

# ***Graduate Coursework in Education:***

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 240 graduate coursework students in the Faculty of Education 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 Education.

Where meaningful, findings are compared to Monash-wide averages to highlight areas where Education 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

- 240 Education graduate coursework students participated.
- Response rate represents approximately 7% of enrolled Education 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 Education graduate coursework contexts.
- Financial pressures and their impact on study.
- Parental and carer responsibilities.
- Peer connection and support needs unique to Education 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 Education 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 Education

This section provides core findings from the 240 Education 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 Education 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.

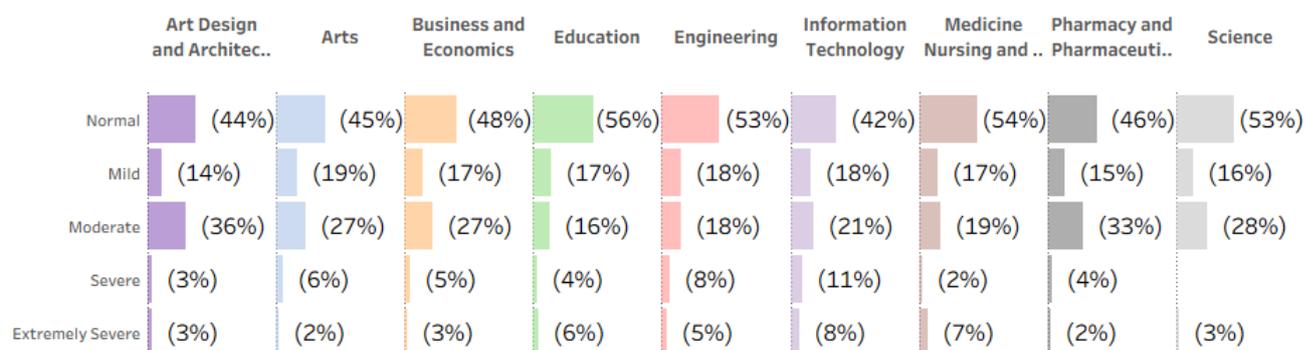
### 1. The Mental Health and Wellbeing Landscape

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.

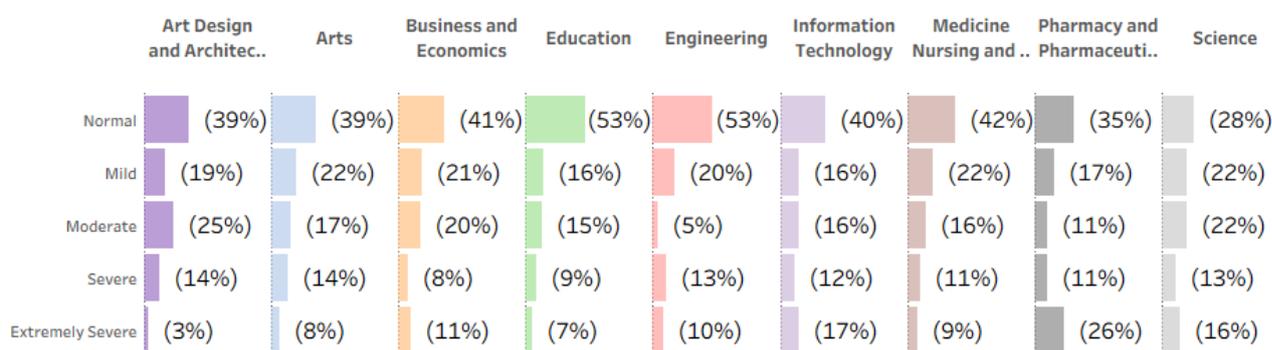
#### DASS21 and Mental Health Indicators

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.

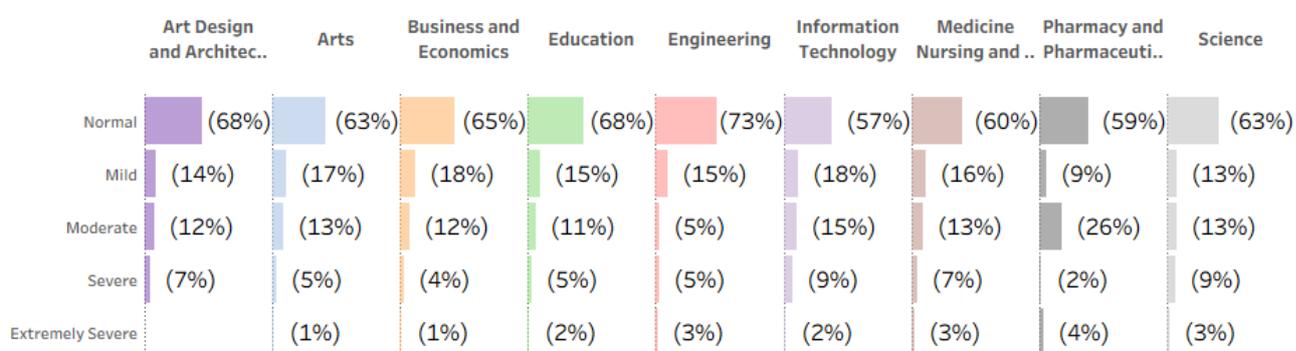
#### Depression:



### Anxiety:



### Stress:



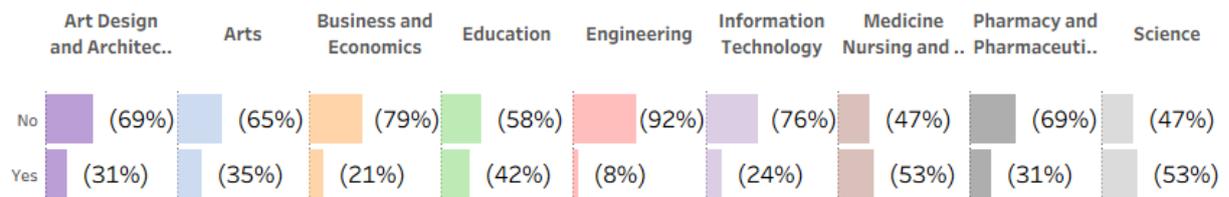
Education graduate coursework students show mental health patterns that reflect broader challenges facing graduate coursework students across the sector, though with some notable variations from the university-wide average. For depression, 56% of Education students fall within the “normal” range compared to 49% across Monash, with 26% experiencing moderate to extremely severe symptoms versus 34% university-wide. Anxiety levels show 53% of Education students in the normal range compared to 43% across Monash, and 31% report moderate to extremely severe symptoms versus 39% university-wide. Stress patterns reveal 68% of Education students in the normal range compared to 63% across Monash, with 18% experiencing moderate to extremely severe stress versus 20% university-wide.

These findings suggest that Education graduate coursework students experience somewhat better mental health outcomes than the broader Monash population across all three domains.

## 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 Education graduate coursework students reveals encouraging engagement patterns. Overall, 42% of Education students report having accessed mental health support, whilst 58% have not accessed these services, placing Education as the third highest faculty for mental health support access behind MNHS (53%) and Science (53%).

This relatively high access rate may reflect Education's survey respondent demographic composition, with 34% domestic students compared to predominantly international cohorts in other faculties. Given that domestic students access mental health support at more than double the rate of international students university-wide (60% versus 25%), Education's overall 42% access rate aligns with these broader patterns. Nevertheless, with 58% of Education students not accessing mental health support services, targeted outreach remains essential – particularly for the 66% of international students in Education who may face additional barriers to help-seeking including cultural considerations around mental health, unfamiliarity with the Australian mental health system and isolation from traditional support networks.

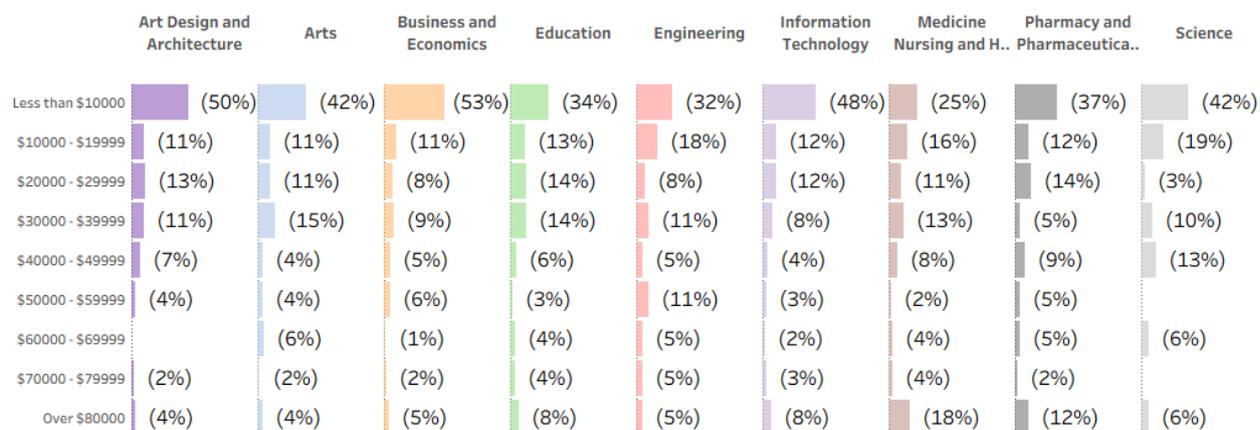
## 2. Financial Circumstances and Study Impact

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.

**Estimated Annual Income by Faculty**



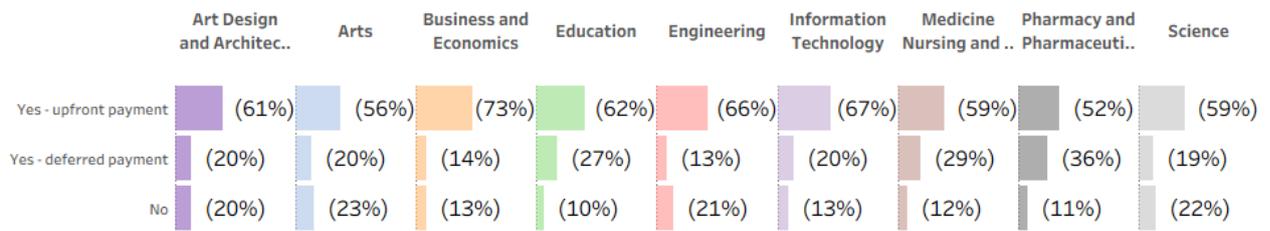
Education graduate coursework students report income levels that reflect a median income between \$20,000 and \$29,999, with notable concentration across lower and middle brackets: 34% earn less than \$10,000 annually, 13% earn between \$10,000 and \$19,999, and 14% each in the \$20,000–\$29,999 and \$30,000–\$39,999 brackets. Combined, almost half (47%) of Education students earn less than \$20,000 per year.

These income patterns are likely shaped by the faculty’s demographic profile, where 66% of Education survey respondents are international students facing visa restrictions limiting work opportunities to 48 hours per fortnight during semester. However, Education shows somewhat higher representation in upper income brackets compared to some other faculties, with 8% earning over \$80,000 – likely reflecting the 34% domestic students who may maintain established careers whilst studying. With nearly half of Education students reporting less than \$20,000 in annual income, there are significant implications for 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 Education graduate coursework students reflect a mix of perspective from both domestic and international students. The majority of Education students (62%) report paying tuition fees upfront, whilst 27% utilise deferred payment arrangements (primarily domestic students accessing HECS-HELP) and 10% have no fee obligation through scholarships or employer sponsorship.

Education's 62% upfront payment rate positions the faculty in the middle range across the university, indicating that a substantial proportion of students have access to deferred payment mechanisms. The 27% using deferred payments represents one of the higher rates across faculties, reflecting Education's stronger domestic student representation. However, with 62% still required to pay fees upfront, this creates considerable financial demands for the majority of Education graduate coursework students who must secure income streams alongside their study commitments.

### 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 Education

Payment Source	Use this source	All	Most	About Half	A little
Self	49%	12%	6%	9%	21%
Family	82%	47%	18%	8%	9%
Employer	4%	1%	0%	0%	3%
Sponsor	10%	7%	1%	1%	1%
Other	5%	1%	1%	1%	1%

Among Education students with upfront fee payment responsibilities, funding sources reveal substantial reliance on family support combined with meaningful self-funding contributions. A notable 82% of Education students paying upfront report receiving family contributions, with 47% having families pay all course fees and 18% having families pay most fees. Simultaneously, 49% of Education students contribute their own funds, with 12% covering all fees themselves.

This balance between family support and self-funding reflects Education’s mixed demographic, with international students typically relying more heavily on family contributions whilst domestic students may self-fund through employment income. Employer fee support remains minimal at 4%, whilst sponsor support reaches 10% of students. These patterns highlight how Education students draw on multiple funding sources to finance their education, with the combination of family investment and personal contribution creating unique pressure points where both family financial circumstances and individual earning capacity can directly influence students’ ability to comfortably continue their studies.

