

Graduate Research in BusEco:

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

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Introduction

This report examines the experiences of 72 graduate research students in the Faculty of Business and Economics (BusEco) who participated in the MGA's 2025 *National Postgraduate Student Survey on Health, Family and Finances*. It complements the university-wide report *Graduate Research at Monash: Student Experience, Challenges and Opportunities for Enhancement* by identifying faculty-specific patterns and opportunities for targeted enhancement within BusEco.

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

- 72 BusEco graduate research students participated.
- Response rate represents approximately 30% of enrolled BusEco graduate researchers.
- Data collected May – June 2025 as part of broader institutional study.

Report Focus

This report addresses four key areas:

- Mental health and wellbeing in BusEco graduate research contexts.
- Financial pressures and their discipline-specific manifestations.
- Academic progression, career uncertainty and attrition considerations.
- Peer connection and support needs unique to BusEco students.

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

Key Findings for Business and Economics

This section presents core findings from the 72 BusEco graduate research students who participated in the survey, examining patterns across mental health, financial circumstances, academic progression and peer connection. Where meaningful, findings are compared to Monash-wide averages to identify areas where BusEco students' experiences align with or diverge from broader institutional trends. These comparisons reveal both shared challenges affecting graduate researchers across disciplines and distinctive patterns that may warrant faculty-specific interventions.

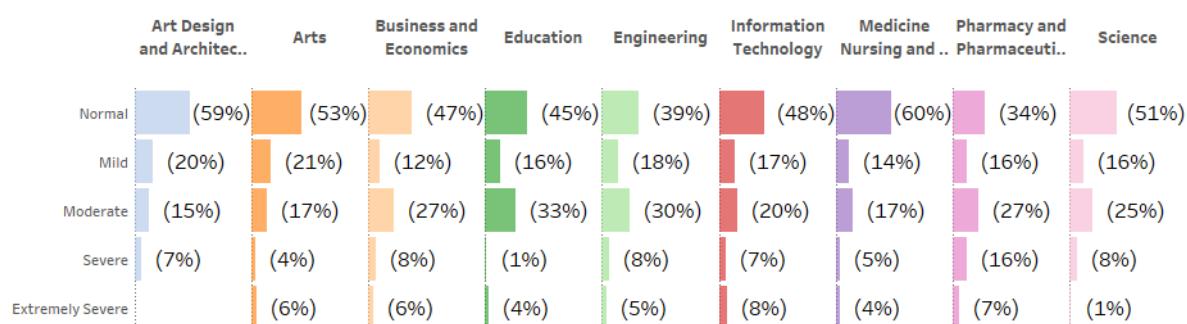
1. Mental Health and Wellbeing

Mental health challenges affect graduate research students across all disciplines, but the intensity and nature of these challenges – and students' willingness to seek support – vary by faculty context. This section examines mental health indicators, support access patterns and imposter syndrome rates among BusEco students, comparing them to university-wide averages. These findings reveal where BusEco students face similar challenges to their peers and where discipline-specific factors may create unique barriers or pressures.

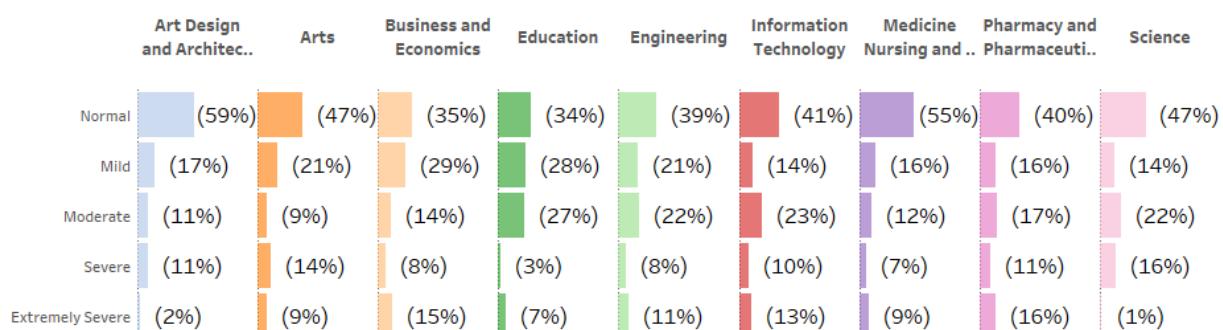
DASS21 Indicators:

Business and Economics students show mental health patterns similar to the Monash average.

