

Graduate Coursework in IT:

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 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

Edwards, Ryan. *Graduate Coursework in IT: Student Experiences, Challenges and Opportunities for Enhancement*. Melbourne: Monash Graduate Association, 2025.

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Introduction

This report examines the experiences of 230 graduate coursework students in the Faculty of IT 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 IT.

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

- 230 IT graduate coursework students participated.
- Response rate represents approximately 6% of enrolled IT 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 IT graduate coursework contexts.
- Financial pressures and their impact on study.
- Parental and carer responsibilities.
- Peer connection and support needs unique to IT 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 IT 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 IT

This section provides core findings from the 230 IT 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 IT 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.

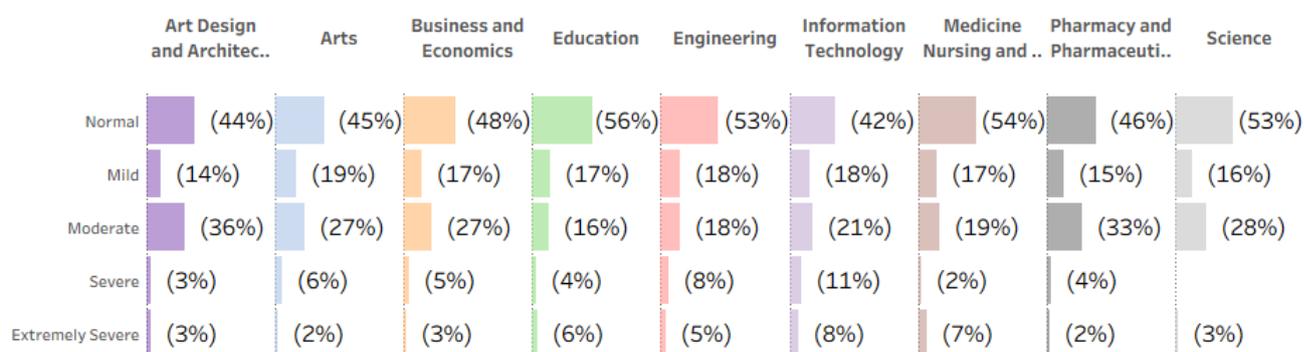
1. The Mental Health and Wellbeing Landscape

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.

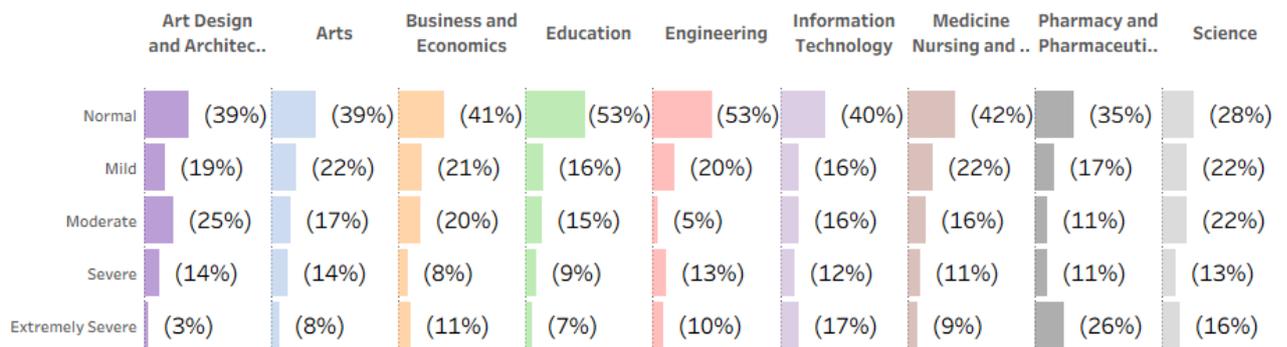
DASS21 and Mental Health Indicators

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.

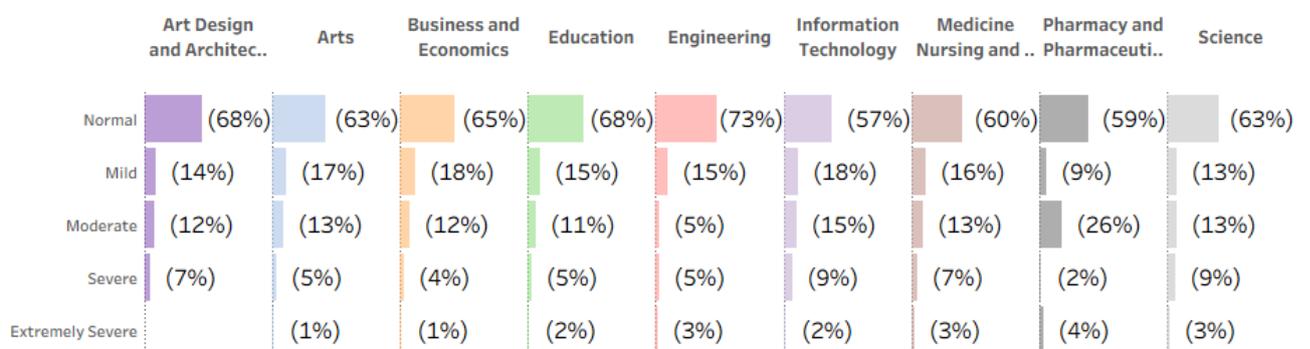
Depression:



Anxiety:



Stress:



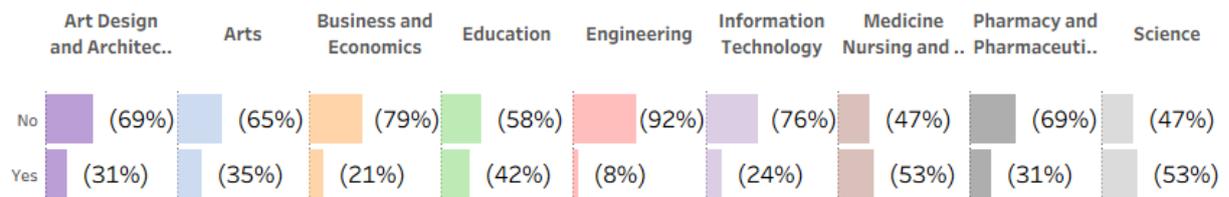
IT graduate coursework students show mental health patterns that reflect concerning challenges across all three DASS-21 domains. For depression, 42% of IT students fall within the “normal” range compared to 49% across Monash, with 40% experiencing moderate to extremely severe symptoms versus 34% university-wide. In particular, IT students report the highest concentration in the severe and extremely severe categories (19%) compared to all other faculties. Anxiety also presents as a concern, with 40% of IT students in the “normal” range and 45% experiencing moderate to extremely severe symptoms. Stress shows somewhat better outcomes, with 57% of IT students in the “normal” range and 26% experiencing moderate to extremely severe stress levels.

These findings suggest that IT graduate coursework students experience notably elevated mental health challenges compared to the broader Monash population, particularly for depression.

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 IT graduate coursework students reveals mixed patterns of engagement. Overall, IT students show moderate access to mental health services, with 24% of students reporting that they have accessed services. However, 76% of students remain disconnected from mental health services, though this likely reflects the predominantly international composition of the faculty respondents (87%) where international students access support at significantly lower rates than domestic students. The data suggests opportunities to enhance awareness and accessibility of mental health resources specifically tailored to the IT graduate coursework community, particularly given the elevated depression and anxiety levels documented in this cohort.

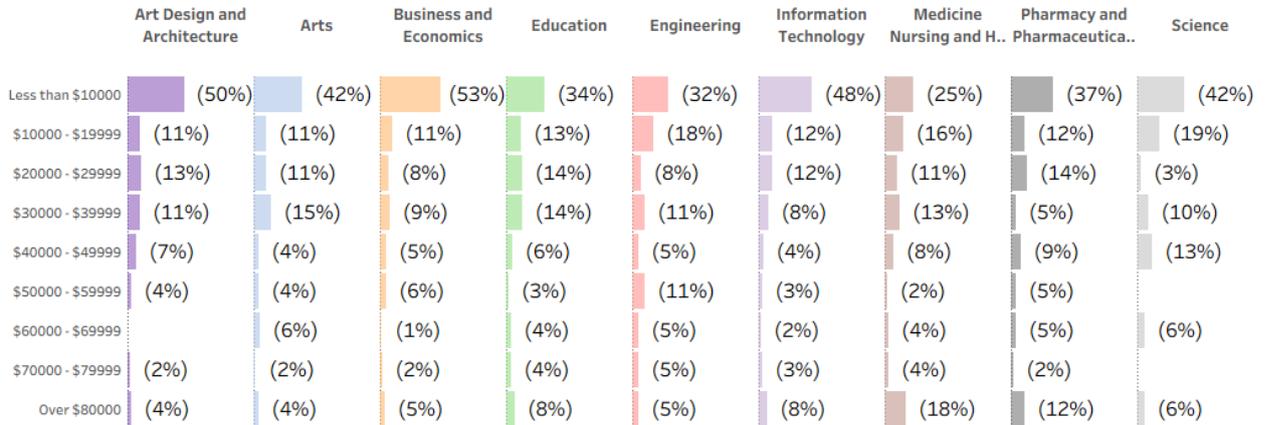
2. Financial Circumstances and Study Impact

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

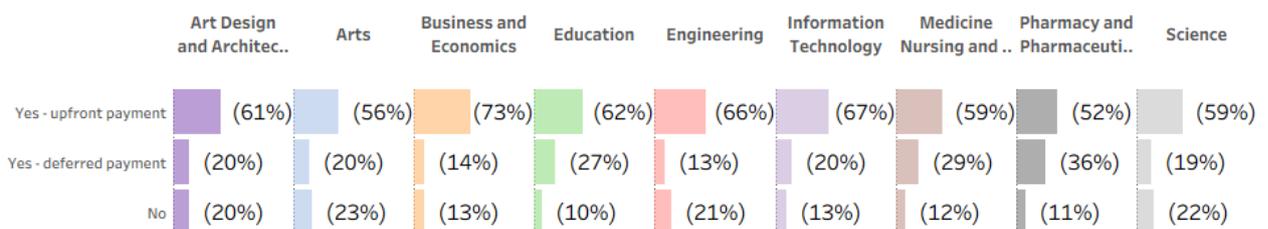


IT graduate coursework students report income levels that reflect diverse financial circumstances, with notable concentration across lower and middle income brackets. Almost half (48%) report earning less than \$10,000 annually, with a further 24% earning under \$30,000 per year. This means roughly three quarters of IT students (72%) are earning below the poverty line (currently \$30,368 per year). However, IT shows some representation in upper income brackets, with 13% reporting income above \$60,000 per annum. This potentially reflects students with prior professional experience in the technology sector or those maintaining employment relationships with technology companies whilst studying.

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



The vast majority of IT graduate coursework students pay tuition or course fees directly (67%), reflecting typical patterns for this cohort where most students bear direct financial responsibility for their education. A further 20% defer their fee payment, while a small minority of 13% do not pay course fees. This high proportion of fee-paying students provides important context for interpreting value for money perceptions and financial stress indicators documented elsewhere in this report, as students making substantial upfront investment in their education understandably hold high expectations for course quality, career outcomes and return on investment.

