

# ***Graduate Coursework in Arts:***

Student Experiences,  
Challenges and Opportunities  
for Enhancement



## Acknowledgements

### Acknowledgement of Country

The Monash Graduate Association respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we work and learn. We pay our respects to the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong peoples of the Kulin Nation, on whose unceded lands our Melbourne campuses are situated.

We also acknowledge and pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of all lands and waters across Australia from which our graduate students participated in this research. We honour the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country, culture and community and recognise their enduring knowledge systems and contributions to Australian society.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

### Report Production

The Monash Graduate Association would like to thank all those who assisted in the production and distribution of this survey. We would also like to thank the graduate students who completed the survey.

This report was produced by the MGA's Research Manager, Dr Ryan Edwards. Should you have any questions in regard to the paper, please contact [ryan.edwards@monash.edu](mailto:ryan.edwards@monash.edu) for further information.

### Use of Generative AI

The design, methodology and core content of this report are the work of the author. Generative AI (Claude) supported specific technical tasks including the coding of open-ended survey responses and the automation of repetitive data analysis procedures. AI assistance was also employed for language editing and refinement throughout the document. All applications of AI were supervised and validated by the research team. The analytical insights, conclusions and recommendations presented in this report represent the independent professional judgment of the author. All cited sources were identified, reviewed and verified manually.

### How to Cite this Report

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## Introduction

This report examines the experiences of 130 graduate coursework students in the Faculty of Arts who participated in the MGA's *2025 National Postgraduate Survey on Health, Family and Finances*. It complements the university-wide report *Graduate Coursework at Monash: Student Experience, Challenges and Opportunities for Enhancement* by identifying faculty-specific patterns and opportunities for targeted enhancement within Arts.

Where meaningful, findings are compared to Monash-wide averages to highlight areas where Arts students' experiences converge with or diverge from broader institutional trends. Given the focused sample size, this report emphasises actionable insights for faculty leadership rather than comprehensive statistical analysis.

## Survey Participation

- 130 Arts graduate coursework students participated.
- Response rate represents approximately 7% of enrolled Arts graduate coursework students.
- Data collected May-June 2025 as part of a broader institutional study.

## Report Focus

This report addresses six key areas:

- Mental health and wellbeing in Arts graduate coursework contexts.
- Financial pressures and their impact on study.
- Parental and carer responsibilities.
- Peer connection and support needs unique to Arts students.
- Course experience and attrition considerations.
- Employment outcomes and career planning.

**Note on methodology:** For detailed survey methodology, limitations and comparative analysis with other universities, please see the main university-wide report. This faculty report focuses on patterns specific to Arts students and what the faculty can do to enhance support.

This research was approved by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (Project ID: 46811).

## Key Findings for Arts

This section provides core findings from the 130 Arts graduate coursework students who participated in the survey, examining patterns across mental health, financial circumstances, course experience and peer connection. Where meaningful, findings are compared to other faculties and Monash-wide averages to identify where Arts students' experiences align with or diverge from broader institutional trends. These comparisons reveal both shared challenges affecting graduate coursework students across disciplines and distinctive patterns that may warrant faculty-specific interventions.

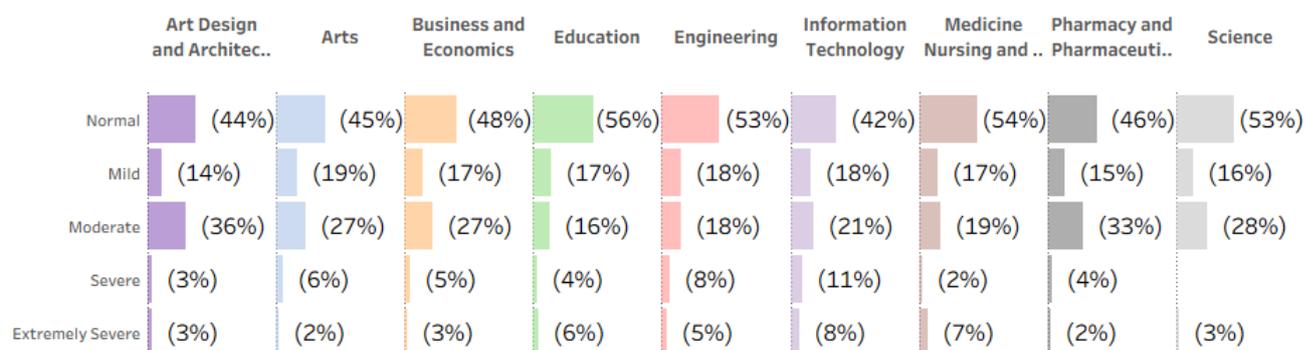
### 1. The Mental Health and Wellbeing Landscape

Mental health and wellbeing represent fundamental aspects of the graduate coursework student experience, influencing not only personal quality of life but also academic performance, productivity and career trajectories. The unique demands of graduate coursework training – including extended periods of independent work, uncertain timelines, financial constraints and high-stakes academic pressures – create particular psychological challenges that distinguish this population from other student cohorts. Understanding the mental health landscape among graduate coursework students provides essential insights into the support needs of this community and helps contextualise the broader challenges they face in balancing personal wellbeing with academic achievement.

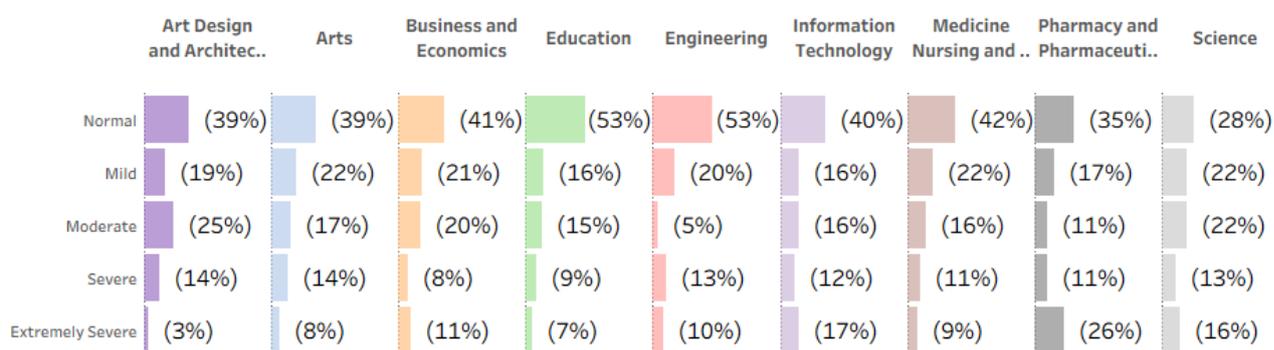
#### DASS21 and Mental Health Indicators

The Depression Anxiety Stress Scales-21 (DASS21) is a widely used, validated psychological assessment tool that measures three related emotional states: depression, anxiety and stress. The DASS21 was included in the survey to provide standardised, comparable measures of mental health that can be benchmarked against general population norms and other student cohorts. This tool uses empirically derived severity categories ranging from “normal” through “mild”, “moderate”, “severe”, to “extremely severe” levels, moving beyond simple self-reported perceptions to structured, research-based classifications.

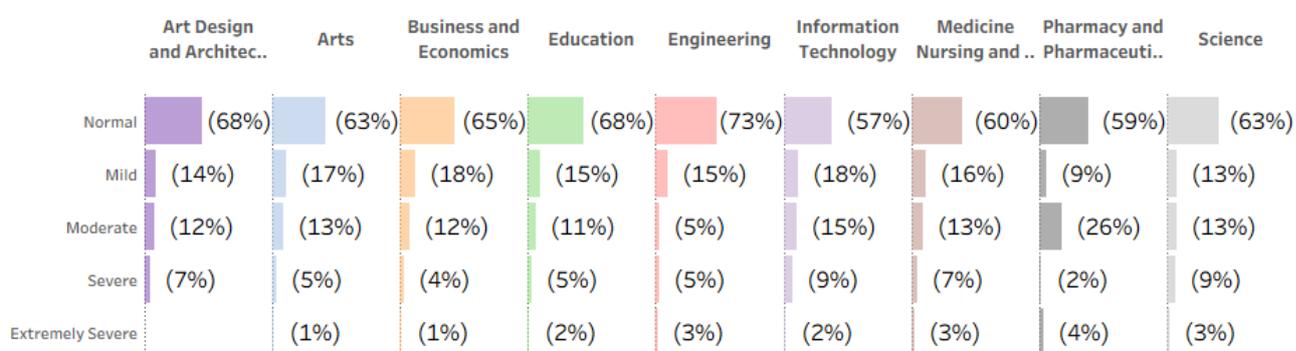
#### Depression:



### Anxiety:



### Stress:



Arts graduate coursework student respondents show mental health patterns that reflect broader challenges facing graduate coursework students across the sector, though with some notable variations from the university-wide average. When comparing Arts students with Monash graduate coursework students overall, Arts students demonstrate mixed outcomes across the three mental health domains.

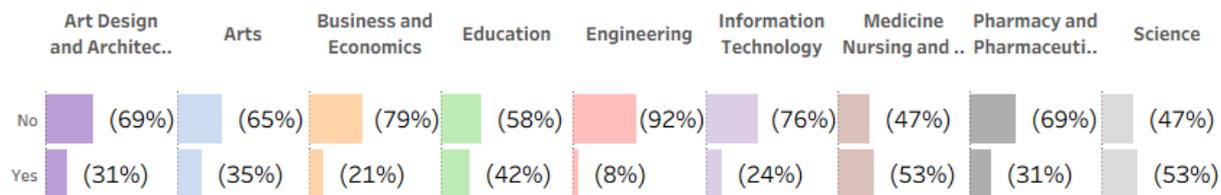
For depression, 45% of Arts students fall within the “normal” range compared to 49% across Monash, with 42% of Arts students experiencing moderate to extremely severe symptoms, higher than the university-wide rate of 34%. Anxiety levels reveal further pronounced differences, with 39% of Arts students in the normal range compared to 43% across Monash and 39% of Arts students reporting moderate to extremely severe symptoms, matching the university-wide rate. Arts students’ stress levels show a comparable pattern, with 63% of Arts students in the normal range, identical to the Monash average, and 19% experiencing moderate to extremely severe stress versus 20% university-wide. At the extreme end, Arts students show similar outcomes in severe and extreme stress, with 6% reporting severe or extreme stress compared to 8% across Monash University.

These findings suggest that mental health challenges affect Arts graduate coursework students at rates broadly consistent with the wider university population, with Arts students experiencing somewhat higher rates of depression symptoms but reporting comparable experiences of stress to peers across other faculties.

## Accessing Mental Health Support

Mental health support utilisation among graduate coursework students reveals both encouraging engagement patterns and concerning disparities across different student populations.

### Accessing Mental Health Support by Faculty



Mental health support utilisation among Arts graduate coursework students appears moderate in comparison to other faculties. Overall, 35% of Arts students report having accessed mental health support, whilst 65% have not accessed these services, putting Arts in the fourth highest level of mental health support access behind MNHS (53%, Science (53%), and Education (42%).

Critically, 85% of Arts survey respondents are international students. Given that international students access mental health support at less than half the rate of domestic students university-wide (25% versus 60%), Arts' overall 35% access rate potentially reflects this demographic reality rather than faculty-specific barriers. In fact, Arts' access rate slightly exceeds what would be expected based on broader university student cohort patterns, suggesting the faculty may have some success in reaching the international student cohort.

Nevertheless, more than half (65%) of Arts student respondents are not accessing mental health support services, indicating a substantial gap in support access. Given the over-representation on international students in the survey data, it is important to recognise the multiple barriers international students face to help-seeking including cultural stigma around mental health, unfamiliarity with the Australian mental health system, language considerations and isolation from traditional family and community support networks. Targeted interventions including culturally appropriate support options, multilingual services and proactive outreach programmes acknowledging the unique challenges of studying abroad whilst managing mental health concerns are essential for improving access within Arts.

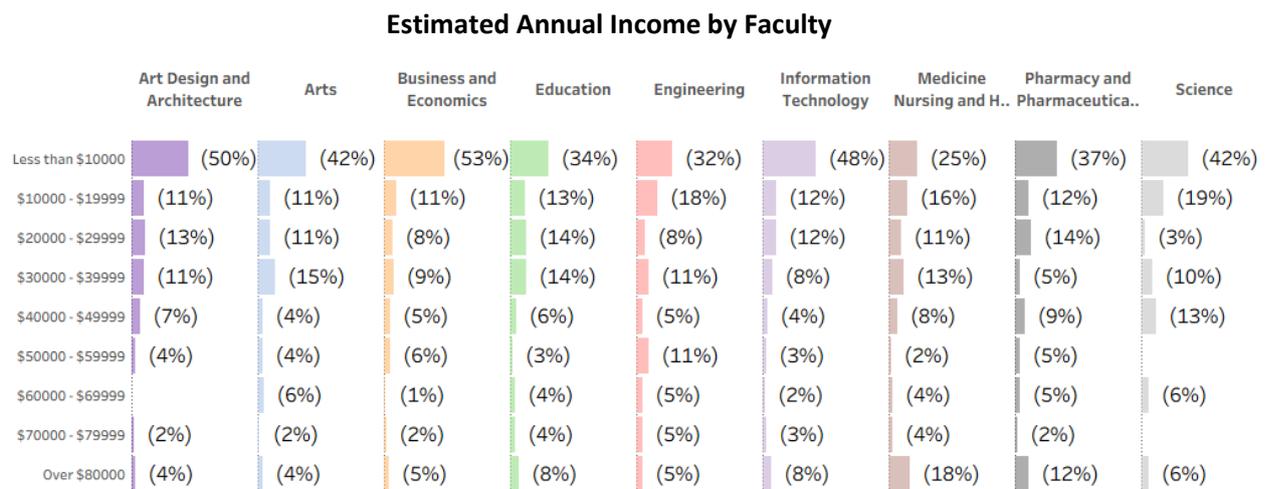
## 2. Financial Circumstances and Study Impact

Financial circumstances play a pivotal role in shaping the graduate coursework student experience, extending far beyond basic living expenses to directly influence academic engagement, course participation and career development. The intensive demands of graduate coursework programmes, combined with limited financial support mechanisms and the need for many students to maintain substantial employment alongside full-time study, create unique economic pressures for this

particular cohort. Understanding how financial circumstances affect students' ability to engage fully with their coursework and professional development is essential for comprehending the broader challenges facing the graduate coursework community and identifying areas where enhanced support could meaningfully improve both student wellbeing and academic outcomes.

