

# ***Graduate Coursework in MNHS:***

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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<p>MNHS international students show the strongest intention to remain in Australia post-graduation of any faculty, with 55% planning to stay. Only 16% plan to return home, the lowest rate across Monash. This signals strong confidence in Australian health workforce opportunities and suggests that MNHS international students view their qualifications as a pathway to local careers rather than solely credential acquisition. A marginal 4% plan on taking their qualifications overseas to another country, reflecting a similar trend to most other faculties. However, the 25% who are unsure represent an opportunity for targeted career guidance around registration pathways, visa transitions and workforce integration. ....</p>	
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## Introduction

This report examines the experiences of 41 graduate coursework students in the Faculty of MNHS 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 MNHS.

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

- 41 MNHS graduate coursework students participated.
- Response rate represents approximately 5% of enrolled MNHS 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 MNHS graduate coursework contexts.
- Financial pressures and their impact on study.
- Parental and carer responsibilities.
- Peer connection and support needs unique to MNHS 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 MNHS 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 MNHS

This section provides core findings from the 41 MNHS 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 MNHS 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.

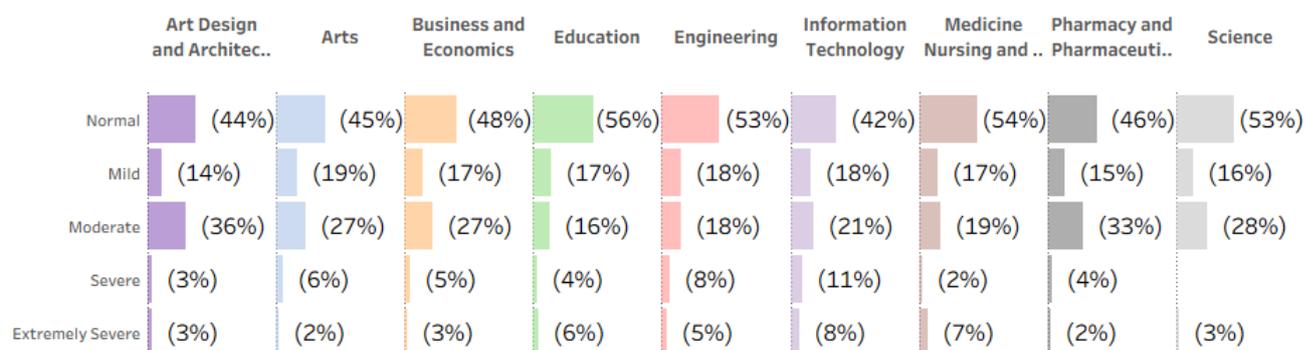
### 1. The Mental Health and Wellbeing Landscape

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.

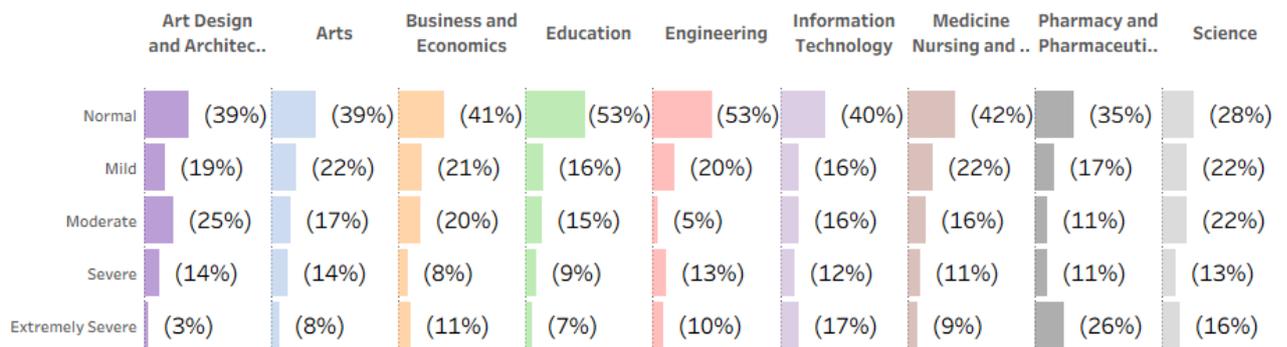
#### DASS21 and Mental Health Indicators

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.

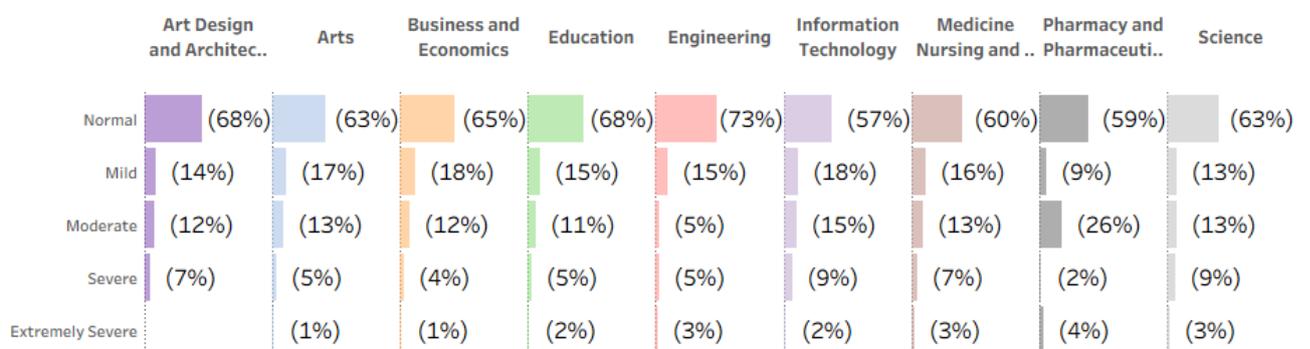
#### Depression:



### Anxiety:



### Stress:

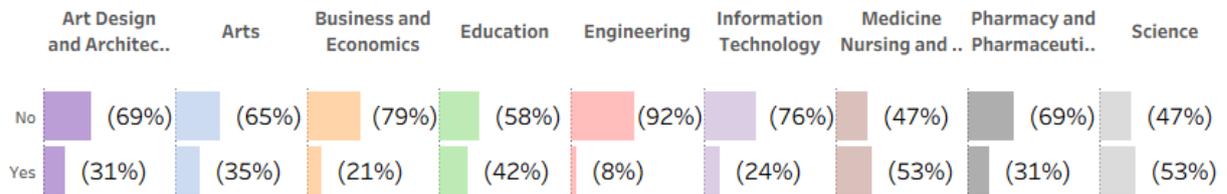


MNHS graduate coursework students present a mental health profile where anxiety emerges as the most prevalent challenge. While 54% fall within the normal range for depression and 60% for stress, only 42% score in the normal range for anxiety — meaning 58% report some level of clinical anxiety symptoms. The 9% recording extremely severe anxiety and 11% at the severe level represent a substantial proportion of the cohort (20%) experiencing significant psychological distress. Stress indicators are somewhat more favourable by comparison, though the combined 10% reporting severe or extremely severe stress should not be overlooked.

### 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



Over half (53%) of MNHS graduate coursework students report having accessed mental health support from a counsellor, doctor or advocate — the equal-highest rate of any faculty alongside Science. This likely reflects a combination of factors: the health literacy inherent to MNHS disciplines, but also the demographic composition of the cohort, with 52% domestic students and 86% women — two groups that consistently access mental health support at significantly higher rates.

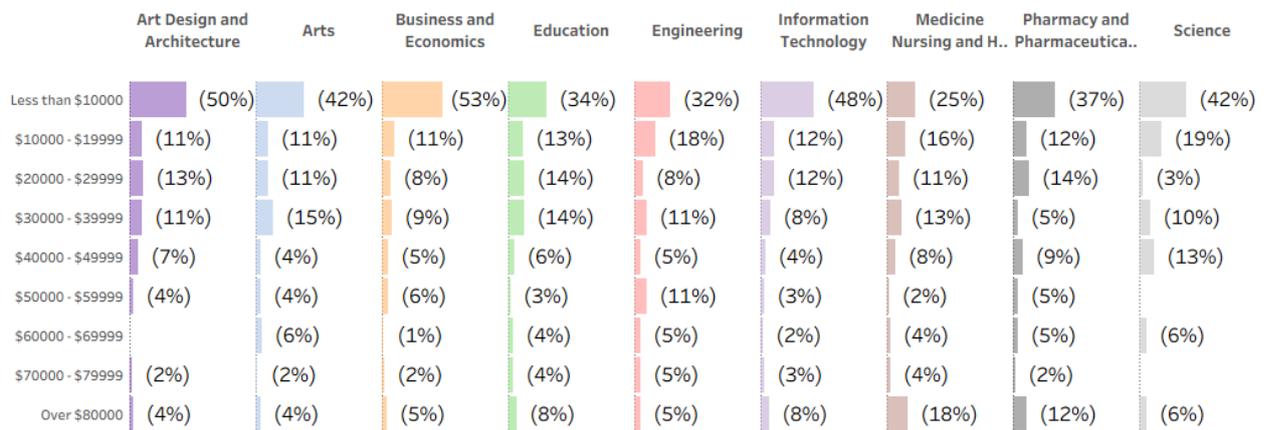
## 2. Financial Circumstances and Study Impact

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

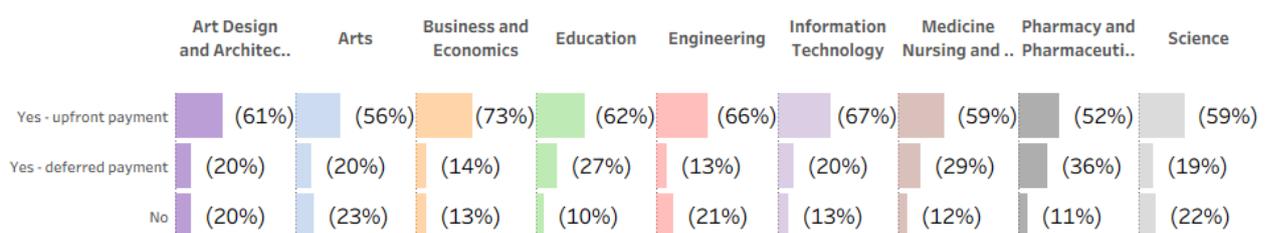


MNHS graduate coursework students display a notably polarised income distribution. Over half (52%) of students are earning less than \$30,000 a year, with a quarter of students (25%) concentrated in the income bracket of less than \$10,000. However, this is one of the lowest rates of very low income across all faculties — well below Business and Economics (53%), Art Design and Architecture (50%) and Information Technology (48%), meaning MNHS students appear to be faring better financially in terms of annual income. At the other end, just over a quarter (26%) of MNHS students report income above \$60,000 per year, with 18% reporting incomes over \$80,000, the highest proportion of any faculty. This bimodal pattern likely reflects the composition of the MNHS cohort: international full-time students on restricted working hours due to visa conditions alongside domestic students already employed in health professions who are upskilling through part-time study.

### 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 MNHS graduate coursework students (88%) pay tuition fees, with 59% making upfront payments and 29% on deferred arrangements. A small minority of 12% report having no fee payment obligations.

