

JCUSA Request for Clarification Regarding Proposed Laboratory and Technical Services Changes and Student-Facing Impacts

22 July 2026

Matthew Evans

Director, Academic Services

James Cook University

Via email: educationchange@jcu.edu.au

Dear Mr Evans,

RE: Request for Clarification Regarding Proposed Laboratory and Technical Services Changes and Student-Facing Impacts

I write on behalf of the JCU Student Association Council regarding the proposed Laboratory and Technical Services changes and their actual or potential impacts on students.

Following the formal adoption of motions by the JCU Student Association Council, JCUSA writes in its capacity as the representative student body to seek clarification and further engagement regarding the student-facing implications of the proposal.

JCUSA recognises that the proposal is a formal change management document prepared in the context of staffing, service delivery and organisational sustainability. JCUSA also recognises that the consultation period is currently open, with written feedback being received through the University's stated feedback channels.

However, the proposal has significant potential implications for students. These include practical learning, laboratory and field-based teaching, technical support, specialist expertise, safety, work-integrated learning, placements, research training and the broader student experience.

JCUSA's concern is that the proposal has clear potential implications for present and future students, but it is not yet clear how those impacts have been assessed, communicated or mitigated within the current consultation process.

JCUSA does not treat petitions as a substitute for formal consultation. However, petitions, society submissions and direct correspondence indicate substantial concern and provide useful insight into the impacts requiring further consideration.

JCUSA has established a direct feedback pathway for students to raise their concerns with the Association. This process is intended to assist JCUSA in identifying common themes, documenting student impacts and ensuring student perspectives can be raised through appropriate representative and institutional channels.

JCUSA raises these matters constructively and with the intention of ensuring that student concerns are clearly understood, appropriately considered and addressed before final decisions are made.

Student-facing impacts requiring clarification

Based on the proposal and the concerns raised by students, JCUSA seeks clarification regarding the following matters.

1. Student Impact Assessment

The proposal identifies changes with potential student-facing consequences, including changes to laboratory support, field trip support, research support, animal husbandry, display animal support, aquaculture support, engineering workshop support and veterinary diagnostic laboratory services.

JCUSA requests clarification regarding:

- a. What assessment has been undertaken of the impact of the proposed changes on present and future students;
- b. Whether a student-facing risk assessment or impact assessment has been prepared separately from the staff-focused change management material;
- c. How impacts on practical learning, laboratory classes, fieldwork, work-integrated learning, placements, research training and student safety have been assessed; and
- d. How student-facing impacts will be considered before final decisions are made.

2. Practical Learning, Laboratory Teaching and Technical Support

Students have raised concerns that changes to technical support may affect the quality, reliability and safety of practical learning, laboratory teaching, fieldwork and project-based learning.

JCUSA requests clarification regarding:

- a. How the University intends to maintain the quality and reliability of practical and laboratory-based teaching under the proposed model;
- b. How discipline-specific technical expertise will be maintained where support is reorganised into broader functional teams;
- c. Whether any practical classes, fieldwork, laboratory activities, final-year projects or research-linked learning activities are expected to be reduced, redesigned, delayed, outsourced or replaced by alternative delivery methods; and
- d. What mitigation is proposed to protect student learning, safety and access to specialist equipment, workshops and technical advice.

3. Specific Areas of Student Concern

JCUSA has received or become aware of concerns relating to several specific areas, including engineering and physical sciences, Science Place and live-animal-supported learning, aquaculture support, and veterinary diagnostic laboratory services.

JCUSA requests clarification regarding:

- a. How the proposed changes may affect engineering and physical sciences students, including laboratory access, technical support, fieldwork, specialist equipment and final-year project work;
- b. How the proposed changes may affect Science Place resources, live specimens, aquaria, animal husbandry, teaching collections, work-integrated learning, volunteering or other practical learning opportunities;
- c. Whether the proposed changes would result in the cessation, outsourcing or substantial alteration of veterinary diagnostic laboratory services; and
- d. How the University has assessed the impact of any change to veterinary diagnostic laboratory services on veterinary science, biomedical science, medical laboratory science and other students who may rely on these services or related expertise for practical learning, training or research exposure.

4. Postgraduate Coursework and HDR Students

JCUSA notes that impacts may extend beyond undergraduate students, including to postgraduate coursework and HDR students who rely on laboratory access, technical expertise, specialist equipment, fieldwork support, animal facilities, diagnostic services or research infrastructure.

JCUSA requests clarification regarding:

- a. Whether postgraduate coursework and HDR student impacts have been considered;
- b. How research training and laboratory access will be supported under the proposed model; and
- c. Whether affected postgraduate coursework and HDR students have been directly informed of potential impacts.

5. Student Consultation, Feedback and Next Steps

JCUSA recognises that the proposal identifies a current consultation process. However, students have raised concern that they were not clearly informed of the proposal or provided with direct, accessible information about how their education may be affected.

JCUSA requests clarification regarding:

- a. Whether students were directly informed of the proposal and the available feedback pathways;
- b. Whether JCUSA, affiliated student societies, course representatives or student representatives were consulted before or during the feedback period;
- c. How feedback from students will be considered before final decisions are made;
- d. Whether the University is willing to receive and consider a de-identified summary of feedback collated by JCUSA, noting that this would complement, rather than replace, any direct University feedback process;
- e. Whether the University will provide students with a clear explanation of likely impacts on subjects, practical classes, fieldwork, laboratory access, placements, research activities or other learning opportunities; and
- f. Whether the University is willing to meet with JCUSA and relevant student representatives to discuss the concerns being raised before final decisions are made.

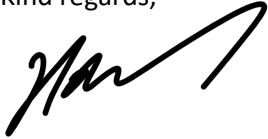
Request for circulation

JCUSA requests that this correspondence be circulated to relevant College leadership, course coordinators, academic governance bodies, student experience bodies and any University body involved in the consideration, approval or implementation of the proposed Laboratory and Technical Services changes.

JCUSA remains committed to working constructively with the University to ensure student concerns are heard, documented and considered. JCUSA is made up of students, for students, and we take seriously our responsibility to advocate where decisions affect student learning, wellbeing and the broader university experience.

We would appreciate a written response to the matters raised above and would welcome the opportunity to meet with you, relevant University representatives and, where appropriate, relevant student representatives or affiliated student groups to discuss the concerns being raised.

Kind regards,



Harrison O'Kane

President

JCU Student Association

On behalf of the JCU Student Association Council

cc:

DVC Education Office

General Manager, JCU UniLife