## Estimated Income

Graduate coursework students report varying income levels that reflect their diverse circumstances and study arrangements.



Arts graduate coursework students report income levels that reflect a median income between \$20,000 and \$29,999, with notable concentration at the lower end: 42% earn less than \$10,000 annually and a further 11% earn between \$10,000 and \$19,999. Combined, 53% of Arts students earn less than \$20,000 per year.

These income patterns are heavily shaped by the faculty's demographic profile, where 85% of survey respondents are international students. International students face significant and unique income constraints compared to their domestic counterparts due to visa restrictions limiting work opportunities to 48 hours per fortnight during semester, distance from family financial support networks and limited access to ongoing income streams whilst studying.

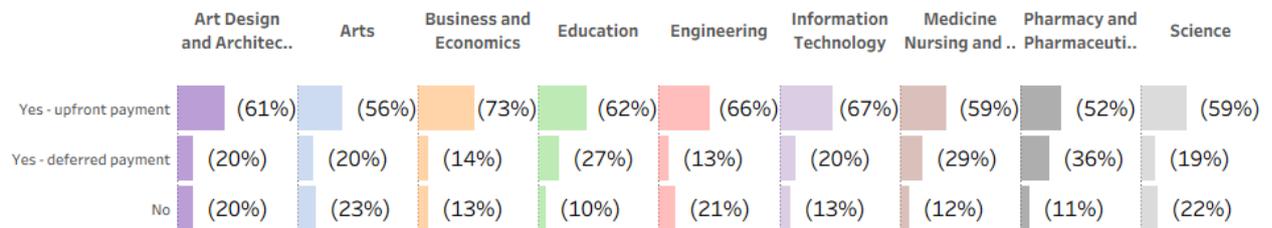
Only modest proportions of Arts students achieve higher incomes: 6% earn between \$60,000 and \$69,999 and just 4% earn over \$80,000. With the majority of Arts student survey respondents reporting <\$20,000 in income, there are likely profound implications for Arts students' financial wellbeing and ability to participate fully in their academic programmes.

## Student Fee Payment Status

This section examines the proportion of graduate coursework students who pay tuition or course fees directly. Understanding fee payment status provides important context for interpreting student experiences, particularly regarding value for money perceptions and financial stress indicators.

Students who bear direct financial responsibility for their education may have different expectations and concerns compared to those whose fees are covered through external support, including family finances, scholarships and sponsorship or student loans.

### Course Fees by Faculty



Fee payment patterns for Arts graduate coursework students reflect the faculty’s survey respondents predominantly international composition. The majority of Arts students (56%) report paying tuition fees upfront, whilst 20% utilise deferred payment arrangements and 20% have no fee obligation.

Arts’ 56% upfront payment rate is comfortably in the middle of the faculties across the university, indicating that a significant minority of survey respondents have some access to financial support whether in the form of loans or through fees being covered by family, employers or scholarships. However, with 56% still required to pay their fees upfront, this is critical to consider as this adds to the demands of the majority of Arts graduate coursework students in needing to secure income streams in addition to committing their time and energy to their studies.

Students who bear direct financial responsibility for their education through upfront or deferred payments may also have heightened expectations regarding course quality and value for money, making their satisfaction and engagement critical indicators of programme success.

### Course Fee Funding Sources

While the previous section examined whether students pay tuition fees, this section explores the distribution of fee payment responsibility across different sources for those making upfront payments. These students were asked to indicate how much of their course fees are paid by each of the following: self, family, employer, sponsor and other sources.

Understanding fee payment sources provides crucial insight into the financial ecosystems supporting graduate coursework education. Students who self-fund their education face different financial pressures compared to those with employer support or family assistance. Similarly, the extent of family contribution may reflect broader household financial circumstances and intergenerational support patterns. These funding arrangements have direct implications for student financial stress, employment decisions and study intensity.

The following analysis examines the proportion of fees covered by each source across different student cohorts, revealing the diverse financial arrangements underpinning graduate coursework study.

#### Course Fee Funding in Arts

Payment Source	Use this source	All	Most	About Half	A little
Self	28%	3%	3%	6%	16%
Family	87%	65%	10%	7%	4%
Employer	6%	1%	1%	0%	3%
Sponsor	10%	9%	0%	0%	1%
Other	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%

Among Arts students with upfront fee payment responsibilities, funding sources reveal overwhelming reliance on family support. A striking 87% of Arts students paying upfront report that they receive family contributions, with nearly two-thirds (65%) having their families pay all course fees. Only 28% of Arts students contribute their own funds, and when they do, these contributions are typically modest amounts (22% contributing half or less) supplementing family support rather than covering substantial portions of fees.

This heavy dependence on family funding reflects the over-representation of Arts international students who responded to the survey (85%). University-wide, 88% of international students with upfront payment obligations rely on family contributions, with 59% having families pay all fees. Arts survey respondents closely mirrors this pattern, underscoring how international students often face immediate, substantial financial obligations requiring significant family resources.

Employer fee support remains minimal in Arts at just 6%, whilst sponsor support reaches 10% of students paying upfront fees. Other funding sources are negligible at 1%. These patterns highlight how Arts students depend almost entirely on intergenerational family investment to finance their education, creating unique pressure points where family financial circumstances directly determine students' capacity to continue their studies and maintain adequate living standards whilst enrolled.

#### Melbourne Institute's Financial Wellbeing Scale

Whilst reported income provides important baseline information about graduate coursework students' financial circumstances, the Melbourne Institute's Financial Wellbeing Scale offers a more nuanced understanding of how financial situations actually affect students' lives and wellbeing. Income figures alone cannot capture the complexity of financial stress – two students with identical incomes may experience vastly different levels of financial pressure depending on their expenses, debt levels, family responsibilities and psychological relationship with money. The MI Financial Wellbeing Scale addresses this limitation by measuring not just what students earn, but how secure, free, safe and in control they feel regarding their finances.

The MI Financial Wellbeing Scale offers a comprehensive and validated measure of individuals' financial circumstances and their psychological relationship with money. This scale was incorporated in the survey to move beyond simple income reporting and capture the multifaceted nature of financial wellbeing, including financial security, financial freedom, financial safety and financial

control. Respondents are categorised into four groups: “doing great,” “getting by,” “just coping,” and “having trouble,” providing nuanced insights into how financial circumstances affect daily life and decision-making.

#### MI Financial Wellbeing Scale

	Arts 2023	Arts 2025	Monash 2025
Doing great	6%	5%	4%
Getting by	34%	36%	37%
Just coping	52%	48%	41%
Having trouble	8%	12%	19%

The financial wellbeing results reveal significant pressures facing Arts graduate coursework students, though with somewhat better outcomes than the university average. Only 5% of Arts students reported “doing great” financially, marginally above the 4% observed across Monash. The majority of Arts students find themselves in the middle categories: 36% are “getting by” compared to 37% university-wide, whilst 48% are “just coping” versus 41% across Monash. Most notably, 12% of Arts students report “having trouble” financially, substantially lower than the 19% university-wide rate.

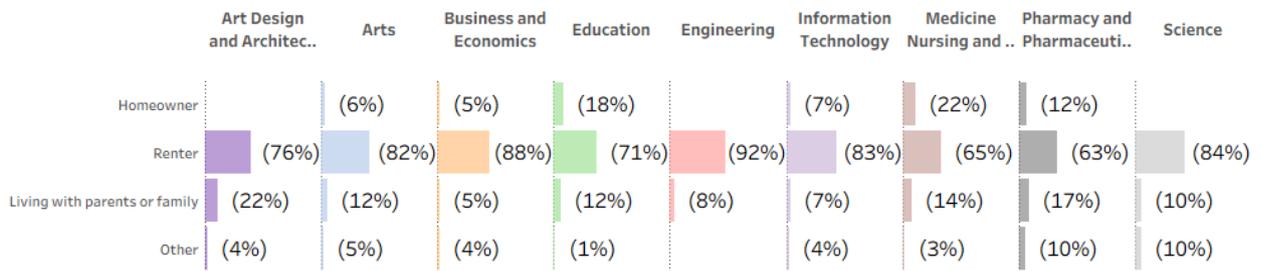
When compared to 2023 Arts student financial wellbeing data, there has been a slight decline in those “doing great” (from 6% to 5%) and a concerning increase in those “having trouble” (from 8% to 12%), suggesting intensifying financial pressures over recent years within the faculty. These patterns may also reflect broader economic conditions impacting all students, including higher cost of living and slow wage growth in Australia. However, Arts students demonstrate notably better financial resilience than the broader Monash cohort, with significantly fewer reporting severe financial difficulty despite the income constraints documented earlier.

These patterns suggest that whilst very few Arts students feel financially secure, most maintain some coping capacity, potentially reflecting the family financial support structures that enable 87% of fee-paying students to access substantial family contributions. However, with just under half (48%) “just coping”, it is critical for the faculty to ensure greater supports are in place to prevent this group from tipping into greater financial stress and difficulty, which may disrupt their course progression.

#### Housing Costs

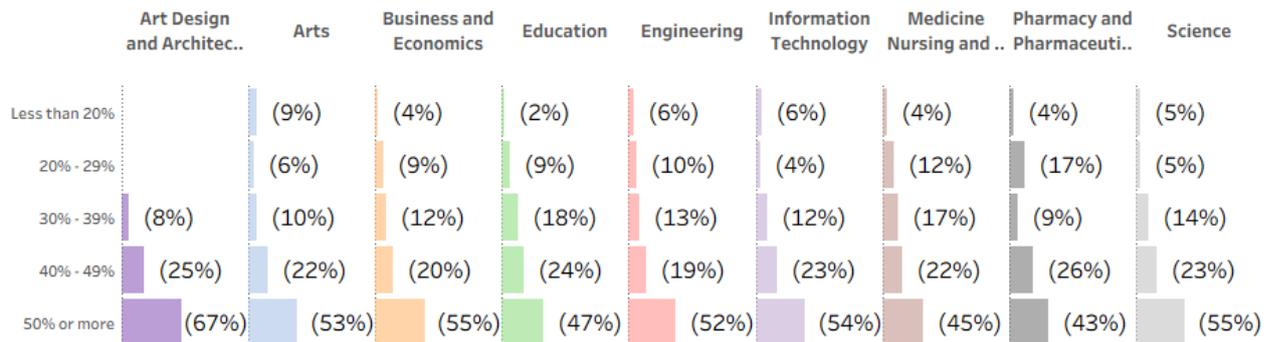
Housing represents one of the most significant financial pressures facing graduate coursework students, with rental costs consuming substantial proportions of monthly income and directly constraining students’ capacity to meet other essential expenses. The following analysis examines living arrangements and rental burden patterns across faculties, revealing the extent to which housing affordability challenges affect Arts students.

### Living Situation by Faculty



Arts graduate coursework students face significant housing cost pressures, with the overwhelming majority (82%) renting accommodation. Only 6% are homeowners and 12% live with parents or family. This high rental dependence is comparable to majority of the faculties across the university, with IT, Science and BusEco all reporting rates between 83% - 88%. This large number Arts students renting also aligns with the high survey response rate of international student (85%), as international students typically rent whilst studying in Australia.

### Rent as Percentage of Monthly Income by Faculty



The severity of rental stress among Arts graduate coursework students becomes evident when examining the proportion of monthly income consumed by rent. An alarming 53% of Arts students spend half or more of their monthly income on rent alone, matching the university-wide rate for severe housing affordability stress. A further 22% spend between 40% and 49% of their income on rent.

Overall, 85% of Arts renters are under rental stress, spending more than 30% of their total monthly income on rent. This places Arts marginally better than the 88% university-wide rental stress rate, though the difference is minimal and provides little comfort given the overwhelming proportion of students affected.

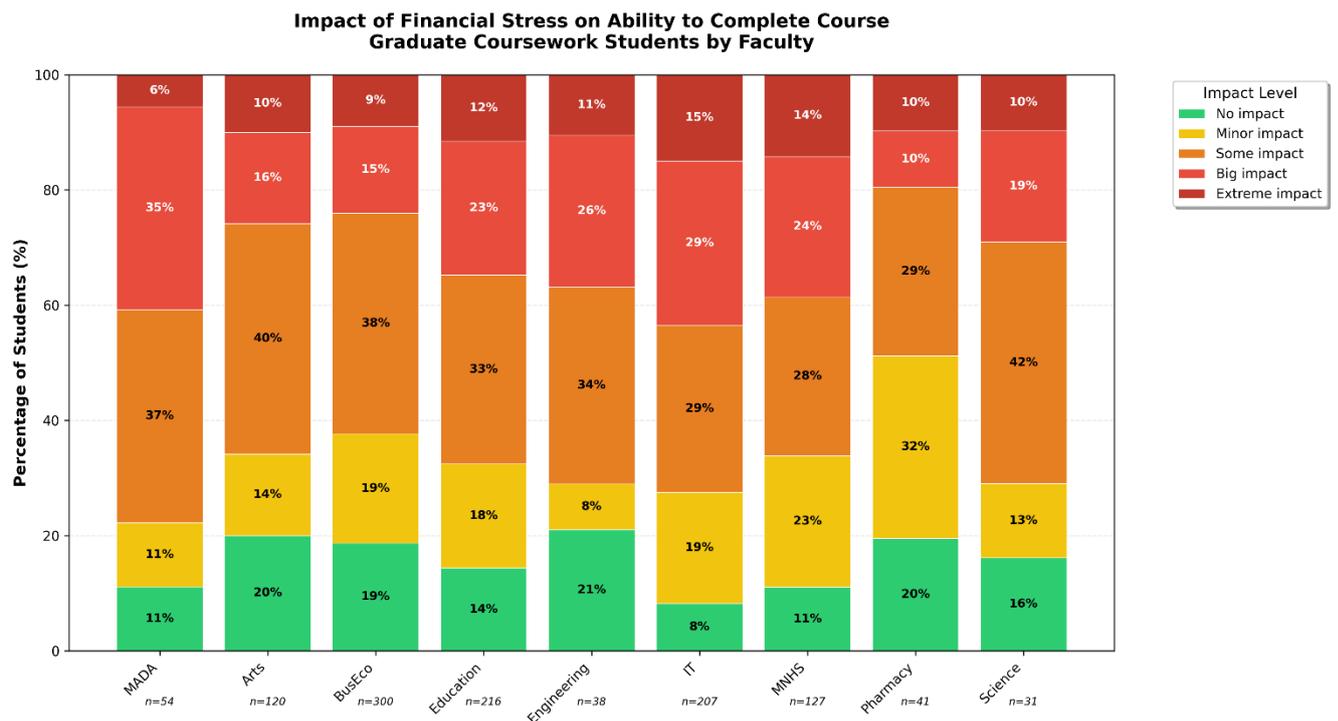
Only 15% of Arts students maintain rental costs below the 30% threshold considered financially sustainable. At the lowest end, just 9% spend less than 20% of their income on rent and a further 6% spend between 20% and 29%.