### 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 MNHS

Payment Source	Use this source	<i>All</i>	<i>Most</i>	<i>About Half</i>	<i>A little</i>
Self	65%	35%	6%	9%	15%
Family	56%	31%	13%	5%	8%
Employer	8%	1%	0%	3%	4%
Sponsor	10%	4%	1%	4%	1%
Other	12%	3%	5%	4%	0%

Self-funding is the dominant fee payment arrangement in MNHS, with 65% of fee-paying students contributing from their own resources and 35% covering all of their fees personally. Family support is also a noted source of funding at 56%, with 31% of students relying on family for all of their fees — a pattern often consistent within the international student cohort, where family financial support is often essential. Notably, employer sponsorship is very low at just 8%, despite many MNHS programmes being directly tied to professional advancement in health settings. A further 22% report funding comes from sponsors or other sources. These patterns suggests that most students are pursuing further qualifications at their own or their family’s financial risk rather than with employer backing, which may amplify the financial pressures and value for money concerns explored elsewhere in this report.

## 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

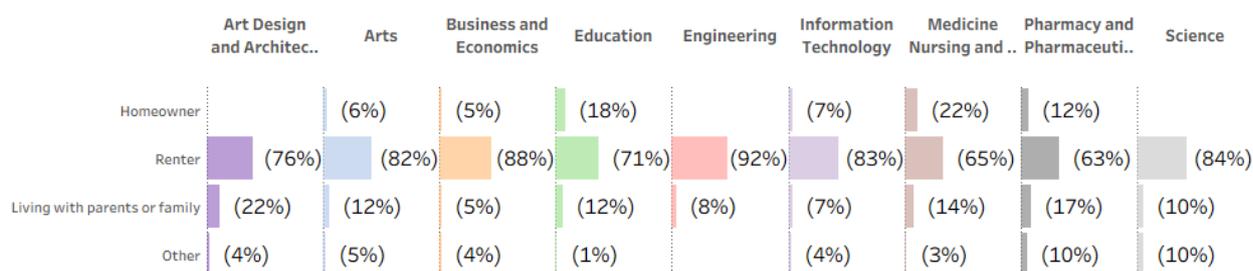
	MNHS 2023	MNHS 2025	Monash 2025
Doing great	9%	5%	4%
Getting by	32%	37%	37%
Just coping	44%	42%	41%
Having trouble	15%	16%	19%

MNHS students’ financial wellbeing closely mirrors the Monash-wide average, with 58% either just coping or having trouble in 2025. Compared to the faculty’s own 2023 results, there has been a modest decline: the proportion doing great has nearly halved from 9% to 5%, while those having trouble edged up from 15% to 16%. The one relative positive is that MNHS students report slightly less acute financial distress than the university average, with 16% having trouble compared to 19% Monash-wide — though this modest difference offers limited reassurance given that well over half the cohort remains in the lower two wellbeing categories.

## Housing Costs

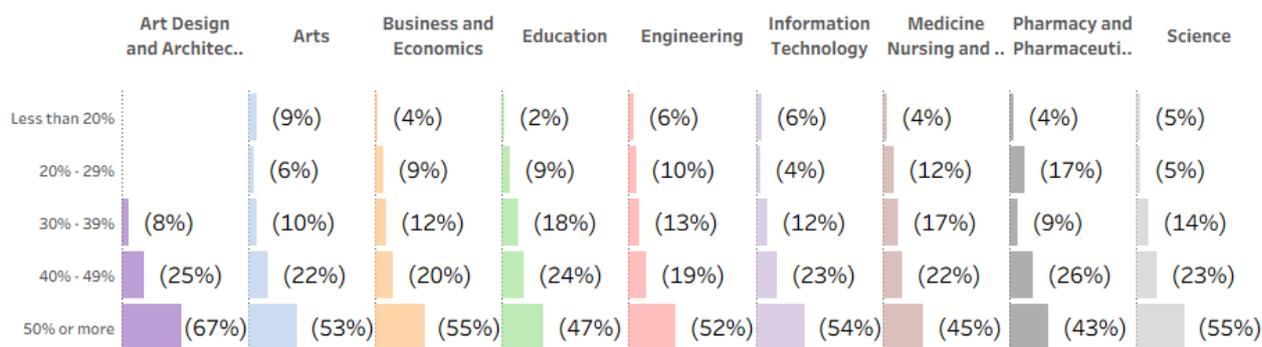
Housing represents one of the most significant financial pressures facing graduate coursework students, with rental costs consuming substantial proportions of monthly income and directly constraining students’ capacity to meet other essential expenses. The following analysis examines living arrangements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

### Living Situation by Faculty



MNHS students have the highest rate of homeownership of any faculty at 22%, well above the next closest (Education at 18%), reflecting the older demographic profile and established professional careers of many domestic students in health disciplines. However, the majority (65%) remain renters and 14% live with parents or family. This means most MNHS students are bearing the full weight of Melbourne’s rental market, a pressure that compounds the high fee burden and limited employer sponsorship identified above.

### Rent as Percentage of Monthly Income by Faculty



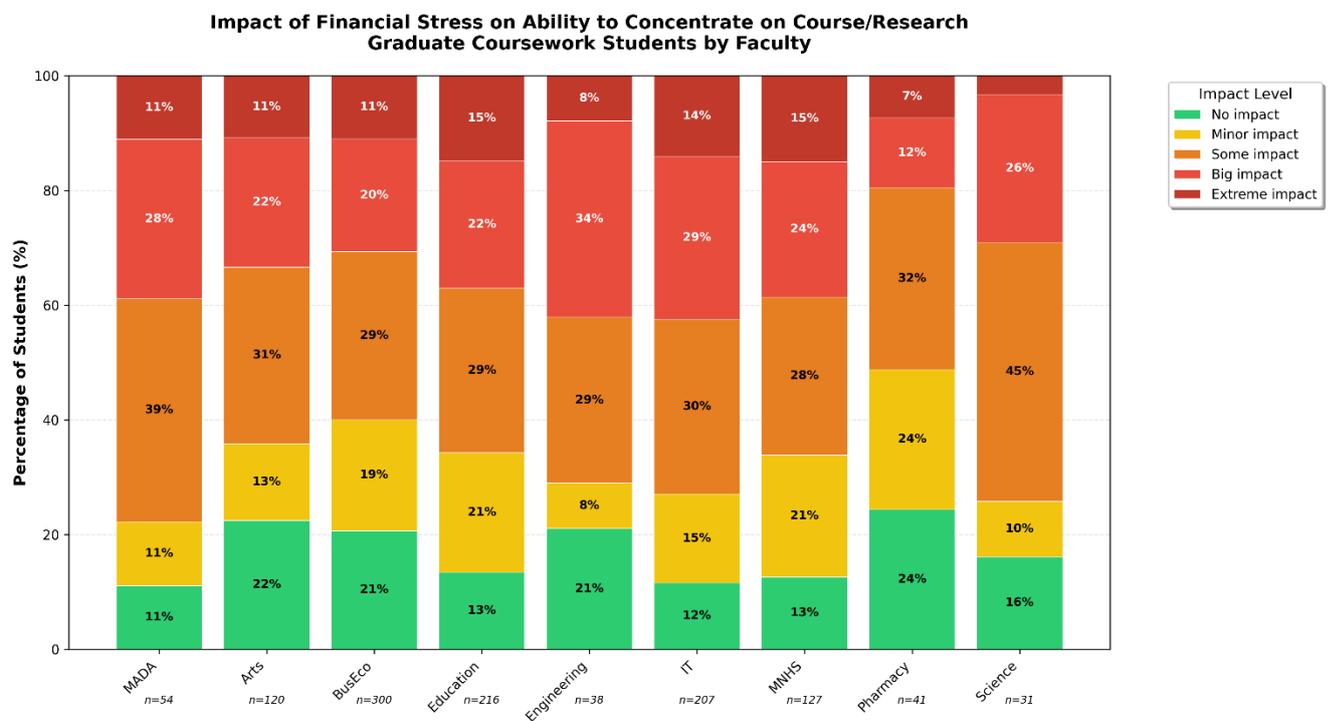
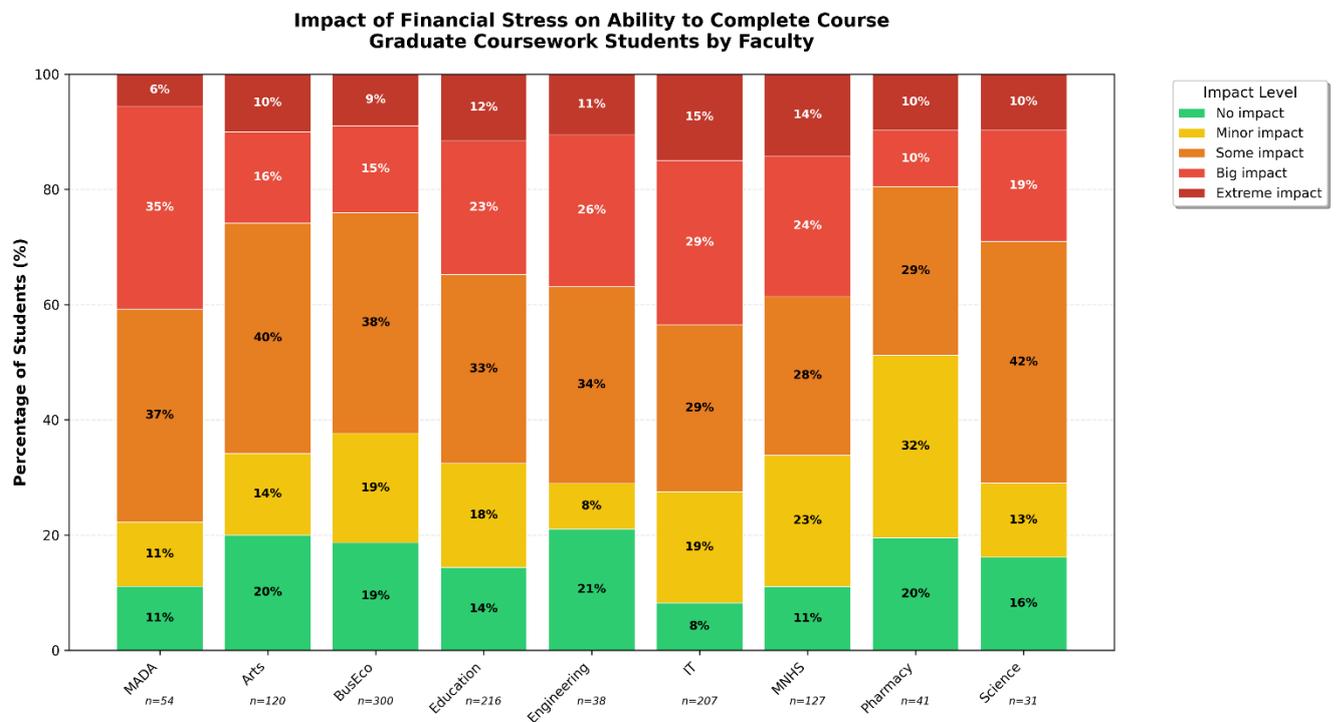
Rental burden among MNHS students is substantial, with 45% spending half or more of their monthly income on rent and a further 22% spending 40–49%. When measured against the widely recognised 30% threshold for rental stress, the picture is stark: 84% of MNHS renters exceed this benchmark, with only 16% spending less than 30% of their income on housing. When combined with the high rates of self-funded tuition and low employer sponsorship, these housing costs leave many MNHS students with very limited financial capacity for other essential expenses.