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 IT

Payment Source	Use this source	<i>All</i>	<i>Most</i>	<i>About Half</i>	<i>A little</i>
Self	46%	11%	5%	8%	22%
Family	81%	52%	15%	10%	5%
Employer	4%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Sponsor	10%	6%	1%	3%	1%
Other	10%	4%	3%	2%	1%

Fee funding patterns among IT graduate coursework students paying upfront fees reveal heavy reliance on family financial support alongside substantial self-funding. The data shows that 81% of IT students receive at least some family contribution towards their fees, with 52% reporting that family pays all their fees. Additionally, 46% of students report using personal funds to cover at least some portion of their fees. Employer and sponsor support remains relatively limited at 4% and 10% respectively, suggesting that most IT students are either continuing directly from undergraduate study or making career transitions without workplace sponsorship. These funding arrangements have direct implications for student financial stress, family financial burden and the intensity of financial pressure students experience during 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.

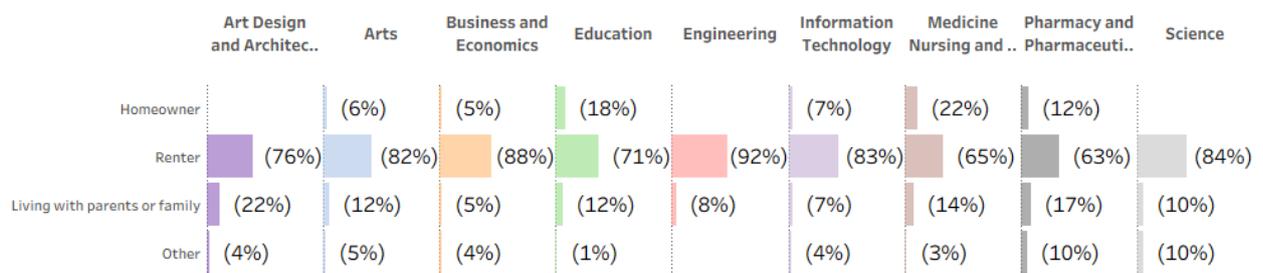
	MI Financial Wellbeing Scale		
	IT 2023	IT 2025	Monash 2025
Doing great	7%	2%	4%
Getting by	34%	35%	37%
Just coping	42%	45%	41%
Having trouble	17%	19%	19%

IT graduate coursework students show concerning financial wellbeing patterns on the Melbourne Institute’s Financial Wellbeing Scale. Only 2% of IT students report “doing great” financially – the lowest proportion across all faculties and well below the 4% Monash average. The majority (45%) report “just coping” with their finances, whilst 19% indicate they are “having trouble” (matching the university-wide average). These findings reveal that 64% of IT students fall into the “just coping” or “having trouble” categories, indicating substantial financial strain within this cohort. The particularly low proportion reporting positive financial wellbeing (“doing great”) suggests that even IT students with seemingly adequate incomes experience significant financial pressure, likely reflecting high course fees, living costs and limited financial reserves. In comparing to financial wellbeing data from 2023, it appears IT students are worse off than their 2023 counterparts, with a 5% drop in those reporting “doing great”, and an increase in all other measures of “getting by”, “just coping” and “having trouble”. This indicates that current students may be worse off financially than two years ago. This likely reflects the increasing cost-of-living crisis include higher prices for rent, food, and basic services which are felt throughout Australia.

Housing Costs

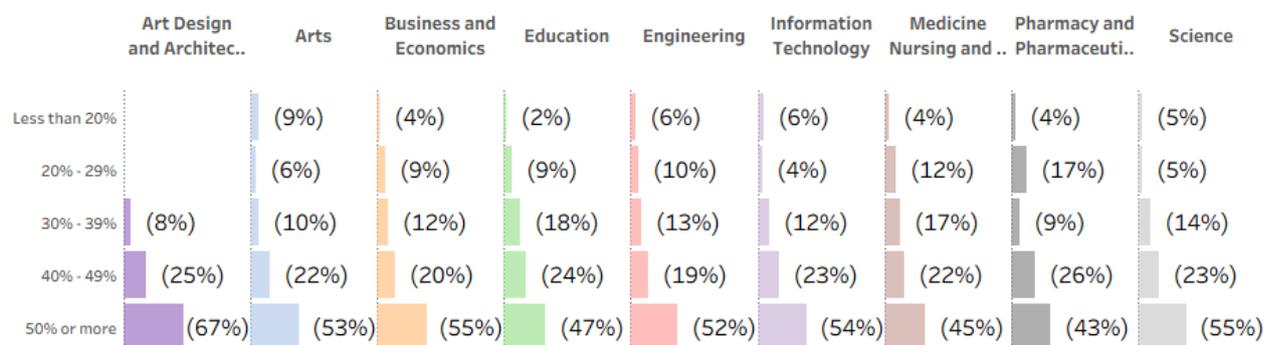
Housing represents one of the most significant financial pressures facing graduate coursework students, with rental costs consuming substantial proportions of monthly income and directly constraining students' capacity to meet other essential expenses. The following analysis examines living arrangements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

Living Situation by Faculty



IT graduate coursework students predominantly live in rental accommodation (83%), while 7% are homeowners and 7% live with parents or family. These trends appear to reflect the income patterns noted earlier, with 13% of IT students reporting incomes above \$60,000 per annum likely accounting for those who own their homes, while the almost three quarters (72%) earning below the poverty line capture the majority of students who are renting or relying other housing such as staying with family. Further, the large proportion of international students represented in the survey responses (87%) align with the high rates of renting, given most international students must rent while they study in Australia.

Rent as Percentage of Monthly Income by Faculty

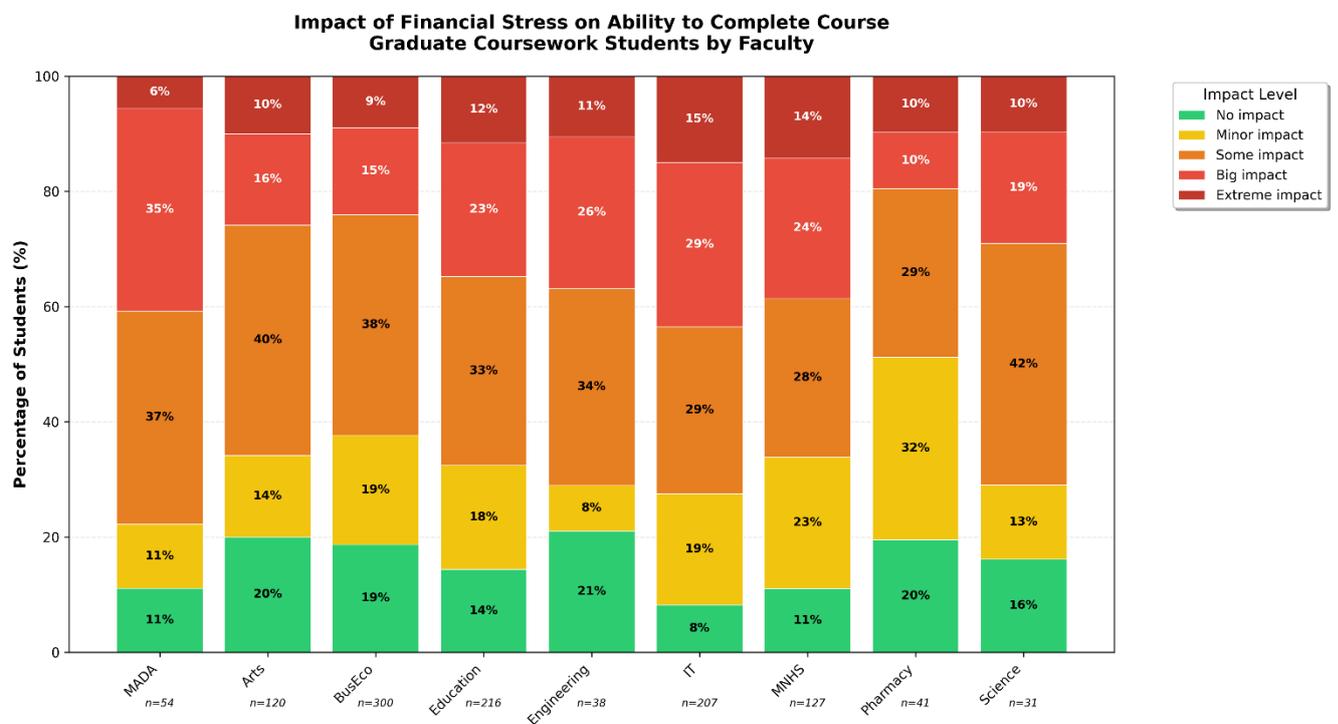


Unsurprisingly, over half (54%) of IT graduate coursework students who live in rental accommodation spend more than half their monthly income on rent. Meanwhile, 89% are considered to be under rental stress (spending more than 30% of their monthly income on rent).

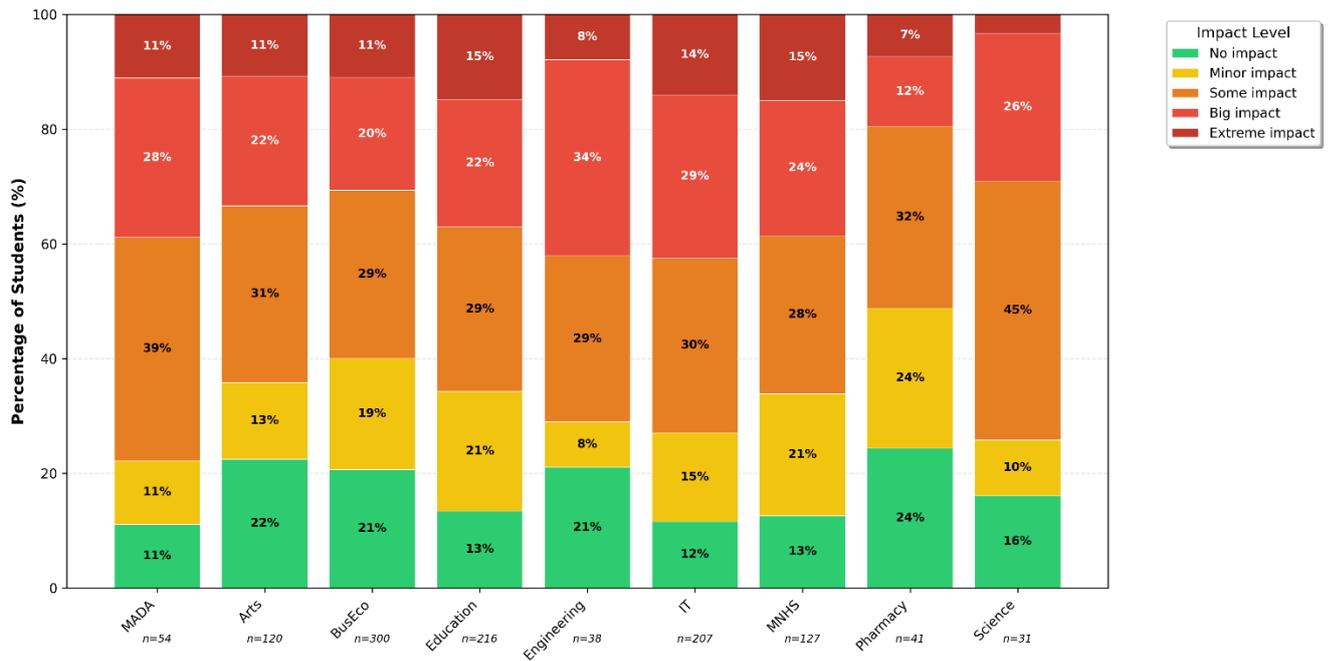
How Financial Stress Impacts Course Engagement

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.