These patterns underscore the acute housing affordability crisis facing many students. When 53% of students allocate half their income to rent before considering any other expenses – including food, bills, transport, healthcare, course materials, technology, and leisure – financial flexibility becomes severely constrained. This helps explain the 48% of Arts students reporting they are “just coping” financially and the 12% “having trouble”, despite family support for tuition fees documented earlier.

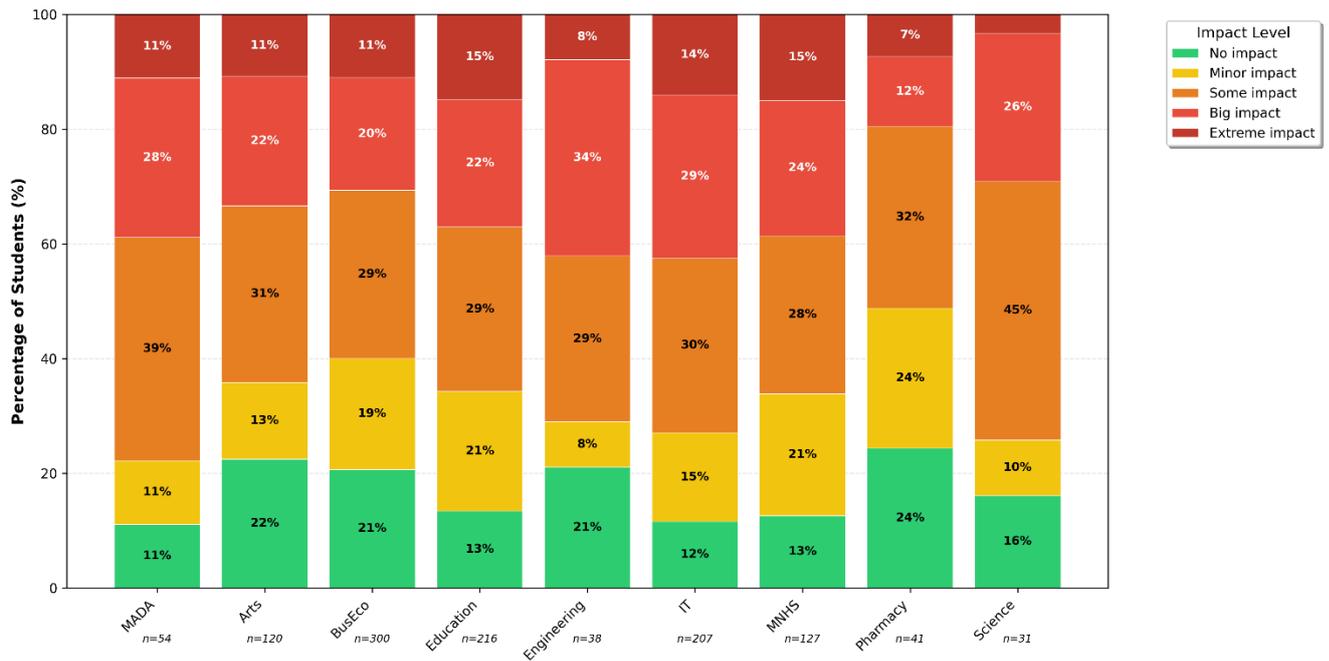
### How Financial Stress Impacts Course Engagement

Financial stress extends beyond personal wellbeing to directly impact students’ ability to engage with their coursework effectively. The survey investigated three specific areas of concern regarding financial stress impact including the ability to complete studies, the capacity to concentrate on studies, and the ability to attend classes and other required study activities. The following section reveals substantial variation across the three groups in how financial pressures affect course engagement, with three graphs detailing these patterns across all impact levels.

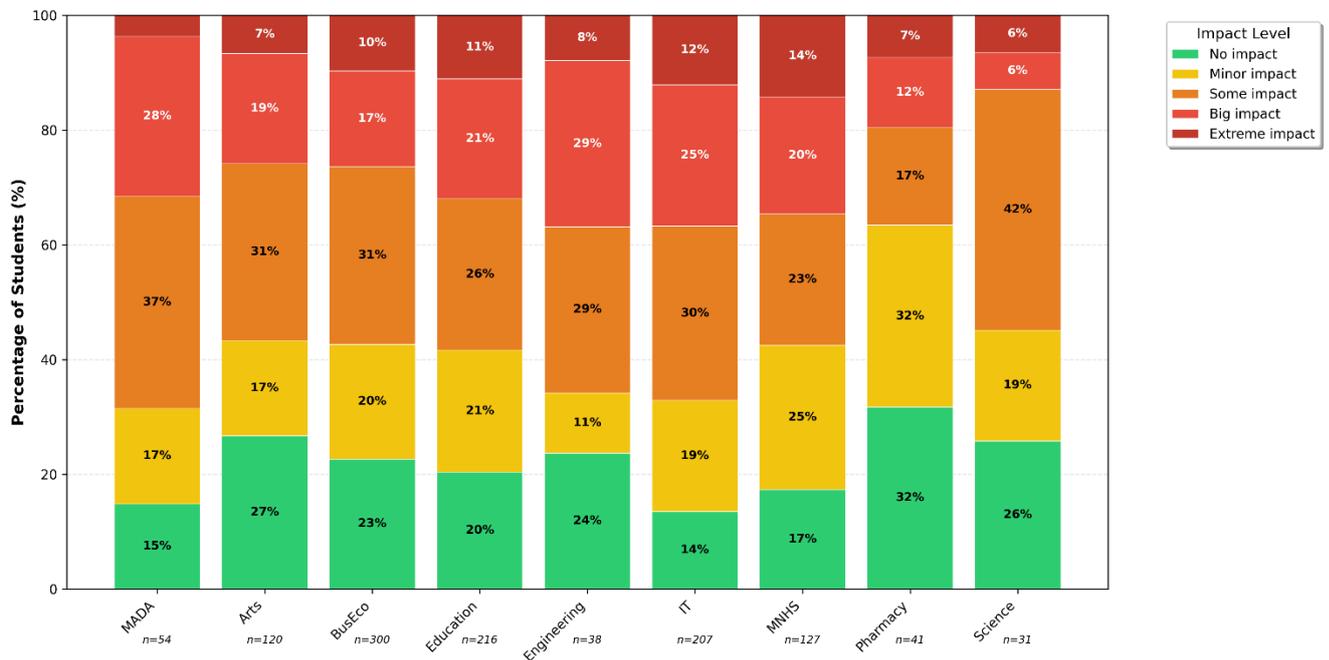
#### Financial Stress on Completing Course to Best of their Ability



**Impact of Financial Stress on Ability to Concentrate on Course/Research Graduate Coursework Students by Faculty**



**Impact of Financial Stress on Ability to Attend Classes/Study/Research on Campus Graduate Coursework Students by Faculty**



Financial stress extends beyond personal wellbeing to directly impact Arts students’ ability to engage with their coursework effectively. The survey reveals substantial variation in how financial pressures affect different dimensions of academic engagement.

For course completion, 26% of Arts students indicate that financial stress has an extreme or big impact on their ability to complete their course to the best of their ability, with a further 40%

reporting some impact and 14% reporting minor impact. Only 20% report no impact, indicating that financial pressures create tangible barriers to academic success for the vast majority of Arts students.

Concentration demonstrates even more severe patterns, with 33% of Arts students reporting extreme or big impact on their ability to concentrate on their course, alongside 31% reporting some impact and 13% reporting minor impact. Just 22% indicate no impact from financial stress on their concentration capacity.

Campus attendance shows similar concerning patterns, with 26% reporting extreme or big impact on their ability to attend classes or study on campus and 31% reporting some impact and 17% reporting minor impact. Only 27% of Arts students report no impact of financial stress on campus attendance.

These findings demonstrate that financial pressures create tangible barriers to academic success for Arts students, with the intensity of impact varying substantially but affecting the overwhelming majority to some degree. The particularly severe impact on concentration (33% reporting extreme or big impact) suggests that even when students maintain attendance and persist with their studies, financial stress significantly undermines their cognitive capacity to engage effectively with course content.

### Student Testimonies: Financial Realities

To complement the quantitative findings on financial wellbeing and housing costs, this section examines students' own reflections on their financial circumstances through their responses to an open-ended question about their financial situation. These qualitative insights provide depth and context to the statistical patterns observed earlier, revealing the lived experiences behind the data and the specific ways financial pressures manifest in students' daily lives:

*"Things were better last year. The unexpected rise of cost of living this year forced me to rethink my priorities and some planned things had to put on the backseat (including attending my graduation ceremony. The overall cost would be too high for me now so I have to change it to in absentia). Moreover, my salary is stagnant so basically my expenses increased but my income doesn't. This makes me anxious sometimes."*

*"I just have to prioritise employment over doing readings ect. most of the time which is annoying as I wish I could dedicate more time to uni."*

*"Heavily dependent on my parents but hoping to find a stable job after I graduate so I can become more financially independent."*

*"It is impossible to bear the occurrence of any accidents and to bear the costs for them ... I have done my best to save money and changed from eating meat to a healthy vegetarian diet."*

*"Still unemployed worrying all the time."*

*"As a scholar, while I don't have to pay tuition and receive living allowance, it is still somewhat difficult to access amenities tied to my course. For instance, cultural festivals and expressions are experiences I want to try in my limited time here. However, it's difficult to balance experiencing those while focusing on fulfilling basic needs."*

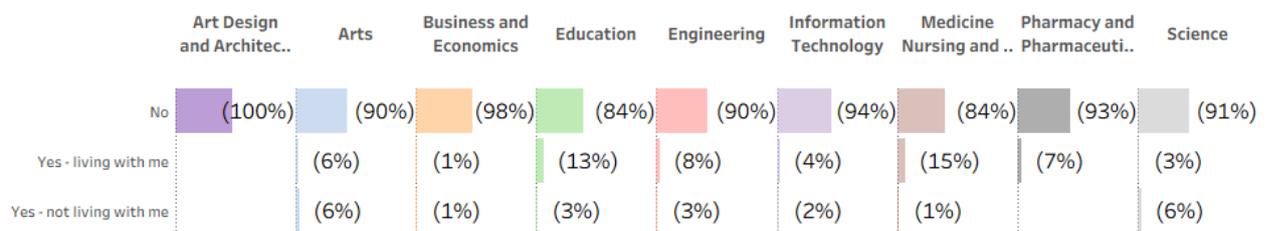
*“My partner earns well which gives me breathing room in terms of expenses. If she didn't my financial outlook and its ability to let me study would be profoundly different.”*

*“I have a secure and well paid job but this requires my ongoing high level of attention and reimbursement depends on my presence. Whilst this degree is a combination of something I am interested in AND something that will add to my employability, I feel limited in the amount of time I can dedicate to it because of my financial commitments and job requirements.”*

### 3. Student Parents and Carers

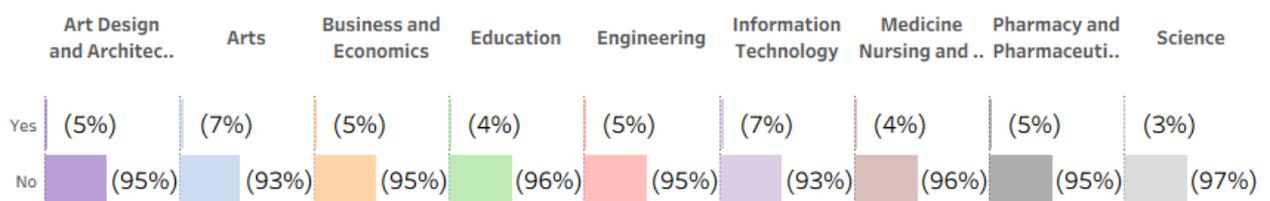
Graduate coursework students who are parents or carers face distinct challenges that compound the typical pressures of academic study, requiring targeted support approaches that acknowledge their dual responsibilities.

**Parental Status by Faculty**



A small proportion of Arts graduate coursework students are parents (10%). University-wide analysis indicates that whilst parents and carers demonstrate quantitative outcomes comparable to students without such responsibilities across most measures, qualitative testimonies reveal distinctive logistical and emotional challenges in balancing intensive coursework demands with family commitments.

**Carer Status by Faculty**



Beyond parenting, 7% of Arts graduate coursework students have carer responsibilities for someone other than a child, whilst 93% do not have such responsibilities. This places Arts slightly above the

university-wide average of 5% with carer responsibilities, suggesting a marginally higher proportion of Arts students manage dual caring and study obligations compared to other faculties.

### Student Testimonies: Parents and Carers on the Distinct Challenges they Face

Despite the quantitative similarities, parent and carer voices reveal the specific practical and emotional challenges they navigate in pursuing graduate coursework whilst managing family responsibilities, providing important context for understanding their experiences beyond what statistical measures can capture.

There were no comments from Arts students in relation to parental or carer responsibilities. However, further insights from students across Monash on the experiences of being a parent or carer while studying can be found in the university-wide report *Graduate Coursework at Monash: Student Experience, Challenges and Opportunities for Enhancement*.

## 4. Peer Connection and Community Building

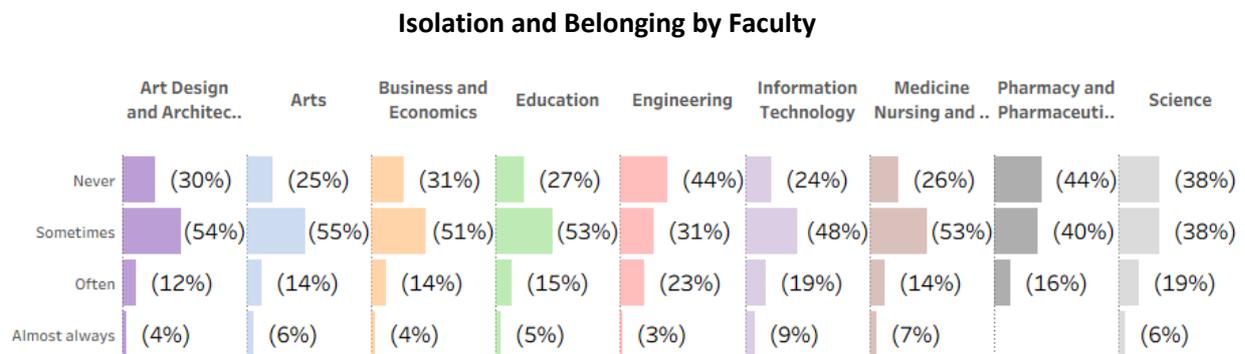
Social connections and peer relationships form fundamental components of the graduate coursework experience for many students. Yet, the survey data reveal challenges in fostering meaningful community amongst this population. The graduate coursework environment appears to present unique obstacles to social connection that extend beyond typical university experiences. Varying schedules, diverse backgrounds and the extended duration of graduate programmes, creates particular challenges for building and maintaining peer relationships that are essential for both academic success and personal wellbeing.

