



**Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee**  
*the council of Australia's university presidents*

**Survey of University Student Organisations**  
**2003**

# AVCC Summary 3/03

## Survey on university student organisations 2003

### 1. Relationship between the university and student organisation(s)

In most cases student organisations are regarded as separate entities, usually incorporated under the relevant State or Territory law. In the responses received, only four student organisations appeared to be part of the university. Ten were categorised as related entities – mainly those which were created by virtue of the relevant university Act.

In seven cases (UNE, UNSW, Sydney, UTS, Flinders and Tasmania) the student association was established by a decision of the university Council and governed by its regulations. Some respondents nonetheless regarded these associations as separate entities. Five universities' student associations (CQU, USQ, Adelaide, Griffith and UWA) were established by State Acts.

Although it is not explicitly stated in some responses, most student associations appear to be incorporated even when they are regarded as part of the university.

**Table 1: Relationship between university and student association(s)**

Part of University	Separate Entity		Related Entity
ACU	Adelaide	Ballarat	ANU
Bond	Canberra	CQU	Griffith
Edith Cowan	Charles Sturt	Curtin	James Cook
Flinders	Deakin	La Trobe	UNE
	Macquarie	Murdoch	UNSW
	Newcastle	Queensland	NTU
	QUT	RMIT	Sydney
	South Australia	Sunshine Coast	Tasmania
	Southern Cross	USQ	UTS
	Victoria	UWA	Wollongong
	UWS		

### 2. Membership of Student association/union/guild

A little over half the responding universities indicated that membership of the student association or guild was not a condition of enrolment.

In almost all cases membership appears to be automatic, the exceptions being Newcastle and La Trobe. All respondents except one (NTU) indicated students were allowed to opt out of

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becoming members, usually on conscientious grounds. In a handful of cases this option was indicated on the enrolment form, but for most it was publicised elsewhere – on websites or in information given to enrolling students. One respondent (UWS) noted that the option was not publicised.

**Table 2: Student enrolment and membership of associations**

Requirement of enrolment		Not a requirement of enrolment	
ACU	Adelaide	ANU	Ballarat
Canberra	Charles Sturt	Bond	Curtin
CQU	Flinders	Deakin	Edith Cowan
James Cook	Macquarie	Griffith	La Trobe
Newcastle	UNSW	Murdoch	UNE
NTU	QUT	Queensland	RMIT
Southern Cross	USQ	South Australia	Sunshine Coast
Sydney	Tasmania	UTS	Victoria
Wollongong		UWA	UWS

The most common approach to students opting out of membership of the student association involved an application in writing to senior university staff – Bursars, Deans of Students and so on – or to the student association itself. A few universities appear to allow blanket exemptions.

The number of students taking up this option is uniformly low: less than 20 students per year (although two universities reported figures of around 20%). In some cases it appears that students who may wish to take up this option may be deterred by the fact that a fee is still payable. This fee may be paid into university general revenue, or to student services other than the association: a common approach is to allocate fees from conscientious objectors to student support schemes, loans, and bursaries.

In some cases failure to pay the fee – whether for conscientious or other reasons – can result in cancellation of enrolment, loss of access to facilities (including libraries), or withholding of results.

**Table 3: Cost of membership of student organisations**

Free Membership		Direct Membership Fee	
ANU	Ballarat	ACU	Adelaide
Canberra	CQU	James Cook	UNSW
Curtin	Deakin	Southern Cross	USQ
Edith Cowan	Griffith	UWS	
La Trobe	Murdoch		
Newcastle	UNE		
NTU	Queensland		
QUT	RMIT		
South Australia	Sunshine Coast		

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Free Membership	Direct Membership Fee
Tasmania UWA	UTS Wollongong

Twenty-one universities have free membership of the student association. In some cases the fee for membership is payable directly to the association at enrolment.

### 3. *Payment of student services fee*

All but three responding universities (Southern Cross, Sydney, and UWS) indicated that a student services fee of some description is levied. There is a wide variation in the amount charged, and in some cases this depends on the number of units in which the student is enrolled.

The fee for full-time, on-campus students ranges between less than \$100 to more than \$350; the median is in the range of \$150 to \$200 per year. Only three universities – UTS, USQ, and Tasmania – have provisions for varying this fee on the basis of opting out of student association membership.

