



THE CASE FOR 24/7 LIBRARIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

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"A 24/7 space in general would be incredible and a library even better. I struggle to get to uni within 2 hours of my home counting driving to the train station, training in, tram and walking. In peak hour, this journey is horrible so I try [to] do it either really early or prefer to avoid peak hour night traffic by staying on campus late. What makes me feel less safe on campus is when I'm there either late at night or early in the morning, and no study spaces are open except the occasional physics building which I get into because it's left unlocked.... (secrets I've had to discover through desperation and cold). Having a library open would just be a life saver, make me feel safer, more comfortable and supported to study on campus instead of a public space like [Melbourne] Central [S]tarbucks, where I often encounter weird, creepy men. I don't know why there wouldn't be a student card activated library open to students only on campus after hours, even open from 6am or something like that, or even better- the 24/7 one UMSU is suggesting."

-Anonymous, UMSU 24/7 library survey

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Demographic

1. There were a total of **879 responses**.
2. Of the respondents, **37% were domestic** students and **63% were international** students.
3. Of the respondents, **58% were undergraduate** students and **42% were graduate** students.
4. Of the respondents, **76% were 1st and 2nd year** students, and 24% were 3rd year students or above.
5. Of the respondents, 8% identified as a student with a disability.

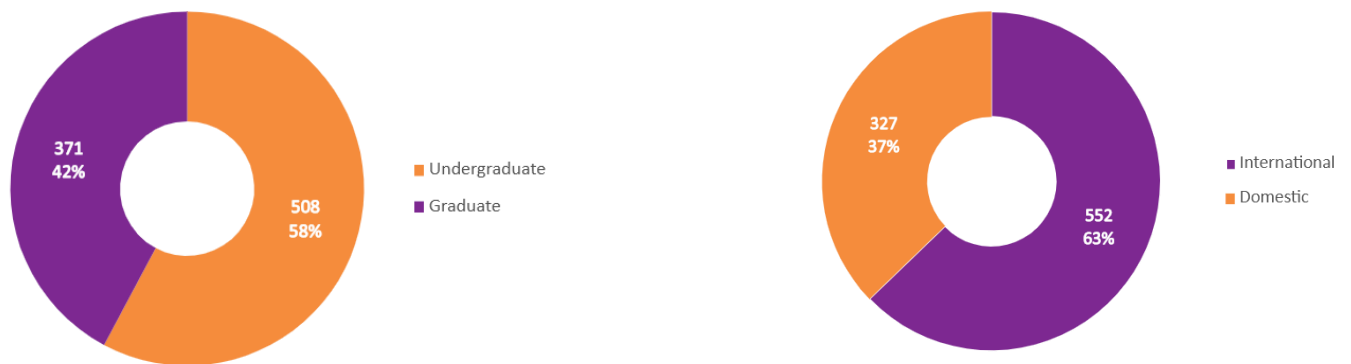


Fig 1: Pie charts representing student demographics

Key findings:

1. **95% of students responded yes** to wanting a 24/7 library space on campus. Further, of this 95%, 59% said it was a **necessity** while 41% said that it would be **convenient**.
2. **53%** of students reported that their **commute to campus is always over twenty minutes**, and a further 10% reported that their commute is sometimes over 20 minutes.
3. **64%** of students reported that they hold **employment**. Out of this, **71%** of students **work over 10 hours per week**.
4. With 526 votes, **Baillieu Library was the most popular choice for a 24/7 library**, narrowly followed by ERC Library at 520 votes.
5. The **University of Melbourne is falling behind other Australian universities, especially the G08**, in providing safe and accessible study places for students outside business hours.