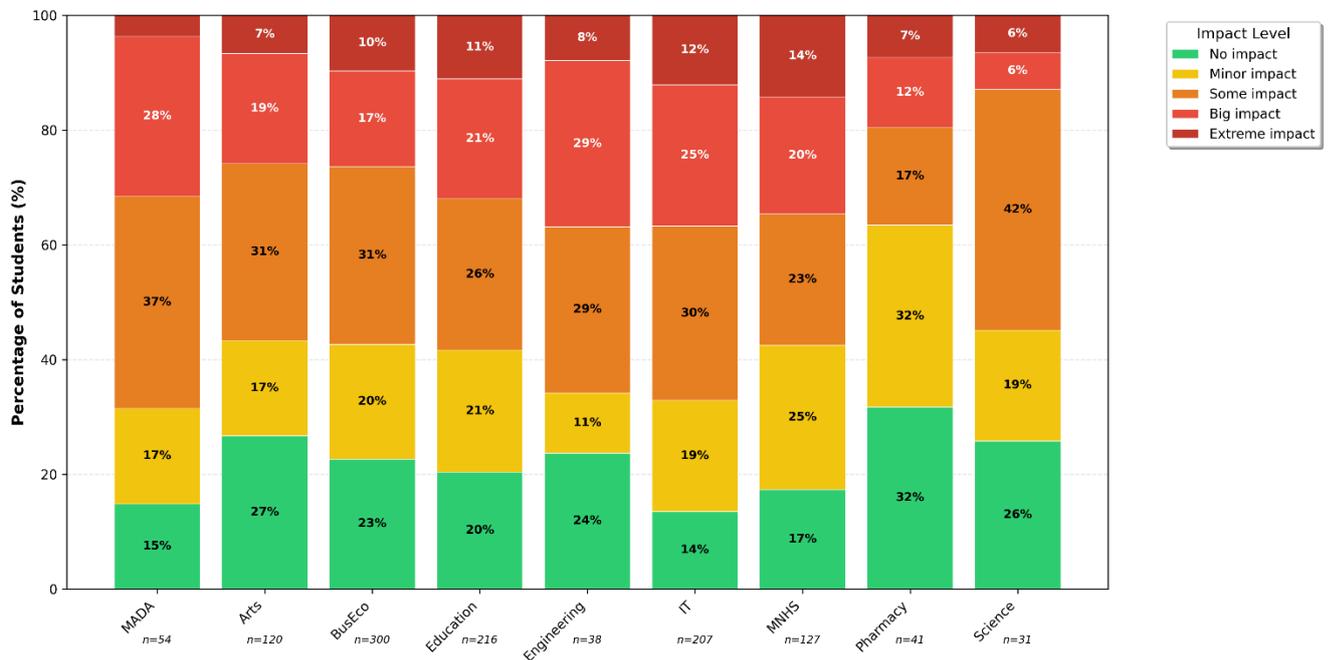
Financial Stress on Completing Course to Best of their Ability



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 creates significant obstacles to course completion for IT graduate coursework students. Only 8% report no impact on their ability to complete their course to the best of their ability – the lowest among faculties – whilst 73% report some, big or extreme impact (29% some, 29% big, 15% extreme). This means nearly three-quarters of IT students find that financial pressures actively impede their capacity to engage fully with their studies. Compared to the university-wide pattern, IT students report particularly high levels of severe impact, with 44% experiencing big or

extreme impact on their ability to complete their course – substantially higher than several other faculties. These findings indicate that financial circumstances represent a critical barrier to academic success for the majority of IT graduate coursework students. Similar patterns are evident for students' reported ability to concentrate on their studies, with a combined 73% reporting at least some impact (30% some, 29% big and 14% extreme). IT students report slightly better outcomes in their ability to attend classes or other study related activities, with a combined 67% experiencing some, big or extreme impact (30% some, 25% big and 12% extreme). However, across all charts, IT students are reporting outcomes that are important to address in order to better support students to thrive in their studies.

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:

"The accommodation cost is astronomically high here almost 70% of my money goes there."

"Need a job so I have some income which will help me focus more on study and relive stress."

"The department of IT does not really care about students work life balance. Because of the schedules and the workload is hard to get a part time job."

"Sometimes I have small amounts of money left to save for my course fee which makes me feel nervous because I don't want to ask a big amount of money from my parents. I try to pay for the course fee by myself as much as I can. That's why I have to work while studying here."

"I'm struggling to find a job and trying the best I can but not getting lucky recently my rented ebike got stolen so had to pay full sum accommodation and transportation is quite costly without any jobs to do lastly monthly bills contributions can leave me with almost zero balance."

"Trying to find a part-time job but getting rejected every single time now I am hopeless. I am tired of everything."

"With a scholarship I could have done better with my coursework."

"Studying online with Monash University as someone with a full-time job and family commitments has been a terrible experience that I would not recommend to anyone else!"

"Financial situation is highly subjective factors out of control of the MGA and other associations such as allotted hours in a week do of course affect them. But as master's student especially international I feel near to no help from the university. Finding and maintaining a job(s) is entirely dependent on a student that has definitely made an impact on the ability to focus on education to the best of potentials. I often find myself worrying about day-to-day expenses such as food and groceries since a simple restocking purchase could easily knock my weekly funds to near 0."

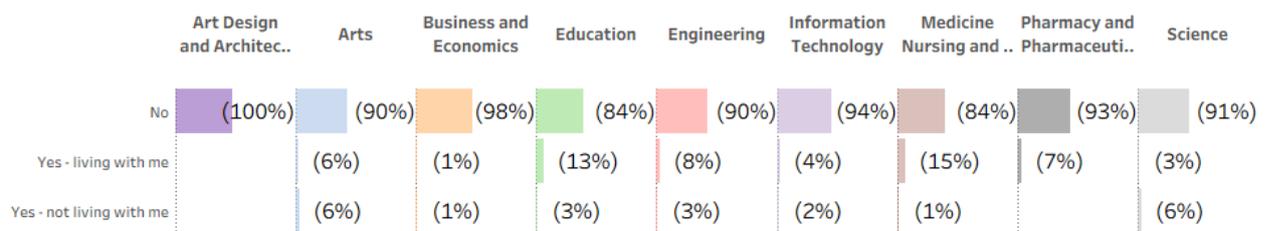
“Family income is now mainly from my spouse as I am unemployed.”

“Being just a 23 year old student it is sometimes too much that I have to manage my casual job for my daily expenses because parents can't bear it I have to find full time job in my field by myself I have to repay my education loan but don't have enough salary to pay instalments can't put pressure on parents for everything sometime s get lost from my focus and just give up.”

3. Student Parents and Carers

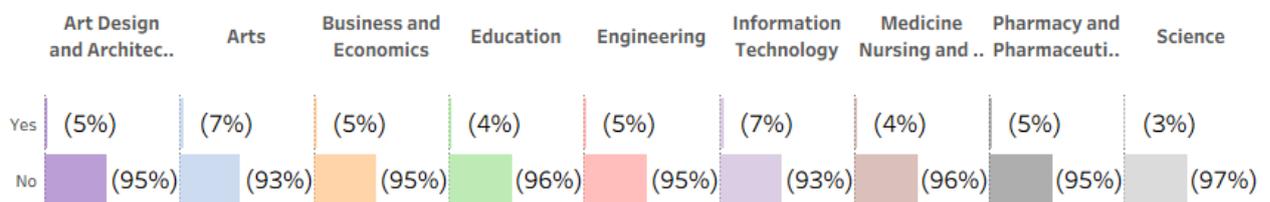
Graduate coursework students who are parents or carers face distinct challenges that compound the typical pressures of academic study, requiring targeted support approaches that acknowledge their dual responsibilities.

Parental Status by Faculty



Parental responsibilities shape the graduate coursework experience for a small minority of IT students. Overall, 6% of IT students are parents – with 4% having children living with them and 2% having children not living with them – whilst 94% do not have children.

Carer Status by Faculty



Beyond parenting, 7% of IT graduate coursework students have carer responsibilities for someone other than a child, whilst 93% do not have such responsibilities. These data reveal that a small but important minority of IT students (13%) face unique pressures and circumstances due their parental and carer status.

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. Only one IT student provided testimony about this, though it is still important to highlight the lived experiences behind the statistical patterns:

“Today my family are still in Indonesia but starting July they will join me. Cost of children school are really make a headache and also for the accommodation rental for family.”

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.

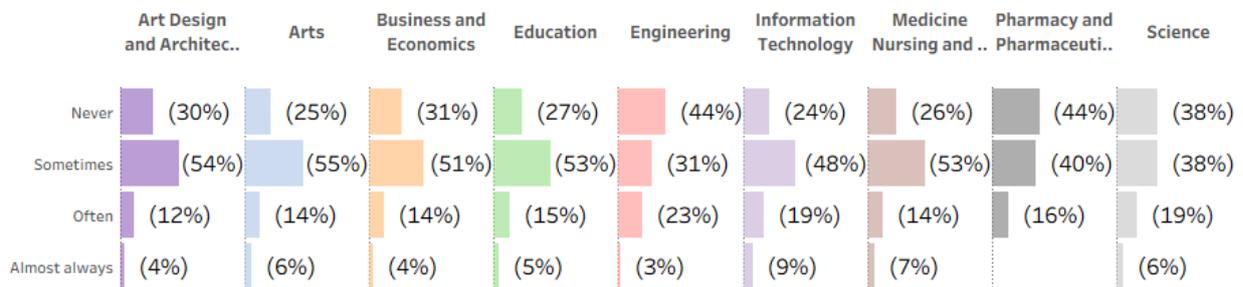
Understanding these connection challenges is crucial given the meaningful correlations identified between isolation and mental health outcomes, academic confidence and retention decisions. The following sections examine the specific factors contributing to isolation amongst graduate coursework students, 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 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.

Isolation and Belonging by Faculty



IT graduate coursework students experience notable challenges with isolation and belonging. The faculty has the largest percentage of students experiencing some degree of isolation (76%). Further, IT students report the highest frequent experience of isolation across faculties, with 9% experiencing isolation “almost always”. International students, who accounted for 87% of survey respondents from the faculty, face additional challenges including distance from established support networks and cultural adjustment. These isolation patterns have direct implications for mental health outcomes, academic engagement and retention, as documented elsewhere in this report.

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 IT graduate coursework environment:

“I feel like I might be complaining about stuff nobody complains about therefore it’s better for me to act as if everything was okay. This makes me feel sometimes alone as I feel like I can’t really get rid of everything that makes me feel worried/sad/angry.”

“Going to class alone and other students are unwilling to open up and talk.”

“Excess of repetitive and monotonous work; lack of time available on self-help and improvement.”

“I’m surrounded by people but I’m not able to connect deeply with many of them.”

“Stress, anxiety, loneliness, fear of failure feeling not worthy enough and dumb compared to others in the class since my bachelor’s was not related to IT and other students seem to know more than me and academic pressure (studies/assignment deadlines/in-class tests).”

“The pressure of shifting to a different place studying full time after 5 years and also the amount of stress to handle and complete the assignments is so real.”

“I don't have time to spare on social connections due to the study load.”

“Not getting out of my house or choosing to stay alone.”