### 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

	Education 2023	Education 2025	Monash 2025
Doing great	6%	4%	4%
Getting by	47%	39%	37%
Just coping	36%	38%	41%
Having trouble	11%	18%	19%

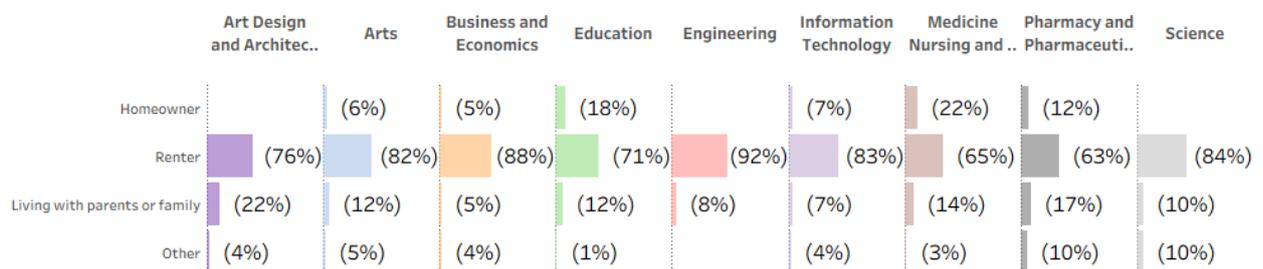
The financial wellbeing results reveal significant pressures facing Education graduate coursework students, with outcomes closely mirroring the university average. Only 4% of Education students report “doing great” financially, matching the 4% observed across Monash. The majority find themselves in the middle categories: 39% are “getting by” compared to 37% university-wide, whilst 38% are “just coping” versus 41% across Monash. Notably, 18% of Education students report “having trouble” financially, slightly below the 19% university-wide rate.

When compared to 2023 Education data, there has been a concerning decline in financial wellbeing: those “doing great” dropped from 6% to 4%, those “getting by” fell from 47% to 39% and those “just coping” rose from 36% to 38%. Meanwhile, students reporting “having trouble” increased substantially from 11% to 18%. These patterns reflect broader economic pressures including rising cost of living.

### 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 Education students.

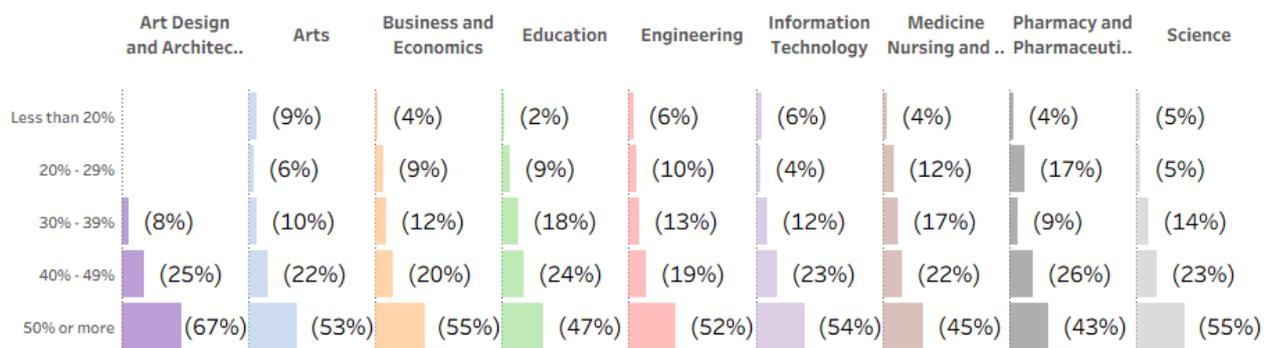
### Living Situation by Faculty



Living arrangements among Education graduate coursework students reveal patterns shaped by the faculty’s demographic composition. The majority of Education students (71%) are renters, whilst 18% are homeowners and 12% live with parents or family. Only 1% report other living arrangements.

Education's 18% homeownership rate is notably higher than the university average (9%) and reflects the faculty's stronger domestic student representation among survey respondents – domestic students are substantially more likely to own homes than international students. The 71% renting rate, whilst substantial, is lower than faculties with higher international student survey respondent proportions such as Arts (82%) and Engineering (92%). The 12% living with parents or family provides some students with reduced housing costs, though this option is primarily available to domestic students with family in Melbourne. These patterns highlight the diverse living circumstances across the Education cohort and their implications for financial pressure.

**Rent as Percentage of Monthly Income by Faculty**



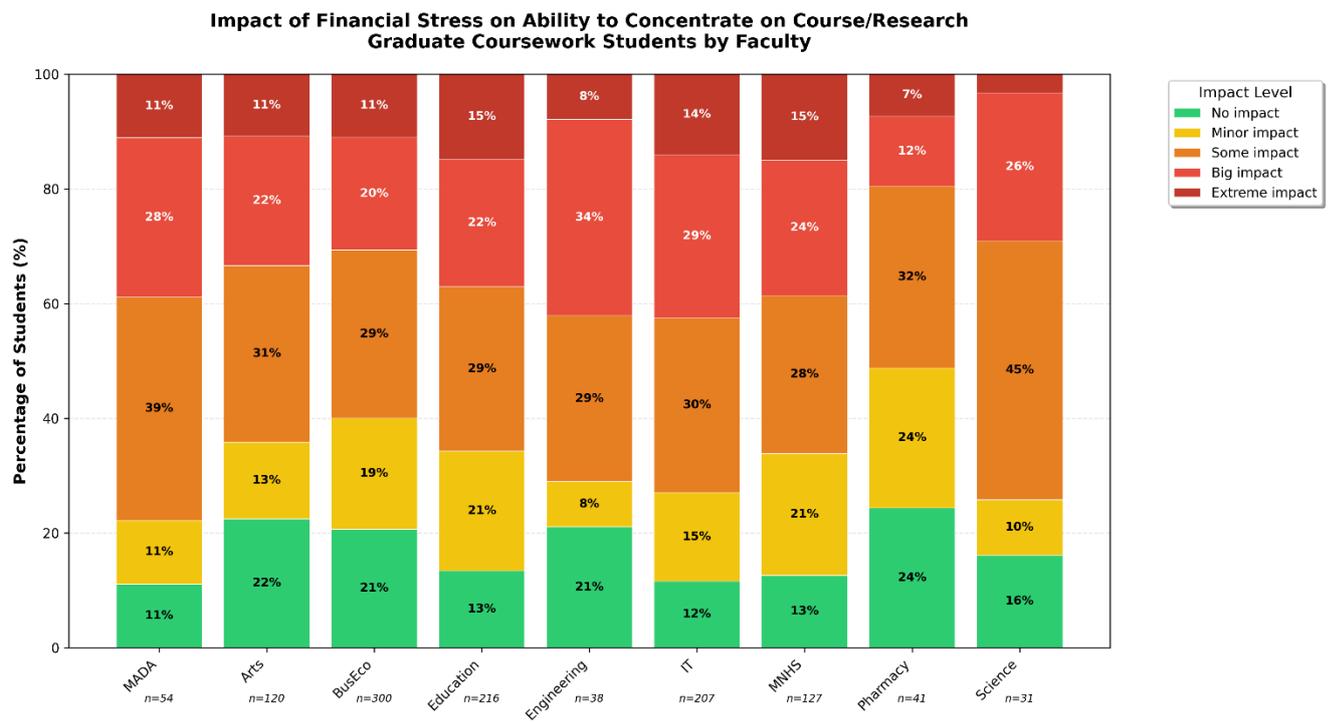
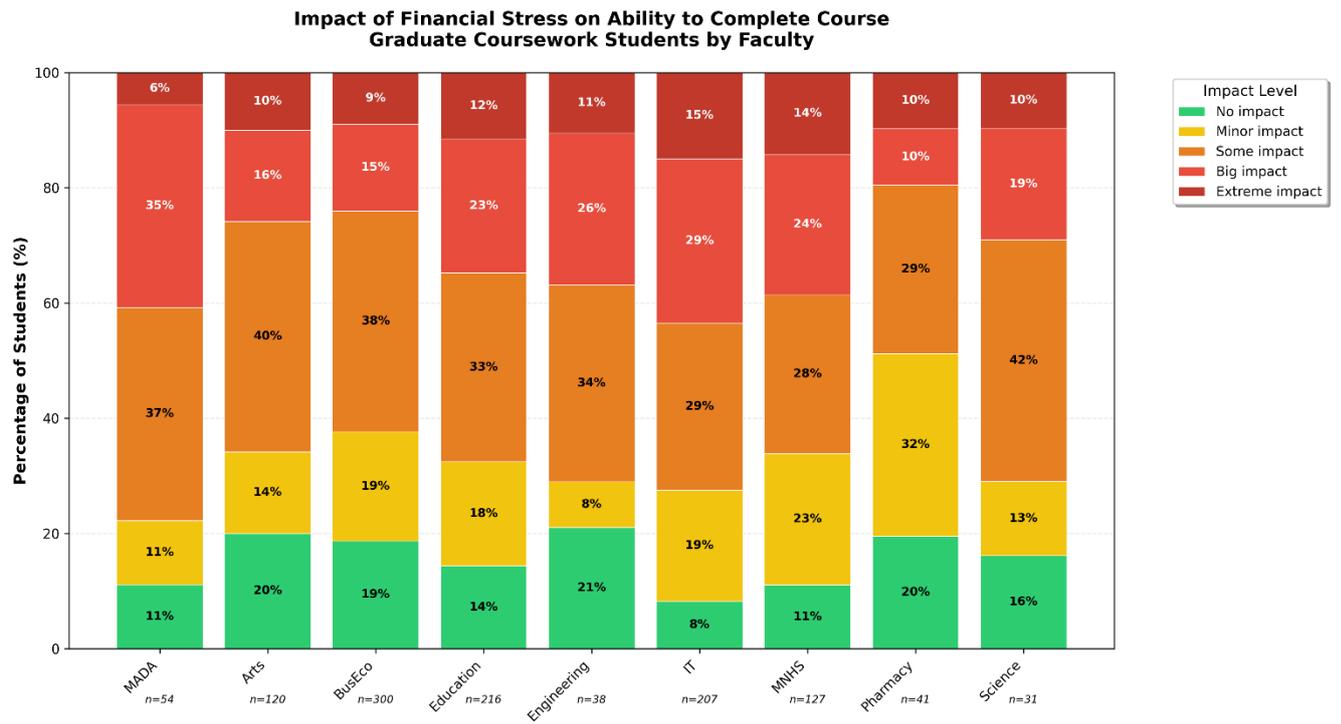
Housing affordability presents a significant challenge for Education graduate coursework students who rent. Nearly half (47%) of Education renters spend 50% or more of their monthly income on rent, whilst a further 24% spend between 40–49%. Combined, 71% of Education renters face severe housing cost burden, spending 40% or more of income on rent – well above the 30% threshold commonly considered affordable.

Only 2% of Education renters spend less than 20% of income on rent, with 9% in the 20–29% bracket and 18% in the 30–39% range. These patterns indicate that the overwhelming majority of Education students who rent experience significant housing stress, with rental costs consuming substantial portions of their income and constraining their capacity to meet other essential expenses. The housing affordability crisis directly compounds the financial pressures documented elsewhere in this report, creating cascading effects on students' wellbeing and academic engagement.