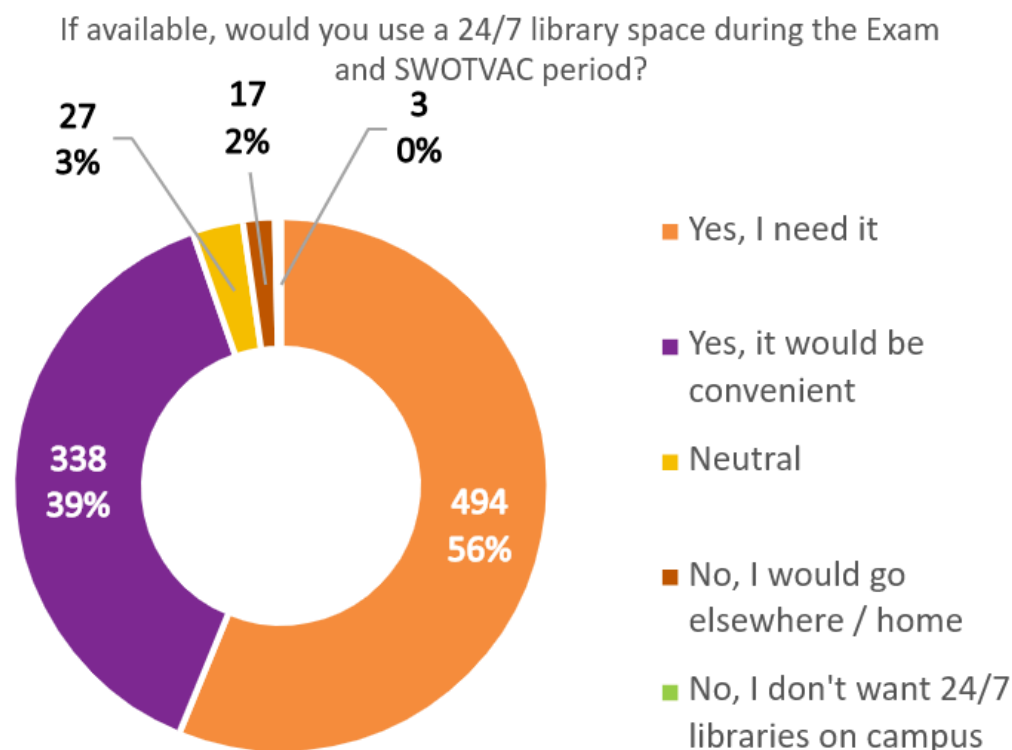


Fig 2: A pie chart depicting student responses for the survey question asking if students would use a 24/7 library space

Recommendations

1. Introduce a trial of 24/7 study spaces in the Baillieu Library for the SWOTVAC and exam period in semester two 2025. The spaces should be accessible via a student card.
2. That UMSU and University collaborate in promoting these spaces to ensure that the trial is widely known and that conditions of use are understood by students.
3. Work with UMSU to collect feedback on the success of the trial and make decisions about future exam periods accordingly.

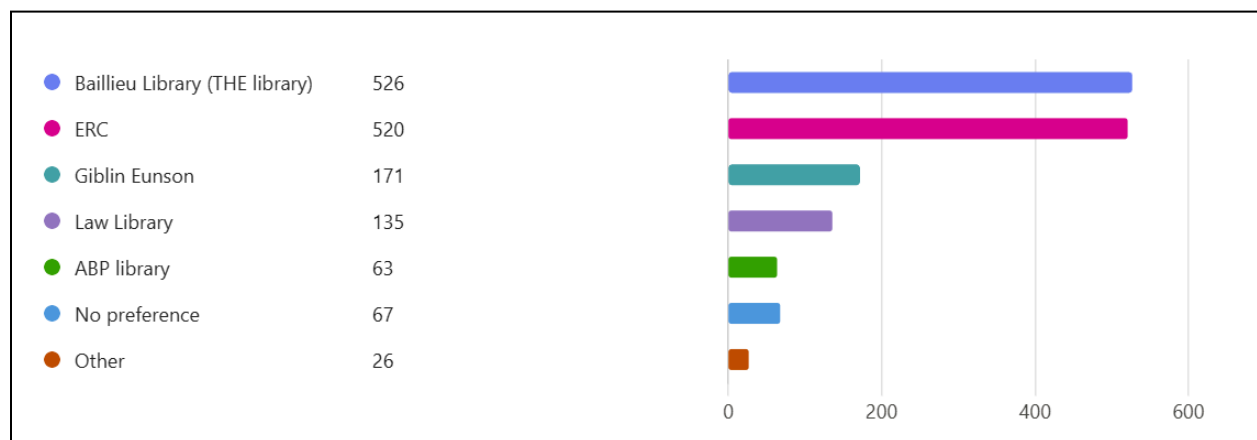


Fig 3: A bar graph depicting the response to a survey question about library preference for 24/7 libraries

INTRODUCTION

For years, the issue of library hours has been raised by student representatives, with various trials being run prior to COVID-19. However, there has been little action taken in recent years, but it remains a consistent priority for students.

In July 2025, the issue of 24/7 libraries was raised by UMSU International within Elected Representatives. From that meeting, UMSU agreed to speak to members to ascertain the demand for 24/7 libraries and, if it was to be established, which library students would prefer to remain open. To gain direct empirical data, UMSU Education worked with UMSU Advocacy and the UMSU President to develop a survey built to identify the following:

- How great is the demand for 24/7 libraries at the University of Melbourne
- For those students who show support for 24/7 libraries, why?

This paper details the findings of that survey, alongside research on how other universities, including the GO8, have approached 24/7 libraries.