### How Financial Stress Impacts Course Engagement

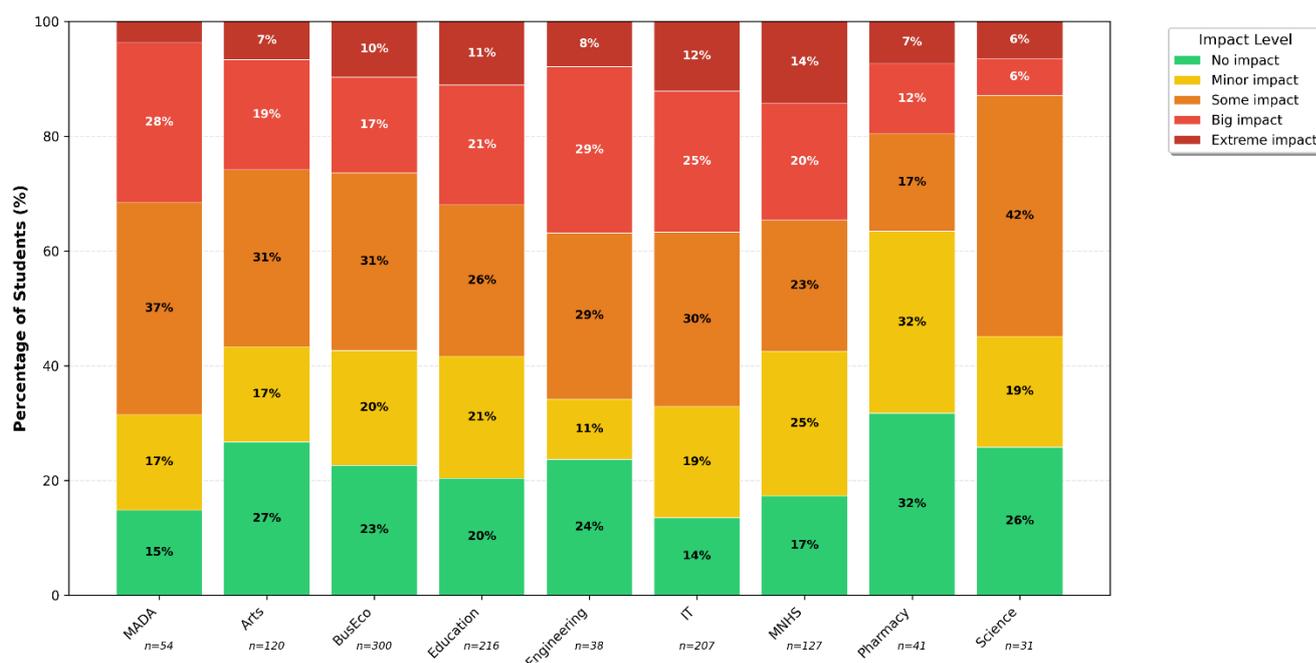
Financial stress extends beyond personal wellbeing to directly impact students’ ability to engage with their coursework effectively. The survey investigated three specific areas of concern regarding financial stress impact including the ability to complete studies, the capacity to concentrate on studies 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 has a pervasive impact on MNHS students’ academic engagement across all three measures. For ability to complete their course to the best of their ability, 38% report a big or extreme impact, with only 11% experiencing no impact at all. Concentration is similarly affected, with 39% reporting big or extreme impact. Attendance is marginally less disrupted but still concerning, with 34% reporting big or extreme impact and only 17% unaffected. Across all three measures, fewer than one in five MNHS students report no financial impact on their studies.

The consistency across the three measures suggests financial stress is not merely an inconvenience but a structural barrier to academic performance and success for the majority of the cohort.

### 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:

*“As an international student managing finances is hard. The course fee is also almost 3-4 times the domestic. And people say this is what you signed up for and I know that but no one actually knows what it is and how life will look like until they actually start living it. And it is hard away from family doing extra shifts and with unpaid placement on top of that.”*

*“I am trying to save up for placement because for some reason this country thinks it's okay to work full time without being paid and international students are cash cows and should not be included in placement payments. It stresses me out so so much to think about managing my finances during placement.”*

*"I wish that we received a fuel stipend for the amount of travel needed during clinical placements."*

*"It just that inflation makes me sick."*

*"Just that I am waiting to finish my course and get permanent employment in the near future which will drastically change my financial situation."*

*"Little financial stress until graduation but still seek for extra income to handle with unexpected events or friends' catch-ups/birthdays."*

*"Lack of income and dependence on parents for money has made me under spend which further leads to my loneliness because I don't step out of the house due to my fear of spending too much."*

*"I work a part time job and a casual job on top of that with the assistance of youth allowance. I travel two hours to attend university and am unable to catch public transport due to the unsafe early hours or late hours coming home. Textbooks are ridiculously priced and I am unable to pack lunch due to the food going bad on the way to uni alone. Fuel is next to impossible to cover along with a car that continuously has problems and I am unable to apply for a loan to purchase a new car because I don't have the funds. Let alone the cost of food at the moment."*

*"I do get enough funds from my family however it is difficult to match up to the quality of life here in Melbourne due to expensive rent groceries transport."*

*"I live with my family so I rely on them a lot for everyday expenses like food healthcare and any unexpected costs. I have lived alone and was considerably in a less secure position when I did so. I also found completing a 500 hour unpaid placement full-time was had significant financial costs."*

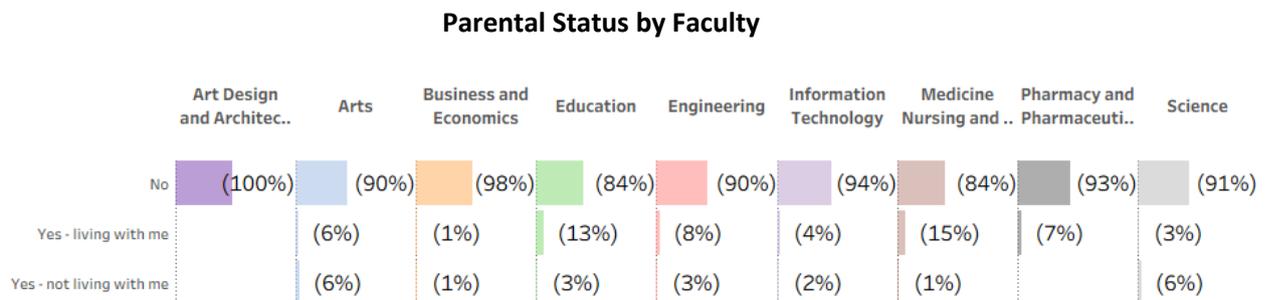
*"I am doing well financially. Not rich by any means but I don't worry. Having said that its because I work a lot to ensure that is and remains the case."*

*"I was in a well-paying job before starting the masters course and I am now looking for work. I chose to study part time because I need to work to live and my financial security depends on how long it takes me to find a new job."*

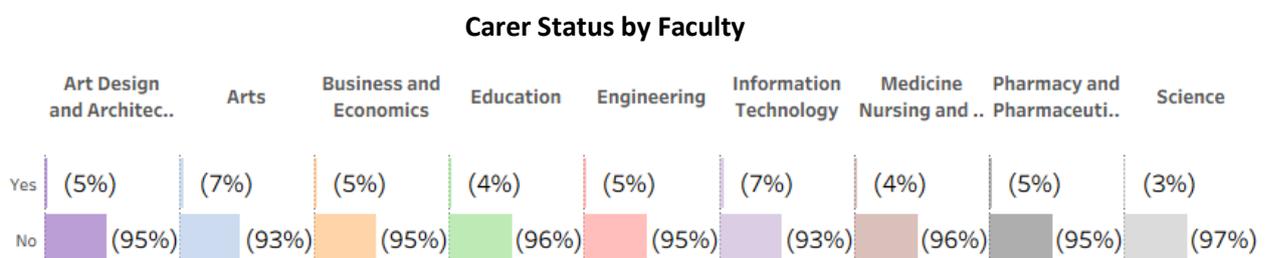
*"I have found that attending campus for study is too big a financial strain so I have to attend online."*

### 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.



MNHS has the equal-highest proportions of student parents across all faculties, with 16% reporting having children. The majority of these (15%) have children living with them, meaning they are actively managing childcare alongside their studies. This is consistent with the faculty’s older age profile and established professional workforce, but it also signals a cohort with significant competing demands on their time and finances — particularly given the mandatory placement requirements common in MNHS programmes.



Carer responsibilities are reported by 4% of MNHS graduate coursework students, broadly in line with other faculties where rates range from 3% to 7%.

#### 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 need my job to complete my course. The course is sponsored by the Government but I can continue only if I am employed at least 0.6 FTE. My financial situation (I pay for everything for the children) means that I cannot reduce my hours. This is the source of stress. I would like to spend more time and would like to focus more on my studies but am forced to split my time."*

*"Felt like I didn't have time to continue meaningful friendships between 3 jobs part time university degree and a 2 year old."*

*"I do not like the uncertainty of casual jobs and not having income security but it is all I have time for while I am studying and caring for a family member."*

*"I'm technically employed but on extended unpaid maternity leave to complete my degree. I'm unable to manage the number of hours for university with caring for a toddler and then working."*

*"I am the oldest by far in my tutorial group. I am the only parent. Would be nice to have more in common with classmates."*

*"I live alone. I have my children every second week but work a fortnight's work in a week so I can care for them. There isn't much time for me and the effort involved in trying to connect with others is simply too much. I am in a situation I cannot get out of because of financial commitments and I am exhausted."*

*"I am a mother of 3 and find that other students do not understand what it is like to juggle as much as I do."*

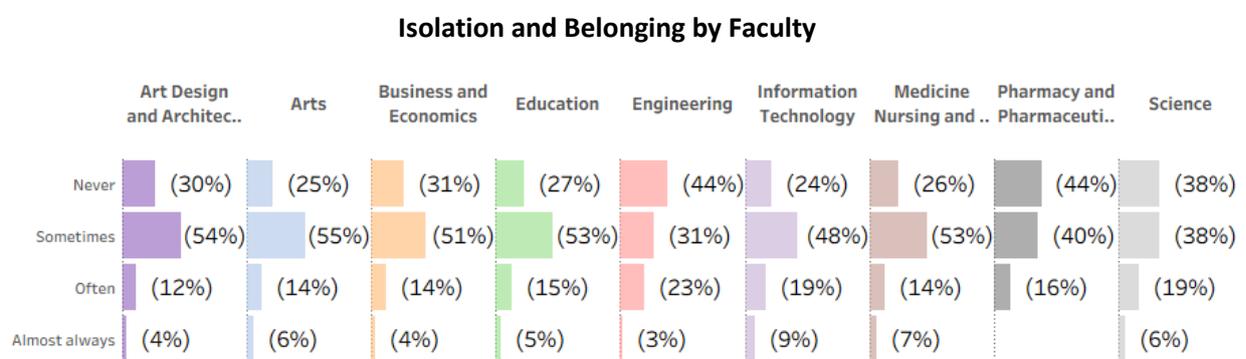
#### 4. Peer Connection and Community Building

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.



Nearly three-quarters (74%) of MNHS graduate coursework students report feeling isolated or lacking a sense of belonging at least sometimes in the past month, with 21% experiencing this often or almost always. Only 26% reported never feeling isolated — notably lower than several other faculties including Engineering (44%), Pharmacy (44%) and Science (38%).