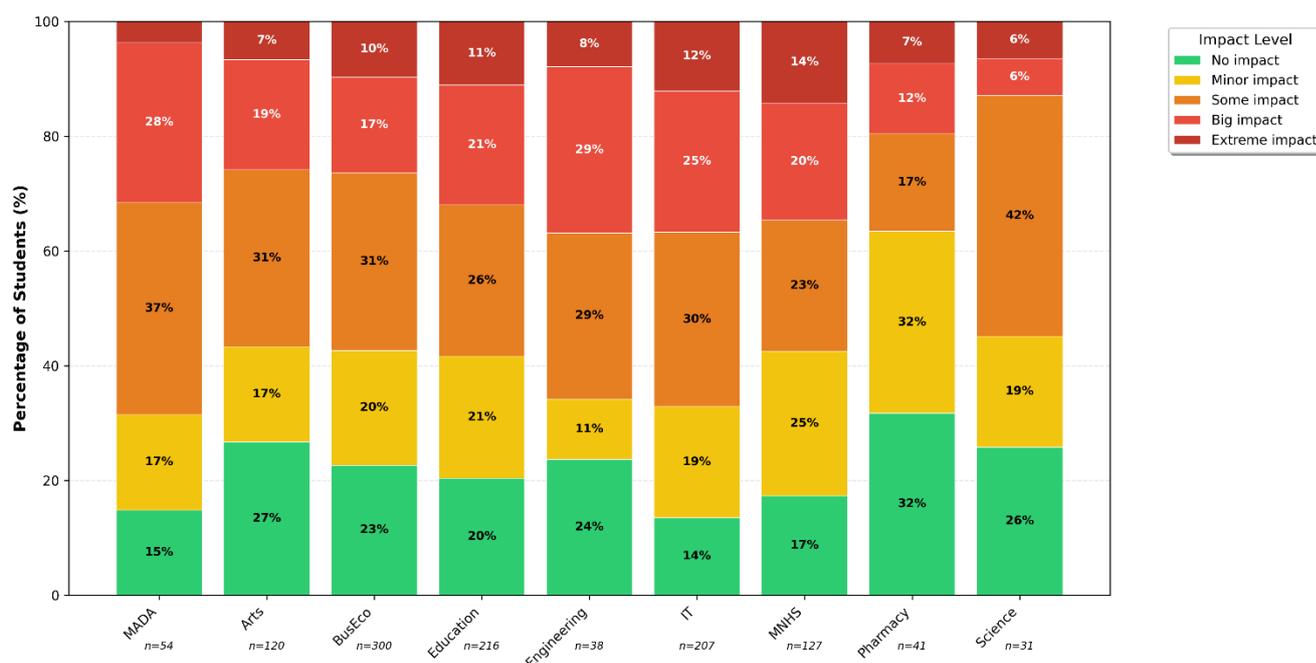
### How Financial Stress Impacts Course Engagement

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 Attend Classes/Study/Research on Campus Graduate Coursework Students by Faculty**



Financial stress significantly impacts Education students’ ability to engage with their coursework. Regarding completing their course to the best of their ability, only 14% report no impact from financial stress, whilst 33% experience some impact and 35% report big or extreme impact. For concentration on studies, 13% report no impact, 29% some impact and 37% big or extreme impact. Campus attendance shows slightly better outcomes, with 20% reporting no impact, though 32% still experience big or extreme impact, while 26% report some impact on their ability to attend classes and required study activities.

These patterns reveal that financial pressures extend well beyond personal wellbeing to directly constrain academic engagement for the majority of Education students. With approximately one-third of Education students experiencing big or extreme financial impact across all three domains, the faculty faces a substantial cohort whose academic performance and completion prospects may be compromised by financial circumstances beyond these students’ control.

### 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:

*“Yes as international student and have to born my own expenses, it's really hard to find job with working hours restriction for my visa.”*

*“I feel a sense of guilt for burdening my parents with my educational expenses and that of my children. The lack of a proper paying job makes me feel very insecure about my future*

*and that of my children. I am concerned about my parents' mental and physical health because of my commitments."*

*"Finding hard to pay debts loans tax and daily living costs."*

*"Teaching placements put a big financial strain on me and I feel like I can't focus on it because I have to spend so much energy after a long day at placement to work to make up for the time. I know the government is coming out with an incentive but I still think that it should apply to all students and not just domestic students because many of my international student friends are at a massive loss after placement."*

*"I am currently experiencing general financial strain while living on Centrelink benefits and studying full-time. Rising living costs inflation and accumulated HECS-HELP debt have further compounded these challenges. However, I remain motivated by the prospect of securing a stable and meaningful career after completing my studies which continues to sustain my commitment during these difficult times."*

*"In order to study I have to work part time. My partner has to take on additional opportunities to earn which puts him under stress and impacts our relationship. This strain has negative impacts on my study."*

*"I am looking for a job I need one but rejections are common and after a while it does impact my mental health. But I won't stop trying."*

*"I am one of the lucky recipients of the Australia Awards Scholarship. Therefore, apart from covering my dependent's expenses I do not have that huge financial burden like other fee paying students."*

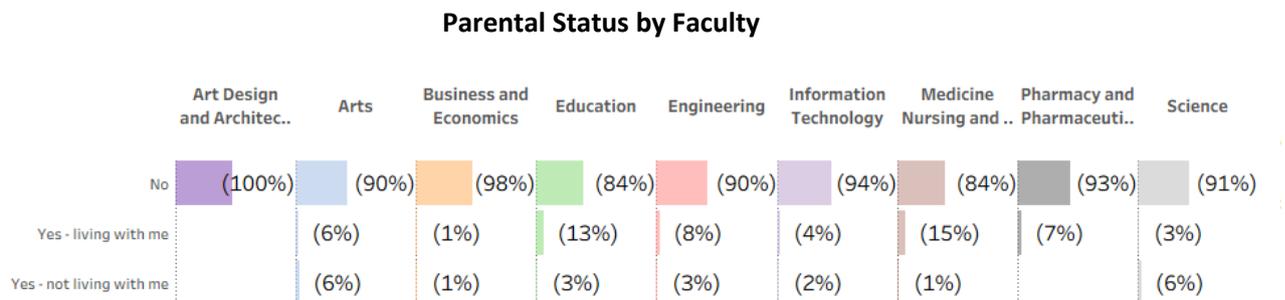
*"I am using up all of my savings to pay for rent utilities and groceries as I don't qualify for Austudy and I have been unemployed for 3 months and struggling to find employment."*

*"Finances and having to support myself and commit to full time study are my main stressor. Having to choose between working to pay rent food bills etc or studying is extreme and often feels unfair when many others are supported fully throughout their studies and can commit more time - it's a huge advantage."*

*"I don't have enough money to get by and maybe not enough to graduate."*

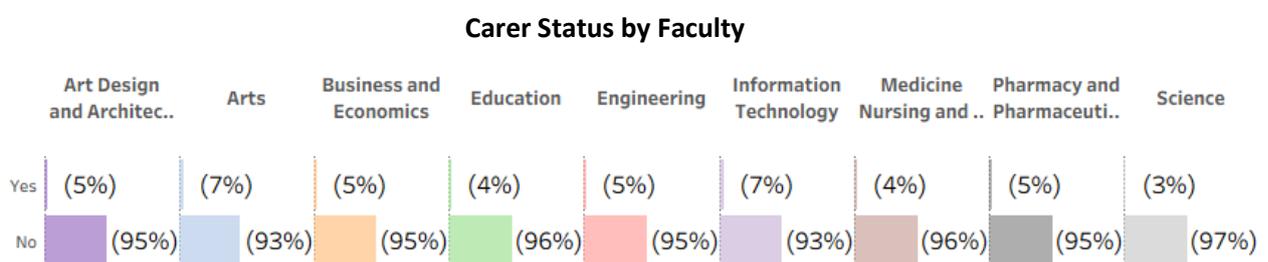
### 3. Student Parents and Carers

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 responsibilities shape the graduate coursework experience for a notable minority of Education students. Overall, 16% of Education students are parents – with 13% having children living with them and 3% having children not living with them – whilst 84% do not have children. This places Education slightly above the university-wide average parental rate, reflecting the faculty’s demographic profile including older students and those balancing established family lives with professional development in education.

The presence of dependent children creates distinct time pressures and financial demands that compound typical coursework challenges. Students with children living with them face particular difficulties managing childcare alongside study commitments, tutorial attendance and placement requirements. The 13% with co-resident children represent a cohort requiring targeted support including flexible assessment arrangements, placement scheduling that accommodates school hours and recognition of the additional pressures they navigate in pursuing their qualifications.



Beyond parenting, 4% of Education graduate coursework students have carer responsibilities for someone other than a child, whilst 96% do not have such responsibilities.

## 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:

*"I am a single mother who has to work and study at the same time. I have done my three placements at my own cost and had to defer my studies because I couldn't afford to finish it."*

*"My husband's one income supports our [large] family ... The time I spend studying means I cannot work but obviously this is just something to struggle through during my degree so I can gain employment and a salaried job in the future."*

*"It feels like it's a privilege to be able to afford my masters. I get taxed with my HECS prior to finishing my uni which puts my living cost at risk. I struggle to pay rent in Melbourne and support the cost of life with two kids!!!!"*

*"Course structure ... is not conducive to parenting and causes undue stress with so many months in the year which the course could be spread over. I also don't understand why placement periods can't be moved out of unit semester times. Also mentioned enrolled at Peninsula only to be made to complete classes online and at Clayton adding travel costs time (I live an hour away from Clayton campus) and the stress of parking issues at Clayton. So far two out of three absolutely terrible placement experiences which I have given feedback to Monash about but still has largely fallen on deaf ears. I would have been better simply enrolling in an online course and choosing my own placement schools and mentors."*

*"I feel the cost of my units are exceedingly expensive. Although I am learning a lot in this course, I am unable to change to another university (that is less expensive) due to not getting enough credits for my study to date hence requiring more years studying. Unfortunately, I cannot justify prolonging years of study as I have a young family. I want to finish as soon as possible and this comes as a significant expense. The cost of my course has increased over time. I took 12 months off from study to earn a full-time income but this has added to rising costs of units."*

*"Overwhelmed when my baby is cranky and I need to do household chores with due date for assignment nearly."*

*"I quit my job to enable me to commit to study full time but this course really needs to be supplemented, especially for parents."*

## 4. Peer Connection and Community Building

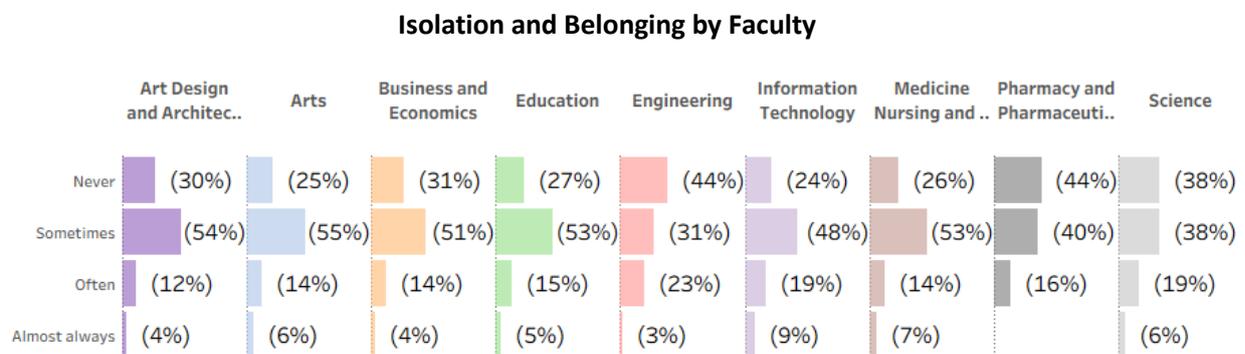
Social connections and peer relationships form fundamental components of the graduate coursework experience for many students. Yet, the survey data reveal challenges in fostering meaningful community amongst this population. The graduate coursework environment appears to present unique obstacles to social 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 and personal 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 challenges for Education graduate coursework students, though with somewhat better outcomes than some other faculties. When asked about isolation frequency in the past month, 27% of Education students report never feeling isolated, whilst 53% report sometimes feeling isolated. However, 20% report frequent isolation, with 15% feeling isolated often and 5% almost always.

Education’s isolation patterns may reflect several faculty-specific factors. For those students who do not experience isolation, the higher domestic student proportion among survey respondents (34%) may mean more students have established local support networks. Nevertheless, the nature of education coursework can also contribute to isolation, with students often on placement and unable

to access peer interaction opportunities that other courses regularly afford. The combined 73% of students who report experience isolation “sometimes” “often” or “almost always” warrants attention, particularly given the documented correlations between isolation and mental health outcomes, and retention decisions (see *Graduate Coursework at Monash: Student Experiences, Challenges and Opportunities for Enhancement*). International students, who comprise 66% of the cohort, face particular risks given distance from family support networks and the challenges of building new social connections.