Understanding these connection challenges is crucial given the meaningful correlations identified between isolation and mental health outcomes, academic confidence and retention decisions. The following sections examine the specific factors contributing to isolation amongst graduate coursework students, explore their lived experiences of disconnection through their own voices and analyse patterns of meaningful contact across different relationship types. By investigating both the barriers to connection and the types of contact that students find most valuable, this analysis aims to identify opportunities for enhancing peer networks and community-building initiatives that could address the widespread sense of isolation within the graduate coursework community at Monash.

### Isolation and Belonging

Feelings of isolation and lack of belonging represent significant challenges for graduate coursework students, with implications extending beyond social wellbeing to encompass mental health, academic engagement and retention outcomes. The intensive nature of graduate coursework programmes, combined with the diverse study patterns across the cohort – some students attending full-time whilst others balance study with substantial professional commitments – creates distinct challenges for building and maintaining peer connections. International students face additional barriers including distance from established support networks, cultural adjustment and language considerations. The survey asked students how frequently they had felt isolated or lacking a sense of

belonging in their academic or social environment during the past month, revealing notable differences in isolation experiences across the three groups that correspond with their distinct circumstances and study patterns.



Feelings of isolation and lack of belonging represent significant challenges for Arts graduate coursework students. Only 25% of Arts students never feel isolated, meaning 75% experience isolation. The majority (55%) report feeling isolated “sometimes”, whilst 14% experience this “often” and 6% “almost always”. Combined, 20% of Arts students face frequent isolation (often or almost always).

Arts students report one of the lowest rates of never feeling isolated (25%), exceeded only by IT (24%). This widespread isolation experience likely reflects multiple intersecting factors including the intensive nature of graduate coursework programmes, managing careers and study with limited opportunities for peer connection, and the overrepresentation of Arts international student survey respondents at 85% (with international students facing distance from established support networks and cultural adjustment challenges).

University-wide analysis demonstrates clear correlations between isolation and mental health outcomes, with students experiencing extremely severe depression showing tenfold higher isolation rates than those with normal scores. For Arts students, where three-quarters experience at least some isolation, addressing social connection gaps represents a critical opportunity to support both wellbeing and academic engagement.

### Student Testimonies: Isolation

To complement the quantitative findings on isolation frequency, this section examines students’ own reflections on the factors that contribute to their feelings of disconnection through their responses to an open-ended question about isolation experiences. These qualitative insights provide depth and context to the statistical patterns observed earlier, revealing the lived experiences behind the data and the specific circumstances that foster feelings of isolation and lack of belonging in the Arts graduate coursework environment:

*“Being a foreigner and not having a solid group of friends.”*

*“Limited English proficiency and lack of social interactions especially during break and public holidays when there is no class.”*

*“Cost of living and lack of financial support, lack of job opportunities and my skill development, my cultural background as a hurdle for my employability in Australia and my consistent experience of rejection from most employers.”*

*“Probably it is due to managing and planning the weekly schedule and studying hard while trying to find a job.”*

*“Having one class a day mostly in afternoons, not being able to attend to events because of living far, assignments pileup, some personal stuff always happening in life, feeling like I’m interfering in friends lives and going silent”*

*“My undergraduate background differs significantly from my masters and I’m often left feeling quite dumb and behind in my classes as other students have a more sufficient background in policy.”*

*“Not being able to mingle with new people and forming strong connections.”*

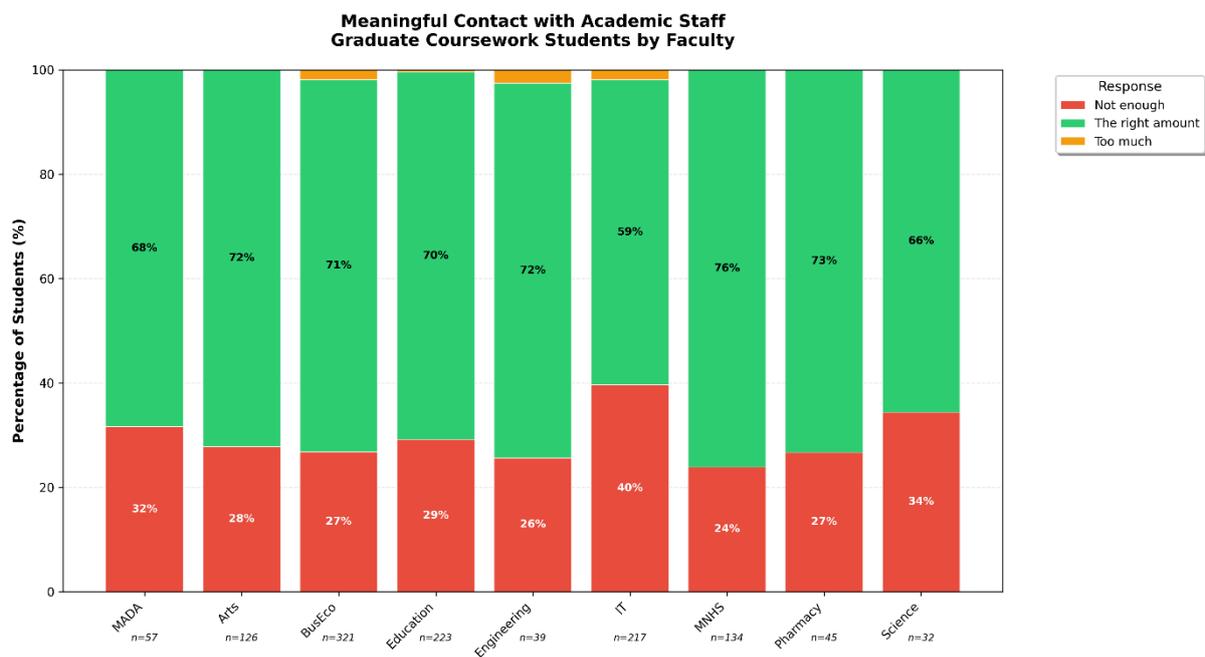
*“Perhaps not enough group work within tutorials, leading to less opportunities to form friendships or support networks with other peers.” “Busy-ness - i.e I cannot reach out/connect because I don’t have the time to.”*

*“I moved here from interstate. Developing new friendships and looking for community takes time. I have plans with students this weekend though. And the university offers plenty of places to engage.”*

## Meaningful Contact

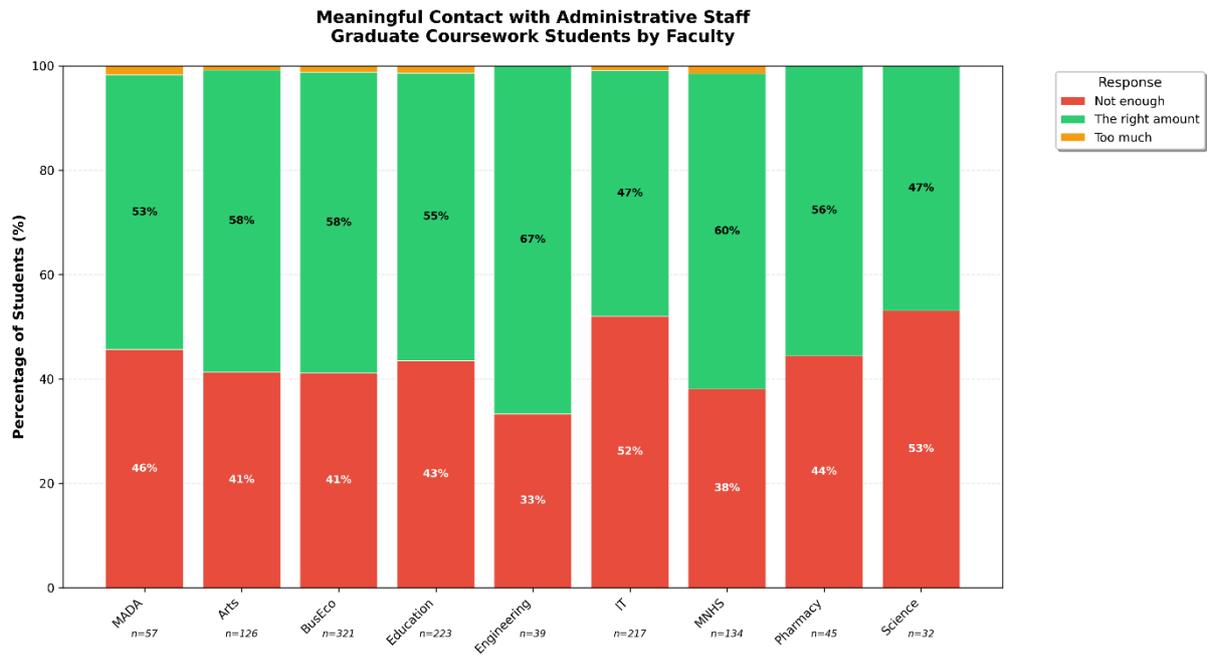
To assess students' access to support networks, respondents were asked to evaluate the frequency of their meaningful connections across five key relationship categories: academic staff, administrative staff, family, friends and peers. This analysis examines how students perceive their level of connection within each sphere and identifies where gaps in meaningful contact may be contributing to feelings of isolation or insufficient support.

### Academic Staff



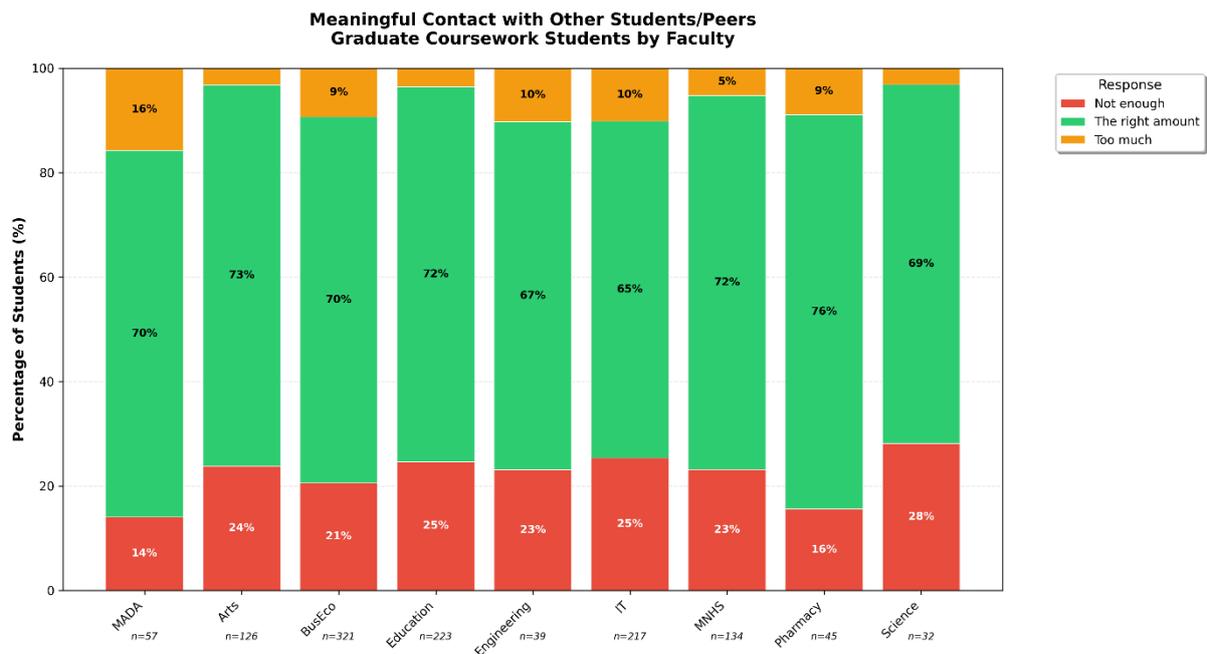
Arts students report relatively strong access to academic staff, with 72% indicating they receive the right amount of meaningful contact and 28% reporting insufficient contact.

Administrative Staff



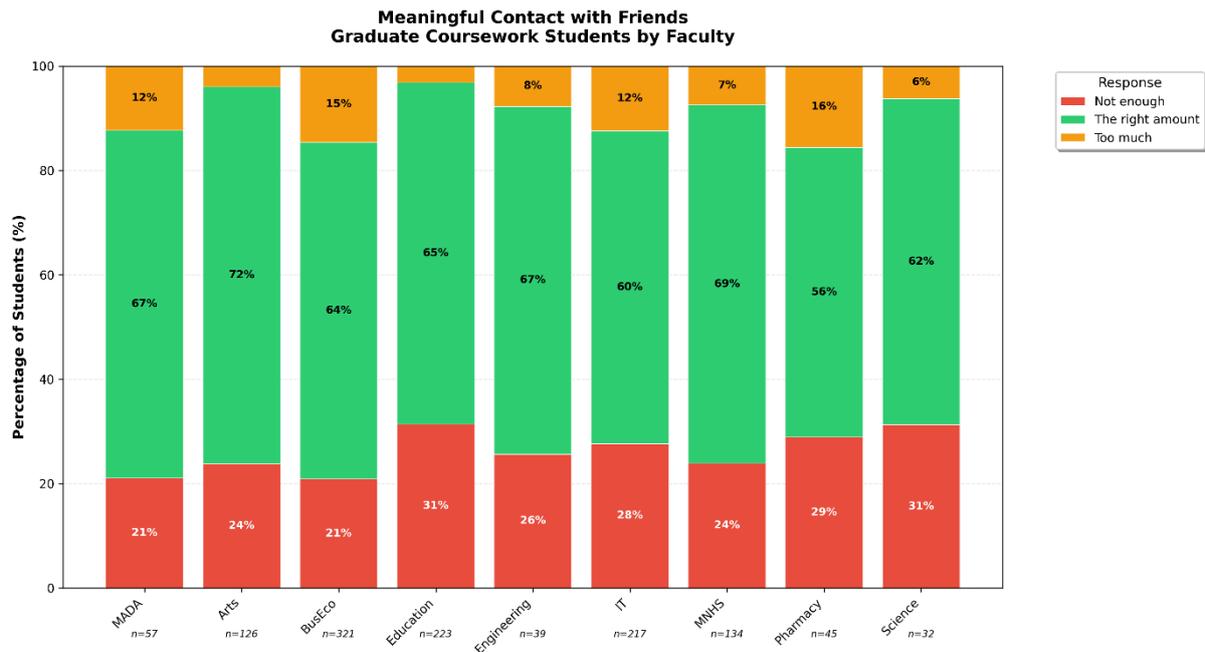
Administrative staff contact presents a more concerning picture, with 41% of Arts students reporting insufficient meaningful contact with administrative staff, whilst 58% indicate they receive the right amount.