### 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 MNHS graduate coursework environment:

*“Mainly being away from home. Away from family and friends is a major factor for me.”*

*“Being away from home family my partner and my pets. Having nothing to do during the holidays (I'm a high performing person need to be engaged all the time). Having no contact with my friends as they all moved in together and have forgotten about me.”*

*"That there is not much people from South America around me or that know Spanish specially in my classes."*

*"Doing full time placement makes it hard to have time to spend with friends."*

*"Not being good enough and not fitting in properly."*

*"Not really connecting to peers in my course as most people are busy working. Having all of my lectures being pre-recorded videos instead of live feels isolating as well."*

*"Mental and physical health issues, geographic isolation, transphobic laws preventing me from visiting my family, lack of queer and disabled representation and community at Monash and in my ... degree."*

*"Not a lot of people shared the same ambition or had more drive [than me]. The people I met during my undergrad were passionate about their field of interest when I came here it didn't feel like it. I am second guessing where I am and choose to be. Although there are people who are incredible, I can't seem to get that particular thought out of my head. Also, it feels like everyone for themselves I find it hard to trust people even though I try my best to talk to people. I feel like someone will stab me in the back."*

*"Struggling with coursework and felt like no one else was."*

*"Homesickness is the biggest factor but it usually settles pretty quickly because of peer support."*

*"When I don't take a moment to breathe and assess. I think the more I try to do things one at a time I'll feel better but sometimes you're a bit overwhelmed with all the coursework you have to do and you let yourself stress before you look at your options."*

*"I am predominantly a distance education student and being connected to staff and other students is difficult."*

*"Lack of money to be social lack of time due to study and work."*

*"Being autistic and socially anxious. I can't make and keep friendships. I am always uncomfortable in social settings I chose DE because I was so nervous about going into campus every day."*

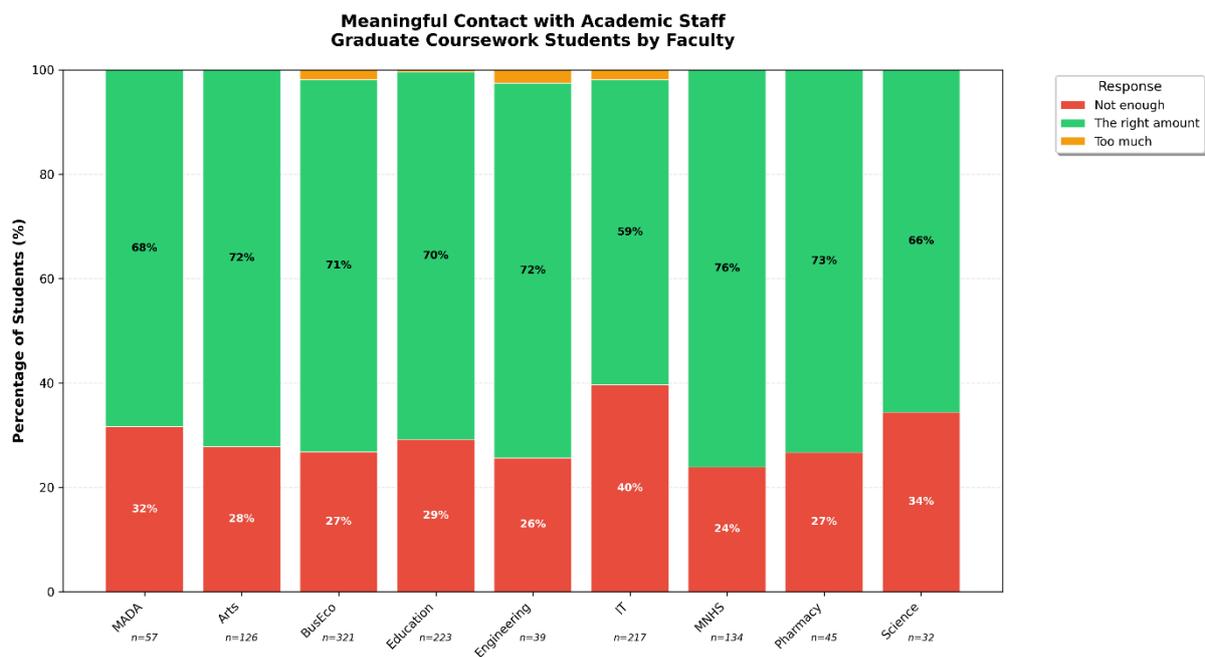
*"Ridiculous course requirements for nurses who are already self-employed teachers not understanding specialties other than ED teachers having no time for us and not exactly warm and approachable clunky Moodle and upload of video assignments taking so long a course handbook accessible just days before starting the course so I really didn't have clear indications of what I was signing up for course content mainly YouTube with little live teaching and little time for questions. It seems the universities are putting unsustainable workloads on the teachers so they are making mistakes with rubrics and offloading more work onto the students e.g. find your own clinical settings fake patients and invigilators for videos of clinical skills assessment then struggle to upload these videos onto a clunky system. This is the worst educational experience I have had."*

*"Online learning lots of Moodle work limited access face-to-face with colleagues in course. Lots of long distance travel to campus."*

## Meaningful Contact

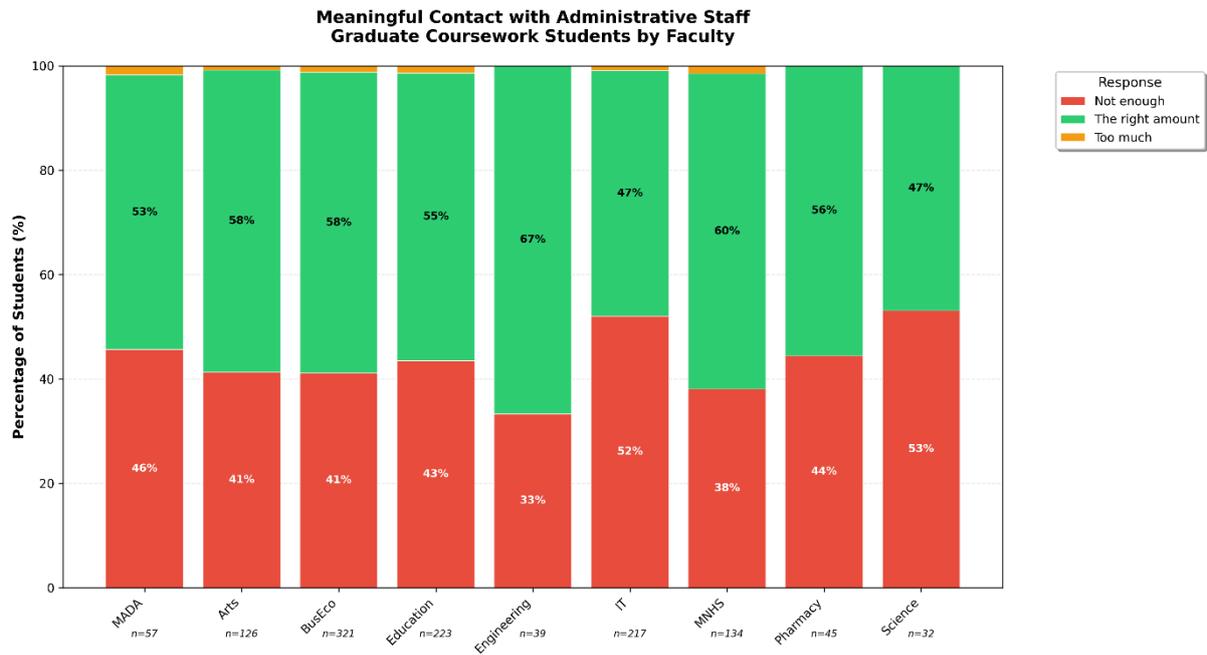
To assess students' access to support networks, respondents were asked to evaluate the frequency of their meaningful connections across five key relationship categories: academic staff, administrative staff, family, friends and peers. This analysis examines how students perceive their level of connection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

### Academic Staff



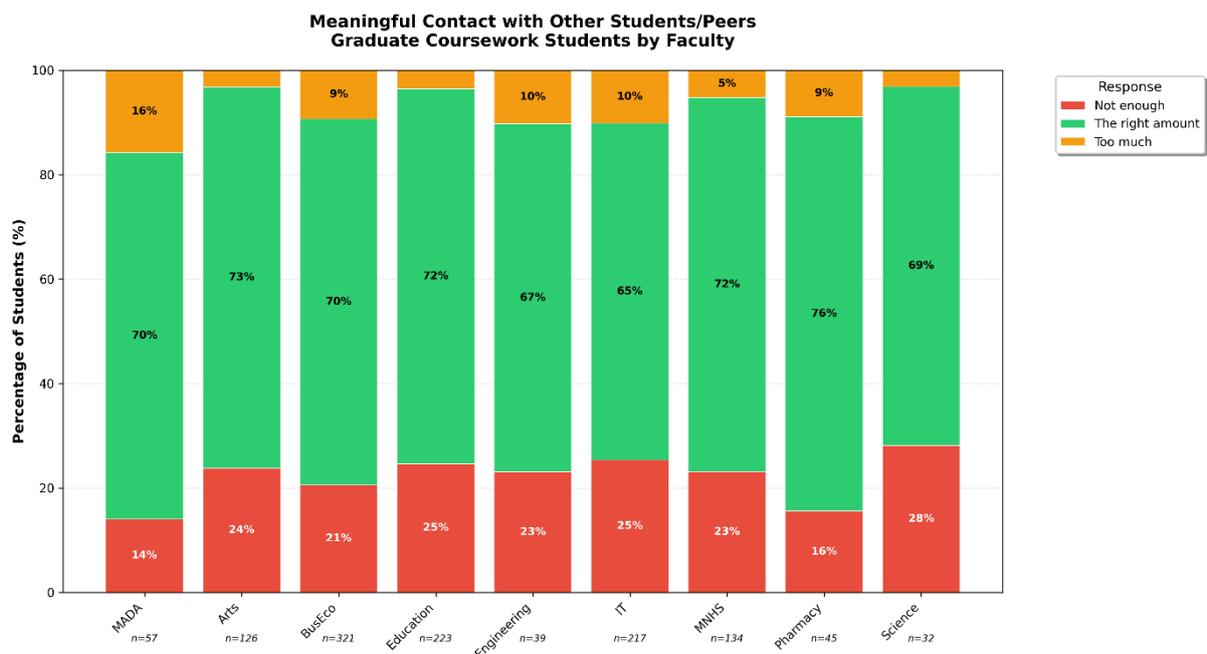
Three-quarters (76%) of MNHS students report the right amount of meaningful contact with academic staff — the highest satisfaction rate of any faculty. Just 24% feel they do not get enough.