### 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 Education graduate coursework environment:

*“Lack of interest in any activity feeling lethargic feeling out of place and pressured to feel the need to fit in.”*

*“The fact that I need to spend most of my personal time on assignments and I could only concentrate to do it without anyone distracting me.”*

*“Online student in regional [Australia]. Monash has no resources for online students.”*

*“Lack of social network and no family in this city/country.”*

*“Feeling unworthy of having friends. Not feeling I'm good enough.”*

*“First being far from my family and friends back home left a gap in my daily life no familiar voices no shared meals and no comforting presence after a long day. Second adjusting to a new environment in Australia with its different culture lifestyle and pace made me feel like an outsider at times. Even though people were kind I still struggled to feel truly connected. Lastly spending long hours alone in my room focused on my studies often made me reflect on how alone I really was.”*

*“Just not living with people I know and love. If I need social support it has to be through the phone - calling them - or intentionally meeting them rather than just leaving my room and having someone I could lean on be right there.”*

*“Educators at placement centre asking intrusive questions not being welcoming and addressing me by name not addressing my presence unless they need me for something making it difficult to meet placement requirements being dismissive. Overall disregard and lack of care for volunteers. Discouraging to see when I thought I was joining a profession where empathy is a core strength.”*

*“Literal physical isolation disability, lack of LGBTIQ+ literacy and safety in education setting.”*

*“Being in a crowd of people but no one to talk to share no interest with people no common topics.”*

*“Most of my cohort come to class when it starts and leaves immediately when it ends. in my undergrad we used to stay back study in between classes get lunch etc. now everyone is either in cliques from undergrad or they just don’t make friends outside of necessary interactions in class.”*

*“I feel that most of my loneliness comes from not being fluent enough in English. You can't imagine what a genius and popular person I would be if I could study and make friends in my native language!”*

*“Being in a different country and starting from scratch (having to make friends is tough in your mid- twenties).”*

*“As a part time student, I have already done most of the coursework that my peers are doing this year. Also only having one class limits the opportunity to get to know people.”*

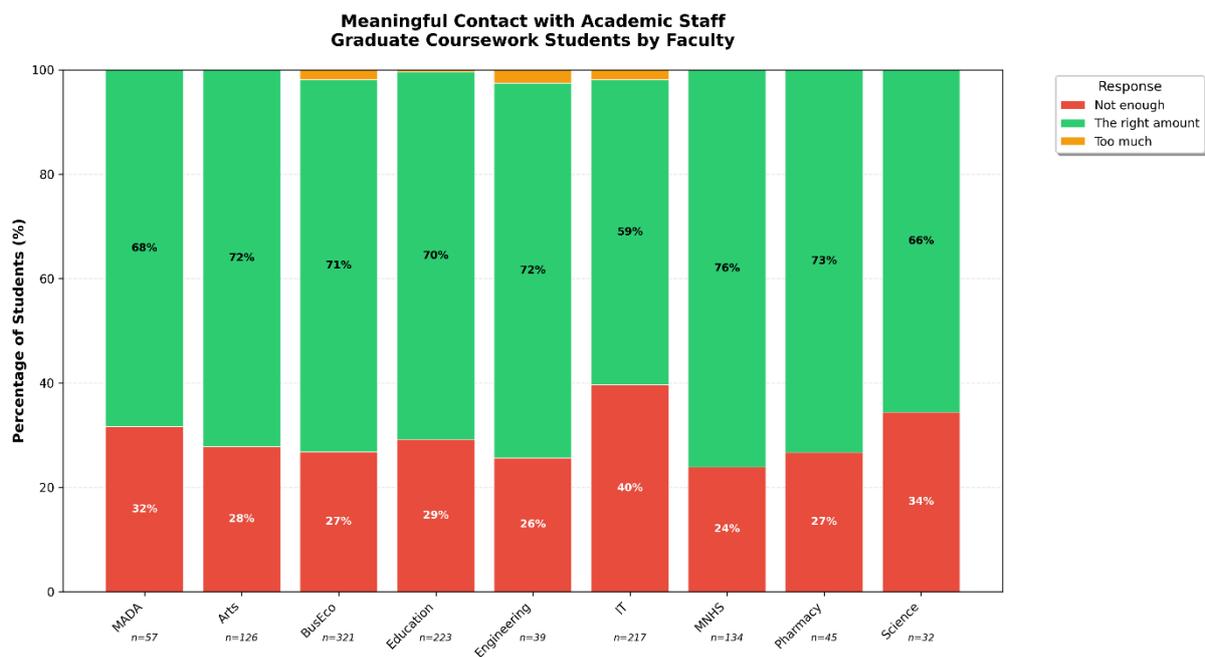
*“We are supposed to be enrolled in an on campus course at Peninsula which would mean regular contact with colleagues and peers and we are now either online or at Clayton and rarely get to catch up with peers. Additionally, classes on some days are structured in a way we have no time between classes to eat or socialise and the workload and day is not balanced.”*

*“There is no way to engage with other students outside of the moodle environment.”*

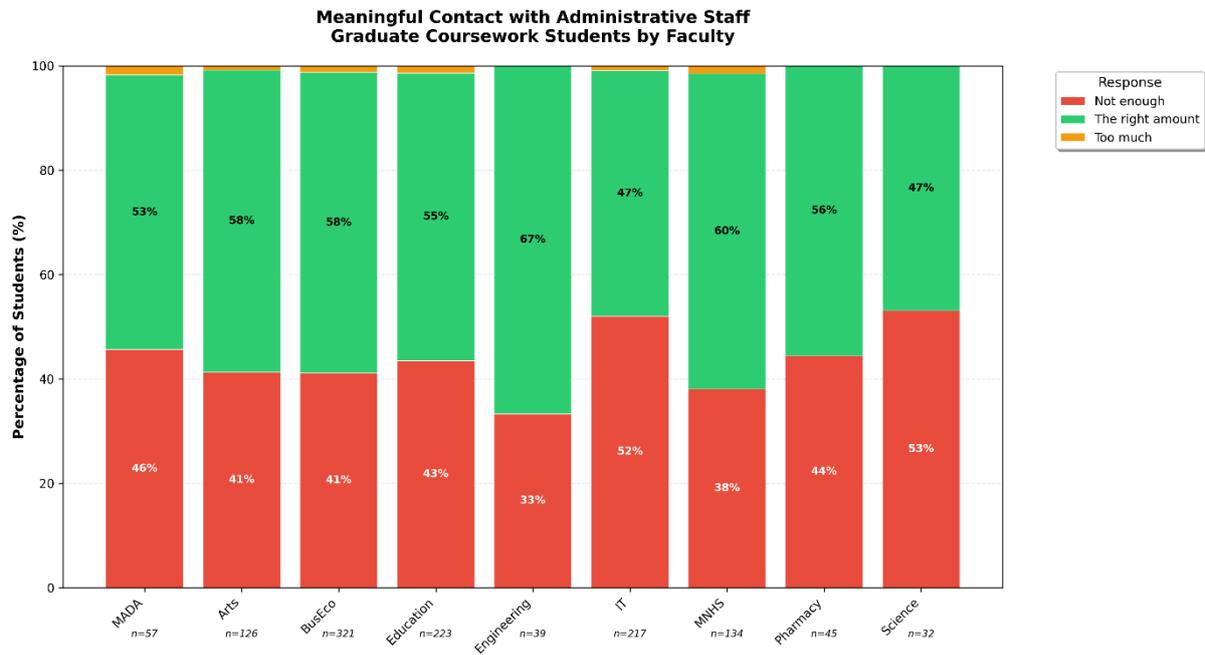
## Meaningful Contact

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

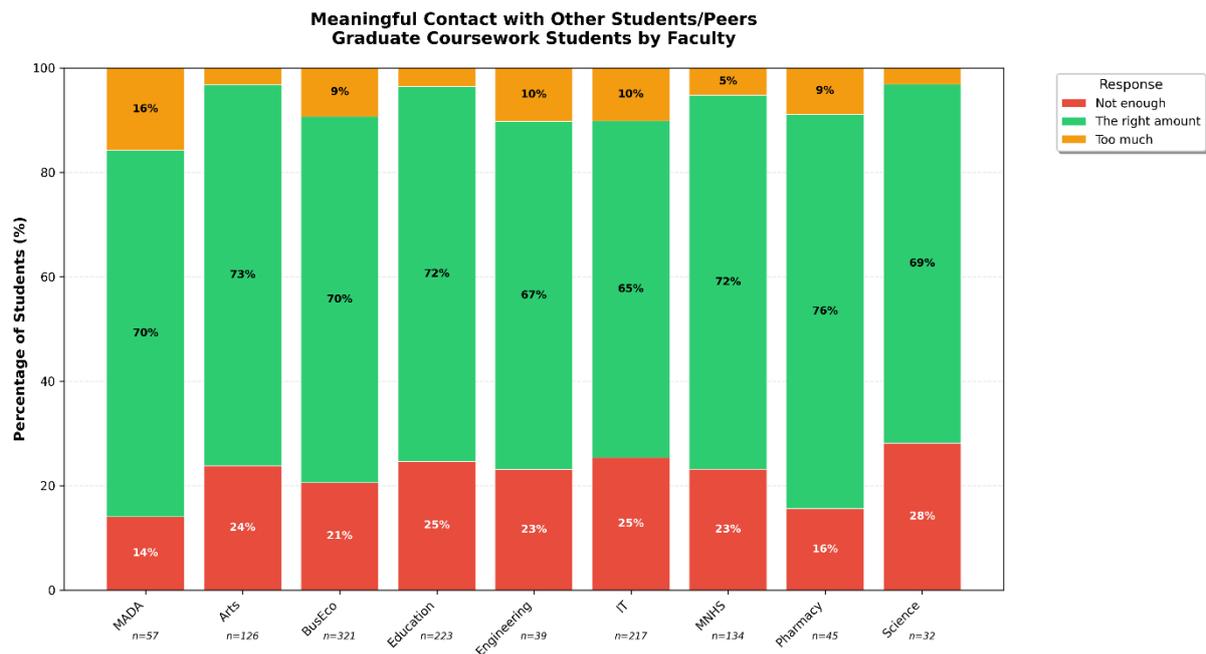


Education students report relatively positive experiences with academic staff contact. The majority (70%) indicate they receive the right amount of meaningful contact with academic staff, whilst 29% report not having enough contact and only 1% report too much.



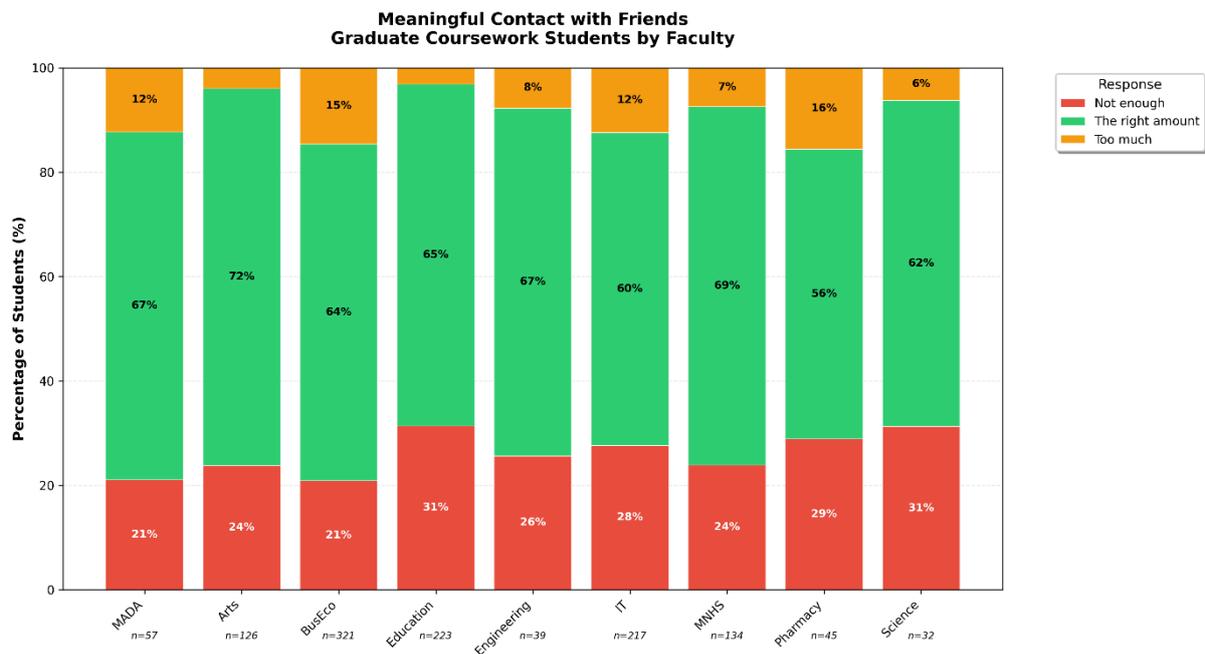
Education students show mixed experiences with administrative staff contact. Just over half (55%) report receiving the right amount of meaningful contact with administrative staff, whilst 43% indicate not having enough contact and 2% report too much. Education’s 43% insufficient contact rate positions the faculty in the middle range across the university, though this still represents a substantial proportion of students who feel disconnected from administrative support.

Administrative staff play crucial roles in graduate coursework programmes, from enrolment and progression queries to placement coordination and graduation requirements. The 43% reporting insufficient contact suggests opportunities to enhance accessibility and proactive communication from administrative teams.



Education students report largely positive experiences with peer connection. Nearly three-quarters (72%) indicate they receive the right amount of meaningful contact with other students and peers, whilst 25% report not having enough peer contact and 3% indicate too much. Education’s peer contact satisfaction is among the highest across faculties, matching Arts (73%) and MNHS (72%).