Other Students/Peers



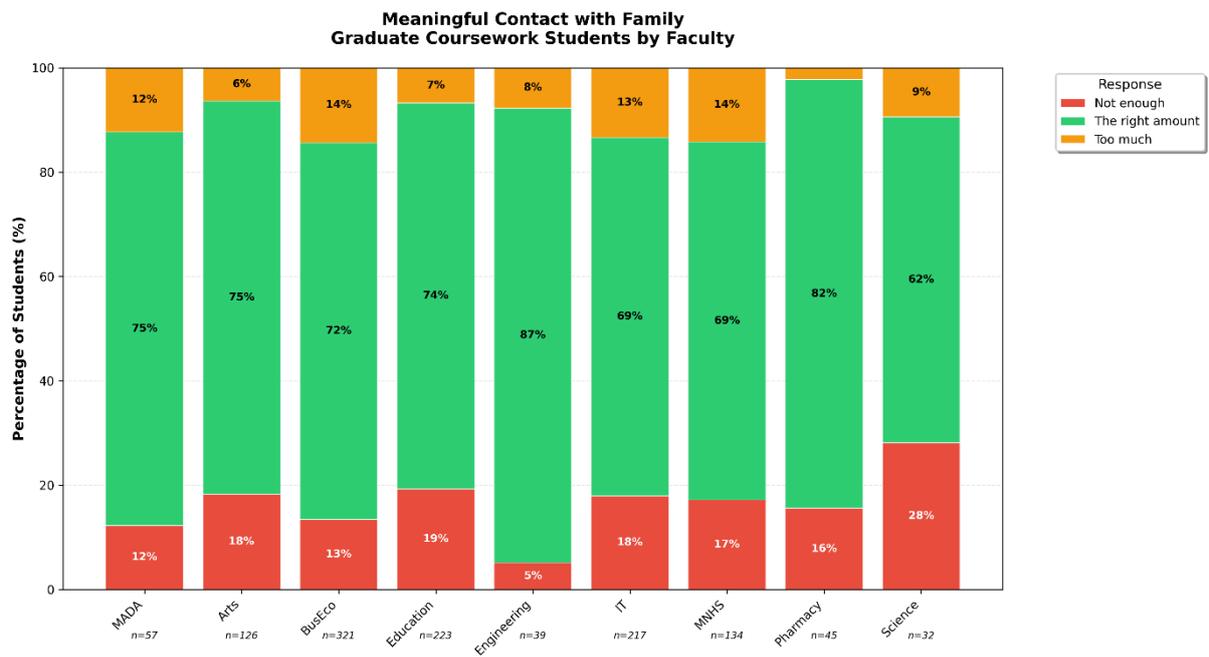
Peer connection presents challenges for Arts students, with 24% reporting insufficient meaningful contact with other students or peers, whilst 73% indicate they receive the right amount. This places Arts in the middle range amongst faculties for peer contact adequacy, though the nearly one-quarter reporting insufficient peer connection aligns with the broader isolation patterns documented earlier, where 75% of Arts students experience feelings of isolation at least sometimes.

### Friends



Friend contact shows similar patterns, with 24% of Arts students reporting insufficient meaningful contact with friends, whilst 72% indicate they receive the right amount. Arts performs comparably to other faculties on this measure, sitting in the middle range for friend contact adequacy, though the one-quarter reporting insufficient friend contact suggests ongoing challenges in maintaining social connections outside academic contexts.

## Family



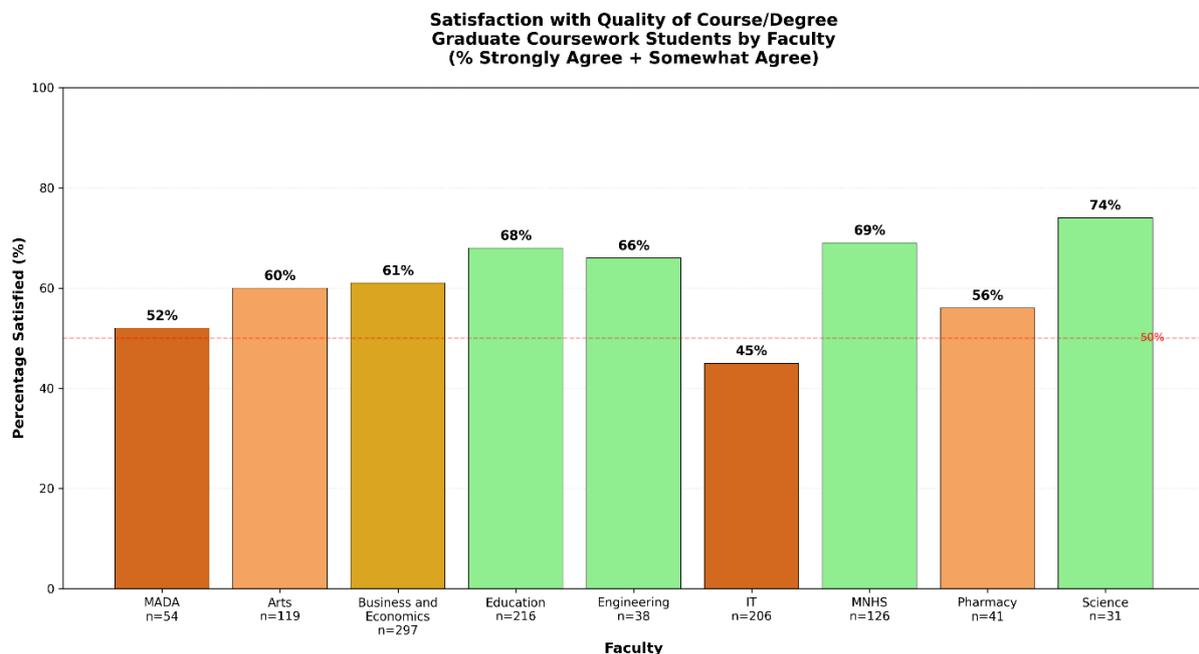
Family contact shows relatively strong outcomes for Arts students, with 75% reporting they receive the right amount of meaningful contact with family and just 18% indicating insufficient contact. This is particularly notable given that 85% of Arts survey respondents are international students who face geographical distance from family support networks, suggesting that most students maintain adequate family connection despite studying abroad.

## 5. Course Experience, Satisfaction and Retention

The academic journey for graduate coursework students involves navigating complex psychological and practical challenges that significantly influence both their immediate wellbeing and long-term success. Graduate coursework programmes represent substantial investments of time, money and professional opportunity, making students' perceptions of course quality and value particularly important indicators of the educational experience. The survey reveals concerns across the graduate coursework community about whether their programmes are meeting expectations and providing adequate return on investment, with many students questioning both the quality of their educational experience and whether the financial costs justify the benefits received. Understanding these perceptions is crucial for supporting student success, as course satisfaction and perceived value for money can be interconnected with the mental health and financial pressures explored earlier in the chapter.

### Course Satisfaction

Course satisfaction represents a critical measure of student experience, reflecting whether academic programmes meet expectations and deliver meaningful value. Satisfaction patterns across graduate coursework cohorts reveal important insights about how different student groups perceive the quality of their educational experience.

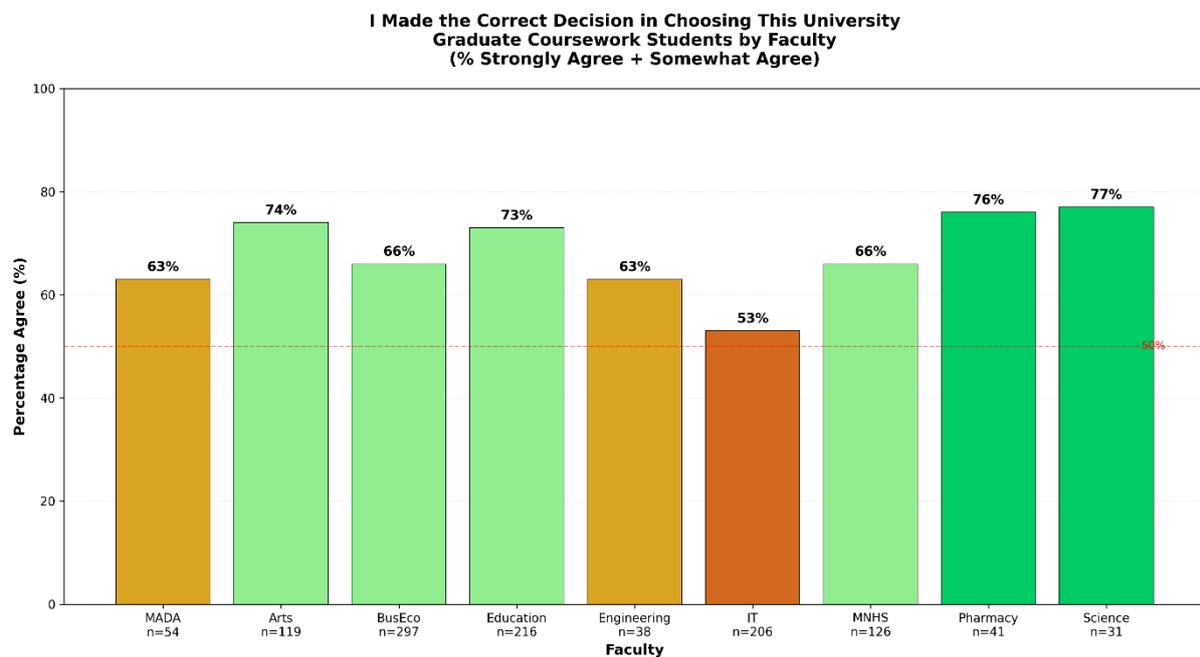


Overall satisfaction with course quality reveals concerning patterns for Arts students. Only 60% of Arts students agree that they are satisfied with the quality of their course or degree.

Arts' 60% satisfaction rate suggests significant room for improvement in course experience and delivery. With two-fifths of students expressing dissatisfaction or ambivalence about course quality, this represents a critical challenge for the faculty, particularly given that 85% of Arts survey respondents are international students paying substantial fees and expecting high-quality educational experiences.

## University Choice

Beyond satisfaction with course quality, students' reflections on whether they made the correct decision in choosing Monash provides insight into their overall evaluation of their educational experience. This measure captures retrospective assessment of university choice, encompassing course quality, support services, campus experience and value proposition.

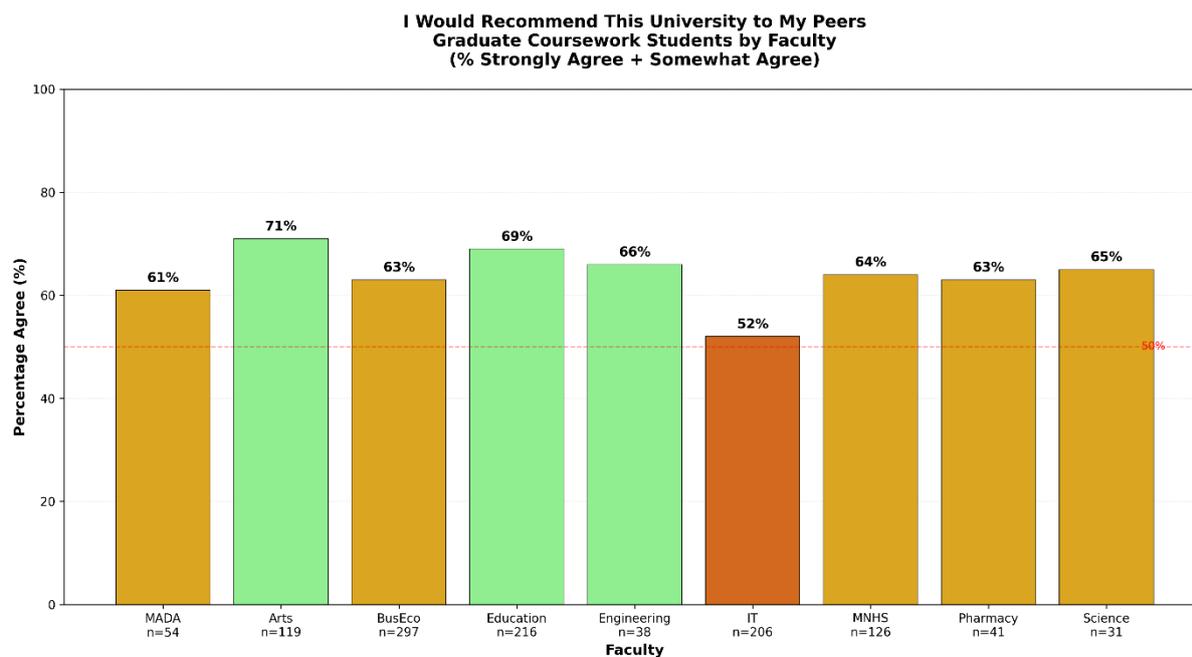


When asked whether they made the correct decision in choosing Monash, 74% of Arts students agreed. This represents a notably stronger result than Arts' 60% course satisfaction rate, suggesting that whilst students may have concerns about specific aspects of course quality, most retain confidence in their overall decision to study at Monash.

Nevertheless, the 26% who do not feel they made the correct decision in choosing Monash represents a significant minority whose doubts about their institutional choice warrant attention, particularly given the substantial financial and personal investment involved in graduate coursework study.

## Peer Recommendation - University

Students' willingness to recommend Monash to their peers serves as a key indicator of overall satisfaction and institutional reputation, reflecting whether students would advocate for the university based on their own experiences. This measure captures the strength of students' endorsement and their confidence in recommending Monash to others in similar circumstances.