The success of the survey in terms of responses in such a short period (20 days) can be linked to two factors: firstly, the collaborative and unified approach taken by elected representatives and student volunteers; secondly, the exceedingly high level of support that students have for 24/7 libraries. Not only did students want to fill in the survey, but numerous students, after responding, volunteered their time to support the Education Department in promoting the survey.

ANALYSIS

Background

During the examination period, students are forced to leave libraries and other study areas at a given time. Whilst long periods of study are not ideal, they are a reality of tertiary education. By providing 24/7 library spaces, we are not only providing a safe and welcoming place for students to engage with their education, but we are also addressing the underlying reasons why students want these spaces. These reasons include:

- Long commutes to and from campus;

- Unable to study at home due to living arrangements; and
- They are unable to afford internet and/or the necessary tools for studying at home.

“My commute is long and tiring. By the time I get home I just want to sleep, so I prefer to stay late and keep the momentum going. Engineering study often requires study sessions lasting many hours, especially if completing assignments or projects, which are extremely time consuming. Very late nights become all but necessary [at] that point, so sometimes I have to sit in my car and finish working.”

-Anonymous, UMSU 24/7 library survey

Positive effects of 24/7 libraries

The conventional idea that extended opening hours might negatively affect student well-being doesn't hold up under closer inspection. In fact, the opposite may be true. A survey (Lauriol, 2019) at Birkbeck University found that 82% of students said 24-hour library access had a *positive* effect on their mental health ^[1]. For many, it offered a calm, quiet, and less distracting space than home, allowing them to study more effectively without feeling isolated or overwhelmed by the time pressure of opening hours.

Unequal access to late-night study places

Providing students with access to 24/7 study places is widely accepted.

Removing this service at a time when it is needed the most, not only increases the burden on students but deepens the economic divide at the height of the cost-of-living crisis.

Many private third-party student accommodations, such as Scape and UniLodge, provide 24/7 study spaces to their residents. However, given the high price charged, being able to live in these accommodations is not something affordable to all students. Students of lower socioeconomic

background are being forced to take longer commutes, to live in houses with an increasing number of housemates, and to accept a falling standard of quality for accommodation. One uncomfortable conclusion is that, due to the lack of 24/7 study spaces at the University of Melbourne, students with the means to live in private accommodation have more support in studying by access to 24/7 study spaces than a student unable to afford it. This is only exacerbated by the fact that students who can't afford to live in private student accommodation are more likely to work part-time, further reducing their ability to study. Further, for students who find employment during conventional business hours, they have no safe, secure and comfortable place to study after finishing work.

In *A Campus in Crisis*, a report produced in 2024 by UMSU Welfare Officers on the cost-of-living crisis, 32% of students reported that they disliked their roommates, but have to live with them to save money. This data does not explore issues such as feeling unsafe or uncomfortable at home, but the reality that students often simply cannot afford to find an accommodation that feels like home and allows for productive study cannot continue to be ignored.

"[S]tudents who can afford to pay for fancy [S]cape student accom[m]odation or private colleges have access to nice 24/7 study spaces with support, but the rest of us don't. Seems a bit unfair that a standard university feature got essentially privatised in the 2020s."

-Anonymous, UMSU 24/7 library survey

24/7 LIBRARY SPACES ACROSS THE AUSTRALIAN TERTIARY EDUCATION INDUSTRY

We have compiled data on the status of 24/7 libraries in each G08 university in Australia and other universities within Victoria. Summary tables are below:

COMPARISON CHART WITH OTHER G08 UNIS

FEATURES	24/7 LIBRARY IN EXAM SEASON	24/7 LIBRARIES ALL SEMESTER
University of Sydney	✓	✓
University of Adelaide	✓	✓
University of West Australia	✓	✓
University of New South Wales	✓	✓ *
University of Melbourne	✗	✗
Australian National University	✓	✓
University of Queensland	✓	✓
Monash University	✓	✓

*UNSW has Law library open 24/7 throughout semester and opens up Main library during exam season alongside Law

Fig 4: A comparison chart of 24/7 library status at every G08 university

Sl no.	University Name	24/7 Library Status
	G08 Universities	
1	University of Sydney	The University of Sydney has a variety of year-round 24/7 study spaces ^[1]
2	Australian National University	ANU offers 24/7 access to the Law Library at Chifley, Hancock and Law to all students and staff since 2021. ^[2]
3	Monash University	Monash University started a successful 24/7 library pilot for Semester 1, 2025 specifically in direct response to student need, accommodating for study patterns, shift-based work and commute times. As of July 2025, thanks to strong trial outcomes, the space has been confirmed to remain accessible moving forward. ^[3]
4	University of New South Wales (UNSW)	The Law Library at UNSW is open 24/7 all semester. During exam period, the Main Library is available in addition to that to all students ^[4]
5	University of Queensland	UQ has several buildings open 24/7, including a dedicated 24/7 space open all throughout the semester ^[5]
6	University of Adelaide	The Barr Smith and Roseworth Library at UA has been open 24/7 for all students since 2018 ^[6]
7	University of Western Australia	UWA has several libraries and spaces open 24/7 for all students ^[7]