Administrative Staff



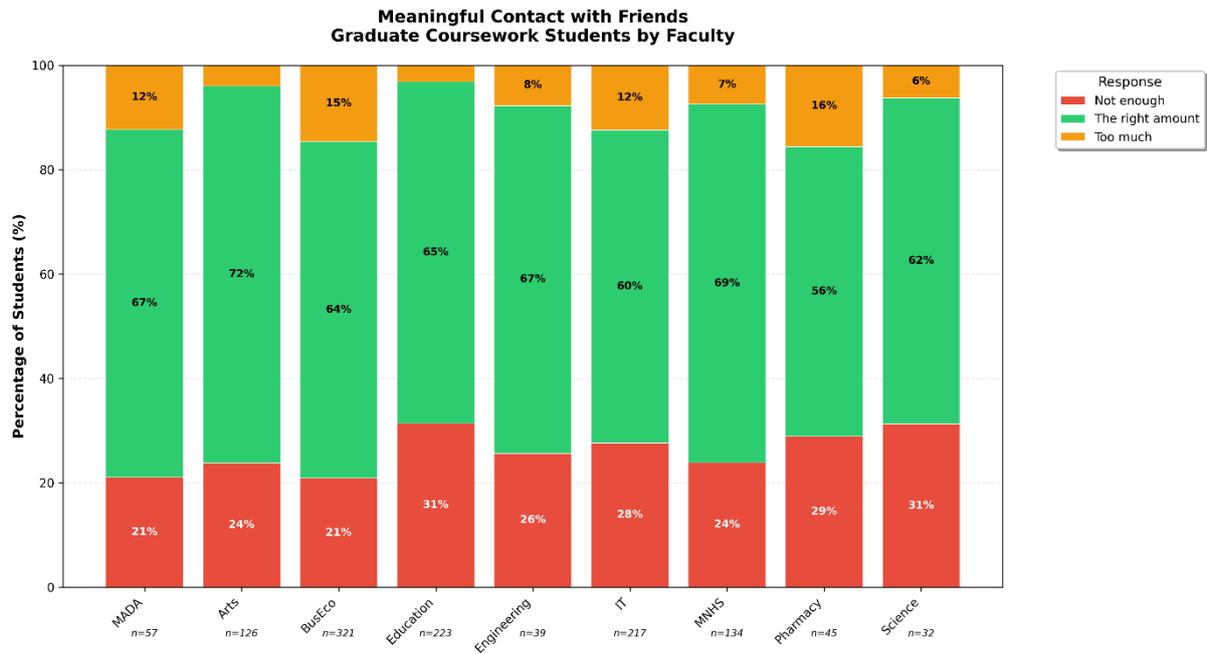
A majority (60%) of MNHS students feel they receive the right amount of meaningful contact with administrative staff, with 38% wanting more — one of the lower dissatisfaction rates across faculties.

Other Students/Peers



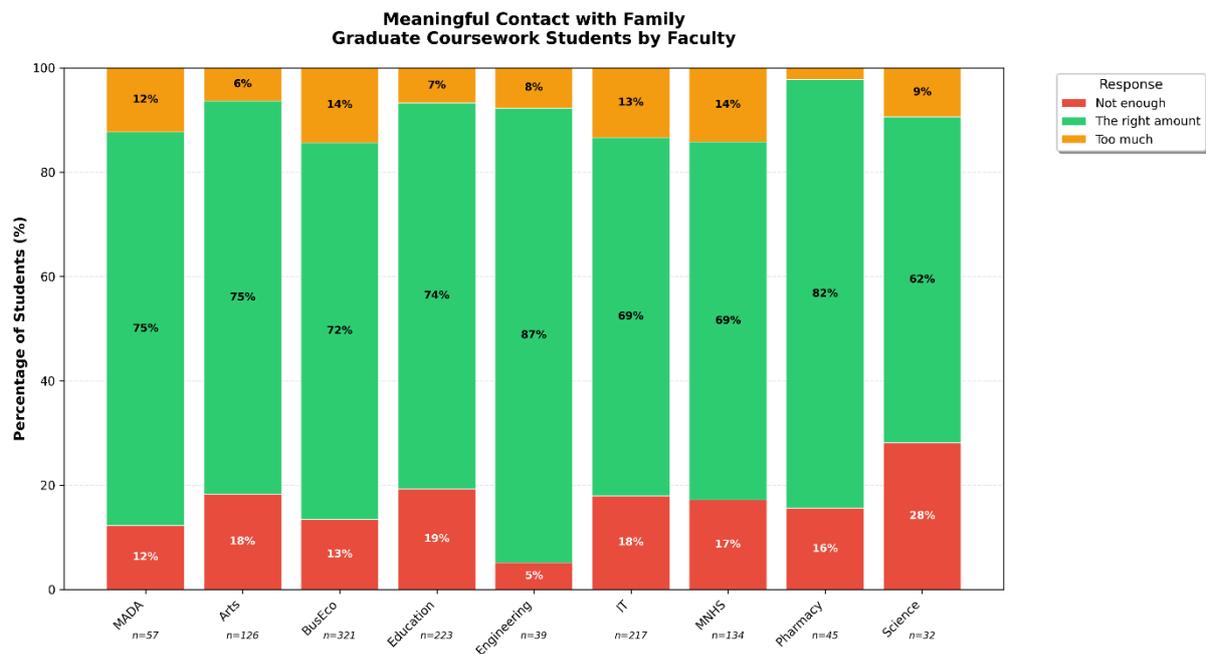
Most MNHS students (72%) report the right amount of peer contact, though 23% feel they do not get enough — a figure consistent with the isolation patterns documented above and the diverse study modes that limit consistent peer interaction.

*Friends*



Around a quarter (24%) of MNHS students report insufficient meaningful contact with friends, while 69% feel they have the right amount. This places MNHS in the middle of the pack across faculties.

## Family



Most MNHS students (69%) report the right amount of family contact, though 17% feel they do not get enough — a figure likely driven by the 48% international student cohort living far from home, as echoed in the isolation testimonies referencing homesickness and distance from family.

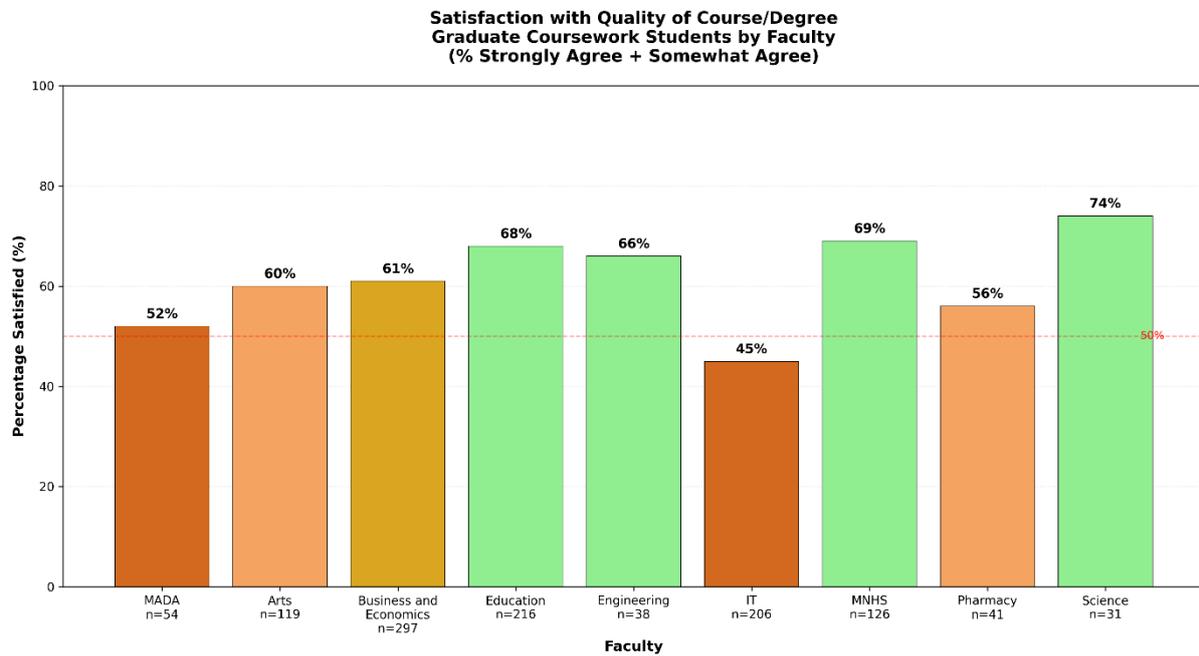
## 5. Course Experience, Satisfaction and Retention

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

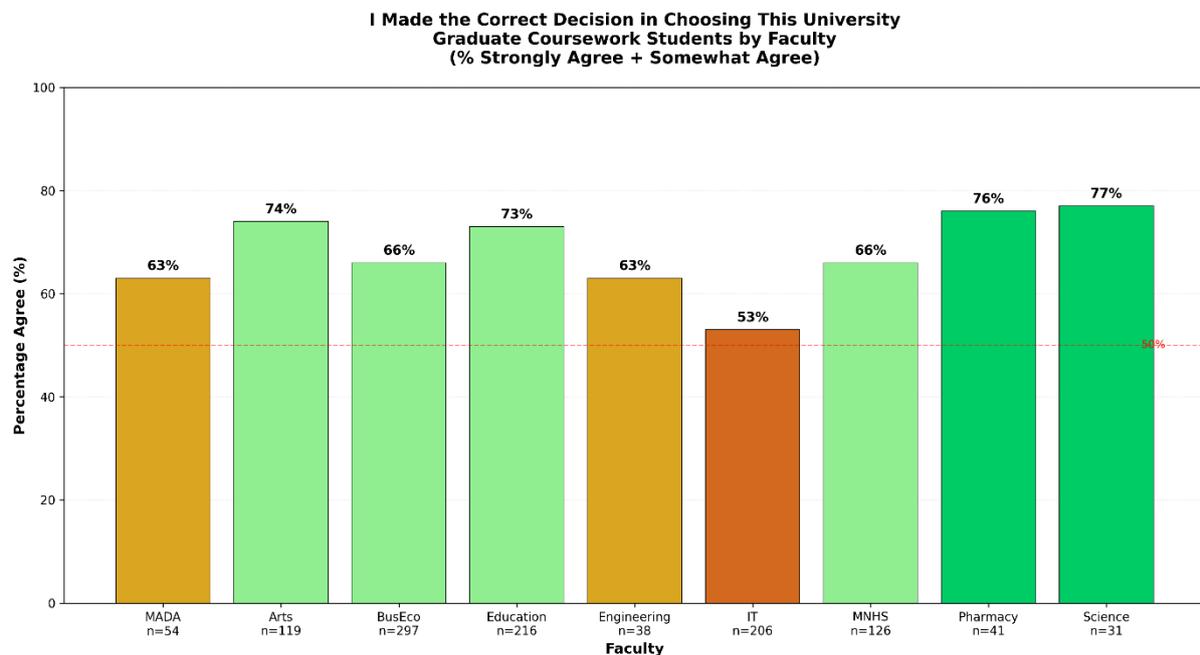
coursework cohorts reveal important insights about how different student groups perceive the quality of their educational experience.



MNHS students report the second-highest course satisfaction rate across all faculties at 69%, behind only Science (74%). While this is a positive result that suggests the majority of students value their programme, it also means that nearly a third of the cohort are not satisfied with the quality of their course — a finding worth consideration alongside the value for money concerns and student testimonies that will be presented later in this report.