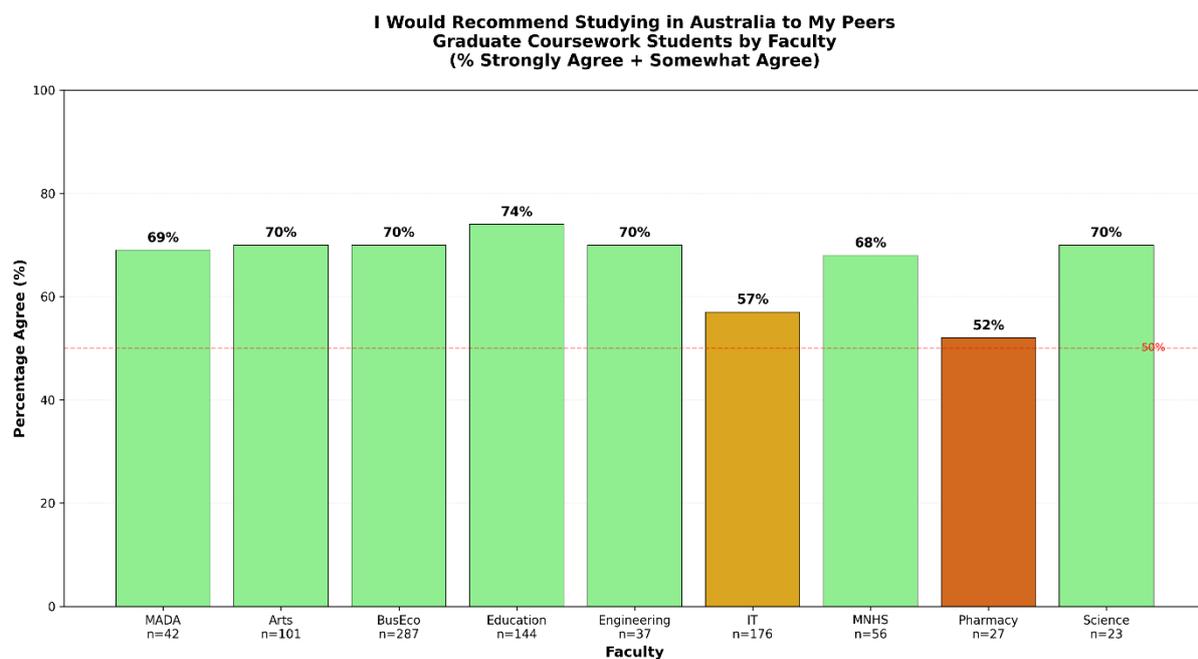


Arts students demonstrate the strongest willingness to recommend Monash to their peers amongst all faculties, with 71% agreeing they would recommend the university. This positive advocacy rate suggests that despite the 60% course satisfaction figure, Arts students maintain sufficient confidence in their Monash experience to endorse it to others.

However, the 29% who would not recommend Monash to peers represents a substantial minority whose reservations about the institution could negatively impact future recruitment through word-of-mouth, particularly given the importance of peer networks and recommendations in international student decision-making.

## Peer Recommendation – Australia

For international students, perceptions of studying in Australia as a destination extend beyond their specific university experience to encompass the broader educational, cultural and professional environment. This measure, asked only of international students, distinguishes between satisfaction with Monash specifically and satisfaction with the Australian higher education experience more generally.



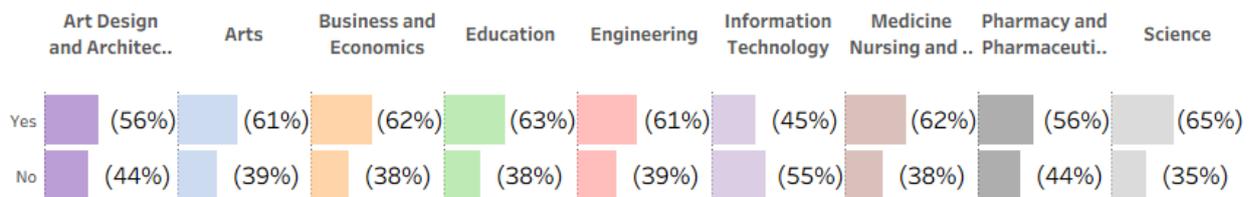
When asked specifically about recommending studying in Australia (a question posed only to international students), 70% of Arts international students agreed.

Given that 85% of Arts survey respondents are international students, this high endorsement of studying in Australia indicates that most students value the Australian higher education context, even where they may have specific concerns about course quality or institutional aspects. The 30% who would not recommend studying in Australia represents a significant minority whose reservations extend beyond Monash to encompass the broader Australian study experience.

## Value for Money

Value for money perceptions represent a critical measure of whether students believe their substantial financial investment in graduate coursework education delivers commensurate returns. This assessment encompasses not only course quality but also the broader educational experience, career outcomes and support services relative to the fees paid.

**Value for Money by Faculty**



Perceptions of value for money reveal mixed sentiments among Arts students. 61% feel their course offers value for money, whilst 39% do not share this view. This means that nearly two-fifths of Arts students question whether the financial investment in their education is justified by the returns received.

The substantial proportion expressing value for money concerns is particularly significant given that 56% of Arts students pay tuition fees upfront and 87% of fee-paying students rely on family contributions to cover costs. When combined with the 60% course satisfaction rate documented earlier, these patterns suggest discord may exist between the substantial financial investment required (particularly from international student families) and perceived educational outcomes.

The 39% questioning value for money represents a critical challenge for Arts, as these perceptions directly influence student satisfaction, retention decisions and future recruitment through peer recommendations. For international students especially, who pay substantially higher fees than domestic peers, demonstrating clear value becomes essential for maintaining enrolment and positive reputation through word-of-mouth advocacy.

### Student Testimonies: Value for Money Concerns

Graduate coursework students who indicated their course does not offer value for money were asked to elaborate on their concerns through an open-ended question: “Why do you feel that your course does not offer value for money? Please elaborate.” Of the 35 responses provided by Arts students, these highlighted concerns regarding quality of content, access to resources and career transitions. Below are a selection of testimonies capturing the key issues Arts students perceive regarding course value for money:

*“I don't think this course alumni have good networking.”*

*"The disorganised and unqualified teaching and the results and comments received for assessments make me frustrated and feel be treated unfairly enough in part of units."*

*"A lot of classroom knowledge relies entirely on self-study. Although the school can provide some resources on the whole it is still somewhat insufficient compared with the high cost of studying abroad."*

*"Courses are incredibly expensive and majority of classes and lectures are online/not even being taught. We just get told to watch videos and essentially teach ourselves."*

*"I felt that a number of my units were not taught at post-graduate level. I observed that core units are taught by teaching associates that are not as experienced (as staff) in terms of facilitation analysis synthesis and discussion which are all important for master's level. These classes failed to intellectually stimulate me and have demotivated me. I have heard the same feedback from peers. It does not help that in many of these classes some students are non-responsive (likely due to language barriers or other factors that Monash should assess/look into to ensure a vibrant thriving student community). For the amount of fees there is a lot to improve in terms of investing in human resource particularly those involved in teaching."*

*"There was only one class each week and the instructor didn't provide many useful insights during the sessions most of the time was spent on peer discussions."*

*"International students have to pay several times more expensive tuition fees than local students. But most of the learning part is about writing essays [and] it's had no impact for our employment and can't help us to be competitive and handle real skill."*

*"I feel as though I am paying for more content than what is provided."*

*"The quality of the courses' program, materials, structure and teaching is poor. It lacks expertise and knowledge. Questions are not answered because the teacher doesn't know the answers. We have translation course taught by a teacher who doesn't know our languages and a translation tutor who has never studied translation. Luckily I don't pay tuitions but the quality of the units would not be worth the amount of money foreign students have to pay."*

*"The course is more on theory than on practical applications."*

*"There were very few classes and I didn't feel like I learned anything useful."*

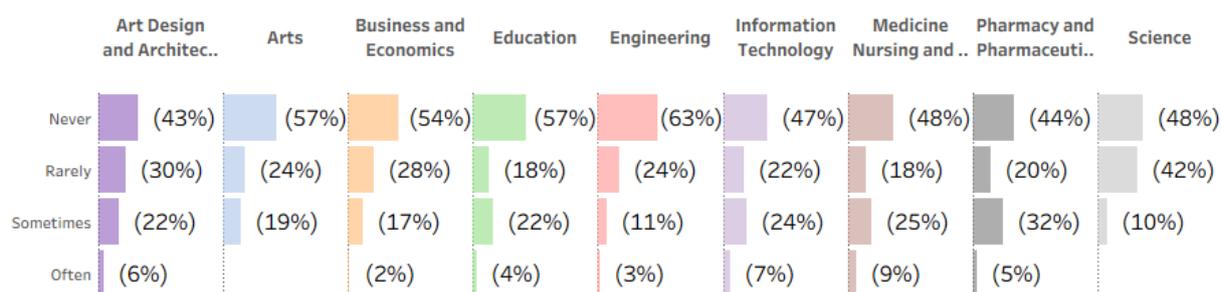
*"Well work life is very different and this degree ain't getting me a job."*

*"For me I was already working and when I went back to university, I found that if I am not a researcher in the future, the content of the class would not be very useful for real work. I still hope that the university's curriculum can be somewhat different so that can better improve my work ability."*

## Considering Leaving

Students were asked to indicate how frequently they had considered leaving or withdrawing from their course, with response options ranging from “never” to “often”. This measure provides insight into retention vulnerability across graduate coursework cohorts, with implications for intervention strategies and support system design. Whilst considering departure does not necessarily lead to withdrawal, frequent consideration signals underlying dissatisfaction or challenge that warrants institutional attention.

**Considering Leaving by Faculty**



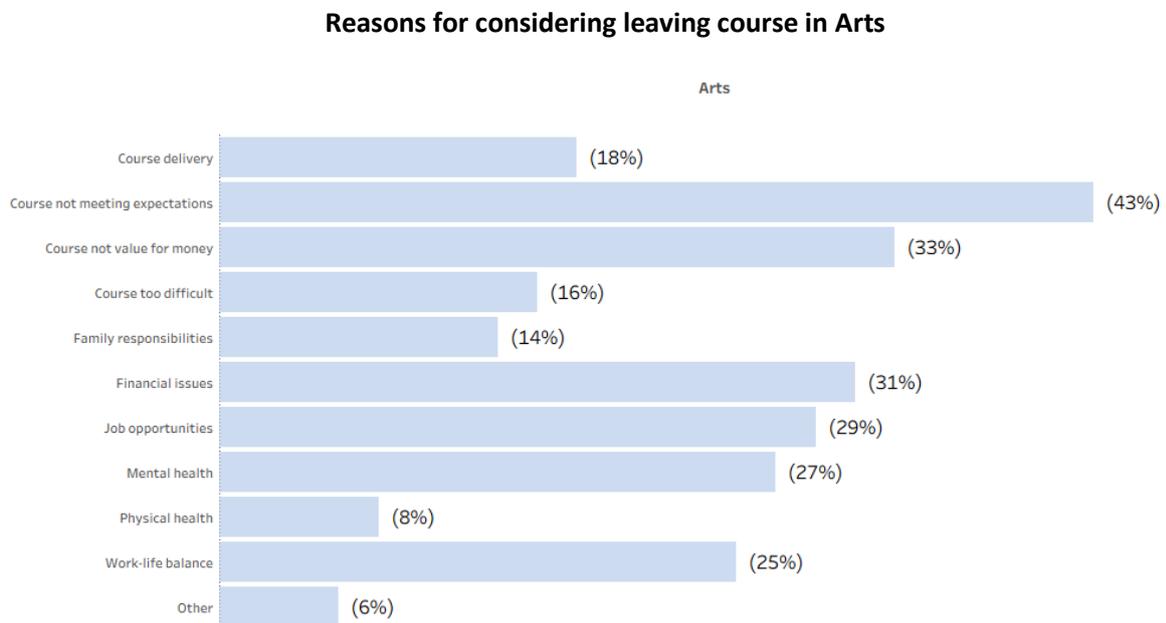
Arts demonstrates relatively strong retention indicators compared to most other faculties, with 57% reporting they have never considered leaving their course. This means 43% have considered leaving at some point: 24% rarely, 19% sometimes. Positively, no Arts survey respondent reported considering leaving “often”.

Furthermore, Arts’ 57% “never considered leaving” rate represents the equal-second highest retention confidence across all faculties, suggesting that despite concerns about course satisfaction (60%) and value for money (61%), most Arts students remain committed to completing their programmes. However, the 43% who have contemplated withdrawal at some point signals underlying dissatisfaction or challenge that warrants institutional attention.

The relatively strong retention despite moderate satisfaction scores may reflect the substantial family investment in international student education (87% receiving family support for fees; 85% of Arts survey respondents are international students), creating high barriers to withdrawal even when students experience reservations about their course experience.

### Factors Influencing Withdrawal Considerations

The reasons students cite for considering leaving reveal the interconnected nature of the challenges they face. Here they are for the faculty:



The factors driving Arts students to consider leaving reveal a clear hierarchy of concerns dominated by course experience and financial pressures. Course not meeting expectations emerges as the primary driver at 43%, followed by course not offering value for money at 33%. These two course-related factors substantially outweigh other considerations, suggesting that improving course quality and demonstrating value represent the most critical retention levers for Arts.

Financial issues affect 31% of those who have considered leaving, whilst job opportunities concern 29% and mental health 27%. Work-life balance impacts 25%, indicating that a significant minority struggle to manage study alongside other commitments. Course delivery (18%), course difficulty (16%) and family responsibilities (14%) represent secondary factors, whilst physical health (8%) affects a smaller proportion.

These patterns underscore that retention challenges for Arts stem primarily from dissatisfaction with course experience rather than external life circumstances or academic capability. The dominance of unmet expectations (43%) and value concerns (33%) directly aligns with the course satisfaction (60%) and value for money (61%) patterns documented earlier, suggesting that enhancing course quality and clarifying value proposition could meaningfully improve retention outcomes.