“Not meeting people in a physical or in-person situation makes me feel depressed and things become kind of hard to concentrate.”

“Working constantly and being unable to get out of the house due to study load and pressure.”

“Not being able to make friends constantly feeling rejected from all the social groups clubs and activities feeling that I don't belong and that I'm an imposter.”

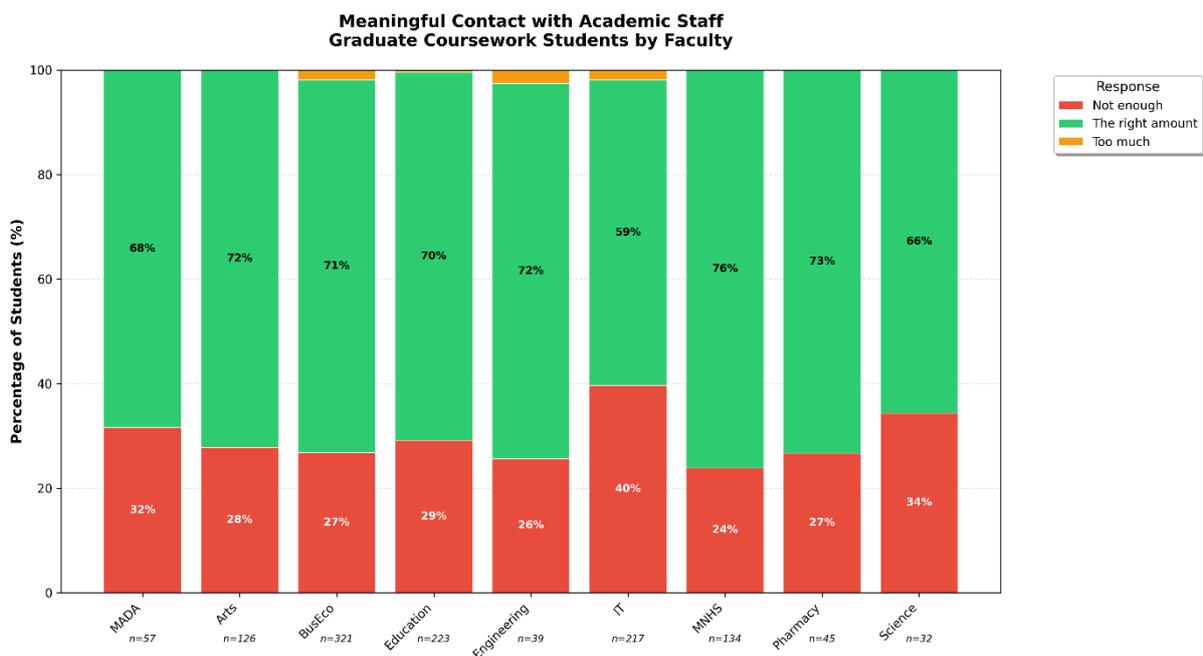
“I am being excessively available to people around me and always create unwanted meaningless convo just to keep the environment active and I feel ashamed of myself sometimes for being like this. Also, when people hurt me I isolate myself from them and others.”

“Being lazy and sleeping too much instead of doing things.”

Meaningful Contact

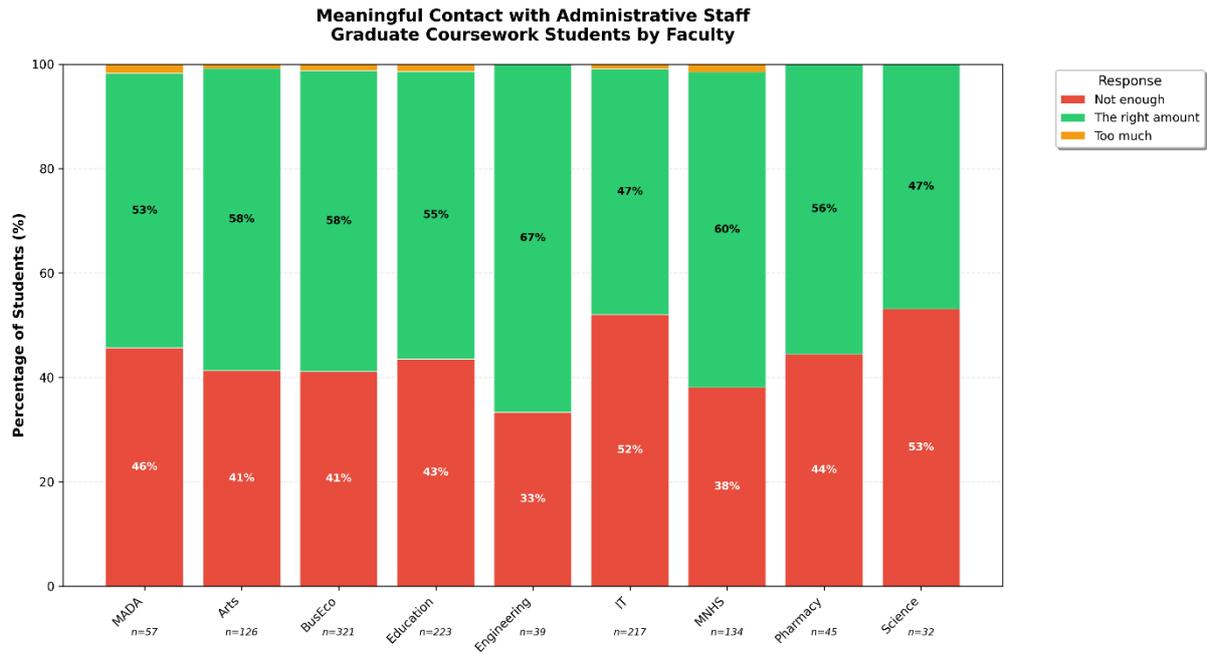
To assess students' access to support networks, respondents were asked to evaluate the frequency of their meaningful connections across five key relationship categories: academic staff, administrative staff, family, friends and peers. This analysis examines how students perceive their level of connection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

Academic Staff



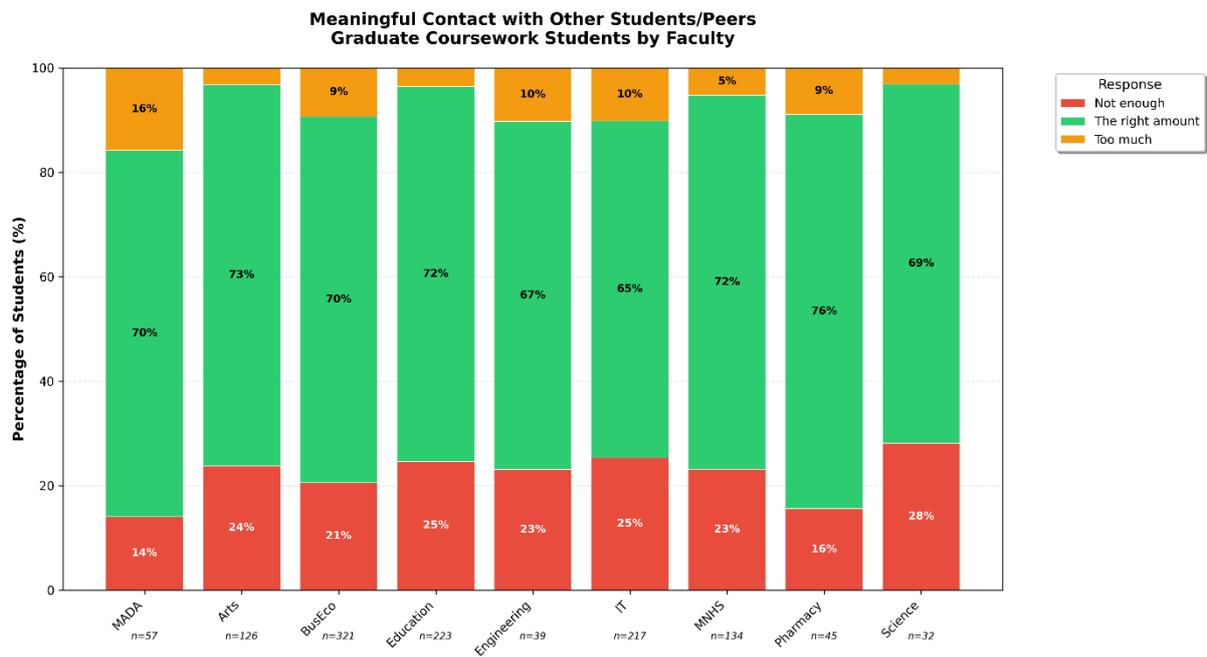
Of all the faculties, IT had the highest proportion of students reporting that they did not have enough contact with academic staff (40%).

Administrative Staff



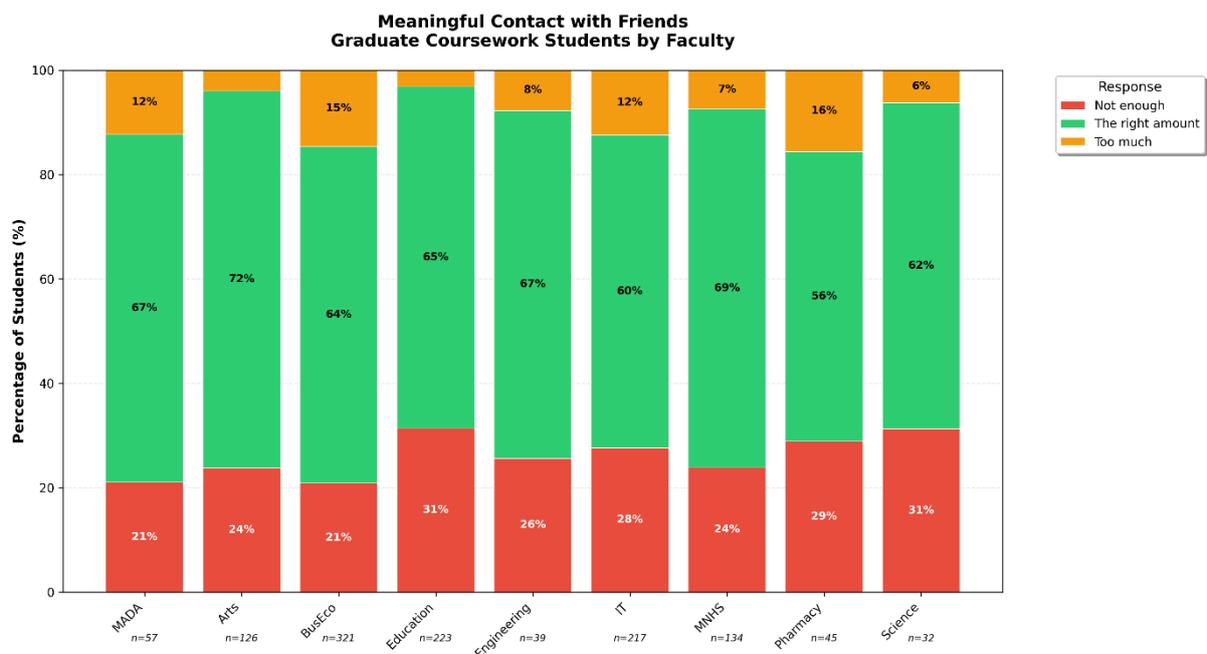
More than half (52%) of IT respondents reported that their contact with administrative staff was “not enough”, the second highest figure across the faculties.