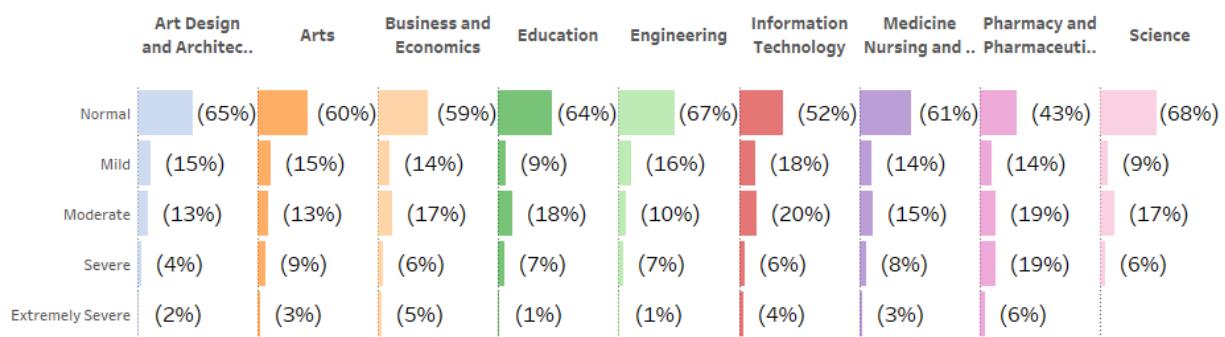
Depression:



Anxiety:



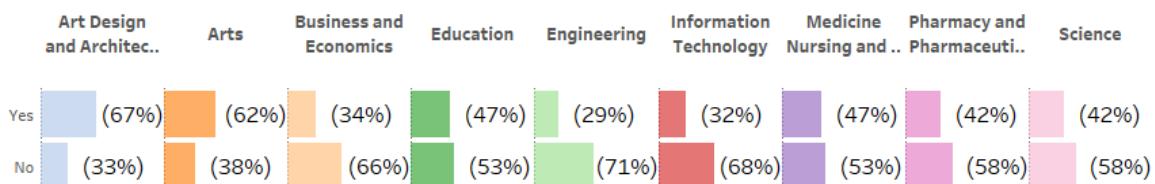
Stress:



These patterns suggest that BusEco students experience mental health challenges at rates comparable to the broader Monash graduate research population. While 47% fall within the normal range for depression (similar to 51% university-wide), approximately one-third experience moderate to extremely severe symptoms across all three DASS21 domains.

Mental Health Support Access:

BusEco respondents access mental health support far less frequently than most other faculties; however, as with Engineering and IT, this can be explained by the high proportion of the faculty's respondents who were international students. Across the University, international students were far less likely to access support than their domestic peers (32% versus 62%).

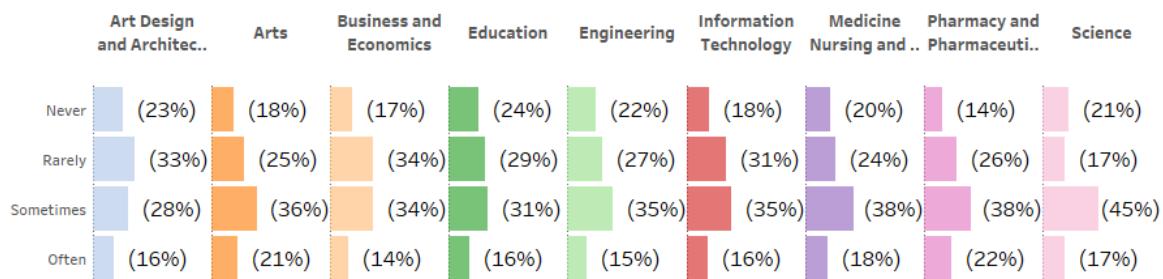


Key demographic insights:

- 34% of Business and Economics students have accessed mental health support (vs. 45% university-wide).
- 43% of domestic students (n.8) and 33% of international students (n.58) had accessed support.
- 40% of men (n. 26) and 31% of women (n.40) had accessed support.

Imposter Syndrome:

Beyond clinical mental health indicators, imposter syndrome – the persistent feeling of being a fraud despite evidence of competence – represents a distinct psychological challenge facing graduate researchers. Examining imposter syndrome rates provides insight into how students experience their academic identity and belonging within the research community.



- 83% of Business and Economics students reported experiencing imposter syndrome at some point (vs. 80% university-wide)

Student Voices from Business and Economics:

While the quantitative data reveals patterns in mental health outcomes, research pressures and imposter syndrome among BusEco students, hearing directly from students themselves provides essential depth and context to these statistics. The following testimonies illustrate the lived experiences behind the data, revealing how mental health challenges manifest in the daily realities of graduate research students in BusEco:

“I am currently going through a very dark phase of my life. I am struggling to find a career for myself and feel like a failure.”

“Impostor syndrome. The feeling that my supervisor doesn't like me because of my progress ... She told me several times that I was behind the peers but sometimes she praised me so mixed feelings. I'm afraid I couldn't find a postdoc here in Australia. I'm worried I couldn't find a job then I'll need to suffer financially or need to do a physical job to survive. Before PhD I published a lot of papers but since I attended PhD I haven't published one. I feel like a failure but I don't know whether this is me or my supervisors also take responsibility. I envy other students who can be confident with their study and progress even though some of them have the same conditions as me.”

“I am quite young compared to my colleagues so I often feel looked down upon. Or that I don't know enough to speak up to more established colleagues.”