## University Choice

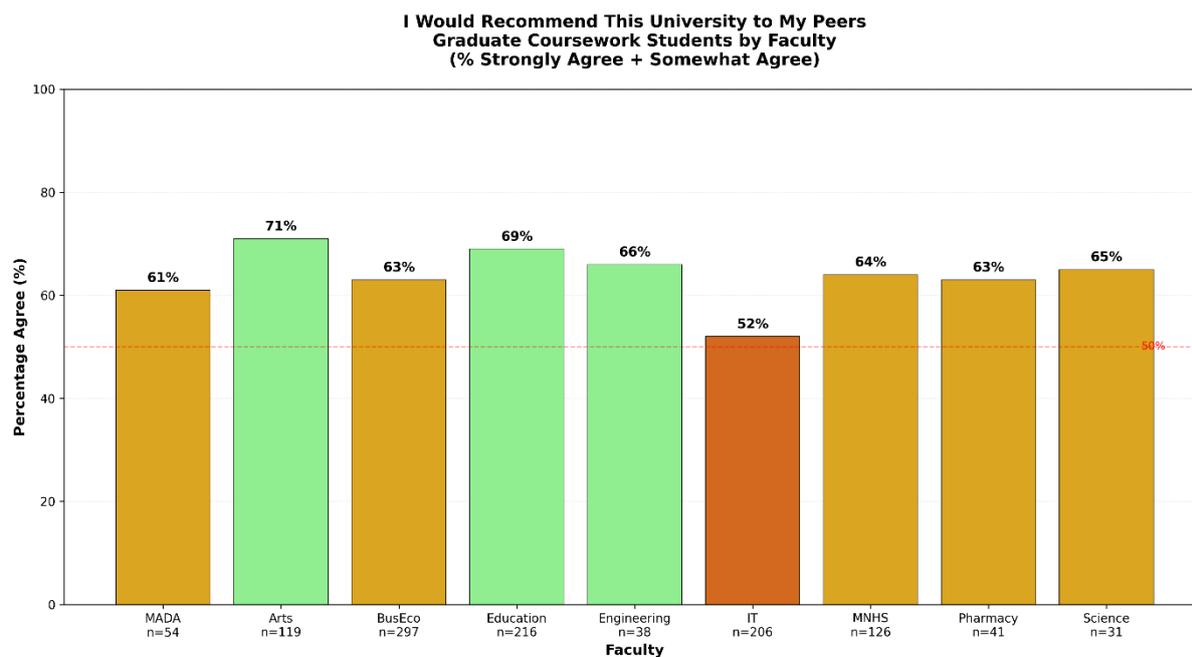
Beyond satisfaction with course quality, students' reflections on whether they made the correct decision in choosing Monash provides insight into their overall evaluation of their educational experience. This measure captures retrospective assessment of university choice, encompassing course quality,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



Two-thirds (66%) of MNHS students agree they made the correct decision in choosing Monash — a mid-range result that sits marginally below the course satisfaction figure of 69%. This gap suggests that while students are broadly positive about their programme content, a very small percentage may have reservations about the wider university experience, potentially reflecting the financial pressures, limited career support and isolation challenges documented throughout this report.

## Peer Recommendation - University

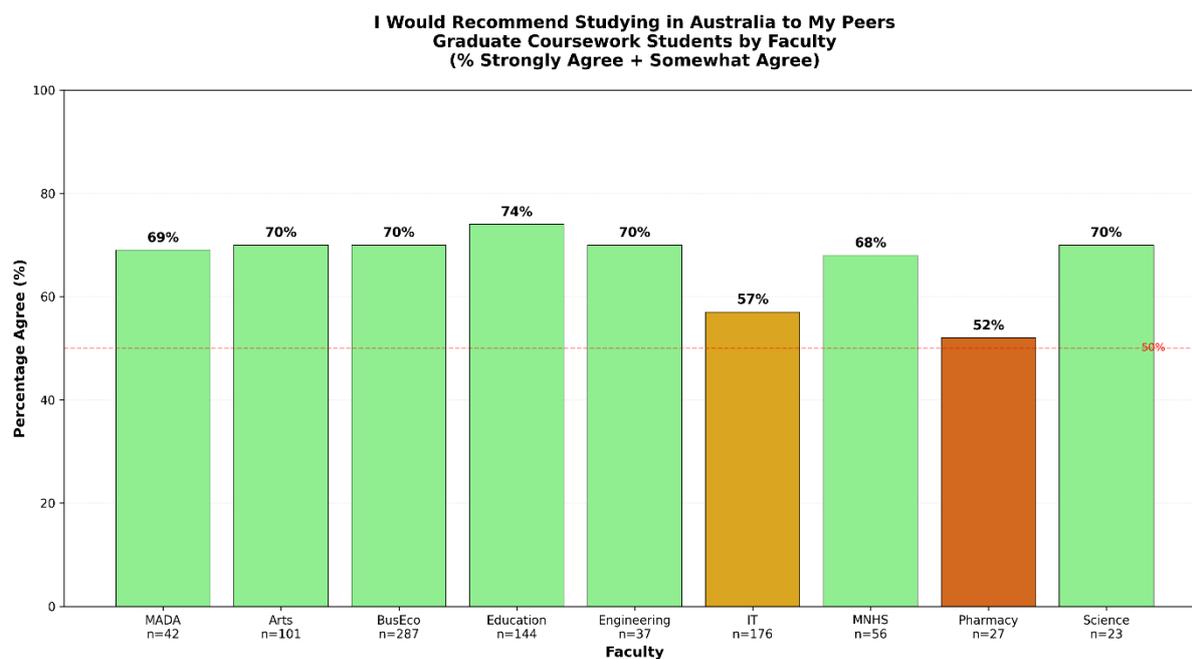
Students' willingness to recommend Monash to their peers serves as a key indicator of overall satisfaction and institutional reputation, reflecting whether students would advocate for the university based on their own experiences. This measure captures the strength of students' endorsement and their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



Just under two-thirds (64%) of MNHS students would recommend Monash to their peers — a mid-range result across faculties. Notably, this is lower than both the course satisfaction (69%) and university choice (66%) figures, suggesting that while students are reasonably positive about their own experience, some are more hesitant to endorse the university 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.

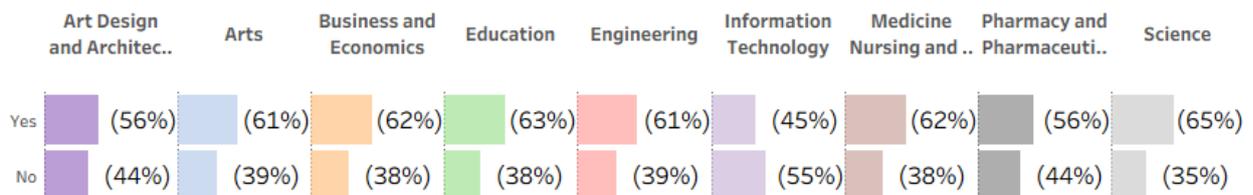


Among international students, 68% of MNHS respondents would recommend studying in Australia — slightly below the 69–74% range seen in most other faculties but well clear of the lowest performers. Given the financial pressures documented throughout this report, particularly the high cost of fees, unpaid placements and rental stress, this is a reasonably positive endorsement of the broader Australian study experience, even if it falls short of a strong vote of confidence.

## 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



A majority (62%) of MNHS students feel their course offers value for money, placing the faculty mid-range across Monash. However, the 38% who disagree represents a substantial minority, and given the high rates of self-funded tuition, unpaid placement requirements and limited employer sponsorship documented earlier, this figure signals a real tension between programme quality — which students rate highly — and the financial cost of accessing it.

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

*“It is just too expensive. For a middle class international family it is difficult to manage such a huge amount. My dad spent almost his entire life earning for me to come here and make a life for myself. It may be worth it, it may not be worth it, but as of now it is difficult to manage expenses. I have 1000 hours of unpaid placement as well. During this time, I can’t really work and can’t earn. Even if it is placement, I am still working for someone and should have the right to minimum wage.”*

*“No help from course coordinators. No clarity in the course content. Feel like an outsider. No help for professional connections.”*

*“It’s too expensive in comparison to what other unis are offering the same course for.”*

*“Most of my units are online and expect me to study on my own. I don’t see why I am expected to pay the same as other master courses or even come to Australia if I have classes*

*once a week. It's disappointing and not worth money I spend on fees and money I invest to live here."*

*"The quality and content of courses are slightly different than I expected. I had expected more in-depth lectures."*

*"Too expensive and even more expensive every term. It is a good course but cost way too much. It might take me a few years to earn that amount of saving."*

*"There are very few additional contents other than that provided by textbooks and YouTube videos. I sometimes feel that I could teach myself the content without the course."*

*"It is too expensive for international students and when you enrol it is not just about studying you have to find a job work and earn to live here. The course where we have to go to uni only 2-3 days a week and even have unpaid placement the amount is a lot which is paid by the international students."*

*"The part time schedule is not what I expected as it is not consistently part time. I am not sure but I think I am paying the same over the four years but I am not at uni consistently. I have completed one semester but only 6% of the course."*

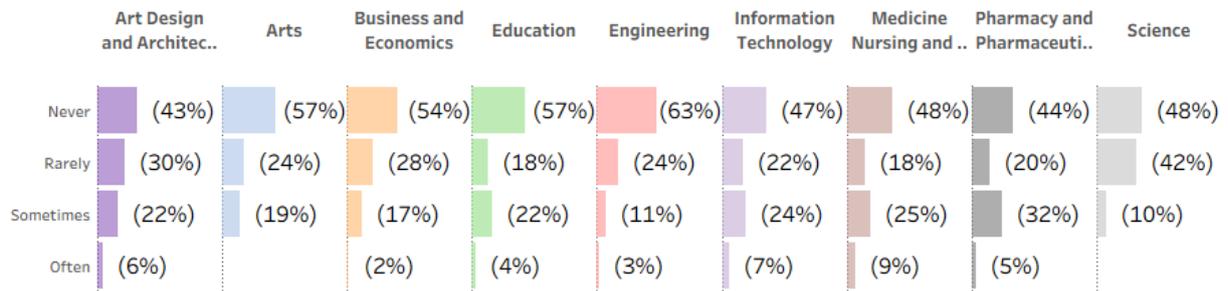
*"Although I am sponsored for this course it hasn't been designed for students such as myself. We are being added into existing units that were not designed for us or our roles. We are undertaking this course as the first cohort but there are many difficulties. Many unit coordinators don't understand our jobs so don't understand the nuances of shift work our employer or how we are able to manage our time. They don't understand our working environment and cannot see how an assessment that might be reasonably straightforward for an existing student can be significantly more difficult for us. The course seems piecemeal and was certainly not designed with us as students in mind or with the recognitions that even though employment with a specific employer was required the lack of support we receive from that employer."*

*"I have only completed one course so far. The tutorial is in person but the lectures are pre-recorded. I feel there is little opportunity to engage as a group with the material each week and to reflect and learn from classmate's experiences and expertise. I feel like this is particularly relevant to social work as it is a people focussed discipline."*

## 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

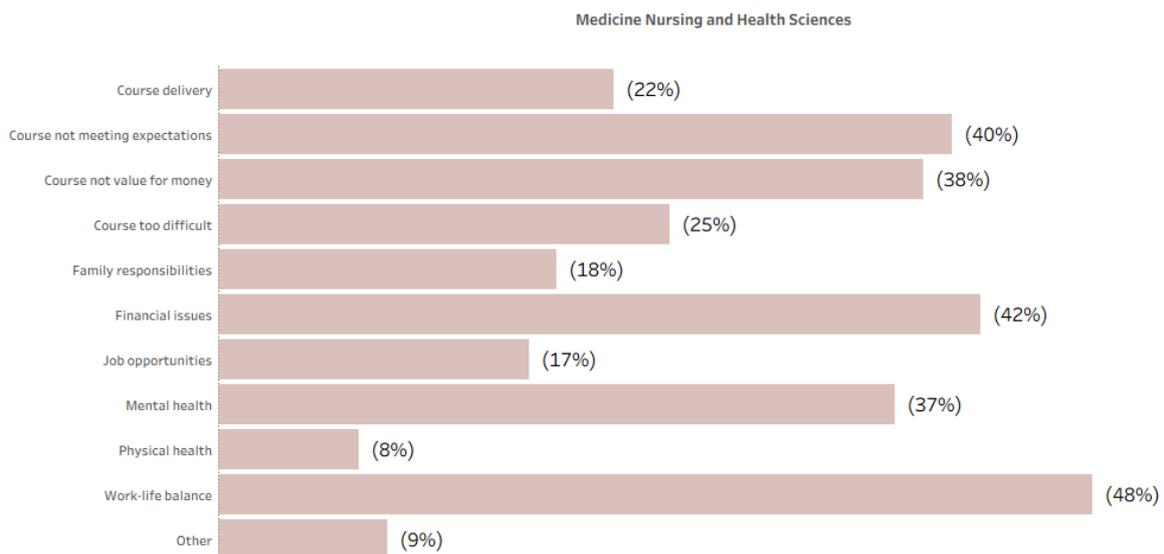


Over half (52%) of MNHS students have considered leaving their course at some point, with 34% doing so sometimes or often — one of the higher rates across faculties. However, the high domestic student response rate in MNHS compared to other faculties provides context here as domestic students are more likely to consider leaving. The remaining 48% of students report never considering leaving, indicating that the potential professional gains from completing programmes may outweigh concerns about course satisfaction or value for money. Alternatively, some may never consider leaving because they do not perceive this as an option, likely especially for those whose families sacrifice financially for their study or for those who have gone to great lengths to attend their course, such as moving to a new country and leaving family and friends behind.