Other Students/Peers



One-quarter of IT respondents (25%) reported they didn't have enough contact with other students, while 10% said they had too much contact.

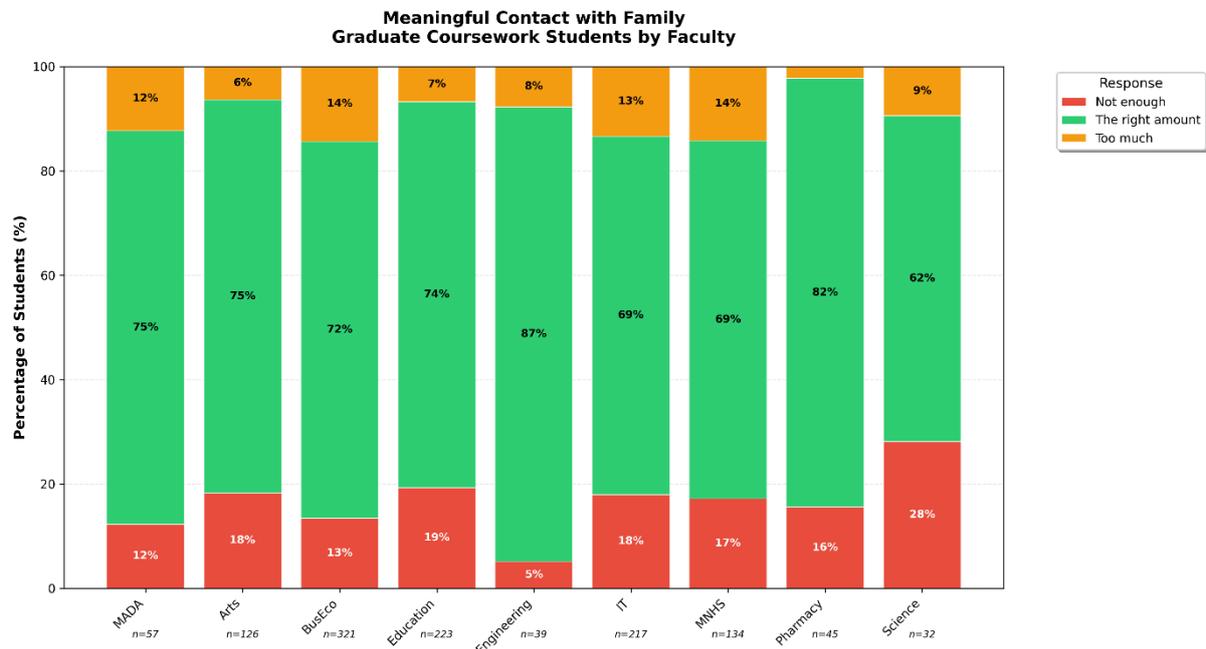
Friends



Over a quarter of respondents (28%) said that they did not have enough contact with friends, while

12% indicated they had too much contact.

Family



Despite most of IT respondents being international students, 18% reported not having enough contact with family.

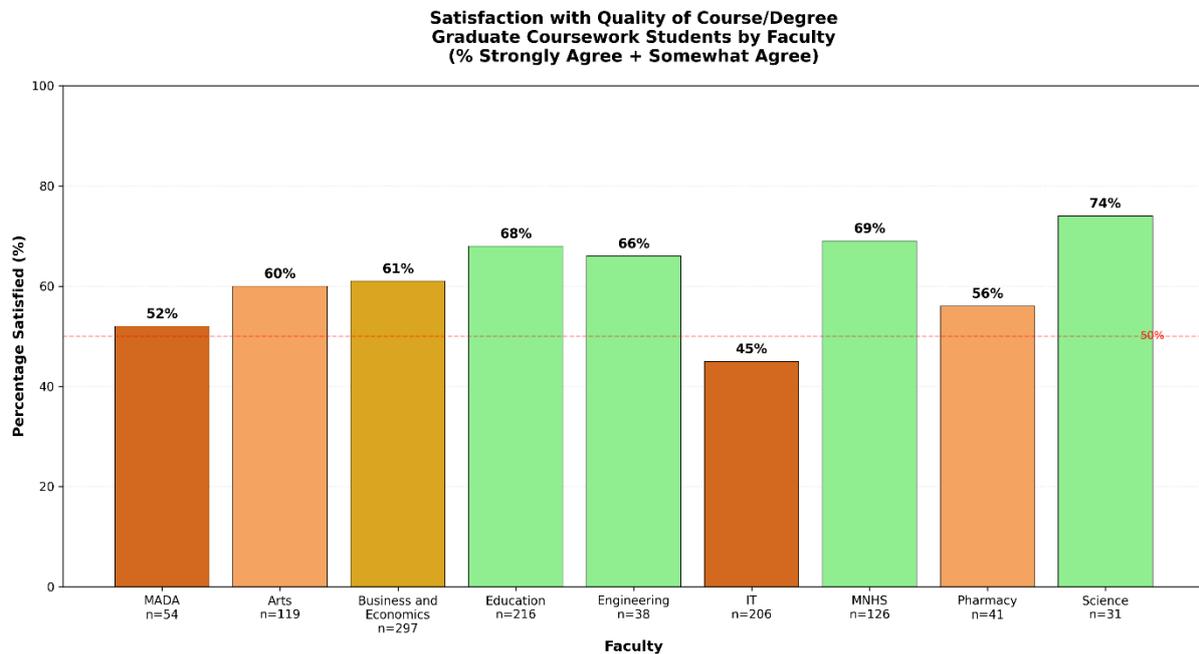
5. Course Experience, Satisfaction and Retention

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.

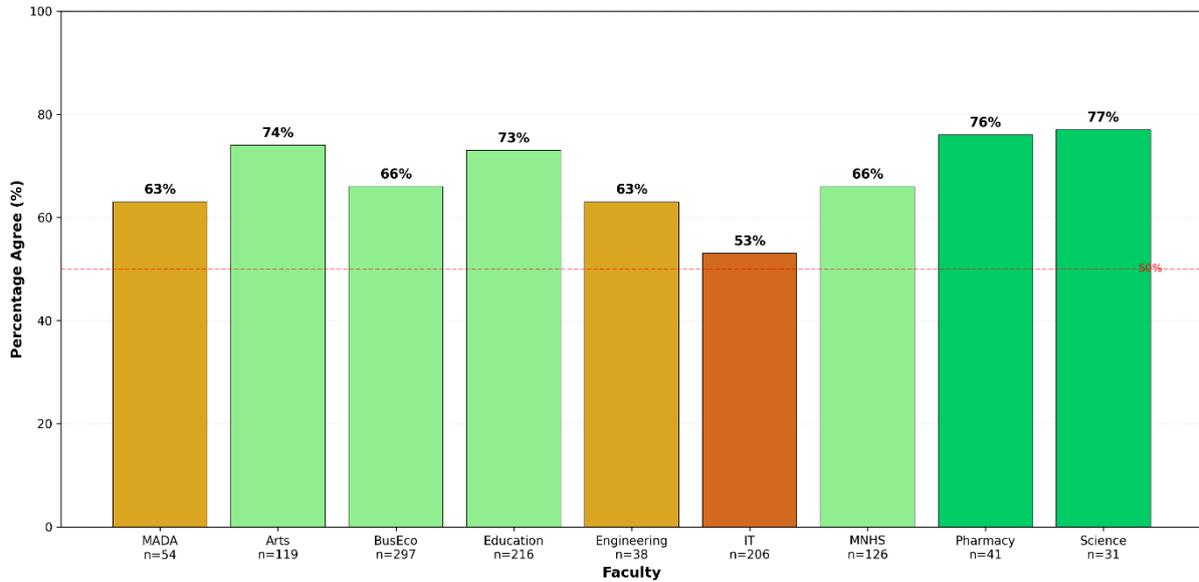


IT respondents were the least satisfied across the faculties with the quality of their course with less than half (45%) satisfied. IT students satisfaction reports are 29% lower than the highest reported satisfaction (74% for the faculty of Science), indicating a significant percentage gap worth investigating to better understand the issues behind these numbers.

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.

**I Made the Correct Decision in Choosing This University
Graduate Coursework Students by Faculty
(% Strongly Agree + Somewhat Agree)**

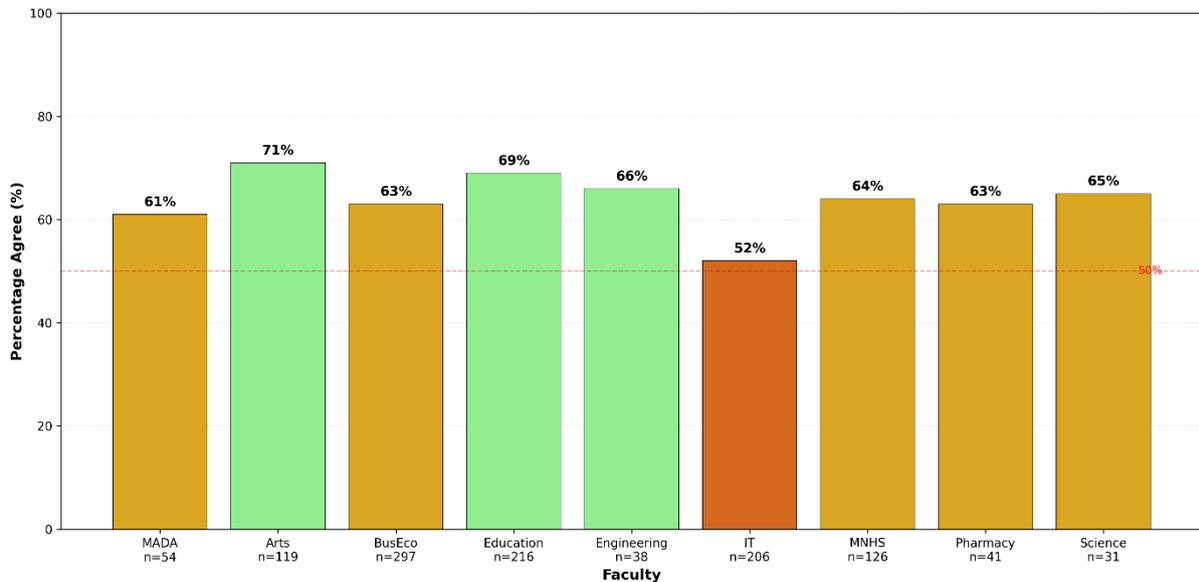


Just over half (53%) of IT respondents agreed that they made the correct decision in choosing Monash – the lowest proportion across the faculties.

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.