What This Means for BusEco:

BusEco students access mental health support at lower rates than the university average (34% vs. 45%), but this pattern might be explained by the faculty's demographic composition rather than discipline-specific cultural barriers. BusEco has a higher proportion of international student

respondents and across the university, international students access support at dramatically lower rates than their domestic peers (32% vs. 62%). The BusEco support access rate of 34% thus likely reflects this demographic reality rather than indicating a unique faculty-level problem. However, this explanation does not diminish the need for action – it simply clarifies where intervention should focus. The Faculty's large international student population means that targeted efforts to improve mental health support access for international students will likely have significant impact within BusEco. Strategies might include:

- Culturally responsive outreach that addresses specific barriers international students face (visa concerns, cultural stigma, unfamiliarity with Australian mental health systems).
- Multilingual support options and explicit messaging that accessing support does not affect visa status.

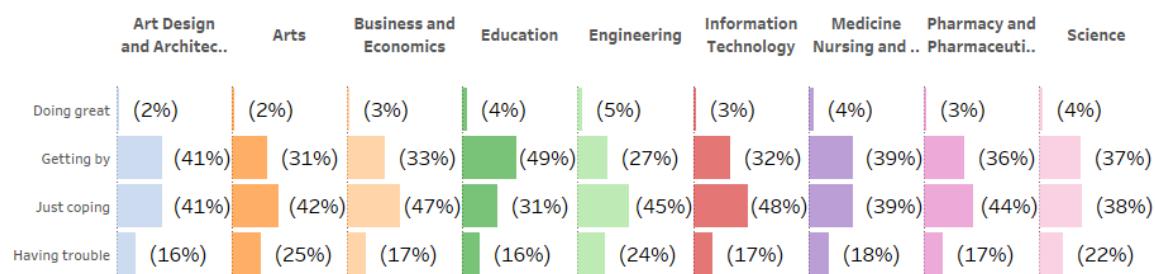
While the competitive culture of research may compound existing barriers for some students, the primary opportunity for improvement lies in ensuring that support services effectively reach the faculty's substantial international student cohort.

2. Financial Circumstances and Career Pressure

This section examines two interrelated dimensions of the BusEco graduate research experience: financial circumstances and career navigation. Beyond standard financial wellbeing measures, BusEco students face discipline-specific pressures including international conference/fieldwork expectations, professional presentation standards and the tension between academic career paths and industry opportunities. These factors combine to create unique financial and professional challenges that may require targeted faculty-level interventions.

Melbourne Institute's Financial Wellbeing:

BusEco graduate research students show financial wellbeing patterns similar to the Monash average with 64% of the faculty's students either "just coping" or "having trouble."



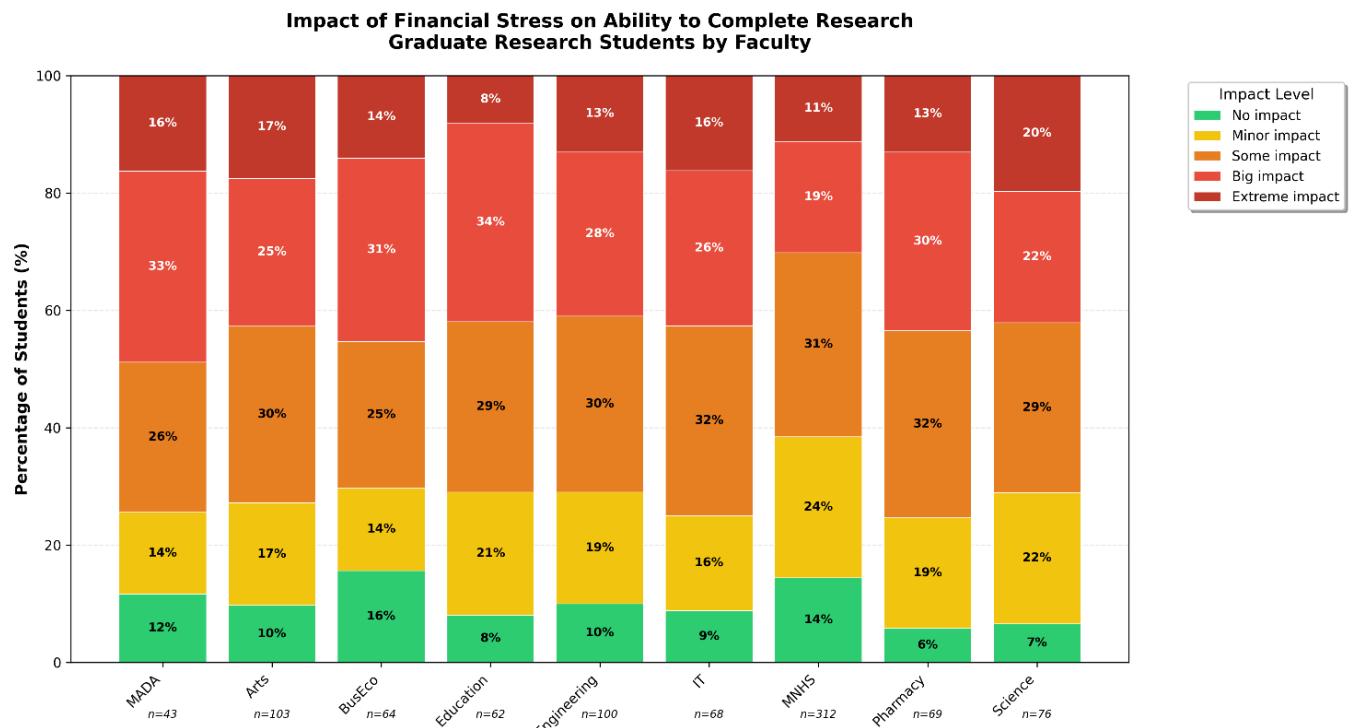
Estimated Annual Income (AUD)