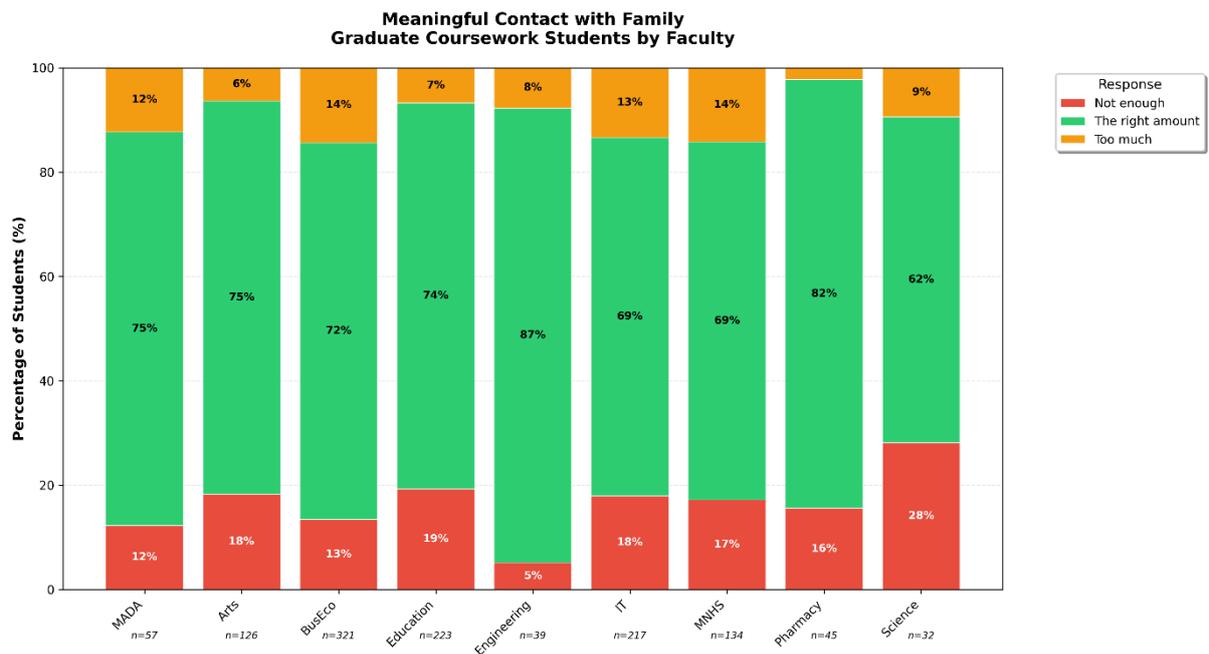
This is interesting, given the majority of Education survey respondents (73%) report also experiencing isolation in their student experience. This discord between student reporting on isolation and student reporting on peer connection may indicate that while Education coursework students do see each other, they are not necessarily interacting in environments that foster deeper social connection, as indicated by the student testimonies highlighted earlier. The relatively strong peer connection reporting may instead reflect Education’s cohort-based programme structure, shared placement experiences that create common ground for discussion and the collaborative nature of many Education assessments. However, the 25% reporting insufficient peer contact represents a meaningful minority who may benefit from additional community-building initiatives.



Education students show notable challenges maintaining friendships during their studies. Just under two-thirds (65%) report the right amount of meaningful contact with friends, whilst 31% indicate not having enough contact and 4% report too much. Education’s 31% insufficient friend contact rate is the equal-highest across all faculties (with Science students also reporting 31%), suggesting particular challenges in maintaining social connections outside the academic environment for students in both of these faculties.

This pattern may reflect the intensive demands of Education programmes, including substantial placement requirements that consume time otherwise available for socialising. The high proportion of international students among survey respondents (66%) also contributes to the reports of limited contact with friends, as many have left established friendship networks in their home countries.

## Family



Education students report generally positive levels of family contact despite study demands. Nearly three-quarters (74%) indicate they receive the right amount of meaningful contact with family, whilst 19% report not having enough contact and 7% report too much. Education's family contact patterns are comparable to the university average.

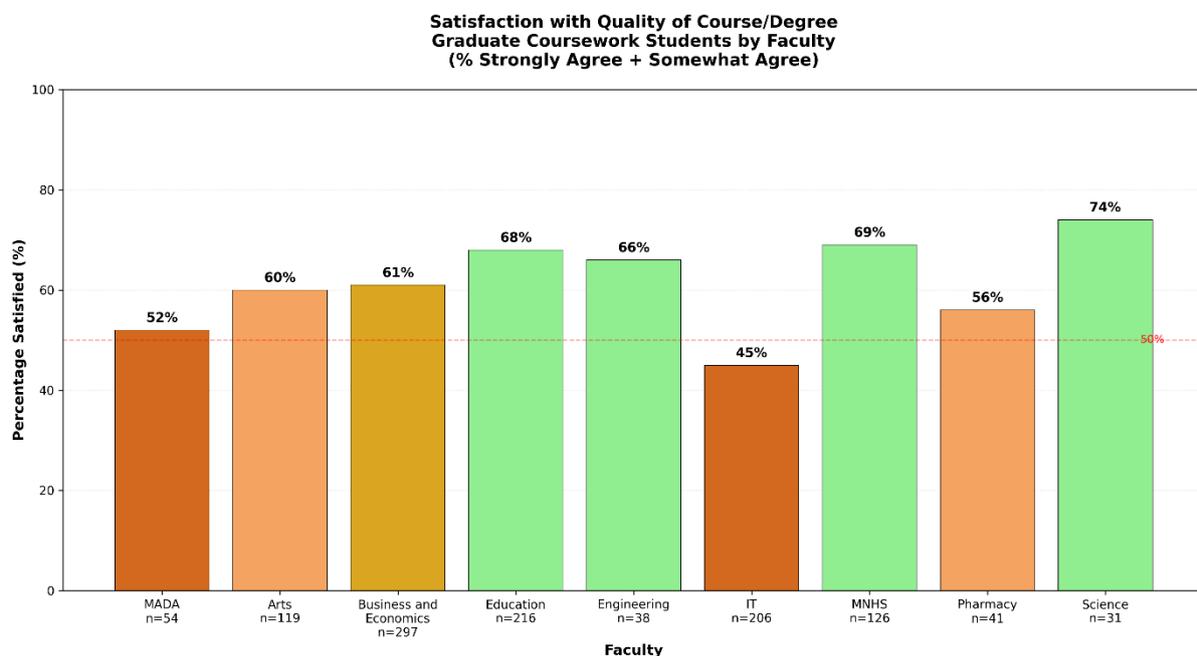
The 19% reporting insufficient family contact likely reflects the high proportion of international student survey respondents (66%) who are geographically separated from family members. For these students, maintaining family connections relies on digital communication across time zones, which may feel inadequate compared to in-person contact.

## 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.

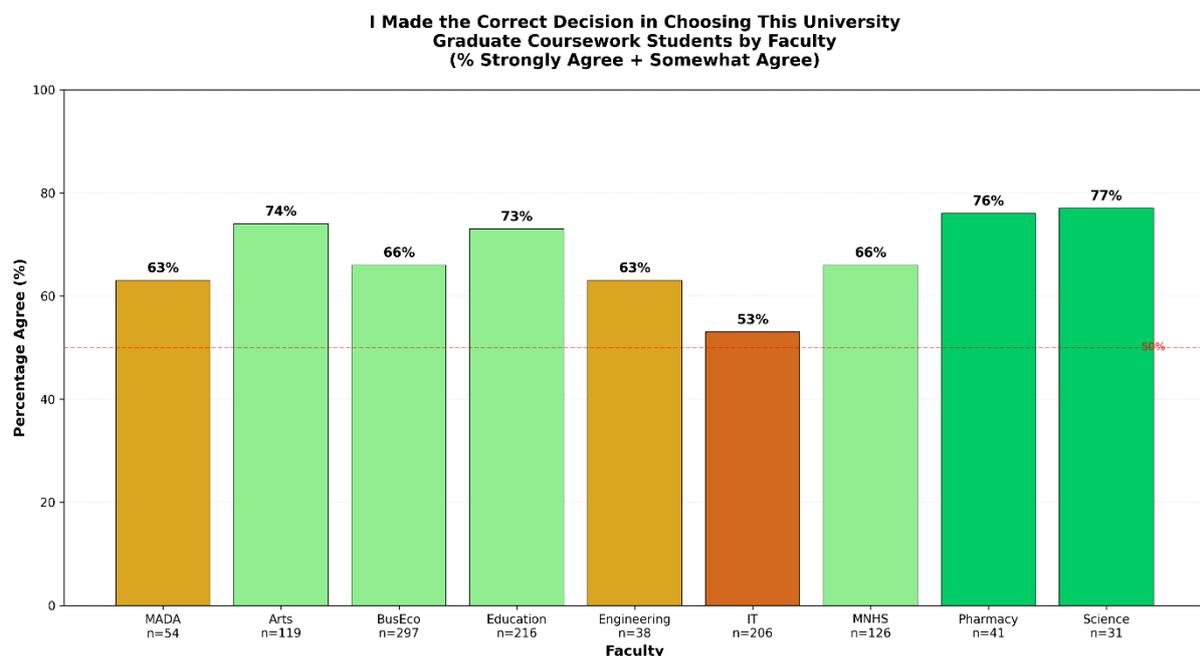


Education students report strong course satisfaction relative to other faculties. Overall, 68% of Education students agree or strongly agree they are satisfied with the quality of their course, positioning Education as the third highest faculty behind Science (74%) and MNHS (69%), and well above the lowest-performing faculty IT (45%).

This relatively positive satisfaction level suggests Education programmes are largely meeting student expectations regarding course quality and indicates that Education’s programme delivery resonates well with its diverse student cohort.

## 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.

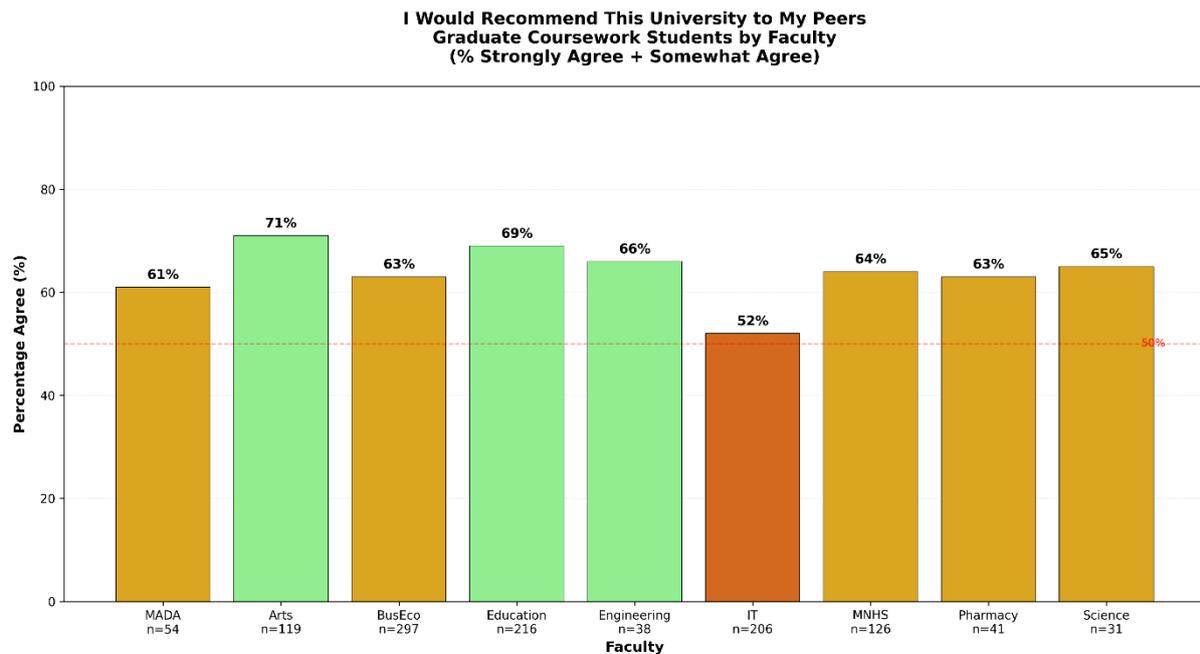


Education students demonstrate confidence in their university selection. Nearly three-quarters (73%) agree or strongly agree they made the correct decision in choosing Monash, placing Education among the higher-performing faculties alongside Arts (74%), Pharmacy (76%) and Science (77%).

This strong endorsement of university choice reflects positively on Monash’s reputation in Education and suggests students perceive value in the qualification and experience they are receiving.