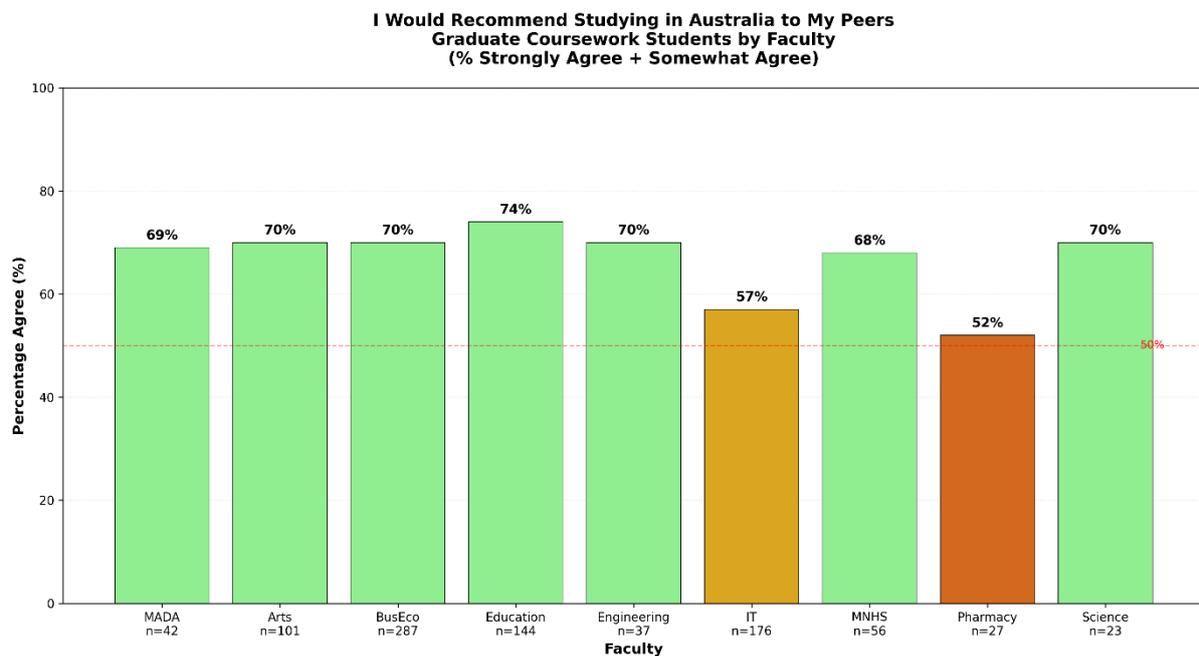
**I Would Recommend This University to My Peers
Graduate Coursework Students by Faculty
(% Strongly Agree + Somewhat Agree)**



IT respondents were the least likely across the faculties to recommend Monash to their peers, with only 52% agreeing that they would do so.

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.



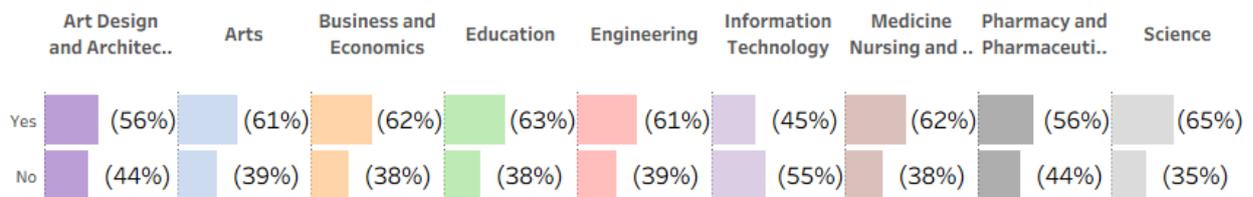
Just over half (57%) of IT respondents would recommend studying in Australia to their peers. This was marginally higher than in Pharmacy (52%), which was the least likely to be willing to recommend studying in the country.

Overall these patterns across the data regarding course satisfaction, choice of university and peer recommendation for university as well as studying in Australia clearly show room for improvement for IT, with majority of students reporting low levels of satisfaction or confidence in these critical elements of study choice.

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



IT is the only faculty where more students (55%) believe that their course does not represent value for money than those that do (45%). This finding aligns with the previous noted trends in satisfaction and recommendation, indicating that IT may benefit from exploring and investing in actions to improve student experience.

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

“Some of the units in the course is not useful in the career and faculty as well is not good. Also assignments are very generic and most of them are not aligned with practical problems.”

“We pay a lot of fees to the university but do not receive any help in regards to internships or jobs. The on-campus rent is also too high. Some classes are kept during inconvenient times and are not even recorded. Overall, it is quite stressful.”

“There are several teaching teams that you can barely understand. I respect and understand that we can all have different accents and that English can be our second language but for the lecturers I consider they should be able to express themselves in a way all students can understand. Sometimes even Zoom captions can't get what they are trying to say... The teachers are not objective while grading. They don't really provide a justification of why they are giving you low marks and no matter what you do you'll never be able to get an HD. This can be quite frustrating and even depressing as you work harder and harder to improve but

honestly it's not worth it as in the end you'll just get a random grade. Also talking about industry experience I'm extremely disappointed as it's nothing like it was promised and also it is not specific for each course which makes it completely useless for students that are not from the IT course."

"I think university should design Job ready course contents like for example OSCP+ kinda contents which will ensure student have hands on experience."

"The expense are way higher than its worth. Only a few units can provide real skills for employment. The assignments test the knowledge which materials don't cover I have to self-learning to finish assignments."

"Not getting quality of knowledge from this course which ideally as a masters student should have. they are not preparing us for industry jobs. 70% quality and content of course not feel useful."

"Some ... lectures or tutor does not teach as much as they could. And often ask the students to complete the task themselves and not giving us the complete/ ideal way to do the assignment after submitting."

"Most of us CANNOT understand what our tutors say at ALL LIKE NOTHING. I don't even bother attending classes because I watch the lectures done by other tutors online. WASTE OF MY MOTHERS HARD EARNED MONEY makes me genuinely want to cry. IVE BEEN ON TOP Of my academics my WHOLE life, this is too bad too and THUMBS DOWN Monash!!!! If the tutors at least spoke clearly I would have attended my classes and wouldn't lag behind SO MUCH!!!!"

"There is too much study load and we are too busy just trying to complete assignments to understand what is actually being taught in the course. Either the semester should be increased by a few more weeks or the assignments should decrease."

"We don't have any internship from university. This course does not teach us much significant knowledge but waste time."

"What is the use of Monash being one among the global top 40 university if there is no upper hand in me securing my future after graduating from here. I understand that I also have to give my best but if I were given opportunities to at least sit for a face-to-face interview only then will I be able to demonstrate my capabilities."

"The equivalent undergraduate course is significantly less expensive with identical content."

"Poor teaching quality outdated course materials uncaring/absent team members extremely poor staff: student ratio overall teaching quality cut-back consultation hours workshops etc."

"Question isn't applicable in the current situation I can't judge the value for money before actually applying what I may have learnt out in my field. And I am yet to have a chance to do that. Sometimes I do feel like I've learnt valuable things from the course but sometimes it feels as completely inapplicable information."

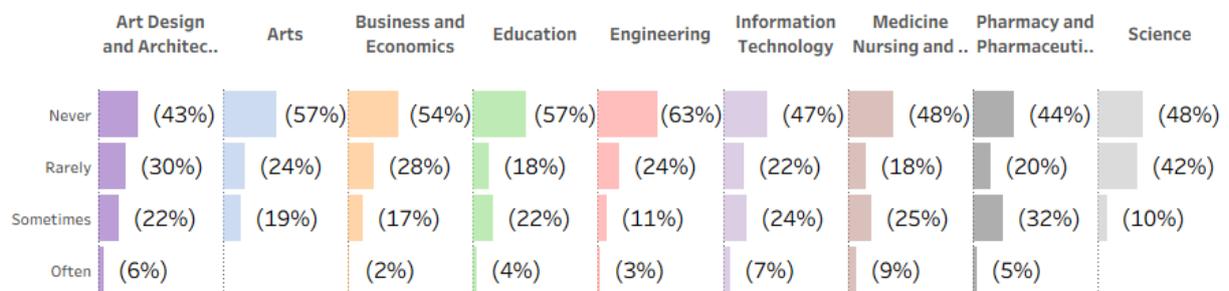
"Monash University is not exactly what I was imagined average level teaching don't have access to the main administration poor teaching staff also faculty or university actually don't care much about students for them the international students are just another source of money."

“1. Too difficult 2. will need to go to a therapist and doctor before getting a job in order to fix my physical and mental health 3. might not be able to get a job since everyone is doing it and better than me. 4. have no friends no sleep no time etc.”

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 challenges that warrant institutional attention.

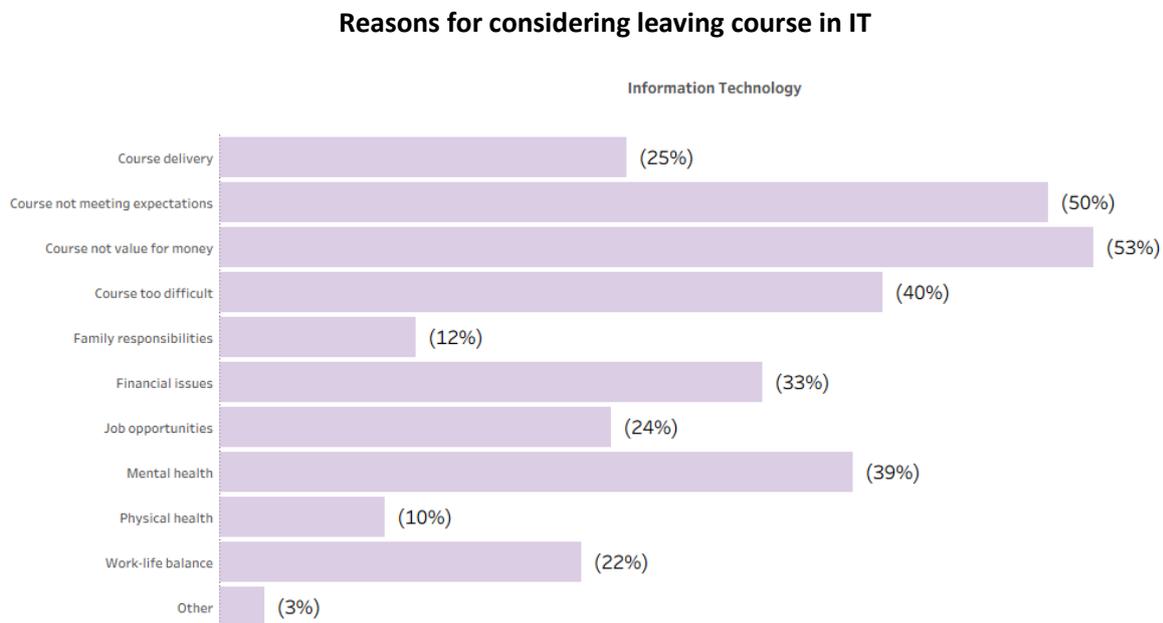
Considering Leaving by Faculty



Just under half (47%) of IT respondents have never considered leaving their course. Whereas, 53% have at least considered leaving at some point. More concerningly, 24% consider leaving sometimes, and 7% consider leaving often. Given the prevalence of international students amongst respondents (87%), it is important to consider the reasons behind those who have considered leaving as international students are often more locked into their studies, due to the sacrifices by them and (often) their families in order to move to another country for education.

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 departure consideration among IT graduate coursework students reveal course quality and value concerns as the dominant withdrawal triggers. Among IT students who have considered leaving, 53% cite “course not value for money” and 50% cite “course not meeting expectations”. Mental health emerges as another critical factor, with 39% of students considering leaving due to mental health challenges. Financial issues drive departure consideration for 33% of students, whilst course difficulty (40%), job opportunities (24%), course delivery (25%) and work-life balance (22%) also contribute substantially. Physical health (10%) and family responsibilities (12%) play more limited roles in affecting withdrawal considerations.