BusEco students show income patterns broadly consistent with university trends, with full-time students reporting median incomes in the \$30,000-\$39,999 range (reflecting scholarship levels), while part-time students report significantly higher median incomes.

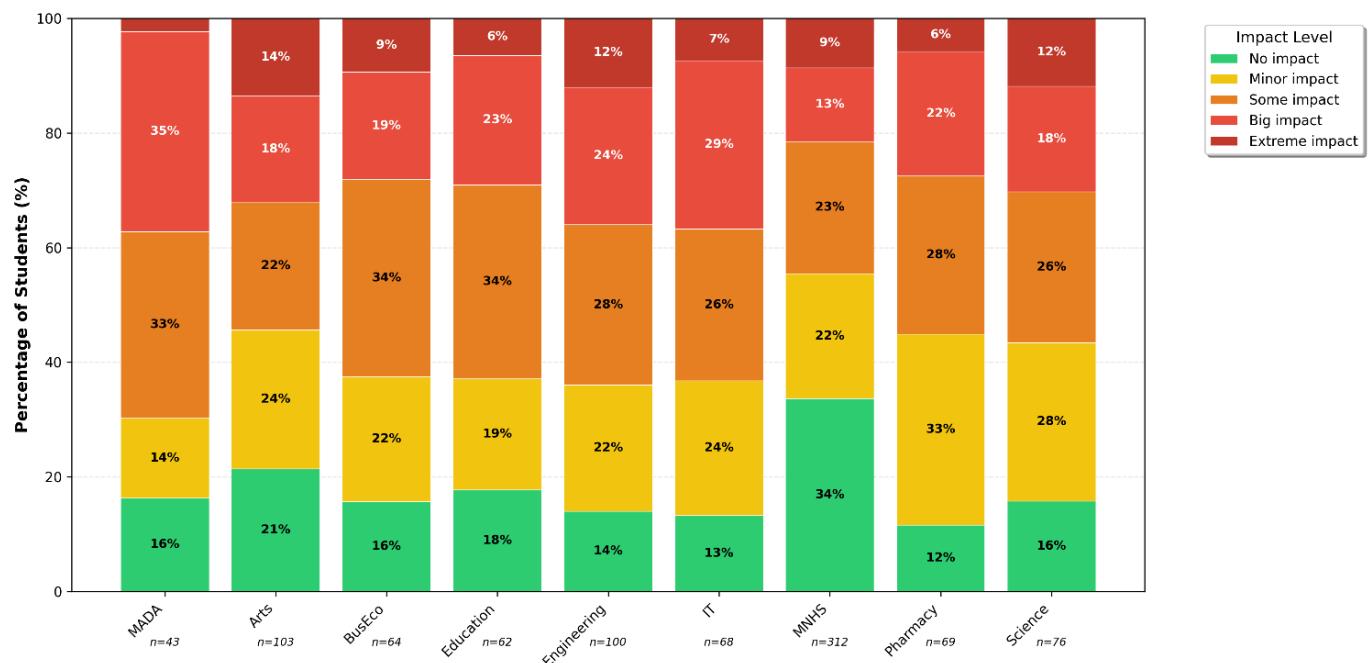
	Art Design and Architec..	Arts	Business and Economics	Education	Engineering	Information Technology	Medicine	Pharmacy and ...	Pharmaceuti..	Science
Less than \$10000	(11%)	(19%)	(21%)	(23%)	(12%)	(19%)	(7%)	(5%)	(6%)	
\$10000 - \$19999	(8%)	(3%)	(5%)	(6%)	(1%)	(3%)	(3%)	(3%)	(1%)	
\$20000 - \$29999	(3%)	(2%)	(3%)	(6%)	(5%)	(5%)	(2%)	(6%)		
\$30000 - \$39999	(16%)	(38%)	(43%)	(26%)	(57%)	(39%)	(43%)	(45%)	(65%)	
\$40000 - \$49999	(18%)	(20%)	(16%)	(17%)	(15%)	(23%)	(20%)	(21%)	(13%)	
\$50000 - \$59999	(21%)	(11%)	(5%)	(11%)	(2%)	(6%)	(8%)	(14%)	(13%)	
\$60000 - \$69999	(13%)	(4%)	(5%)	(4%)	(4%)	(3%)	(6%)	(2%)		
\$70000 - \$79999	(8%)			(2%)		(2%)	(3%)	(3%)	(1%)	
Over \$80000	(3%)	(2%)	(2%)	(6%)	(4%)		(8%)	(2%)		