## 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.

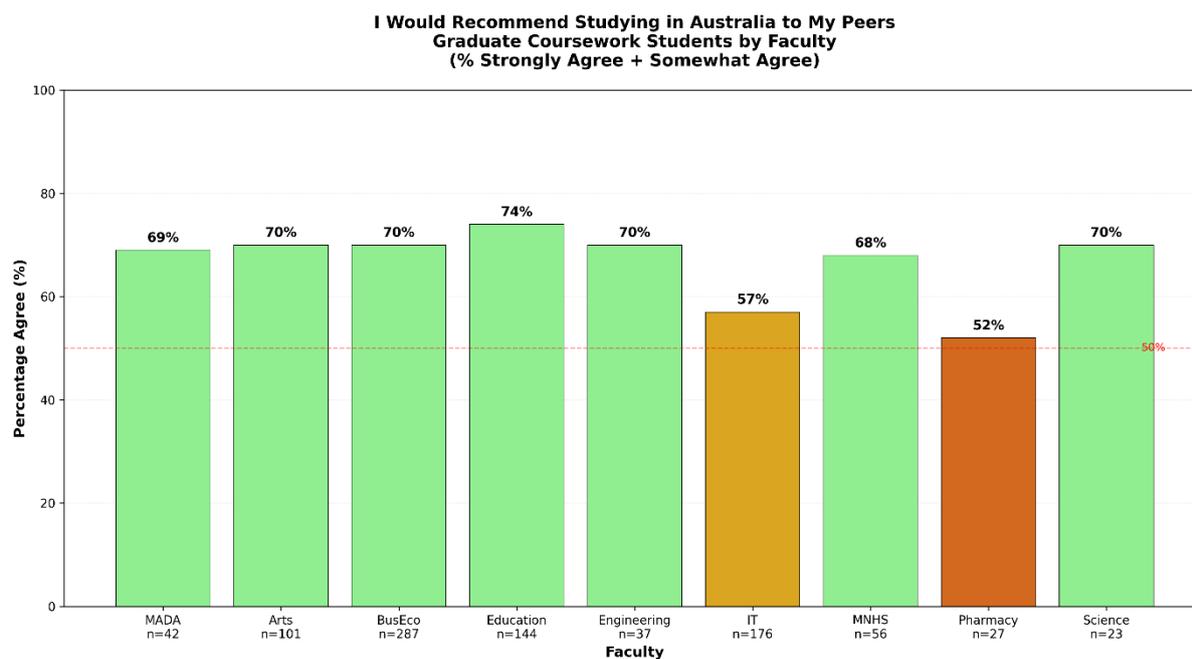


Education students show solid willingness to recommend Monash to peers. Over two-thirds (69%) agree or strongly agree they would recommend the university, positioning Education above the median across faculties and substantially above IT (52%) though below Arts (71%) and the top-performing faculties.

Peer recommendation serves as a key indicator of student advocacy and overall satisfaction with the institutional experience. Education's 69% recommendation rate suggests most students feel positively enough about their Monash experience to endorse it to others.

## 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.



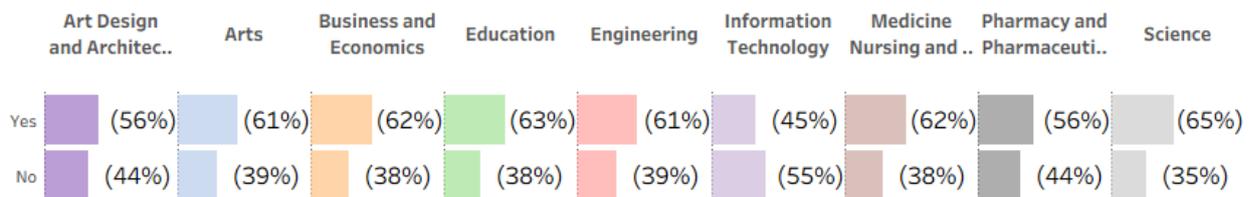
International Education students demonstrate notably positive perceptions of studying in Australia. Among international students, 74% agree or strongly agree they would recommend studying in Australia to their peers – the highest rate across all faculties.

This strong endorsement suggests international Education students have had positive experiences with the broader Australian educational and cultural environment, not just their specific programme at Monash. The 74% recommendation rate exceeds even faculties with higher overall satisfaction scores, potentially reflecting Education’s supportive cohort environment and the value international students place on Australian teaching qualifications for their home-country careers.

## 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



Value for money perceptions among Education students show concerning patterns despite relatively strong course satisfaction. Just under two-thirds (63%) of Education students feel their course offers value for money, whilst 38% do not – positioning Education as the second-highest across the faculties in relation to perceived value, below only Science (65%).

The gap between course satisfaction (68%) and perceived value for money (63%) highlights that satisfaction with academic quality does not automatically translate to feeling the financial investment is worthwhile. Education’s 38% negative value perception is particularly significant given the high proportion of students paying fees upfront (62%) and the substantial financial pressures documented earlier.

### 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 Education students, these highlighted concerns regarding quality of content, access to resources and career transitions. Below are a selection of testimonies capturing the key issues Education students perceive regarding course value for money:

*“The department is as out of date as the learning materials. The in-class intensive was a waste of time and money. The content is structured very poorly. Teaching staff are slow to respond and unsupportive”*

*“There should be more opportunities for students to have practical experience/ perspectives on the field. The tutorials sometimes are unprepared and really messy in how it is delivered.”*

*“Some of my tutors are absolutely awful and should not be teaching.”*

*“Just too expensive for an international student. mostly freebies are given in campus which in my situation I only come once a week and would rather not spend \$10 fare for freebies or events.”*

*“Not enough active support provided. Information provided is mostly vague especially in relation to assignments.”*

*“Only 3 months per semester. Really only studying for half a year. Only two in person classes a week. Doesn't feel like I'm learning enough at all. I feel like for a research masters this kind of schedule would make sense. But for a coursework masters there truly isn't enough course.”*

*“Lecturers take weeks to respond to emails and questions on Moodle sometimes not answering at all. Moodle is clunky lecturers organize their Moodle pages in different ways which makes navigating a hassle every day.”*

*“It is so expensive !!! For 1 online tutorial per unit every fortnight and one weekly lecture. Content is scattered.”*

*“Increase amount of money for what amounts to 10 hours of lectures and a reading list. They are good lectures but it is not worth what is paid for it.”*

*“I feel that students could get just as good of an education at any other institution. Monash have apparently cut Lectures as part of the teaching course which restricts the amount of contact with the chief examiner of a subject. This limits how much discussion we can have in class since tutors are now doing a lot of the content instruction a lecturer would otherwise provide. It is clear that this model is a cost saving function rather than a way of supporting student learning.”*

*“It is extremely expensive and will take me years to pay off this cumulative debt. It's a good course and I am learning a lot of valuable things and experiences however feel that it is overpriced for a single year.”*

*“The fees are really high and most of the work is self-directed; there are only few face to face sessions per week. The lectures and tutorials are given to big groups.”*

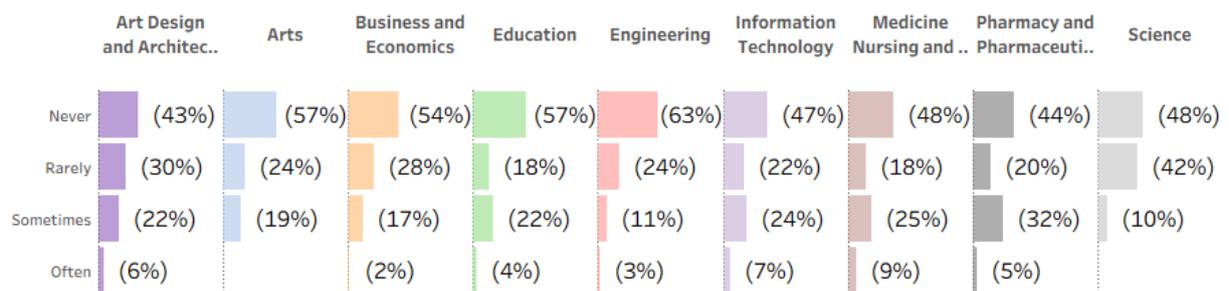
*“Despite the significant financial investment in the course (approximately \$34000) I have found the level of engagement from teaching staff to be extremely limited. Communication is often poor with discussion posts and emails frequently going unanswered which at times makes me question the value of attending when self-directed research seems more productive. Additionally, the course content lacks depth and critical insight and the Moodle platform is disorganised and difficult to navigate which further impacts the learning experience. The presence of additional fees at Monash adds to the overall frustration especially given the already high course costs.”*

*“[Online students] pay the same as on campus students who get access to placement and training opportunities access to test libraries. The university charged students a voluntary additional fee of \$110/person for access to global which is disgusting considering on-campus students have access to the same resources at no additional cost.”*

## 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

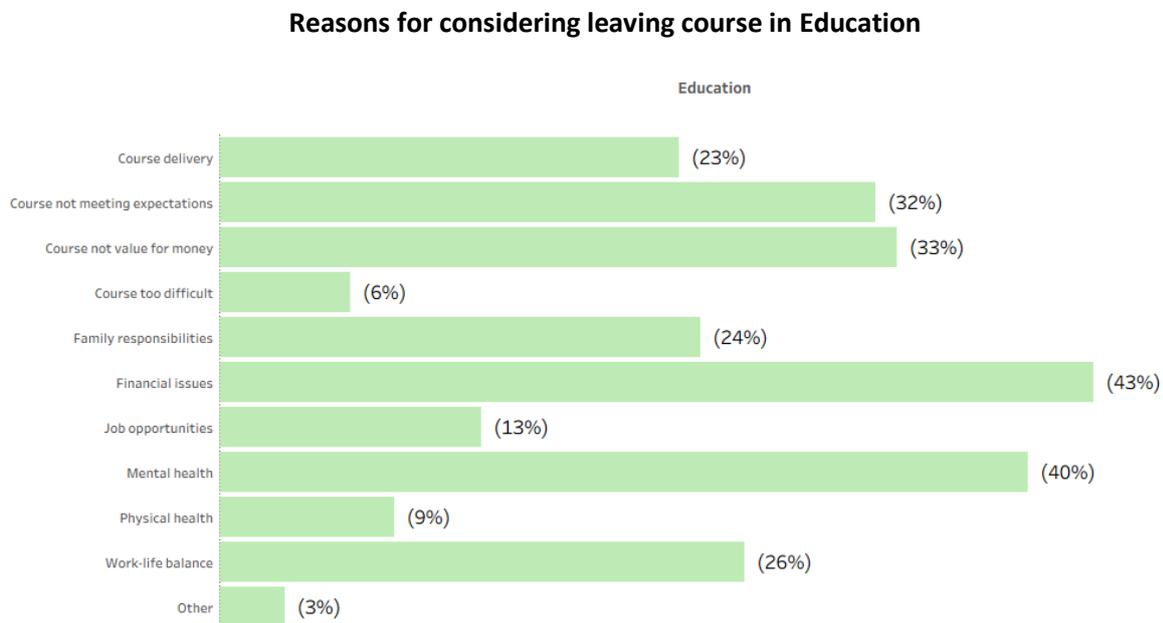


Retention vulnerability among Education students shows mixed patterns. Over half (57%) of Education students have never considered leaving their course – the equal-second-highest rate across faculties alongside Arts (57%) – whilst 18% have rarely considered leaving. However, 26% have considered leaving sometimes or often, with 22% sometimes and 4% often considering withdrawal.

Education’s relatively strong retention indicators may reflect the clear vocational pathway these qualifications provide and students’ commitment to entering the teaching profession. However, the 26% who have at least sometimes considered leaving represents a meaningful at-risk cohort whose concerns warrant investigation and intervention.

## 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:



Education students cite financial issues (43%) and mental health (40%) as the primary pressures driving withdrawal considerations, revealing how economic strain and psychological wellbeing challenges intersect to threaten course completion. These twin pressures affect substantial proportions of students contemplating departure and likely reinforce one another, as financial stress contributes to mental health challenges whilst poor mental health may impair capacity to manage financial obligations. Beyond these dominant concerns, students cite course expectations and value misalignment at nearly equal rates (32% and 33% respectively), indicating that roughly one-third of those considering leaving feel the programme has not delivered what they anticipated or justified the investment required.

Work-life balance (26%) and family responsibilities (24%) emerge as significant secondary factors, combined with course delivery (23%), this suggests that many Education students navigate complex demands beyond their studies – likely reflecting the professional development context where established teachers and education professionals pursue graduate qualifications whilst maintaining careers and family commitments – requiring greater flexibility in course delivery methods in order to accommodate complex professional and personal realities outside of studies. The relatively modest rates for job opportunities (13%) and course difficulty (6%) indicate that career prospects and academic capability are not primary drivers of withdrawal consideration, pointing instead to the sustainability challenges of balancing financial pressures, wellbeing, professional work and family obligations whilst pursuing graduate study. This pattern suggests retention interventions must address not only programme quality but the broader life circumstances and support needs of Education students managing multiple and competing demands.