**Table 4: Student services fees – total charged**

Size of Fee						
<\$150	\$150-\$200	\$200-\$250	\$250-\$300	\$300-\$350	\$350<	Variable
Bond	ACU	Griffith	Ballarat	Adelaide	Macquarie	Charles Sturt
Curtin	ANU	QUT	Canberra	Flinders	Wollongong	CQU
Edith Cowan	Deakin		James Cook	Tasmania		Curtin
Murdoch	Newcastle		VUT			La Trobe
USC	UNE					NTU
UWA	UNSW					UniSA
	RMIT					SCU
	UTS					USQ

Student services fees are commonly set by the university Council or its equivalent; in a few cases the authority to set the fee is delegated to a senior executive or administrative staff member. Special committees, usually with student representatives, set the fee at some institutions.

**Table 5: Setting of student services fees**

University	Council		Committee	Senior Staff	Student Assoc.
Ballarat	Adelaide	Canberra	Bond	ACU	James Cook
Charles Sturt	CQU	Curtin	Flinders	ANU	NTU
	Deakin	Edith Cowan	La Trobe	UNSW	QUT
	Griffith	Macquarie	RMIT		

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University	Council		Committee	Senior Staff	Student Assoc.
	Murdoch UNE USQ Sunshine Coast UTS UWA	Newcastle Queensland South Australia Tasmania Victoria Wollongong	Southern Cross		

Whether the decision is made by the Council or a committee the amount of any fee is typically set on a recommendation from, or in consultation with, the student association. Distribution of the fee is most commonly determined by the student association, often in conjunction with the university, Council, or a finance committee.

**Table 6: Distribution of student services fees**

University	Council	Committee	Senior Staff	Student Assoc.
Charles Sturt	Canberra	ANU	ACU	Adelaide
UNSW	Edith Cowan	Bond	UNE	Ballarat
Queensland	Griffith	Flinders		CQU
RMIT	Macquarie	La Trobe		Curtin
Tasmania	Murdoch	Southern Cross		Deakin
UTS	Newcastle			James Cook
	Sunshine Coast			NTU
	Victoria			QUT
	UWA			South Australia
	Wollongong			USQ

Fifteen respondents indicated that GST is payable on student services fees. Five (UNE, Griffith, Curtin, Murdoch and UWA) noted that they have applied for a ruling on the matter from the ATO; two other institutions (Edith Cowan and RMIT) are no longer charging GST on their student services fees on the basis of such a ruling.

**Table 7: GST liability**

Yes	No
ACU	Ballarat
Adelaide	Curtin
ANU	Deakin
Bond	Edith Cowan
Canberra	La Trobe
Charles Sturt	Macquarie
CQU	Newcastle
Flinders	UNE
Griffith	NTU

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Yes	No
James Cook	Queensland
Murdoch	RMIT
UNSW	South Australia
QUT	Tasmania
Southern Cross	Victoria
USQ	UWA
Sunshine Coast	Wollongong
UTS	

### 4. Financial Obligations to Student Bodies

Only two respondents (New England and Sydney) indicated that the university acted as a guarantor for loans to student bodies. Around half have made loans to student associations, with the amounts involved typically less than \$1 million. Sports facilities appear to be the most common reason for such loans.

**Table 8: Loans to student organisations**

Institution	Amount of Loan(s)	Purpose (if stated)
Adelaide	\$170,000	Gym facilities
ANU	\$650,000	
CQU	Nil at present	
Charles Sturt	\$2 million over past ten years	
Griffith	\$5.5 million	Buildings, extensions
James Cook	\$350,000	Building improvements
Murdoch	\$350,000	
Newcastle	\$5.1 million	Sports facilities
UNE	\$470,000	Sports facilities
NTU	\$400,000	
Queensland	\$500,000	Sports association
Southern Cross	\$50,000 (maximum)	
USQ	\$3.5 million	Recreation centre
Sunshine Coast	unspecified	
Sydney	\$5.9 million over past ten years	Capital work
Tasmania	\$1.9 million	
UWA	\$486,000	Sports facilities
UWS	\$1 million	

### 5. Services Provided by Universities

See the attached Excel tables for a list of the student services provided by various universities.