How Financial Pressures Affect Academic Activities

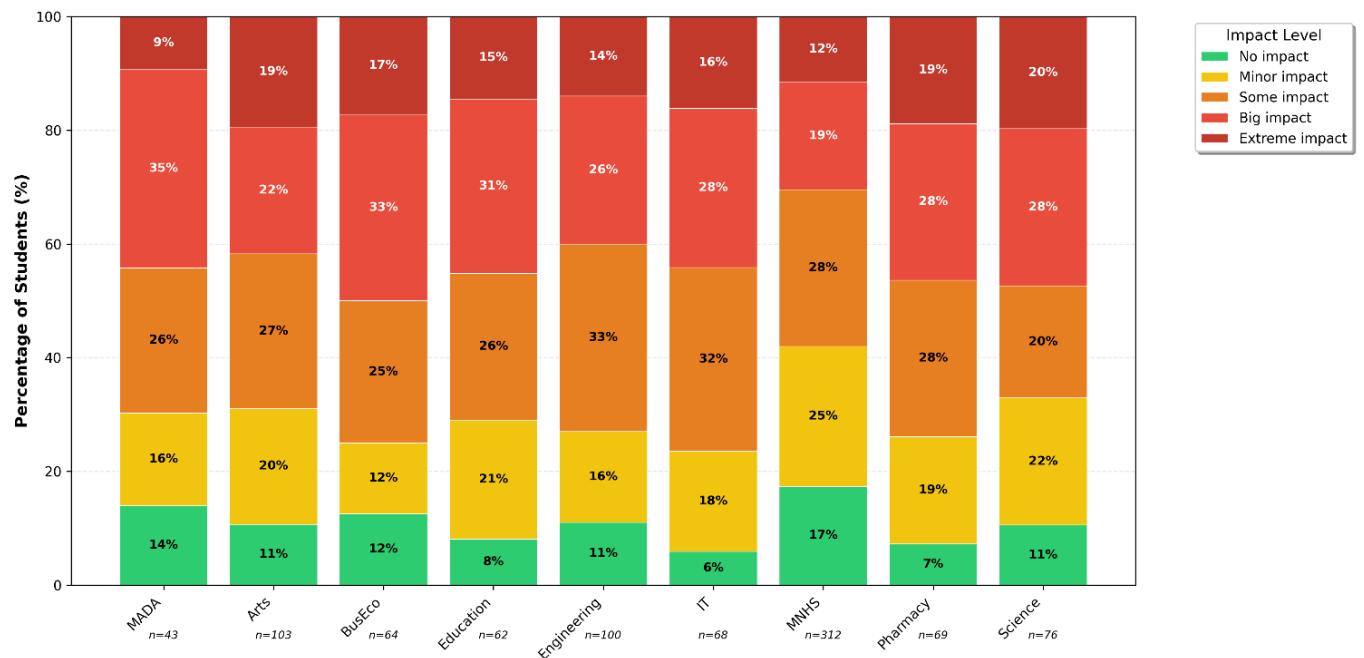
Financial pressures directly impact BusEco students' ability to engage fully with their research and professional development opportunities. The following data reveal how financial stress affects key aspects of academic engagement:

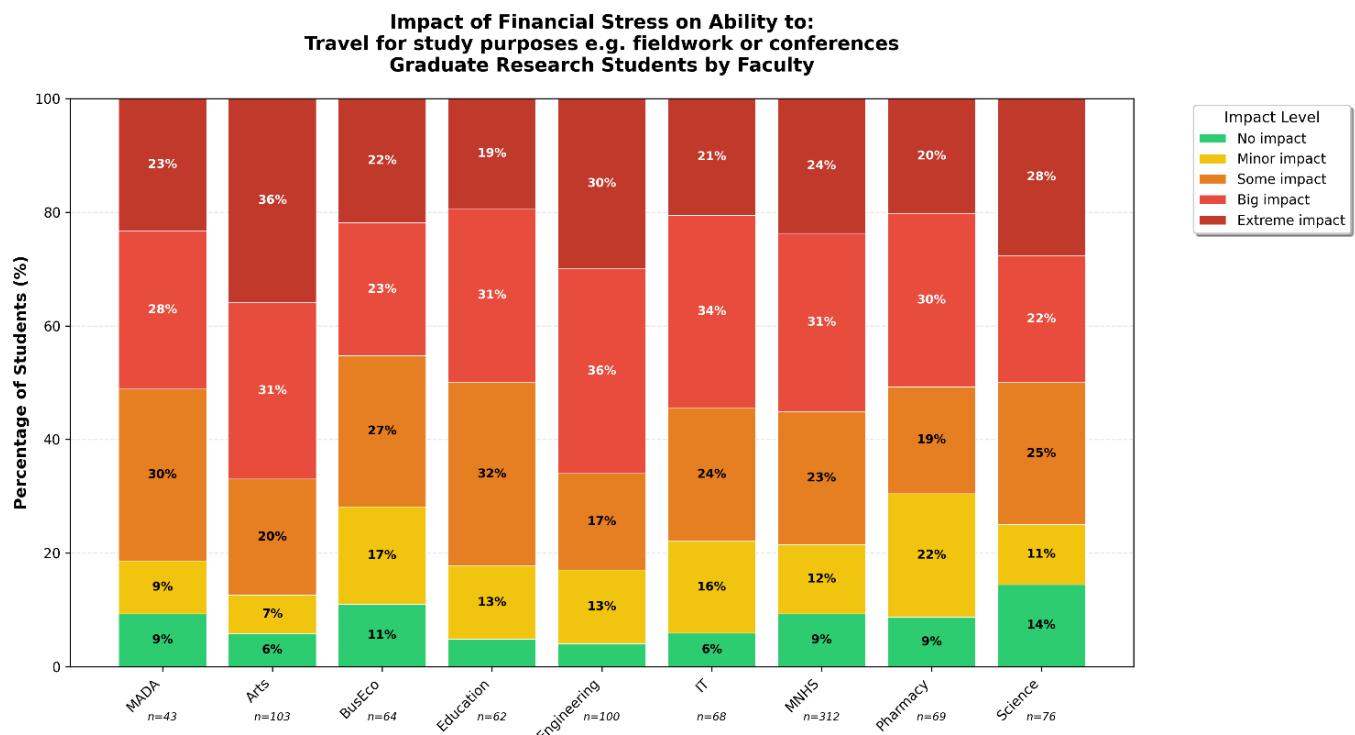


**Impact of Financial Stress on Ability to:
Attend classes/study/research on campus
Graduate Research Students by Faculty**



**Impact of Financial Stress on Ability to:
Concentrate on your course/research
Graduate Research Students by Faculty**





Key Findings on Financial Impact:

- **Research completion capacity:** 45% indicate that financial stress has an extreme or big impact on their ability to complete their research to the best of their ability (vs. 39% university-wide reporting extreme/big impact). This metric captures the cumulative effect of financial pressures on overall research quality and completion prospects.
- **Campus attendance and engagement:** 28% report that financial stress has an extreme or big impact on their ability to attend classes, study, or conduct research on campus (vs. 28% university-wide). For students unable to afford transport costs or who work extensive hours to meet living expenses, physical presence on campus – essential for accessing resources, connecting with peers and engaging with the research community – becomes a luxury rather than a given.
- **Concentration and research quality:** 50% of BusEco students report that financial stress has an extreme or big impact on their ability to concentrate on their research (vs. 40% university-wide). This suggests that financial pressures directly undermine the cognitive focus required for high-quality scholarly work, with BusEco students experiencing higher rates compared to peers across the university.
- **Professional development through travel:** 45% report that financial stress has an extreme or big impact on their ability to travel for study purposes such as fieldwork, conferences, or research collaborations (vs. 56% university-wide). Students facing financial constraints may miss crucial networking opportunities, visibility in their field and professional development experiences that are expected – if not required – for successful academic or industry careers. While BusEco have the lowest extreme or big impact numbers of any faculty, 45% is still a high proportion of respondents.

Student Voices on Financial Reality:

The following testimonies illustrate the lived experiences behind the data, revealing how financial pressures manifest in the daily realities of graduate research student in BusEco – from managing basic living expenses to affording professional conferences and navigating the tension between stipend constraints and the financial expectations of a business-oriented discipline.

“I’d like to study full time but scholarship funding is way too low to live off.”

“My finance situation is due to day care costs ... my entire scholarship goes to the day care. It is sad that Monash is not providing enough support for people like us.”

“I am quite stressed about unexpected expenses. Especially flight tickets back home when needed.”

“Overall the stipend helps me manage basic living costs but there are still times when I feel financially stretched. It would make a real difference if there were more support for everyday needs like public transport or occasional research-related costs. Even small allowances in these areas could help me focus better on my studies.”