These findings indicate that IT students’ departure consideration stems primarily from perceived gaps between expectations and reality regarding course quality, industry relevance and career preparation, compounded by mental health pressures and financial strain. The prominence of value for money and unmet expectations suggests that addressing course design, teaching quality and career guidance could yield significant retention benefits, and would be likely to also address the low satisfaction and peer recommendation performance noted earlier.

6. Employment and Career Planning

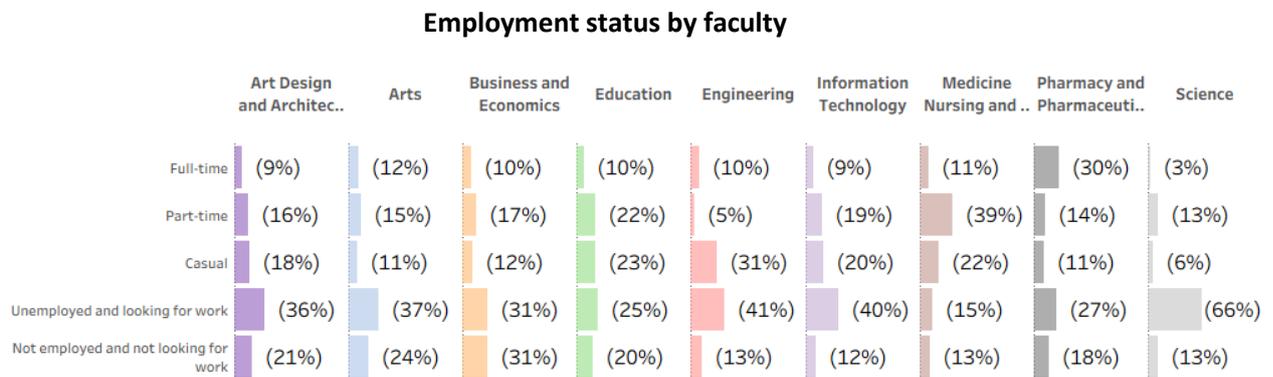
The relationship between employment and academic progress represents a critical balancing act for graduate coursework students, with employment decisions carrying implications for both immediate financial sustainability and long-term career advancement. The survey reveals that graduate coursework students 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 IT, 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 IT students navigate employment choices – and the extent to which their work experiences complement or compete with their academic goals and career aspirations – reveals critical support needs for optimising both financial wellbeing and professional development.

Employment status

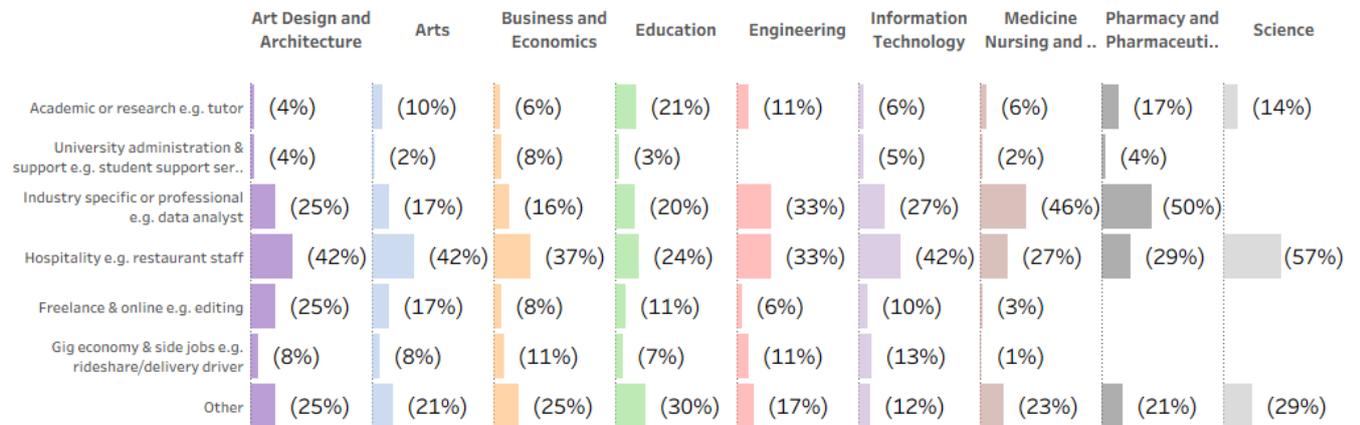
The following table outlines the employment status of Monash graduate coursework students.



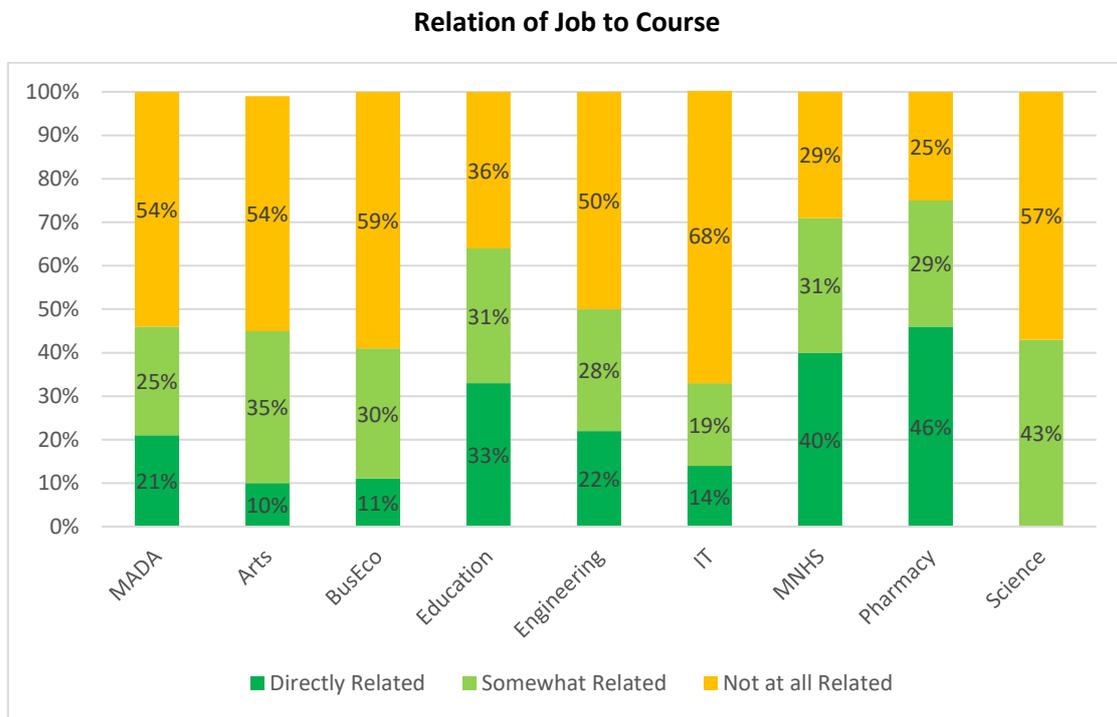
Two-fifths (40%) of IT respondents are unemployed and looking for work. While not as high as in Science (66%) and Engineering (41%), this is a substantial proportion of the faculty’s graduate coursework students who want, but cannot secure employment. A further 12% report being not employment and not looking for work. This may indicate a smaller minority who have given up on finding employment after unsuccessfully trying, or who may have family support enabling them to focus on studies alone. Of those IT students who are employed, majority are in casual roles (31%), while part-time and full-time employment make up 15% of IT students.

Job Type

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



Of those IT respondents who are employed, 42% work in hospitality, indicating a significant proportion of IT students who are engaging in 'survival' employment, rather than roles which help to build their careers. A further 35% of IT students report participating in freelance, gig economy, and other jobs, again reflecting the need to engage in less study-relevant roles. On the positive side, 27% work in an industry-specific or professional job, while 11% engage in academic or university administrative roles.

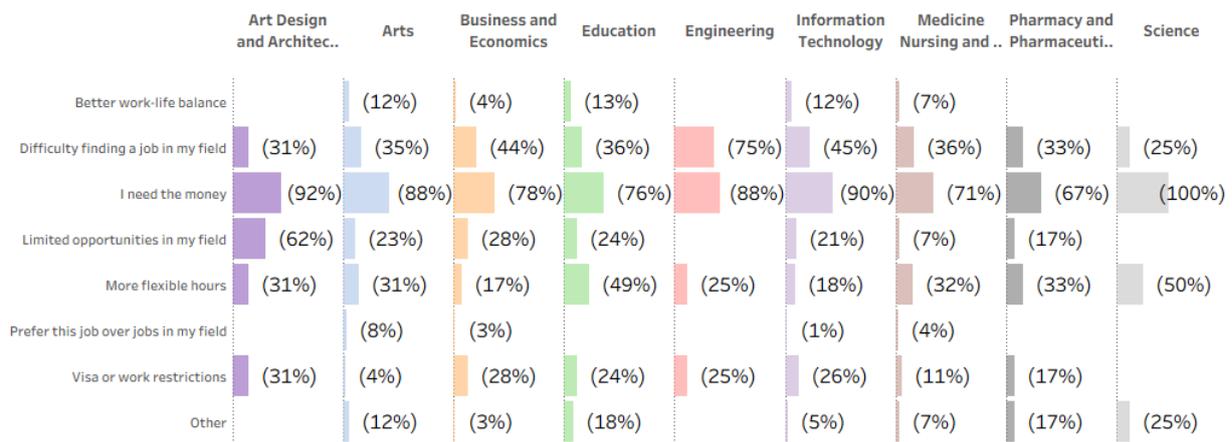


IT has the lowest proportion of students (33%) working in a role related or somewhat related to their course among the faculties, while 68% work in roles not related to their course at all.

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



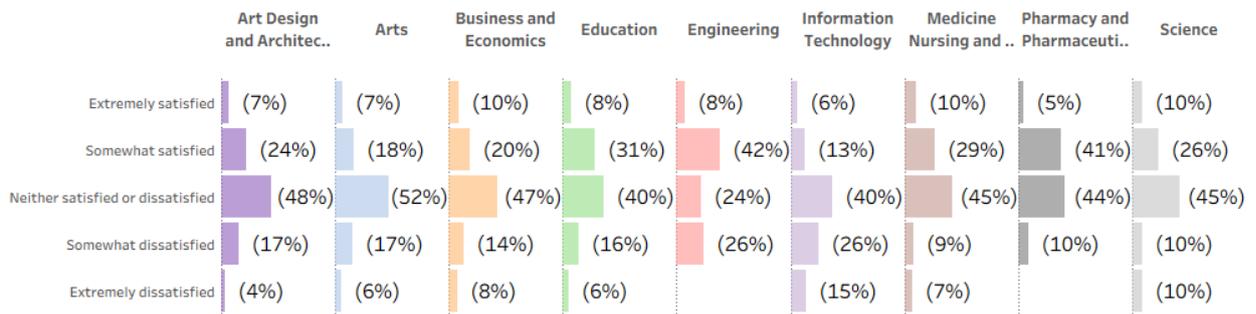
IT students working in jobs unrelated to their field of study cite diverse motivations that reveal the complex interplay of financial necessity, opportunity constraints and practical circumstances. The primary driver is financial need, with the overwhelming majority (90%) of IT students indicating “I need the money” as a reason for working outside their field. This is followed by difficulty finding employment in their field (45%), limited opportunities in their area (21%) and the need for more flexible hours (18%) to accommodate study commitments. Better work-life balance (12%) and visa/work restrictions (26%) also feature prominently.