#### 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:

### Reasons for considering leaving course in MNHS



The reasons MNHS students cite for considering departure confirm the interconnected nature of the challenges documented throughout this report. Work-life balance (48%) is the leading factor, followed by financial issues (42%), course not meeting expectations (40%), course not value for money (38%) and mental health (37%). Notably, the top five factors span personal, financial and academic domains, reinforcing that withdrawal risk in MNHS is rarely driven by a single issue but rather by compounding pressures. The prominence of work-life balance likely reflects the demands of mandatory placements layered on top of traditional coursework requirements, employment and family responsibilities, while the 42% citing financial issues aligns directly with the rental stress, self-funded tuition and limited employer sponsorship patterns identified earlier.

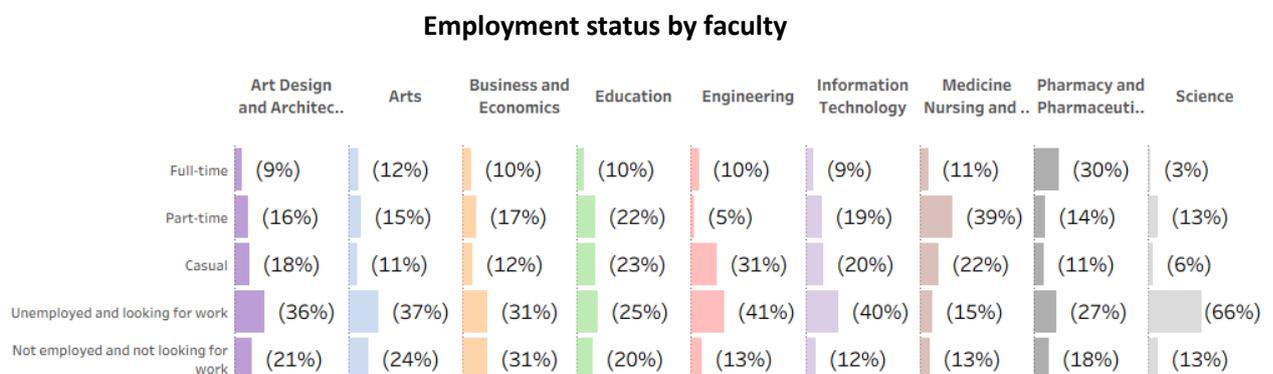
## 6. Employment and Career Planning

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 MNHS, 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 MNHS 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.



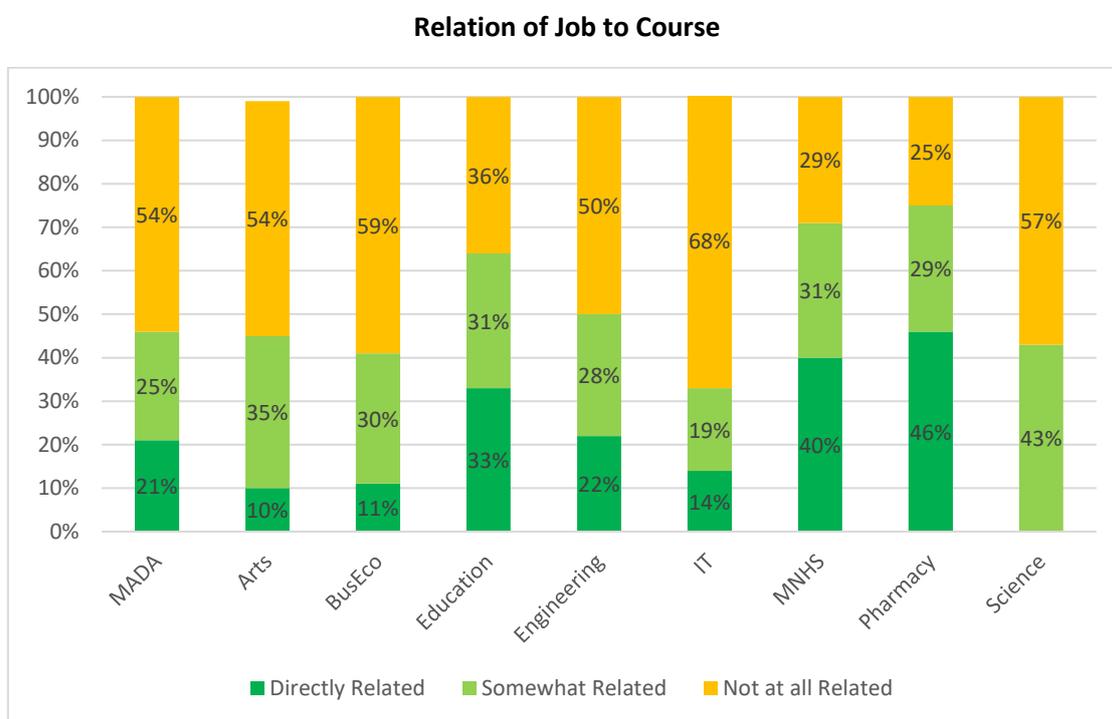
MNHS has the highest rate of part-time employment of any faculty at 39%, with a further 22% in casual work and 11% in full-time roles — meaning 72% of the cohort is employed in some capacity. These patterns also indicate that MNHS has the highest total combined employment rate among all faculties. Conversely, only 15% are unemployed and looking for work, the lowest rate across all faculties. Again, the comparatively high domestic student response rate in the faculty is a factor here as domestic students are far less likely to fall into the category of unemployed and looking for work.

### Job Type

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

	Art Design and Architecture	Arts	Business and Economics	Education	Engineering	Information Technology	Medicine Nursing and ..	Pharmacy and Pharmaceuti..	Science
Academic or research e.g. tutor	(4%)	(10%)	(6%)	(21%)	(11%)	(6%)	(6%)	(17%)	(14%)
University administration & support e.g. student support ser..	(4%)	(2%)	(8%)	(3%)		(5%)	(2%)	(4%)	
Industry specific or professional e.g. data analyst	(25%)	(17%)	(16%)	(20%)	(33%)	(27%)	(46%)	(50%)	
Hospitality e.g. restaurant staff	(42%)	(42%)	(37%)	(24%)	(33%)	(42%)	(27%)	(29%)	(57%)
Freelance & online e.g. editing	(25%)	(17%)	(8%)	(11%)	(6%)	(10%)	(3%)		
Gig economy & side jobs e.g. rideshare/delivery driver	(8%)	(8%)	(11%)	(7%)	(11%)	(13%)	(1%)		
Other	(25%)	(21%)	(25%)	(30%)	(17%)	(12%)	(23%)	(21%)	(29%)

The job types held by MNHS students reflect the faculty’s strong professional orientation. Industry-specific or professional roles account for the majority of employment, with 46% of employed students — the second-highest rate among the faculties. Hospitality work accounts for a further 27%, likely concentrated among international students with fewer options for field-relevant employment and who may face greater barriers to having their skills, training and experience recognised in a foreign health care system. The very low rates of freelance (3%) and gig economy (1%) work distinguish MNHS from faculties like Arts and IT, suggesting that when MNHS students work, they tend to hold more structured roles aligned with either their profession or the service sector. A small minority work within academia (6%) and in university administration (5%), further reinforcing the strong industry ties majority of students have.

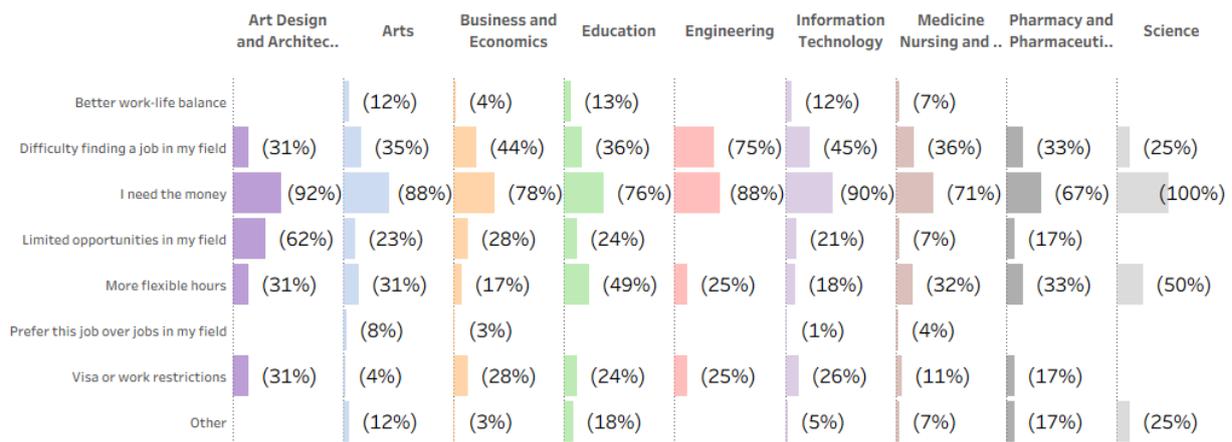


MNHS students report the second-highest rate of directly related employment of any faculty at 40%, with a further 31% in somewhat related roles — meaning 71% of employed MNHS students are working in jobs connected to their field of study. Only 29% work in roles with no relation to their course, the second-lowest rate across all faculties. This strong alignment reflects the professional nature of MNHS programmes and the existing clinical workforce from which many students are drawn, though as the following section explores, those who are working outside their field face distinct pressures.

### *Why Students Work Outside their Field*

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

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

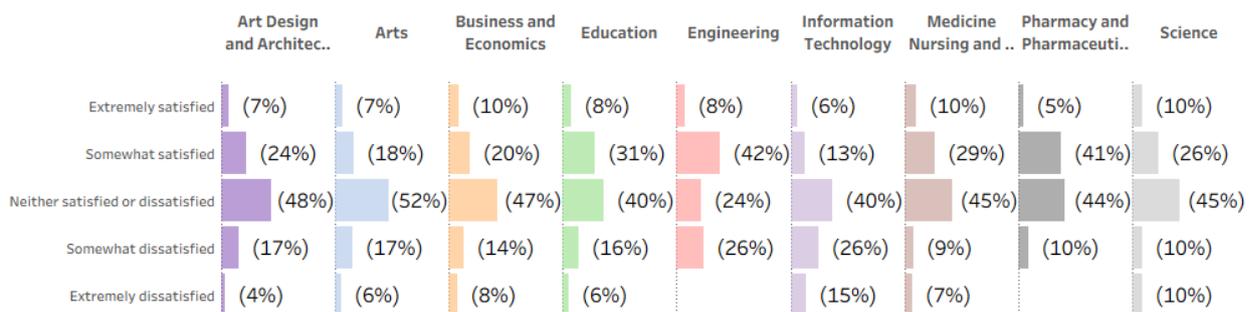


Among the 29% of employed MNHS students working outside their field, financial necessity is overwhelmingly the primary driver, with 71% citing “I need the money.” Difficulty finding field-relevant work (36%) and the need for more flexible hours (32%) are the next most common reasons. Some secondary reasons for working in unrelated jobs include visa restrictions (11%), work-life balance (7%) and limited opportunities in the field (7%). These may indicate the unique factors shaping the employment experiences of international students who are not as easily able to find industry-relevant roles.

