with the lack of flexibility that ECA offers for the coursework component of their PhD.
- There are many other blackholes as well which this new process does not address or does not address well.

SAT has shared the challenges faced by the students with ANUSA execs. We also have had meetings with DSAAS and raised these concerns directly with the registrar's office and their relevant teams.

This is an ongoing advocacy matter.

Late Withdrawal concerns

In a meeting with Suzie Alcorn (Deputy registrar), we raised the concern of the threshold of Late Withdrawal being unreasonably high. The background of this meeting included some support letters from ANU counselling being declined as they were declared a non-diagnostic service and a few LWs being declined because the death certificates of a loved one were not provided.

Suzie assured us that their department is in touch with Sarah Walker (acting Director-University Experience) on ensuring that the ANU counselling support letters meet the requirements of a support letter as suggested by HESA Act 2003 and they will look into the death-related Late Withdrawal applications more empathetically. They also agreed to add to their website some examples of what supporting documents would be acceptable in such a situation.

Late enrolments

A significant number of international students' visas were delayed because of processing delays at the Australian Government. This number was initially around 400 which declined to less than 80 by week 3. This meant that a significant number of students missed their orientation week as well as the first couple of weeks of classes. SAT was in touch with DSAAS in ensuring that these students are provided required flexibility in late enrolments, ECAs and other such academic adjustments.

Academic integrity

The AI-related academic integrity issues have decreased after an initial spike. We are not sure what this can be attributed to but there is a clear decline in the number of allegations students are coming to us with. Also, the start of the semester is very light on assessments so this may be a reason for the decline in academic integrity matters.

HDR uptake

There has been a continued flow of HDR students reaching out to the student assistance team in Q1, 2024.

A notable feature of HDR matters is that they can often be quite sensitive as there is pressure on HDR students to maintain positive and productive relationships with their supervisors, who act as gatekeepers into academia. This lopsided power dynamic can at times mean that HDR students are more fearful of advocating for themselves and seeking support relative to coursework students. A number of HDR matters that we have assisted with in Q1 have been ongoing matters, where several appointments are made to work through complex issues.

SAT and Legal both attended the mini market of ANU service providers on the 2nd of April during the ANU HDR Induction, which was well attended and a useful opportunity to discuss how ANUSA can assist HDR students.

Accommodation

ANUSA Accommodation Assistance Program

We processed 7 emergency accommodation applications and provided students 28 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 34 applications this quarter as compared to 55 last quarter. The decrease in applications can be attributed to the ending of contracts in January and generally at the start of the contracts, not many students require rental assistance.

Disciplinary & Critical cases

Students with a number of appeals and disciplinary cases were assisted by SAT. The majority of these cases relate to sexual assault and sexual harassment (SASH). 9 disciplinary cases and 6 suicide ideation matters required intervention from our team. There were some other complex matters with severe mental health conditions, domestic violence, supervisory relationship breakdowns which required delicate casework from our team and some referrals to the appropriate services for more specialised support.

Other Activities

Planning Day

SAT held an internal annual planning session on 22nd Jan to map out the key dates, activities and focus area for 2024.

Skill Up 2024

We plan to run Skill Up in each semester this year. With a budget of \$5k, we decided to offer our most popular training - Coffee making. The training is scheduled to take place at the start of May at CIT. We received 427 applications for 52 positions. As the number of applications was increasing rapidly, we had to close the applications earlier. In the past, we have offered Responsible service of Alcohol, First Aid, Working with Vulnerable People Card and other trainings. However, with focus on one training this year, we anticipate the program to run more smoothly and utilise less resources.

Some Wins

Assisted students impacted by Palestine-Israel conflict

Email dated 15th December 2023:

“I got the offer from Fenner Hall! I just wanted to thank you again for your help, I really appreciate it.”

Email from 10/01/2024

Dear Emily:

Thank you for your letter. You really helped me a lot. I think I will thank you face to face when the semester begin.

Email 18/04/2024

Hi Emily

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

Best,

Email 29/01/2024

Hi Emily,

Thank you for your concern Emily, I didn't expect you are still remember me XD. Normally I am invisible in life while nobody notices me. To be honest it is so lucky for me to meet you.

Emailed dated 14/03

Your reply is detailed and comprehensive, hence I don't have any other questions. Thank you very much for all the things you've done for me, as well as your time, understanding and patience. Although I'm having a hard time, I believe that everything will get better, especially with warm help from nice people like you.

I hope you have a good day and enjoy the weekend.

A Phd candidate emailed on 18th March:

“Dear Hassan and @ANUSA Assistance Team,

As always, thank you for assisting students, including myself, with these matters. I appreciate your help.

Mapasalamaton,

XXXXXX [he/his]

PhD Student “

Email from 23/02/2024 from a student's mother

Hi Casey, You have been our strength throughout this process and we are ever grateful for your unwavered support. Could you please forward this email to your manager? We want to personally inform him of your fantastic support, your constant updates and leading a light through this entire process for us. Thank you and ever grateful for your support,

Email from 5/03/2024:

Hi Casey, your help was priceless. Thank you.

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.

Community connections, networking and training

Presentations & Panels

- SAT staffed the ANUSA stall alongwith the legal team for SR induction on 23rd January. The team interacted with 240+ incoming senior residents, and briefed them on ANUSA services and referral pathways.
- Presented H2A information in Unilodge on 7th and 9th February.

Community connections:

- Met with Reece, outgoing member of the Student Safety & Wellbeing team on 24th Jan
- Attended ISO Identity consultation on 22nd Jan, which was conducted by ThinkPlace (now Synergy?). Charlotte and Kat were also present in the consultation.
- Prepping for HDR inductions from 4-8th April
- Met with Finn, new Student Safety & Wellbeing Team staff, to discuss ANUSA financial grants and other supports on 11th April

Training

- CPR refreshers
- In-house Research Award Rule (HDR) training session
- Casey completed trainings on “foundation of international education” and “Preventing Vicarious Trauma & Burnout” in early March.
- Hassan & Emily attended the ACUI conference from 23-28 March.

Future goals and focus areas

- Data! Data! Data!
- Roll out a post skill up survey to see where students are at with their employment.