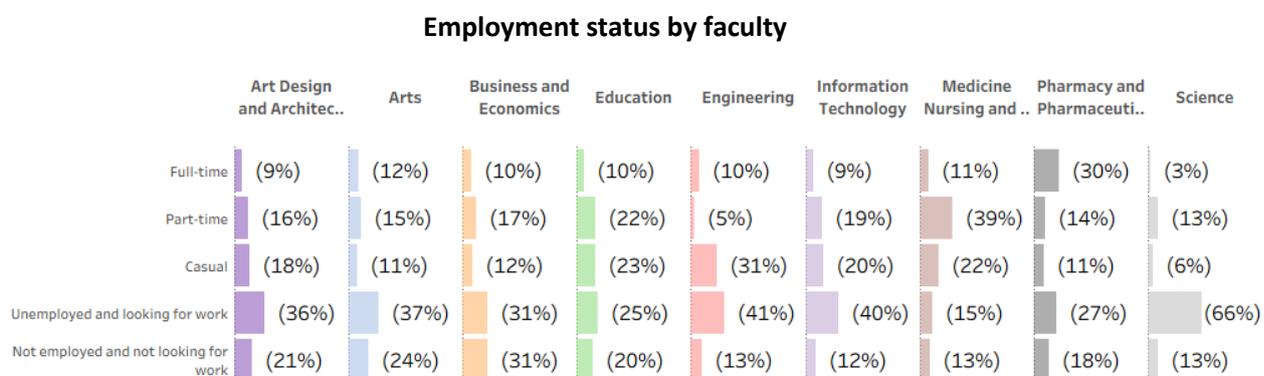
## 6. Employment and Career Planning

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 Education, 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 Education 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.

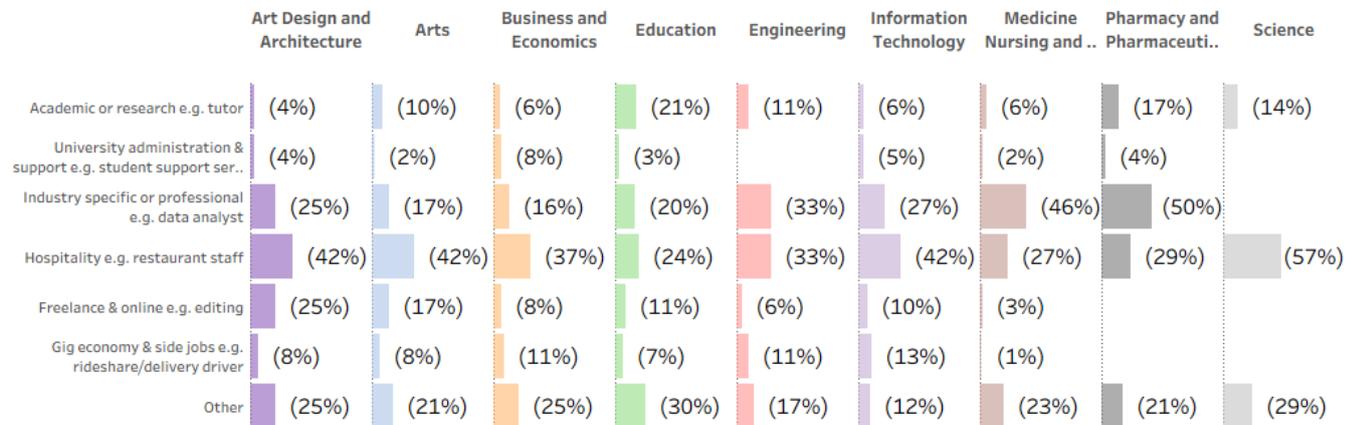


Employment patterns among Education graduate coursework students reflect diverse circumstances and study arrangements. Employment is distributed across categories: 10% work full-time, 22% part-time and 23% in casual roles. Combined, 55% of Education students are employed in some capacity, whilst 25% are unemployed and looking for work and 20% are not employed and not looking.

Education's 25% unemployed-and-seeking rate is notably the second-lowest compared to other faculties. This minority of students seeking work likely reflect the challenges international students face in securing employment with visa work restrictions. The substantial casual employment (23%) indicates many students rely on insecure work arrangements that may offer flexibility but limited income stability.

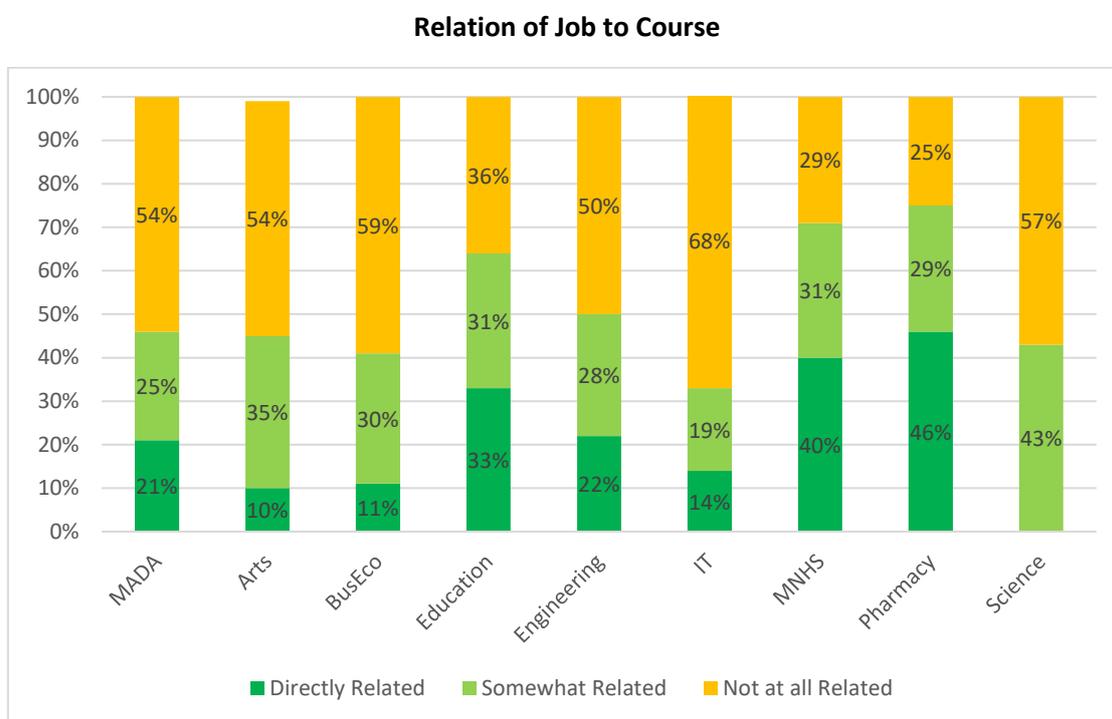
## Job Type

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



Among employed Education students, job types span various sectors with notable concentration in hospitality and education-adjacent roles. Academic or research positions including tutoring account for 21%, the highest among all faculties, whilst hospitality work (24%) remains common. Industry-specific or professional roles account for 20%, potentially including non-academic teaching assistant and education support positions.

The 21% in academic or tutoring roles is encouraging, suggesting Education students are gaining relevant professional experience through university channels. However, the concentration in hospitality (24%) – as well as the combined 48% working in freelance, gig economy or unspecific “other” employment – indicates many students work in unrelated fields, likely driven by the availability of flexible casual work that accommodates study schedules.

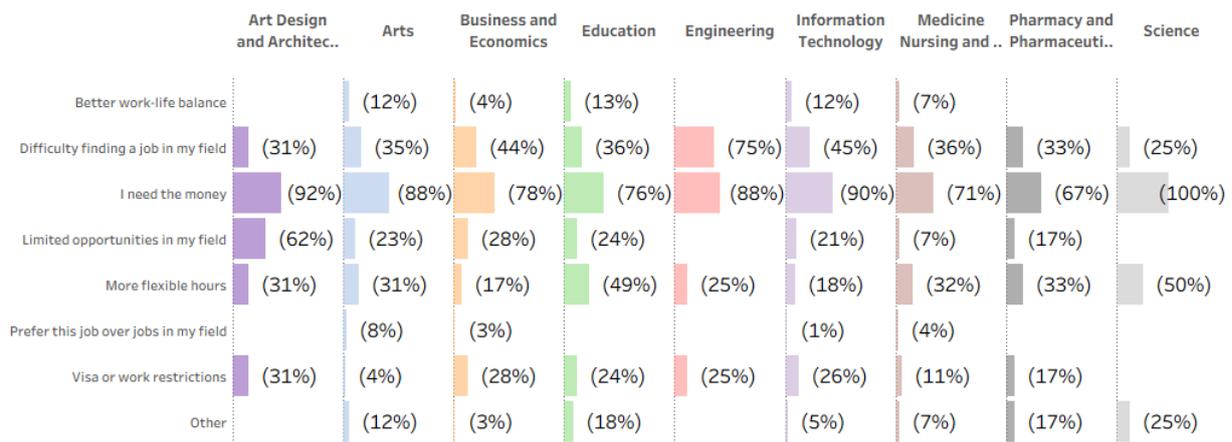


Education demonstrates strong work-study alignment, with 64% of employed students working in jobs at least somewhat related to their field (33% directly related, 31% somewhat related). However, 36% of Education students work in jobs completely unrelated to their field, suggesting a bifurcated experience: established professionals able to maintain career-relevant employment whilst upskilling, alongside students (potentially including international students or career-changers) who lack existing education sector positions and must accept unrelated work to meet financial obligations.

*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



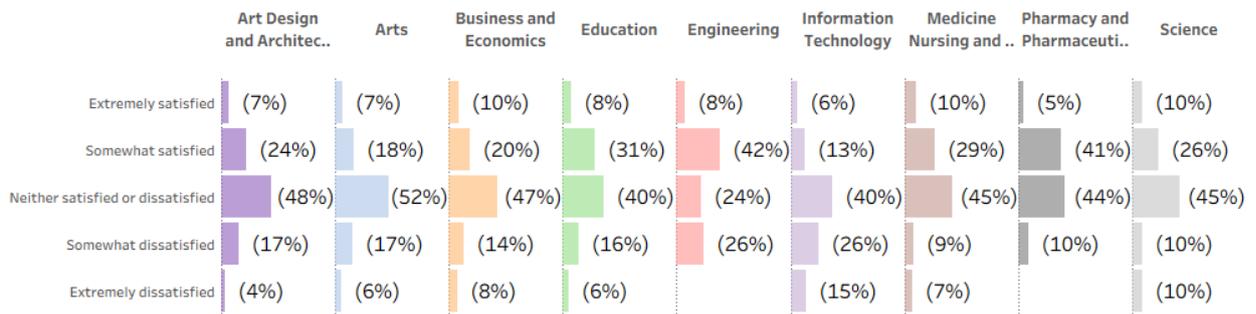
The reasons Education students work outside their field underscore the financial pressures documented throughout this report. With 76% citing financial necessity and 49% seeking flexible hours, employment decisions are driven primarily by survival needs rather than career development. The 36% reporting difficulty finding field-relevant jobs and 24% citing visa restrictions highlight that some Education students are struggling to find appropriate employment opportunities aligned with their studies and accommodating for the international student experience.

For Education students specifically, the gap between study and employment is particularly consequential – teaching placements provide some practical experience, but paid work in education settings would offer both income and professional development, setting students up for successful career transitions post-graduation.

### Career Guidance Experiences

Given the employment challenges documented above – including significant 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 by Faculty



Career guidance satisfaction among Education students shows substantial room for improvement. Only 39% of Education students report satisfaction with career guidance (8% extremely satisfied, 31% somewhat satisfied), whilst 40% are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied suggesting that many students either have not engaged with career services or find them insufficiently impactful to warrant strong opinions. Additionally, 22% report they are dissatisfied (16% somewhat, 6% extremely) with career support opportunities at Monash.

The 62% combined of either indifferent or negative attitudes towards career guidance highlights an opportunity for greater attention and investment into these services for graduate coursework students in Education.