These findings suggest that most IT students working outside their field would prefer relevant employment but face significant barriers including limited technology sector opportunities accessible to current students, visa restrictions constraining work options and financial pressures necessitating immediate income over strategic career positioning.

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



IT graduate coursework students express notably low satisfaction with the career guidance and support they have received from the university. Only 6% report being extremely satisfied with career guidance – the second lowest among faculties behind Pharmacy (5%) – whilst 13% are somewhat satisfied and 40% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Significantly, 26% are somewhat dissatisfied and 15% are extremely dissatisfied, meaning 41% express explicit dissatisfaction with career guidance services.

This represents the lowest career guidance satisfaction rates across all faculties and aligns with student testimonies highlighting inadequate support for internship placement, industry connections and practical career preparation. Given IT students’ high rates of unrelated employment, difficulties finding field-relevant work and concerns about course-career alignment, enhanced career guidance emerges as a critical opportunity for improving student outcomes and satisfaction.

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:

“They should organise career events by inviting companies on campus and should provide more internship opportunities in the final semester of the masters degree.”

“The consultants seem not prepared sometimes.”

“Give more opportunity to connect the students with the professionals from big company. Give enough opportunity to do internship on there to give meaningful practical experience. What I heard from seniors even in Industrial Experience stream the experts from company not involved enough to give additional experience incentive.”

“More webinars and student engagement sessions explicitly to tackle best means of joining work force here in Australia after studies.”

“Having easier access to guidance would be helpful for one. There's too many sites/platforms to browse and we do not have the time or resources to go through every little thing in detail especially as international students who need to juggle their study work social and personal life. Knowing whom to reach out to and easily being able to do so would also make things easier.”

“Honest assessments of the job markets for relevant disciplines (which will never happen given that this can disincentivise students!).”

“Some guidance could be provided on how to enter the tough job market if you don't have any prior experience in this country.”

“As an International student whenever I participate in any industry connect sessions majority of the industry professionals are looking for people with Australian PR or Citizenship which makes it a bit difficult to get an internship for gathering real world experience in my field.”

“Personally, I have not received any. The attempts to provide such assistance by the university have been extremely generalised and justifiably so considering the sheer numbers of students but if the university wants any credit towards this points then some sort of a dedicated solution which allows tailoring to a students unique perspective and aim needs to be achieved.”

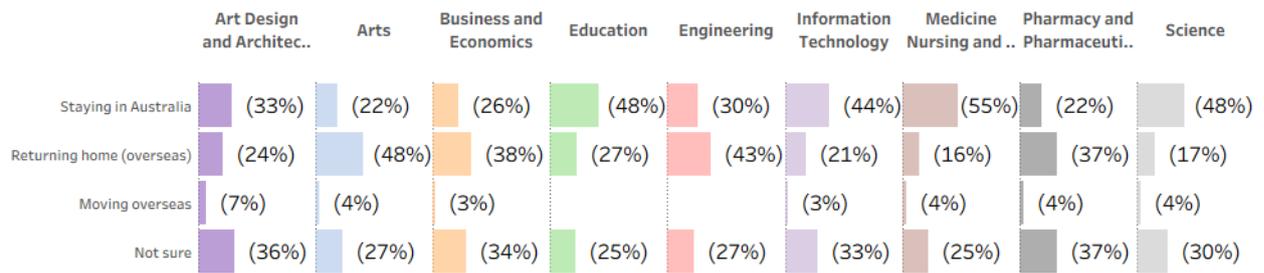
“Usually the guidance assumes or caters for fresh graduates while for me with certain working experience the support is limited or not relevant.”

“I just think that the career guidance is not enough and maybe having more industry relationships so that students can get internships and actual real-world would be the best. I know that undergrad students have a lot more opportunities getting internships an industry placement but not the postgrad students which is a disappointment.”

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 IT students' post-degree plans reveal varied intentions regarding remaining in Australia (44%) versus returning home (21%) or relocating elsewhere (3%). As with in other faculties, the proportion of students unsure of their post-degree plans was substantial (33%). The keen interest in remaining in Australia, combined with those undecided, represent a potential 77% of IT students who see opportunity in bringing their skills and experience into the Australian labour market, but the noted challenges in forging industry connections as well as securing relevant employment may hamper these aspiration, both the detriment of students and Australia's economy.

What Makes IT Distinct: Key Themes

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

Course Quality, Industry Relevance and Career Preparation Gaps

IT graduate coursework students express pronounced dissatisfaction with course quality, value for money and career preparation – concerns that distinguish this faculty from most others and directly threaten retention. Value for money perceptions reveal the depth of dissatisfaction: 55% feel their course does not offer value for money whilst 53% of those considering leaving cite this reason and 50% cite “course not meeting expectations”.

Student testimonies consistently highlight teaching effectiveness issues, content relevance gaps and inadequate career support. Employment patterns reinforce these concerns with 68% of those working employed in a job not at all related to their course (highest across all faculties). When 90% of those in unrelated work cite financial necessity and 45% report difficulty finding field-relevant jobs, the disconnect between coursework and career outcomes becomes apparent. These quality concerns are particularly striking given that 81% receive family support (52% have families pay all fees), indicating motivated students making significant investments yet struggling to see appropriate returns.

Compounding Financial and Mental Health Pressures

IT students face severe financial wellbeing challenges compounded by elevated mental health concerns. Only 2% report “doing great” financially (lowest across faculties) whilst 64% fall into “just coping” or “having trouble” categories. This financial strain compromises academic engagement: 73% report financial stress creates some, big or extreme impact on ability to complete their course, with 44% experiencing big or extreme impact specifically. Mental health patterns reveal concerning symptom prevalence: only 42% fall within the “normal” range for depression (versus 49% university-wide) with 40% experiencing moderate to extremely severe symptoms. Anxiety presents even more pronounced challenges with only 40% in the “normal” range and 45% experiencing moderate to extremely severe symptoms. Mental health drives withdrawal consideration for 39% of students contemplating leaving their course. The interconnection between financial stress and mental health amplifies both challenges, creating a feedback loop where financial pressures drive increased work hours, reducing study capacity and increasing anxiety, which further undermines academic performance and career confidence. Breaking this cycle requires coordinated intervention addressing both financial support accessibility and mental health service engagement.

Faculty-Specific Recommendations

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

Addressing Course Quality, Career Preparation and Industry Relevance Gaps

Cultural and Operational Enhancements (Low Investment)

Create transparent assessment-learning alignment documentation for each unit showing how assessments connect to taught content and industry-relevant competencies, addressing student frustrations about misalignment. Implement “career-first” course communication where instructors explicitly articulate industry application through unit guides and lectures, making visible connections between coursework and professional practice. Develop peer-led technical study support networks facilitating code review sessions and collaborative problem-solving that build community whilst addressing the 40% identifying course difficulty as withdrawal factor.

Moderate Investments

IT students flagged comprehension of lectures and tutorials as a significant issue. Establish educational scaffolding to support students to digest and engage in course material by creating more teaching support roles to deliver supplementary tutorials and provide small-group comprehension support workshops where language barriers affect instruction.

Establish a peer-support program, where senior IT students are partnered with junior students to provide one-to-one support regarding class materials, course content, and managing study priorities.

Develop a comprehensive onboarding and induction process which connects students with career support, study journey mapping, and preparing mental health and wellbeing management plans (detailed further below).

Supporting Financial Wellbeing and Mental Health Resilience

Cultural and Operational Enhancements (Low Investment)

Implement proactive wellbeing and financial stress check-ins at high-pressure programme points where faculty contact students experiencing known stressor periods rather than expecting help-seeking from students already overwhelmed.

Develop IT-specific mental health and financial counselling resources acknowledging distinctive pressures through targeted workshops and support groups. Create transparent programme workload and cost communication providing realistic guidance about time demands and true costs, enabling informed decision-making.

Moderate Investments

Create structured peer connection programme developing cohort-building activities that foster genuine community and address isolation challenges affecting mental health outcomes.

Partner with Monash Counselling Services for IT-specific group mental health support addressing common challenges in cohort settings, providing targeted outreach for the 76% not accessing support despite elevated depression and anxiety across the faculty.

In partnership with Monash Counselling Services, develop targeted mental health and wellbeing support offerings and resources that are tailored to the international student experience, including information about navigating Australia's mental health system, efforts to destigmatise mental health seeking behaviour. Ensure these efforts address misconceptions about visa implications for seeking mental health care, and reframe this care as performance 'optimisation' to encourage engagement.

Appendix 1: Demographics

Course Name	Respondents
Master of Artificial Intelligence	32 (14%)
Master of Business Information Systems	25 (11%)
Master of Computer Science	5 (2%)
Master of Cybersecurity	19 (8%)
Master of Data Science	93 (41%)
Master of Information Systems	47 (21%)
Other	7 (3%)

Campus	Respondents
I do not regularly attend campus	17 (7%)
Clayton	210 (89%)
Caulfield	6 (3%)
Peninsula	1 (0%)
Parkville	0 (0%)
Law Chambers	1 (0%)
Malaysia	1 (0%)
Hospital or Medical Centre	0 (0%)
Indonesia	0 (0%)
Suzhou	1 (0%)
other	0 (0%)

Domestic/International	Respondents
Local student (Australian or New Zealand citizen/permanent resident)	30 (13%)
International student	199 (87%)

Study load	Respondents
Full-time	209 (91%)
Part-time	21 (9%)
On leave from study	0 (0%)

Study location	Respondents
Entirely on-campus	99 (43%)
Multi-modal	114 (50%)
Entirely off-campus	17 (7%)
Other	0 (0%)

Time since last degree	Respondents
Less than 1 year	86 (38%)
1-5 years	110 (48%)
6-10 years	24 (11%)
11+ years	8 (4%)

Degree progress	Respondents
First year	145 (63%)
Second year	76 (33%)
Third year and beyond	9 (4%)

Study hours	Respondents
Less than 5	7 (3%)
6-10	34 (15%)
11-20	65 (28%)
21-30	67 (29%)
31-40	33 (14%)
Over 40 hours	24 (10%)

English proficiency	Respondents
Fluent	108 (47%)
Advanced	64 (28%)
Intermediate	48 (21%)
Elementary	7 (3%)
Beginner	2 (1%)

Gender	Respondents
Woman	116 (51%)
Man	106 (46%)
Non-binary/gender diverse	2 (1%)
Prefer to self-describe	0 (0%)
Prefer not to say	5 (2%)

LGBTIQA+	Respondents
Yes	18 (8%)
No	188 (82%)
Prefer not to disclose	23 (10%)

Indigenous (domestic students only)	Respondents
Yes	0 (0%)
No	28 (93%)
Prefer not to disclose	2 (7%)

Disability	Respondents
Yes	6 (3%)
No	214 (93%)
Prefer not to disclose	9 (4%)

Registered disability with DSS	Respondents
Yes	3 (50%)
No	3 (50%)

Age	Respondents
24 or under	95 (41%)
25-29	99 (43%)
30-39	28 (12%)
40 and over	7 (3%)

Employment status	Respondents
Full-time	20 (9%)
Part-time	41 (18%)
Casual	48 (21%)
Unemployed and looking for work	93 (41%)
Not employed and not looking for work	27 (12%)

Work hours	Respondents
Less than 5	16 (15%)
6-10	14 (13%)
11-20	41 (39%)
21-30	16 (15%)
31-40	13 (12%)
More than 40	5 (5%)