## 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 in MNHS is modest, with only 39% of students satisfied (10% extremely, 29% somewhat) and 45% sitting in the neutral category — suggesting many students have had limited engagement with career services rather than outright negative experiences. The 16% who are dissatisfied, combined with the large neutral group, points to an opportunity for MNHS to develop more visible, discipline-specific career support, particularly for international students navigating Australian health workforce registration and employment pathways.

### *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. Of the suggestions made, most centred around the importance of industry connection and personalised support:

*“There hasn't been any services offered”*

*“No guidance provided.”*

*“What career guidance services? I didn't know we received any.”*

*“We have been told in my degree that we will discuss career options at the end of the degree.”*

*“I want more events in the school of public health catered to our employability and for networking.”*

*“There should be a clear course map that outlines options for i.e. teaching lecturing education in a hospital etc.”*

*“Increased career guidance network events seminars around career guidance and progression.”*

*“Indicate more work opportunity and more guidance”*

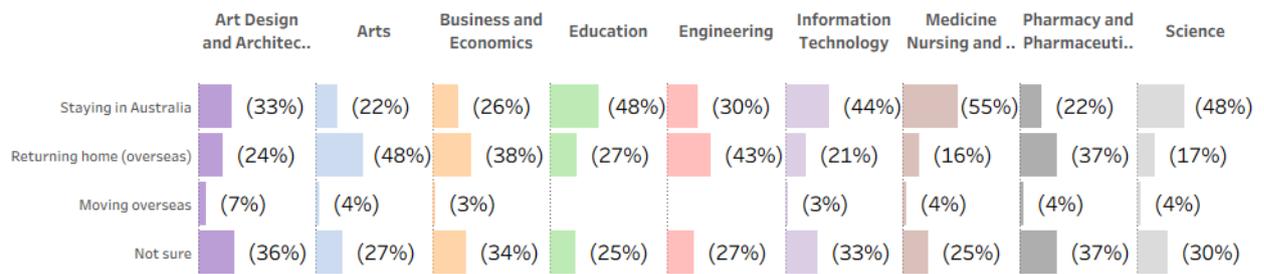
*“More coaching regarding grad year applications and career pathway planning”*

### *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



MNHS international students show the strongest intention to remain in Australia post-graduation of any faculty, with 55% planning to stay. Only 16% plan to return home, the lowest rate across Monash. This signals strong confidence in Australian health workforce opportunities and suggests that MNHS international students view their qualifications as a pathway to local careers rather than solely credential acquisition. A marginal 4% plan on taking their qualifications overseas to another country, reflecting a similar trend to most other faculties. However, the 25% who are unsure represent an opportunity for targeted career guidance around registration pathways, visa transitions and workforce integration.

## What Makes MNHS Distinct: Key Themes

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

### Clinical Placement Demands and the Professional Workforce Balancing Act

MNHS has the most professionally oriented graduate coursework cohort at Monash. The data paint a consistent picture: the highest rate of part-time employment (39%) by a distance, the second-highest rate of directly field-relevant work (40%), the lowest unemployment rate (15%) and the highest homeownership rate (22%) of any faculty. Many of these students are not preparing for future careers in the abstract — many are already embedded in health workforces and pursuing further qualifications to advance or specialise.

Yet this professional engagement creates a distinctive tension. Mandatory (largely) unpaid clinical placements — a defining feature of many MNHS programmes — sit at the centre of compounding pressures that do not exist in most other faculties. Placements simultaneously reduce earning capacity, demand inflexible scheduling, limit time for study and social connection, and impose additional costs including travel and lost wages. Student testimonies repeatedly highlight this burden, with references to “1,000 hours of unpaid placement,” the impossibility of working during placement periods and the financial planning required to survive them. Work-life balance is the leading factor driving withdrawal consideration at 48%, and the isolation data — with 74% feeling disconnected at least sometimes — likely reflects a cohort scattered across clinical sites, campuses and distance study modes with limited opportunity for consistent peer interaction. The challenge for MNHS leadership is that placements are non-negotiable for professional accreditation, meaning the pressures they create must be mitigated rather than removed.

### Financial Stress Despite Strong Programme Commitment

MNHS students demonstrate strong programme commitment — 69% course satisfaction (second highest across faculties), 62% value for money endorsement and the lowest unemployment rate of any faculty at 15%. Yet this commitment exists alongside pervasive financial pressure that threatens both wellbeing and retention. Only 5% report “doing great” financially, 84% of renters exceed the 30% rental stress threshold, and 65% pay course fees directly with minimal employer sponsorship (8%).

The financial strain translates directly into academic impact: 38% report a big or extreme impact on their ability to complete their course and 42% cite financial issues as a reason for considering withdrawal. Work-life balance — the leading withdrawal factor at 48% — reflects a cohort stretched across employment, mandatory placements and study commitments simultaneously, while some also manage more complex personal responsibilities including as parents or carers. Mental health compounds these pressures, with 58% reporting clinical-level anxiety symptoms and 37% citing mental health as a driver of withdrawal consideration. The interconnection is clear: financial stress drives increased work hours, which reduces study capacity and placement availability, which heightens anxiety and undermines the programme engagement that MNHS students otherwise value highly, leading to poorer mental health and wellbeing outcomes. Breaking this cycle requires

interventions that address the structural financial barriers rather than expecting individual resilience from an already stretched cohort.

## Faculty-Specific Recommendations

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

### Mitigating Clinical Placement Pressures

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

Develop flexible study load arrangements around placement blocks, enabling students to reduce coursework intensity during high-placement semesters without extending their programme beyond standard duration. Establish peer support networks connecting students about to enter placement with those who have recently completed it, providing practical guidance on managing finances, logistics and wellbeing during placement periods.

#### **Moderate Investments**

Explore placement scheduling reforms that consolidate or stagger placement blocks to allow students to maintain some employment during non-placement weeks, rather than extended continuous periods that eliminate income entirely. Partner with clinical placement sites to develop travel subsidies or co-located support for students placed at distant facilities, addressing the transport costs and accessibility barriers repeatedly raised in student testimonies.

#### **Strategic Initiatives (Higher Investment)**

Advocate at the institutional level for placement stipends or living allowances for students undertaking extended unpaid placements, drawing on retention data and the workforce pipeline arguments that position MNHS as a key contributor to Australia's health workforce strategy. Explore industry partnership models where health employers co-invest in student training during placement in exchange for workforce commitments, addressing both the financial burden on students and the sector's recruitment challenges.

### Supporting Financial Sustainability Despite Strong Programme Commitment

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

Implement proactive financial wellbeing check-ins at known high-pressure points in the academic calendar — particularly before and during placement periods — where faculty contact students rather than expecting help-seeking from those already overwhelmed. Create transparent programme cost communication providing realistic guidance about total study costs including

placement-related expenses, travel, lost income and living costs, enabling informed financial planning from enrolment. Develop flexible assessment and attendance arrangements for students managing concurrent employment.

### **Moderate Investments**

Establish an MNHS emergency financial support fund targeted at students experiencing acute financial crisis during placement periods, when employment income drops but living costs remain constant. Partner with Monash Counselling Services to deliver MNHS-specific group support addressing the intersection of financial stress, placement pressure and clinical performance anxiety — a combination distinctive to MNHS students.

### **Strategic Initiatives (Higher Investment)**

Advocate for placement stipends or living allowances for students undertaking extended unpaid clinical placements, using retention data and workforce pipeline arguments to build the institutional case. Commission a comprehensive cost-of-study analysis for MNHS programmes that accounts for the full financial burden including placement-related costs, to inform both fee-setting decisions and student support investment.

## Appendix 1: Demographics

<b>Course name</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Doctor of Physiotherapy	1 (1%)
Master of Advanced Clinical Nursing	22 (16%)
Master of Advanced Nursing	10 (7%)
Master of Biomedical and Health Sciences	3 (2%)
Master of Biotechnology	5 (4%)
Master of Nutrition and Dietetics	2 (1%)
Master of Health Administration	3 (2%)
Master of Nursing Practice	15 (11%)
Master of Professional Counselling	1 (1%)
Master of Clinical Embryology	1 (1%)
Master of Social Work	35 (26%)
Other	38 (28%)

<b>Campus</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
I do not regularly attend campus	27 (17%)
Clayton	51 (33%)
Caulfield	41 (26%)
Peninsula	14 (9%)
Parkville	0 (0%)
Law Chambers	0 (0%)
Malaysia	0 (0%)
Hospital or Medical Centre	18 (12%)
Indonesia	0 (0%)
Suzhou	0 (0%)
other	5 (3%)

<b>Domestic/International</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Local student (Australian or New Zealand citizen/permanent resident)	72 (52%)
International student	66 (48%)

<b>Study load</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Full-time	105 (75%)
Part-time	35 (25%)
On leave from study	0 (0%)

<b>Study location</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Entirely on-campus	60 (43%)
Multi-modal	56 (41%)
Entirely off-campus	22 (16%)
Other	0 (0%)

<b>Time since last degree</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Less than 1 year	44 (32%)
1-5 years	58 (43%)
6-10 years	25 (18%)
11+ years	9 (7%)

<b>Degree progress</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
First year	92 (66%)
Second year	40 (29%)
Third year and beyond	7 (5%)

<b>Study hours</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Less than 5	9 (7%)
6-10	32 (23%)
11-20	38 (28%)
21-30	35 (25%)
31-40	17 (12%)
Over 40 hours	7 (5%)

<b>English proficiency</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Fluent	81 (60%)
Advanced	33 (24%)
Intermediate	19 (14%)
Elementary	1 (1%)
Beginner	2 (1%)

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Woman	117 (86%)
Man	14 (10%)
Non-binary/gender diverse	2 (1%)
Prefer to self-describe	1 (1%)
Prefer not to say	2 (1%)

<b>LGBTIQA+</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Yes	19 (14%)
No	113 (83%)
Prefer not to disclose	4 (3%)

<b>Indigenous (domestic students only)</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Yes	1 (1%)
No	70 (99%)
Prefer not to disclose	0 (0%)
<b>Disability</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Yes	7 (5%)
No	120 (88%)
Prefer not to disclose	9 (7%)

<b>Registered disability with DSS</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Yes	6 (86%)
No	1 (14%)

<b>Age</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
24 or under	42 (30%)
25-29	47 (34%)
30-39	34 (25%)
40 and over	15 (11%)

<b>Employment status</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Full-time	14 (10%)
Part-time	52 (37%)
Casual	34 (24%)
Unemployed and looking for work	22 (16%)
Not employed and not looking for work	17 (12%)

<b>Work hours</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Less than 5	3 (3%)
6-10	15 (16%)
11-20	27 (28%)
21-30	21 (22%)
31-40	26 (27%)
More than 40	3 (3%)