#### 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.

*“Having better idea about what pathways a student can take to secure their foothold in the industry.”*

*“The childcare industry is in chaos and students should be made aware of it. There's nothing we can do to fix it but lecturers make us feel like the responsibility to fix the industry is ours when it's actually at government level.”*

*“A dedicated team that helps us find employment in our field and sends us opportunities via email.”*

*“There is often very little relation between the content covered in the course and the actual job of teaching. Everything that I have learnt that will assist me in gaining employment has come from placements or teachers I know in my personal life rather than through uni. There needs to be much more connection between the uni career people and the actual current field of teaching.”*

*“I would recommend a reform of the current support arrangements particularly in relation to career development. This could include the development of a new user-friendly platform dedicated to career pathways and opportunities. Important notifications should be easily accessible and automatically delivered to all students as they often go unnoticed when students are required to actively search for them. The platform should also provide direct*

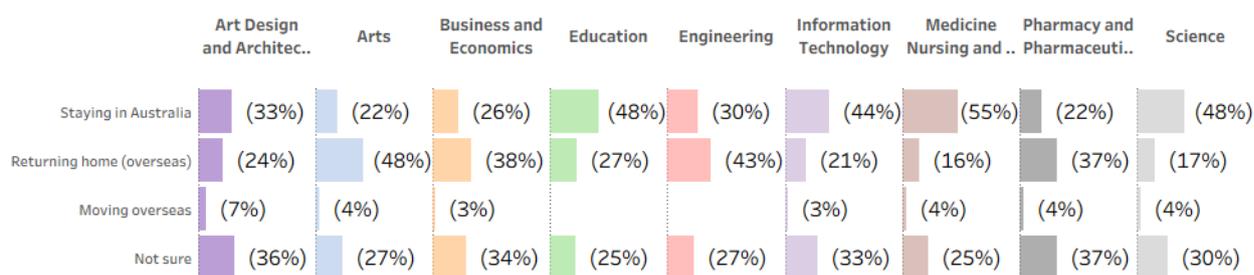
links to employment opportunities and offer comprehensive support for both current students and alumni. This may include access to advocacy services financial assistance for job interviews and professional resources as well as psychological support to assist with preparation wellbeing and transition into the workforce.”

“In speaking to my seniors, I have realised that placements are based on a feeling of scarcity and 'you get what you get' attitude. Therefore, they generally don't lead to an employment opportunity from the managed placement in the future.”

## 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**



International Education students show diverse post-graduation intentions. Nearly half (48%) plan to stay in Australia after completing their degree – the equal-second highest intention-to-stay rate across all faculties (alongside Science 48% and behind MNHS 55%). Over a quarter (27%) plan to return to their home country, whilst 25% are not yet sure of their plans.

Education’s high rate of students intending to stay in Australia post-study (48%) reflects both the value of Australian teaching qualifications and students’ positive experiences during their studies, as evidenced by the strong Australia recommendation rates documented earlier. Teaching

qualifications obtained in Australia may also offer clearer pathways to professional registration and employment than qualifications in some other fields.

## What Makes Education Distinct: Key Themes

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

### Professional Development Dual Track: Balancing Established Educators and Career Entrants

Education demonstrates a student experience reflecting two distinct cohorts: established education professionals seeking advanced credentials whilst maintaining careers and career-changers or new entrants (including international students) working toward entry into the teaching profession.

Employment patterns reveal this division most clearly. Education achieves 64% work-study alignment, with 33% in directly related roles –exceeding most faculties and reflecting how many students maintain teaching or educational leadership positions whilst studying. The 21% working in academic or tutoring positions and combined 32% in full-time and part-time employment suggest established professionals integrating study into ongoing careers, applying learning immediately whilst building credentials for advancement.

However, 36% work in jobs completely unrelated to education, with 24% concentrated in hospitality, and 48% working in freelance, gig or “other” employment. This second cohort – likely comprising of international students facing visa restrictions, domestic career-changers or recent graduates – must accept survival employment whilst pursuing credentials, with 76% citing financial necessity and 36% reporting difficulty finding education-sector roles. The 25% unemployment rate whilst seeking work further reveals barriers to relevant employment access, with the additional 20% unemployed and not seeking work potentially reflecting those who might have previously wanted work opportunities but have given up on finding employment due to lack of success in finding adequate options.

This split creates distinct support needs. Work-life balance (26%) and family responsibilities (24%) are sources of withdrawal considerations, whilst the 31% reporting insufficient friend contact – equal-highest across all faculties – likely reflecting the experiences of established professionals whose work and family commitments affect their social connection time and subsequently their wellbeing during graduate coursework. In contrast, career entrants and international students may face employment access barriers, need to build professional networks from scratch and navigate visa restrictions (24%) whilst managing financial pressures through unrelated work.

For international students in Education, despite these challenges, there appears to be strong levels of intention to remain in Australia post-study (48%) and highly positive attitudes towards studying in Australia (74% – the highest among all faculties), indicating many envision long-term Australian education careers. However, current support structures may inadequately address the divergent needs of these two cohorts.

## Financial Pressure and Wellbeing Crisis Despite Strong Programme Satisfaction

Education faces a paradox: students demonstrate strong satisfaction yet cite financial and mental health pressures as primary threats to completion. This disconnect reveals how external pressures undermine otherwise positive educational experiences.

Satisfaction metrics position Education favourably: 68% course satisfaction (third highest), 73% confidence in university choice, 69% willing to recommend Monash and 57% who have never considered leaving (equal-second highest). Yet financial issues (43%) and mental health (40%) emerge as the dominant withdrawal pressures – substantially exceeding course quality concerns.

Financial circumstances reveal why sustainability threatens otherwise satisfactory experiences. Nearly half (47%) earn below \$20,000 annually, 71% of renters spend 40% or more of income on rent (with 47% spending over half on housing) and only 4% report “doing great” financially whilst 18% are “having trouble” – up from 11% in 2023. These pressures compromise academic engagement: 35% report big or extreme financial stress impact on course completion, 37% on concentration and 32% on campus attendance.

Mental health patterns interconnect with financial stress. Whilst 42% access mental health support (third highest across faculties), 58% do not access support despite 26% experiencing moderate to extremely severe depression and 31% experiencing moderate to extremely severe anxiety. The 40% citing mental health as a withdrawal consideration indicates how wellbeing challenges – potentially exacerbated by financial pressures, work-life demands and isolation – threaten retention despite programme satisfaction.

The value for money gap crystallises this paradox: only 63% feel their course offers value despite 68% being satisfied with quality. Students recognise programme quality yet question whether the financial investment, intensive demands and impacts on wellbeing justify returns – particularly when 82% rely on family support (47% having families pay all fees) and 49% must contribute their own limited funds. For international students paying substantially higher fees whilst facing employment barriers and for domestic students juggling careers and families whilst managing study costs, the sustainability question looms large even if educational quality meets expectations.

## Faculty-Specific Recommendations

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

### Supporting the Professional Development Dual Track

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

Redesign career guidance to explicitly serve both cohorts: create separate pathways for established professionals seeking advancement (leadership preparation, specialisation opportunities, research-practice integration) and career entrants seeking sector access (credential building, placement connections, employment pathway navigation, professional network development). Acknowledge that “one-size-fits-all” career support misses both groups’ distinctive needs.

Develop Education-specific peer mentoring connecting incoming students with established professionals already in education roles who can provide practical guidance on balancing work-study demands, accessing relevant employment opportunities and navigating pathways into teaching. Compensate senior student mentors with small stipends or academic recognition, creating sustainable support whilst addressing the 25% insufficient peer contact rate by facilitating meaningful peer relationships.

Establish flexible programme delivery options accommodating the work-life demands facing established professionals (evening classes, intensive block modes, asynchronous learning components) whilst ensuring career entrants receive structured support accessing placement opportunities, professional networks and employment pathways. Review assessment timing and placement scheduling to minimise conflicts with professional and family commitments to increase accessibility and inclusion.

#### **Moderate Investments**

Create Education “Career Accelerator” programme specifically for career entrants and international students, actively connecting them with schools, educational organisations and teaching opportunities before financial pressures force acceptance of survival hospitality work. Include resume development for teaching positions, interview preparation, Australian education system navigation and professional registration guidance – addressing the 36% difficulty finding field-relevant work and 24% facing visa restrictions.

Pilot “Teaching Professional Development Community” bringing established educators and career entrants together for networking, practice sharing and mentorship. Structure around practical challenges (classroom management, curriculum design, student assessment) where experienced teachers can share insights whilst building peer connections that address the peer contact deficit. This creates value for both cohorts whilst facilitating the professional relationship building that leads to potential employment opportunities.

## Addressing Financial and Wellbeing Sustainability Crisis

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

Implement proactive wellbeing check-ins at high-stress programme points (placement periods, assessment peaks, semester transitions) where faculty contacts students experiencing known pressure periods rather than expecting help-seeking. Train teaching and administrative staff to recognise financial and mental health distress signs and facilitate referrals, normalising that support access is expected part of graduate study rather than crisis response.

Create transparent communication about programme demands, time commitments and true costs (including placement-related expenses, resources, materials, and time burden) before enrolment. Provide realistic guidance on work-study integration challenges so students can make informed decisions about programme timing and financial readiness. Address the 32% who cite unmet expectations by ensuring accurate expectation-setting and management from outset.

Develop Education-specific mental health and financial counselling resources acknowledging the distinctive pressures students face: work-life balance challenges for professionals, isolation and employment barriers for international students, family responsibility navigation, placement stress management. Embed these resources directly into programme communications and placement preparation rather than treating as separate services requiring student initiative.

### **Moderate Investments**

Establish emergency financial assistance specifically for Education students facing acute crises (rent arrears, unexpected expenses, placement costs) that threaten course continuation. Even modest funding could prevent withdrawals amongst the 18% “having trouble” financially and address the 43% citing financial issues as reason for considering leaving. Complement with financial counselling addressing underlying sustainability concerns.

Create structured social connection opportunities addressing the 25% insufficient peer contact and combined 73% of students who report experiencing isolation and lack of belonging at least sometimes or more frequently. Develop cohort-building activities beyond task-focused collaboration: social events, peer study groups, informal networking spaces, placement debrief sessions. Recognise that intensive programme demands and work-life pressures constrain socialising time, so intentionally create low-barrier connection opportunities integrated into programme structure.

Enhance mental health support access for the 58% not currently accessing services despite documented need. Partner with Monash Counselling to provide Education-specific group support addressing common challenges (placement anxiety, work-life balance stress, imposter syndrome in teaching contexts), reducing stigma through normalisation. Offer drop-in counselling during peak stress periods and embed wellness workshops directly into programme rather than expecting external service-seeking behaviour from students experiencing mental distress.

## Appendix 1: Demographics

<b>Course name</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Master of Applied Behaviour Analysis	17 (7%)
Master of Counselling	36 (15%)
Master of Education	46 (19%)
Master of Educational and Development Psychology	6 (3%)
Master of Teaching in Early Childhood Education	23 (10%)
Master of Teaching (Primary and Secondary)	10 (4%)
Master of Teaching (Primary)	4 (2%)
Master of Teaching (Secondary)	45 (19%)
Master of Teaching English as a Second Language	9 (4%)
Master of Educational Leadership	6 (3%)
Master of Teaching (Early Childhood and Primary_	18 (8%)
Other	17 (7%)

<b>Campus</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
I do not regularly attend campus	22 (9%)
Clayton	217 (86%)
Caulfield	11 (4%)
Peninsula	2 (1%)
Parkville	0 (0%)
Law Chambers	0 (0%)
Malaysia	0 (0%)
Hospital or Medical Centre	0 (0%)
Indonesia	0 (0%)
Suzhou	0 (0%)
other	0 (0%)

<b>Domestic/International</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Local student (Australian or New Zealand citizen/permanent resident)	80 (34%)
International student	158 (66%)

<b>Study load</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Full-time	207 (86%)
Part-time	32 (13%)
On leave from study	1 (0%)

<b>Study location</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Entirely on-campus	108 (45%)
Multi-modal	111 (47%)
Entirely off-campus	19 (8%)
Other	0 (0%)

<b>Time since last degree</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Less than 1 year	89 (37%)
1-5 years	110 (46%)
6-10 years	20 (8%)
11+ years	19 (8%)

<b>Degree progress</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
First year	130 (54%)
Second year	98 (41%)
Third year and beyond	12 (5%)

<b>Study hours</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Less than 5	18 (8%)
6-10	59 (25%)
11-20	81 (34%)
21-30	47 (20%)
31-40	28 (12%)
Over 40 hours	5 (2%)

<b>English proficiency</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Fluent	126 (53%)
Advanced	60 (25%)
Intermediate	46 (19%)
Elementary	5 (2%)
Beginner	1 (0%)

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Woman	189 (79%)
Man	41 (17%)
Non-binary/gender diverse	3 (1%)
Prefer to self-describe	2 (1%)
Prefer not to say	3 (1%)

<b>LGBTIQA+</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Yes	48 (20%)
No	177 (74%)
Prefer not to disclose	13 (5%)

<b>Indigenous (domestic students only)</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Yes	0 (0%)
No	79 (99%)
Prefer not to disclose	1 (1%)

<b>Disability</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Yes	15 (6%)
No	213 (90%)
Prefer not to disclose	10 (4%)

<b>Registered disability with DSS</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Yes	8 (53%)
No	7 (47%)

<b>Age</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
24 or under	84 (35%)
25-29	79 (33%)
30-39	45 (19%)
40 and over	30 (13%)

<b>Employment status</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Full-time	21 (9%)
Part-time	50 (22%)
Casual	54 (24%)
Unemployed and looking for work	60 (26%)
Not employed and not looking for work	45 (20%)

<b>Work hours</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Less than 5	17 (14%)
6-10	20 (17%)
11-20	38 (31%)
21-30	27 (22%)
31-40	12 (10%)
More than 40	7 (6%)