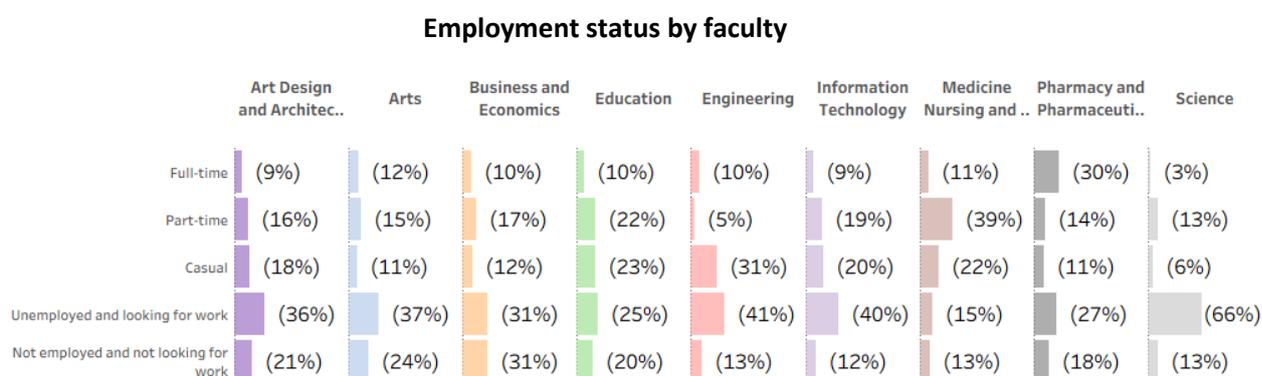
## 6. Employment and Career Planning

The relationship between employment and academic progress represents a critical balancing act for graduate coursework students, with employment decisions carrying implications for both immediate financial sustainability and long-term career advancement. The survey reveals that graduate coursework students engage with employment in fundamentally different ways: many enter postgraduate study whilst maintaining established careers, using coursework programmes to upskill or transition professionally, whilst others seek employment during study to offset substantial tuition costs and living expenses.

This section examines employment patterns within Arts, the types of work students undertake, the alignment between employment and academic programmes, satisfaction with career guidance services and post-graduation plans for international students. Understanding how Arts students navigate employment choices – and the extent to which their work experiences complement or compete with their academic goals and career aspirations in creative industries – reveals critical support needs for optimising both financial wellbeing and professional development.

### Employment status

The following table outlines the employment status of Monash graduate coursework students.



Employment patterns among Arts graduate coursework students reveal relatively modest workforce participation alongside substantial job-seeking activity. Only 38% of Arts students are employed: 12% in full-time positions, 15% in part-time work and 11% in casual roles. Meanwhile, 37% are actively seeking employment whilst unemployed and 24% are neither employed nor looking for work.

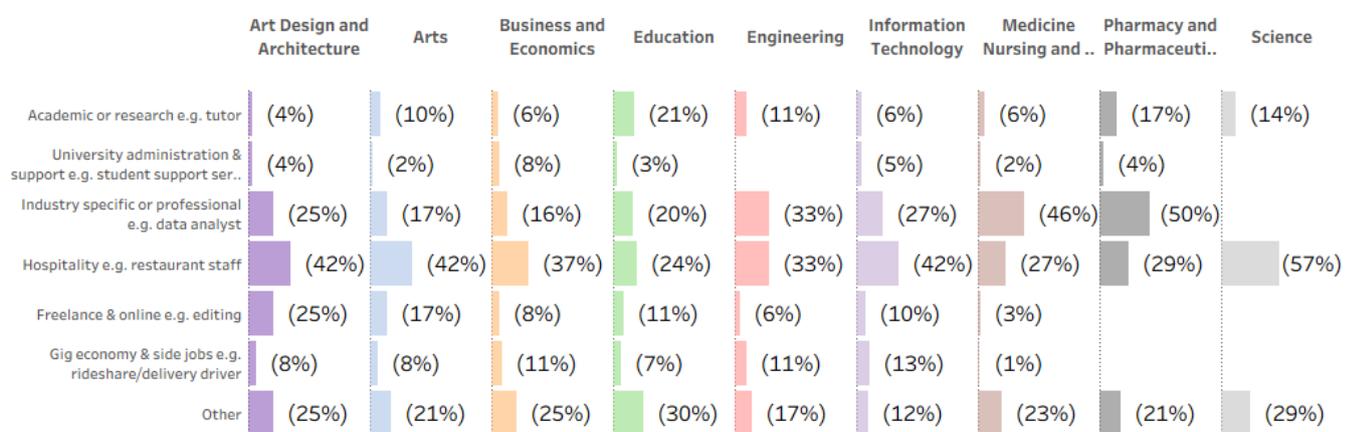
The high proportion of students seeking employment (37%) indicates significant unmet demand for work opportunities amongst Arts students. As international students are over-represented in Arts survey respondents (85%), it is likely the high proportion of Arts students currently unemployed and looking for work reflects the challenges international students face in accessing the Australian labour market due to visa work-hour restrictions, employer preferences for local experience and unfamiliarity with local employment systems. The 24% not employed and not seeking work may

represent students focusing exclusively on academic performance, those with adequate family financial support or students who have given up job-seeking due to repeated unsuccessful attempts.

These patterns underscore that the employment access barriers facing Arts students are complex and may manifest differently depending on citizenship and socio-economic status. Limited workforce participation directly contributes to the income constraints documented earlier, where 53% of Arts students earn less than \$20,000 annually.

### Job Type

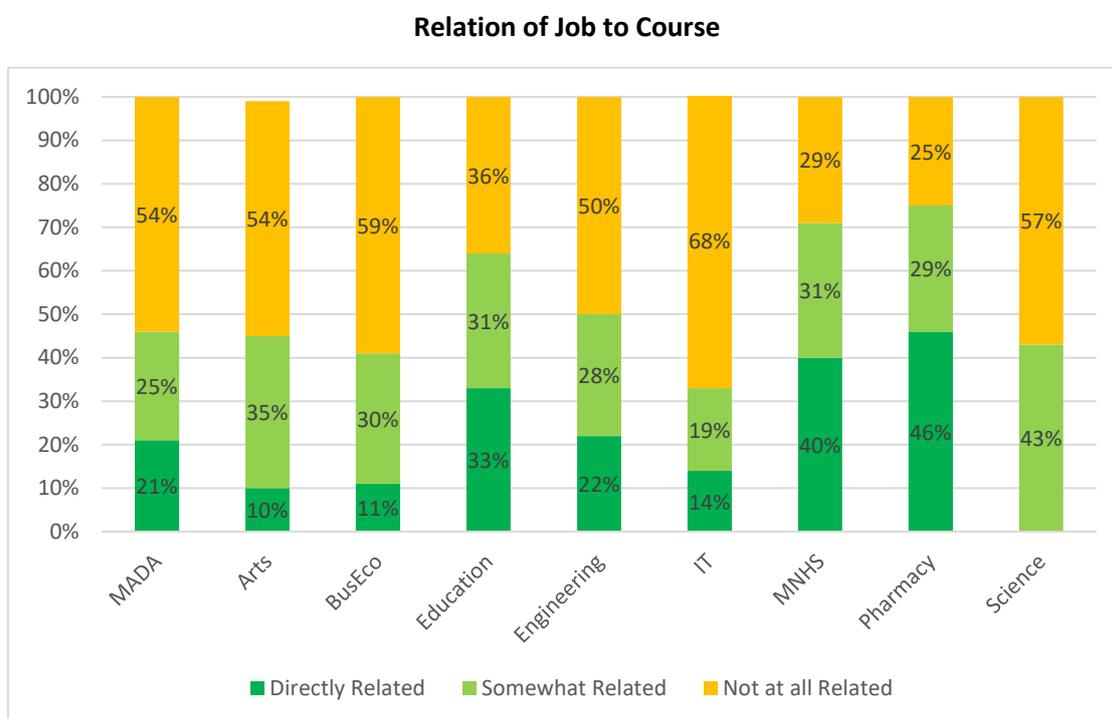
The following table outlines the type of jobs Monash graduate coursework students work in.



Of those Arts students who are employed (38%), job type distribution reveals that Arts students work predominantly in hospitality roles, with 42% engaged in restaurant, cafe or retail positions. This represents the single largest employment category, substantially exceeding professional field-related work. Industry-specific or professional roles account for just 17%, whilst freelance and online work also reaches 17%.

Academic or research positions (such as tutoring) are held by 10% of Arts students, whilst university administration and support roles represent only 2%. Gig economy and side jobs account for 8% and other employment types represent 21%.

The dominance of hospitality work (42%) reflects the employment accessibility patterns facing Arts students, particularly given the substantial number of Arts international students respondents represented in the survey (85%). Hospitality offers flexible hours accommodating study demands, visa working hour restrictions, as well as immediate availability and minimal entry barriers compared to professional roles requiring local experience, networks or Australian qualifications. However, this concentration in hospitality also indicates limited success in securing employment aligned with Arts students' degree programmes and career aspirations, with only 17% working in industry-specific professional roles related to their field of study.



The alignment between employment and academic programmes reveals significant disconnection for Arts students. Only 10% report their employment directly relates to their field of study, whilst 35% work in somewhat related roles and 54% engage in employment entirely unrelated to their degree programmes.

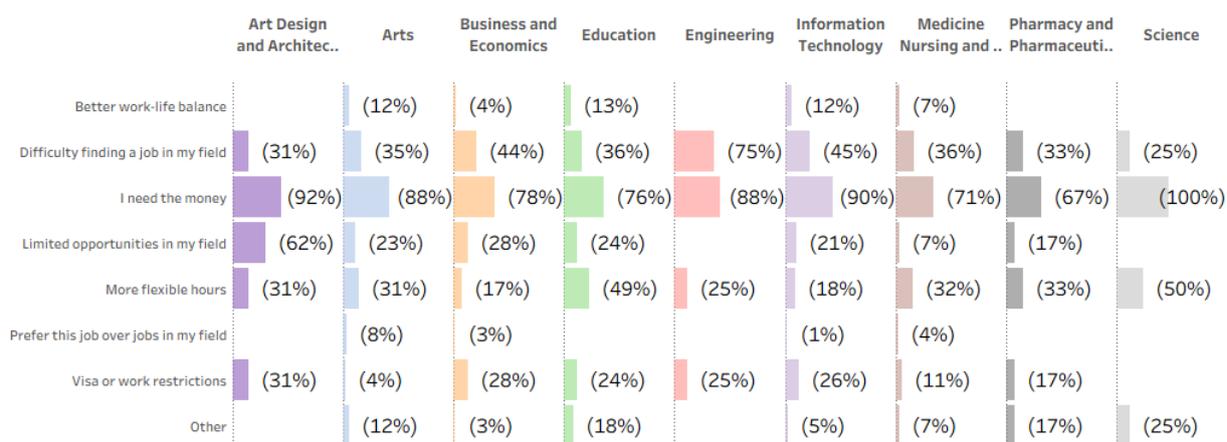
This pattern indicates that the majority of Arts students (54%) experience complete fragmentation between their academic investments and employment realities, limiting professional network development, skills application and career positioning during their postgraduate studies. The modest 10% achieving direct work-study alignment suggests substantial barriers to securing career-relevant employment whilst enrolled.

These patterns likely reflect multiple intersecting factors: Arts’ survey respondents represent 85% international student who likely face visa work-hour restrictions and labour market access barriers, the dominance of hospitality employment (42%) offers flexibility but minimal field relevance, and the limited availability of professional opportunities accessible to students without established Australian work experience or networks. The concentration in unrelated work directly undermines the career development objectives typically motivating postgraduate study.

## Why Students Work Outside their Field

The employment misalignment documented above raises critical questions about the drivers behind these patterns. Students working in unrelated fields were asked to identify reasons for this misalignment, with multiple selections permitted to capture the intersecting pressures shaping employment decisions.

### Why Students Work in Jobs Unrelated to their Course by Faculty



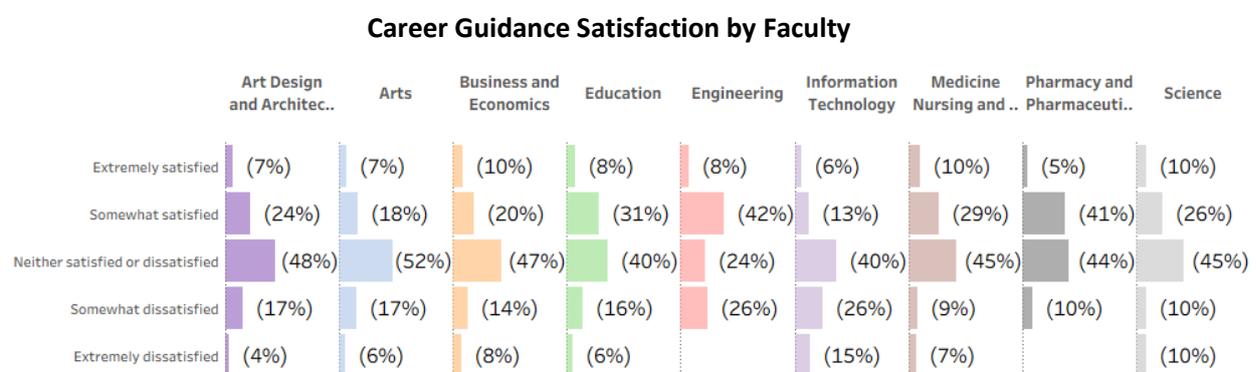
Among Arts students working in positions unrelated to their field of study, financial necessity emerges as the overwhelming driver, with 88% citing “I need the money” as a reason for working outside their field. This far exceeds all other factors and underscores how income constraints documented earlier force students into survival employment disconnected from their academic programmes.

Difficulty finding jobs in their field affects 35% of Arts students, whilst 31% cite the need for more flexible hours to accommodate study demands. Limited opportunities in their field concern 23%, suggesting structural barriers to accessing career-relevant work. Better work-life balance (12%), visa or work restrictions (4%) and preference for current work over field-related jobs (8%) represent secondary considerations.

These patterns reveal that Arts students’ concentration in unrelated employment stems primarily from financial pressures rather than choice or career exploration. The combination of immediate income needs (88%) and difficulty accessing field-relevant opportunities (35%) creates a situation where most Arts students cannot strategically integrate employment with academic development, instead accepting whatever work provides necessary income whilst studying.

## Career Guidance Experiences

Given the employment challenges documented above – including high rates of unrelated work, financial necessity driving employment decisions and labour market access barriers particularly affecting international students – institutional career support services represent a critical intervention point for improving graduate coursework student experience and outcomes. Career guidance tailored to postgraduate contexts should address the distinct needs of students seeking to leverage existing professional experience, transition between fields or establish initial career footholds whilst navigating study demands. However, the extent to which current career services meet these diverse needs remains uncertain. This section examines student satisfaction with career guidance received during their coursework programmes.



Career guidance satisfaction reveals widespread disengagement and concerning dissatisfaction levels among Arts students. The most striking pattern is the dominance of neutral responses, with 52% reporting neither satisfaction nor dissatisfaction, suggesting many students either have not engaged with career services or find them insufficiently impactful to warrant strong opinions.