¹ <https://www.sydney.edu.au/students/study-spaces.html>

² <https://anulib.anu.edu.au/news-events/news/anu-law-library-now-open-247>

³ www.monash.edu/library/about/news/new-247-study-space-pilot-set-to-kick-off-at-the-matheson-library

⁴ <https://www.library.unsw.edu.au/about-unsw-library/opening-hours>

⁵ <https://web.library.uq.edu.au/visit/all-opening-hours>

⁶ <https://adelaide.libcal.com/hours/>

⁷ https://ipoint.uwa.edu.au/app/answers/detail/a_id/3431/~library-24/7-opening-hours

	<i>Other Universities in Victoria</i>	
8	RMIT University	RMIT provides 24/7 access to graduate students at various buildings ^[8]
9	Deakin University	In 2024, Deakin University announced that they would open libraries at the Burwood, Waterfront and Waurin Ponds campuses 24/7 from Monday, 9 September until Friday, 18 October. For security, a security guard is located on premises at all times with a security guard outside library staff hours. ^[9]
10	Swinburne University	Swinburne University has 24/7 spaces at Hawthorn, Wantirna and Croydon campuses. ^[10]
11	Victoria University	Since 2015, Victoria University has provided 24/7 access to the City Flinders and Footscray Park libraries during the exam period with a security guard on post. ^[11]

Table 1: A summary chart of all G08 universities and other Victorian universities and their status of 24/7 libraries

The University of Melbourne stands as the leading university in Australia, and yet in recent years, our provision of facilities that enhance the student experience has fallen behind the offerings of other Victorian universities, the G08, and the general tertiary education landscape of Australia. Currently, we are the only university in the G08 and out of all the big universities in Victoria to not offer a 24/7 study space, and this lack is being clearly felt by our students.

⁸ <https://www.rmit.edu.au/about/our-locations-and-facilities/facilities/study-spaces>

⁹ <https://blogs.deakin.edu.au/article/enter-study-mode-with-24-7-library-access/>

¹⁰ <https://www.swinburne.edu.au/library/study-spaces-computers/24-hour-access/index.php>

¹¹ <https://www.vu.edu.au/node/10901696>

"In 2015, I finished my studies at USyd, and even back then, they had 24/7 libraries (main library with underground passage to law library) with kitchens that had microwaves, hot water, and vending machines with a large selection of meals. It was very convenient, especially for night owls, for whom peak focus comes online at midnight, when UniMelb is shutting down. Last semester (S1, 2025), I used Deakin's Library, which is 24/7 during exam time (luckily they didn't check for student cards!). Deakin's 24/7 library isn't as good as USyd's library because they restrict you to one level, and there's no kitchen, but still better than trying to studying at the train station after UniMelb closes."

-Anonymous, UMSU 24/7 library survey

THE CASE FOR A TRIAL IN SEMESTER 2 2025

The University of Melbourne had three trials in the recent past with 24/7 study spaces in SWOTVAC and exam periods in 2017, 2018 and 2019 at Baillieu, Giblin Eunson and ERC libraries.

The need for overnight spaces was recognised and attended to in the past by the University of Melbourne, and the need has only grown with the aftereffects of the pandemic and the rising cost-of-living crisis.

The structure and convention of student life have changed dramatically, and the current student on campus has a multi-faceted and complex life, which doesn't always allow the flexibility of stopping studying after a certain hour or studying at home.

Often, students fall through the cracks and end up studying at over-priced night cafes or fast food chains like McDonald's, which are not only incredibly distracting but highly unsafe at night, especially for women and gender diverse individuals. This should not be the case for any of our students.

The University prides itself on its global reputation as a tertiary education institution. And yet, these rankings are primarily based on the academic performance of their students. If the University of Melbourne wants its students to do well and, by extension, continue to see our university's rankings improve, it is imperative that we facilitate student learning in all capacities. By opening up libraries 24/7 during the exam period, we are allowing students to study for longer periods, focus on their content, collaborate and socialise with their peers, and in doing so reach their full academic potential.

"The bottomline is that assignments due at 8 a.m. in the morning in the middle of the week (or any other assignment) don't wait for us to arrange a 24/7 space to get things done. They don't take into consideration all the

other aspects of a student's life at uni, which are manifold. A space open for students 24/7 to get uni work done would be amazingly helpful, and would solve an ongoing problem amongst many in the long run."

-Anonymous, UMSU 24/7 library survey