Combined satisfaction rates (extremely and somewhat satisfied) reach only 25% for Arts students, whilst combined dissatisfaction (extremely and somewhat dissatisfied) affects 23%.

The data suggests career support represents a significant missed opportunity for Arts. Given the employment challenges documented earlier – including 54% working in unrelated fields, 37% unemployed and seeking work and 88% working outside their field due to financial necessity – effective career guidance and support could meaningfully improve students’ capacity to access field-relevant opportunities. However, the current 23% satisfaction rate and 52% neutrality indicate that career services are failing to deliver value for the vast majority of Arts graduate coursework students.

*Student Testimonies – Suggestions for Improvements to Career Guidance*

To identify specific areas for improvement, respondents who expressed dissatisfaction with career guidance services were asked to suggest enhancements.

Here is a selection of the 19 responses provided by Arts students:

*“Actually give advice and not make you feel stupid for asking.”*

*“Unsure I need to access the services more, but have been reluctant because I am not sure what is offered.”*

*“I have had no interaction with any form of career guidance.”*

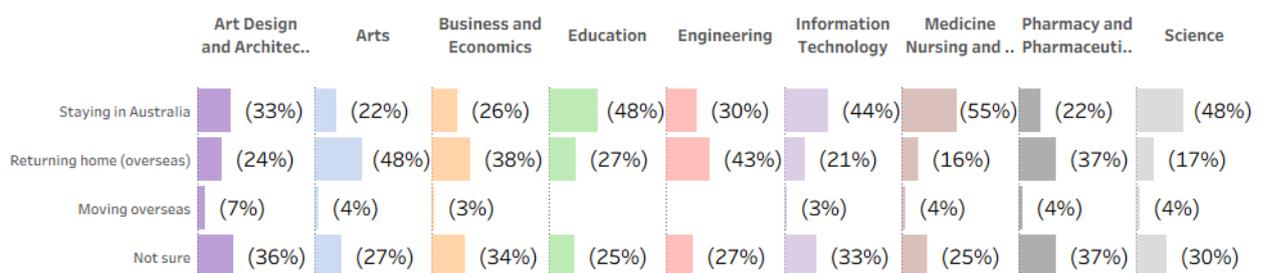
*“There is only very limited or extremely niche guidance for students doing very specific or select majors. I feel as though there is no real help finding a job or preparing someone like myself who has had no real career experience.”*

*“More workshops and networking nights.”*

Post-Degree Plans for International Students

International students’ post-graduation plans carry significant implications for both individual career trajectories and institutional outcomes, influencing the value proposition of Australian postgraduate education and informing workforce retention strategies. Understanding whether students intend to remain in Australia, return home or relocate elsewhere reveals how international coursework students perceive Australian labour market opportunities, the transferability of their credentials to home contexts and the extent to which their study experience positions them for desired career outcomes. These intentions are shaped by the employment challenges documented throughout this report – including difficulty accessing field-relevant work, visa restrictions limiting labour market integration and varying levels of institutional career support. Students planning to remain in Australia signal confidence in local career prospects and successful integration, whilst those returning home may indicate either strong home-country opportunities or discouragement with Australian labour market accessibility. This question illuminates whether Australia’s substantial international coursework cohort views their education as a pathway to local careers or primarily as credential acquisition for opportunities elsewhere.

**Post-Degree Plans for International Students at Monash by Faculty**



Arts international students show strong intentions to return home, with 48% planning to go back to their home countries – the highest return rate across all faculties. Only 22% plan to stay in Australia, 4% intend to move to another overseas destination and 27% remain uncertain about their plans. This pattern suggests Arts international students view their Australian education primarily as credential enhancement for home country opportunities rather than as a migration pathway, with the relatively low staying in Australia rate (22%) potentially reflecting limited career prospects in arts and humanities fields or stronger pull factors from home countries. The 27% uncertainty indicates more than one in four students are still weighing their options, likely dependent on employment opportunities and visa pathways that emerge as graduation approaches.

## What Makes Arts Distinct: Key Themes

Two distinctive patterns shape the Arts graduate coursework experience, each presenting clear opportunities for faculty-led enhancement.

### International Student Challenges Prominently Reflected in Arts Responses

Arts survey respondents were predominantly international students (85%) and whilst this likely reflects over-representation common across the survey rather than exact faculty composition, the distinctive challenges facing international students are particularly visible and urgent within Arts contexts. The concentration of international student responses in Arts reveals interconnected challenges across multiple domains that require coordinated intervention rather than isolated fixes.

International student mental health support access emerges as a critical concern, with only 35% of Arts student survey respondents reporting accessing these services. University-wide data shows international students access support at less than half the rate of domestic students (25% versus 60%) due to cultural stigma, unfamiliarity with Australian mental health systems and language considerations. The prominence of international student voices in Arts survey responses highlights how these barriers substantially impact the faculty experience.

Financial pressures demonstrate distinctive patterns amongst Arts international student respondents. These students show overwhelming reliance on family funding, with 87% of Arts fee-paying students receiving family contributions and 65% having families pay all course fees. This intergenerational dependency creates unique vulnerability where family financial circumstances in students' home countries directly determine their capacity to continue studies and maintain adequate living standards in Australia. When combined with severe rental stress affecting 85% of Arts renters and 53% spending half or more of their monthly income on accommodation alone, international students face acute financial fragility despite family support for tuition.

Employment access represents a third compounding challenge visible in Arts student survey respondent data. The faculty shows high unemployment amongst job-seeking students (37% unemployed but looking for work) and severe employment misalignment, with 54% working in jobs entirely unrelated to their field and 42% concentrated in hospitality roles offering flexibility but minimal career development. International students' visa work-hour restrictions, unfamiliarity with Australian employment systems and employer preferences for local experience create structural barriers to securing field-relevant work in arts and humanities fields that could integrate professional development with income generation.

Finally, Arts international student respondents demonstrate the strongest return-home intentions across all faculties, with 48% planning to leave Australia after graduation. This pattern suggests these students view their Australian education primarily as credential enhancement for home country opportunities rather than as migration pathways, potentially reflecting limited Australian career prospects in arts and humanities fields or discouragement with labour market access during study.

## Course Quality Concerns Undermining the Value Proposition

Whilst graduate coursework students across Monash express concerns about course quality, the data suggests Arts faces a particularly acute challenge given its over-representation of international student perspectives. Only 60% of Arts students report satisfaction with course quality and only 61% feel their course offers value for money, meaning two-fifths question whether their substantial financial investment justifies the educational returns received.

Qualitative student testimonies reveal specific pedagogical concerns that distinguish Arts from other faculties. Students repeatedly identify teaching quality issues including overreliance on inexperienced teaching associates for core postgraduate units, lack of postgraduate-level intellectual stimulation, disorganised course administration and insufficient facilitation of meaningful class discussion (including overreliance on online learning delivery and self-directed learning experiences). International students paying premium fees particularly emphasise the disconnect between financial investment and perceived educational outcomes.

These quality concerns directly influence retention vulnerability, with course not meeting expectations cited by 43% of Arts students who have considered leaving and value for money concerns affecting 39%. Whilst Arts demonstrates relatively strong retention indicators (57% have never considered leaving, the equal-second highest across faculties), the substantial minority questioning their educational experience represents significant risk to future enrolment and peer recommendations, particularly for a faculty heavily dependent on international student recruitment.

The employment outcomes compound value concerns. With 54% of employed Arts students working in unrelated fields, 88% of those students citing financial necessity as the driver and only 25% satisfied with career guidance, the faculty faces challenges demonstrating clear pathways from postgraduate credentials to meaningful career advancement.

## Faculty-Specific Recommendations

These recommendations target the two distinctive challenges identified above, organised by investment level to provide Arts leadership with actionable options across different resource scenarios.

### Addressing International Student Concentration Challenges

#### **Cultural and Operational Enhancements (Low Investment)**

Develop Arts-specific international student orientation programming that explicitly addresses mental health support access, Australian employment systems and financial management strategies tailored to arts and humanities contexts. Partner with successful senior international students to deliver peer-led sessions demystifying help-seeking processes and normalising support service utilisation. Cost-effective implementation through existing orientation infrastructure.

Establish faculty-based “international student champions” amongst Arts academic and administrative staff who receive targeted training on international student challenges specific to Arts disciplines and serve as accessible first points of contact for students navigating support systems. This cultural shift requires minimal financial investment but meaningful staff development time.

Create multilingual mental health and wellbeing resources specifically tailored to Arts international students, acknowledging cultural contexts around help-seeking and explaining the Australian mental health system in accessible language. Partner with Monash Counselling and international student services to ensure cultural appropriateness and relevance to Arts students' distinctive pressures.

#### **Moderate Investments**

Pilot an Arts “Career Accelerator” programme targeting international students in their first semester, connecting students with Australian arts sector employers, cultural organisations, alumni and professional networks before financial pressures force acceptance of survival hospitality employment. Include résumé translation (international to Australian formats for arts careers), interview skills training for creative industries and workplace culture navigation specific to Australian arts contexts. Moderate staffing investment with potential for substantial employment outcome improvements.

Establish emergency financial assistance specifically for Arts international students facing acute rental stress or unexpected family financial disruptions. Even modest funding (e.g. \$500-1,000 short-term loans or grants) could prevent course withdrawals amongst students whose families experience temporary financial difficulties in home countries. Complement with financial counselling addressing underlying pressures and connecting students to ongoing support.

Develop Arts-specific peer mentoring connecting incoming international students with experienced peers who can provide practical guidance on housing, employment opportunities in arts contexts, academic expectations for postgraduate arts study and support access. Compensate senior student

mentors with small stipends or academic recognition, creating a sustainable support model that directly addresses isolation whilst providing leadership opportunities.

## Enhancing Course Quality and Value Proposition

### **Cultural and Operational Enhancements (Low Investment)**

Create transparent communication processes ensuring Arts students understand what they can expect from postgraduate education at Monash in Arts disciplines and how to raise concerns about teaching quality through accessible channels. Demonstrate responsiveness to student feedback through visible actions addressing identified concerns, building trust that complaints will be taken seriously. This addresses student frustration with feeling unheard and builds accountability without substantial investment.

### **Moderate Investments**

Conduct comprehensive teaching audit of Arts postgraduate units, gathering detailed student feedback on pedagogical approaches, assessment relevance, intellectual engagement at postgraduate level and career skill development. Use findings to identify specific units requiring immediate enhancement and teaching staff needing additional professional development. Invest in targeted teaching excellence training for Arts postgraduate instructors, particularly teaching associates, focusing on facilitation skills and techniques essential for graduate-level Arts education.

Develop Arts postgraduate industry immersion experiences that distinguish the faculty's graduate coursework programmes through high-impact activities that bridge students to practical arts environments. This could include intensive arts projects with industry partners, visiting practitioner masterclasses bringing professionals into classroom contexts, collaborative creative research opportunities or international partnerships with leading arts institutions. These distinctive elements enhance value proposition by providing memorable, career-relevant experiences justifying premium investment and directly addressing value for money concerns. Moderate investment in activity development and industry relationship building.

Establish Arts alumni mentoring programme connecting current students with successful graduates working in diverse arts and humanities fields – creative industries, cultural institutions, arts administration, media, education, policy and beyond. This addresses both career guidance deficiencies (52% neutrality, 23% dissatisfaction on career guidance) and value for money concerns by demonstrating concrete career pathways from Arts postgraduate credentials beyond teaching positions. Requires coordination infrastructure and alumni engagement but provides scalable, sustainable support addressing employment concerns.

## Appendix 1: Demographics

Course name	Respondents
Master of Communications and Media Design	27 (21%)
Master of Cultural and Creative Industries	20 (16%)
Master of Strategic Communications Management	13 (10%)
Master of Public Policy	12 (9%)
Master of International Relations	11 (9%)
Master of Interpretation and Translation Studies	6 (5)
Master of Bioethics	2 (2%)
Graduate Certificate in Marketing and Digital Communications	1 (1%)
Other	36 (28%)

Campus	Respondents
I do not regularly attend campus	7 (6%)
Clayton	39 (31%)
Caulfield	104 (81%)
Peninsula	1 (1%)
Parkville	0 (0%)
Law Chambers	0 (0%)
Malaysia	3 (2%)
Hospital or Medical Centre	1 (1%)
Indonesia	0 (0%)
Suzhou	0 (0%)
other	2 (2%)

Domestic/International	Respondents
Local student (Australian or New Zealand citizen/permanent resident)	20 (15%)
International student	110 (85%)

Study load	Respondents
Full-time	127 (96%)
Part-time	3 (2%)
On leave from study	2 (2%)

Study location	Respondents
Entirely on-campus	86 (66%)
Multi-modal	38 (29%)
Entirely off-campus	6 (5%)
Other	0 (0%)

<b>Time since last degree</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Less than 1 year	49 (38%)
1-5 years	57 (44%)
6-10 years	11 (9%)
11+ years	13 (10%)

<b>Degree progress</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
First year	79 (60%)
Second year	47 (36%)
Third year and beyond	6 (5%)

<b>Study hours</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Less than 5	7 (5%)
6-10	31 (24%)
11-20	47 (36%)
21-30	33 (25%)
31-40	10 (8%)
Over 40 hours	2 (2%)

<b>English proficiency</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Fluent	49 (38%)
Advanced	29 (22%)
Intermediate	46 (35%)
Elementary	6 (5%)
Beginner	0 (0%)

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Woman	107 (82%)
Man	20 (15%)
Non-binary/gender diverse	2 (2%)
Prefer to self-describe	0 (0%)
Prefer not to say	1 (1%)

<b>LGBTIQA+</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Yes	17 (13%)
No	102 (79%)
Prefer not to disclose	11 (9%)

<b>Indigenous (domestic students only)</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Yes	0 (0%)
No	20 (100%)
Prefer not to disclose	0 (0%)

<b>Disability</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Yes	8 (6%)
No	119 (92%)
Prefer not to disclose	3 (2%)

<b>Registered disability with DSS</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Yes	6 (75%)
No	2 (25%)

<b>Age</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
24 or under	52 (40%)
25-29	46 (35%)
30-39	29 (22%)
40 and over	3 (2%)

<b>Employment status</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Full-time	15 (12%)
Part-time	19 (15%)
Casual	14 (11%)
Unemployed and looking for work	46 (37%)
Not employed and not looking for work	30 (24%)

<b>Work hours</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Less than 5	20 (42%)
6-10	5 (10%)
11-20	11 (23%)
21-30	9 (19%)
31-40	2 (4%)
More than 40	1 (2%)