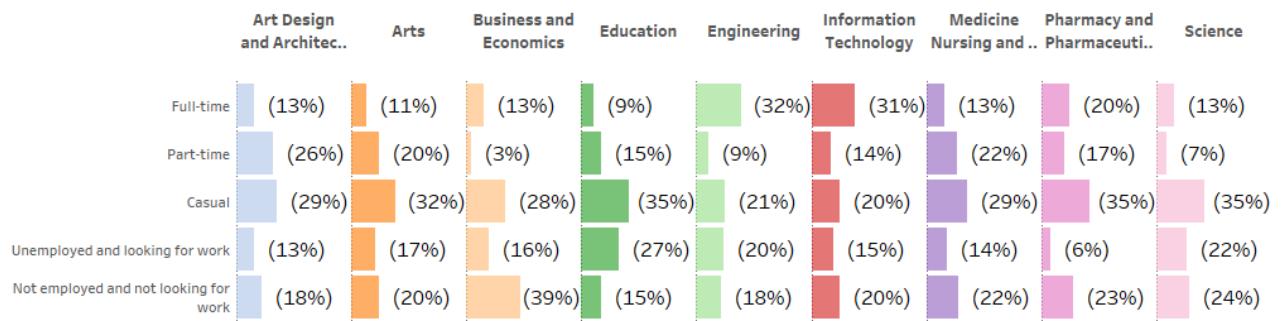
“Our scholarship is lower than the national minimum wage which puts a great pressure on our housing costs. This forces us to spend extra time doing other part-time jobs to make ends meet. Although we are still students we are no different from other people in society when it comes to renting a house. We do not get lower rent prices because of our student status. So after paying for necessary costs such as rent utilities food etc. we do not have extra money to consider whether we can go to other places to attend academic conferences. Although the faculty has funding our funding is only enough for us to attend individual meetings and is not enough to support our freedom of academic travel. In addition to facing high financial pressure we are also facing high academic pressure and employment pressure. This has caused great obstacles to our mental health. Due to high financial pressure we have to choose between academic research and part-time work in a limited time. This also limits our academic research time.”

“The stipend we are provided barely allow PhD student to survive it’s not even minimum wage and the money we receive from working about 6 hrs a week as a TA is abysmal. I really need to find a full-time job alongside my PhD to help me survive. I cannot imagine supporting my family along with my expenses.”

Employment Patterns:

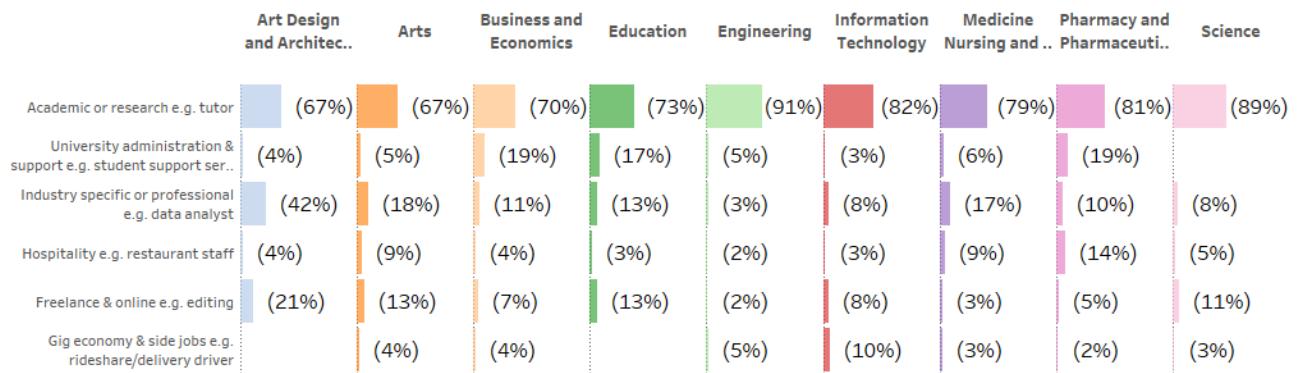
The employment patterns among BusEco students reveal the complex relationship between financial necessity, professional development and research progress. Understanding who works, in what capacity and how employment relates to research provides insight into the discipline-specific challenges BusEco students navigate.

Employment Status of Full-Time Students Across the Faculties:

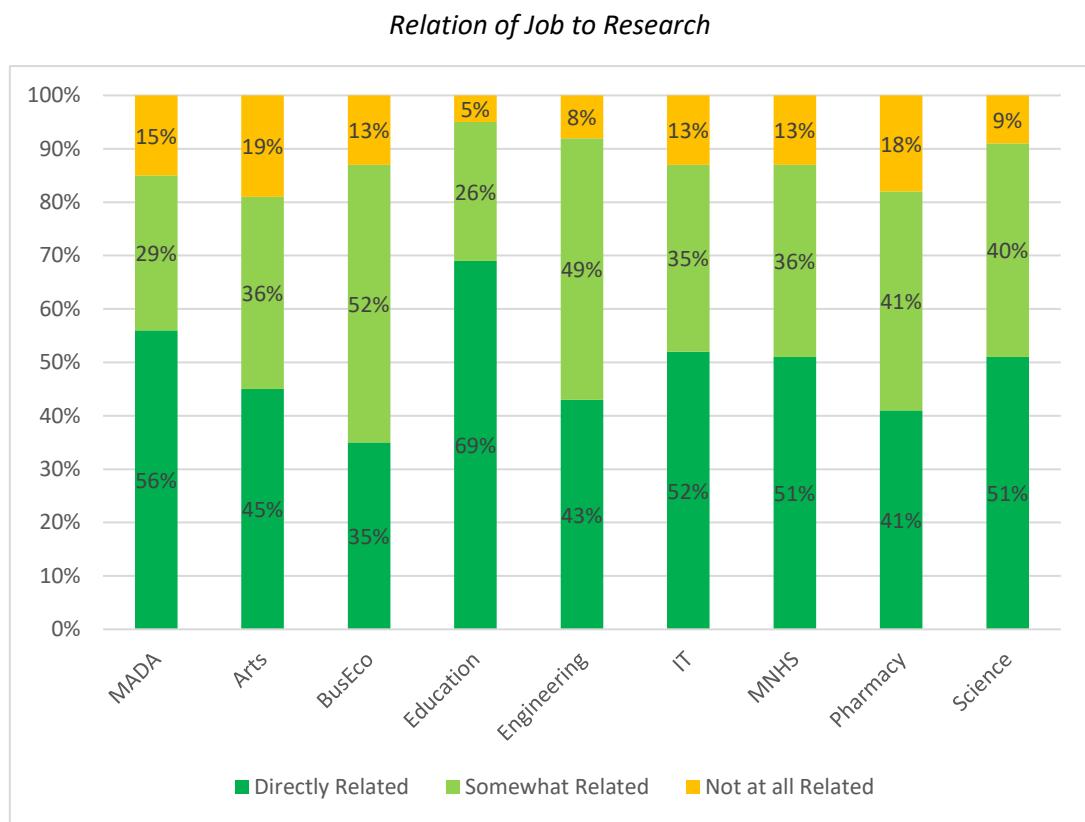


The relatively high proportion of BusEco students not seeking work (39%) warrants careful consideration. This may reflect international student visa restrictions, scholarship recipients focusing entirely on research, sufficient financial support from families or difficulty finding suitable employment that aligns with research demands.

The Type of Jobs Students are Employed In:



These employment patterns require nuanced interpretation. Students employed in business-related roles may be building professionally relevant skills despite time pressures. However, those working in unrelated fields purely for financial necessity face the double burden of competing demands without corresponding direct professional benefit.



These patterns reveal a mixed employment landscape among BusEco students. 35% work in jobs directly related to their studies, 52% in somewhat related positions and 13% in roles not at all related to their research (compared to 49%, 38% and 13% respectively across Monash STEM fields and 52%, 35% and 13% in HASS).

The 87% working in directly/somewhat related roles suggests that a substantial number of BusEco students successfully integrate their employment with professional development, potentially through research assistant positions or tutoring/teaching roles (70%), consulting work or industry research collaborations. These students may experience employment as less burdensome and more complementary to their academic work.

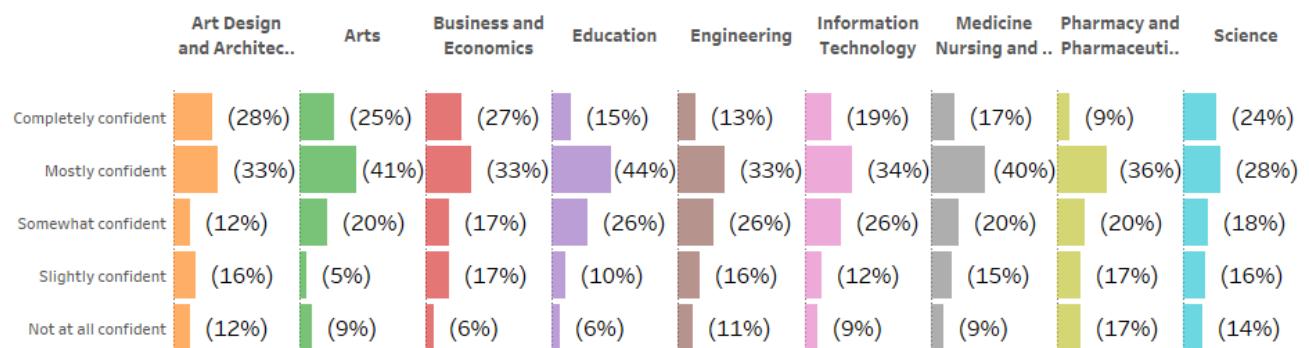
However, the 13% working in jobs unrelated to their studies highlight students for whom employment represents pure financial necessity rather than career building. These individuals face the particular challenge of devoting significant time and energy to work that offers no advancement toward their research or professional goals – a double burden of competing demands and missed opportunity costs. For a discipline where career trajectories increasingly span both academic and industry pathways, ensuring students have access to professionally relevant employment opportunities (whether through expanded teaching assistant roles, research collaborations, or industry partnerships) could transform employment from a competing pressure into a professional development asset.

3. Academic Progression and Career Uncertainty

Beyond the immediate pressures of mental health and financial stress, BusEco graduate research students must navigate questions about their academic trajectory and post-PhD careers. This section examines completion confidence, consideration of leaving and satisfaction with career guidance among BusEco students. Understanding these patterns reveals how the distinctive pressures facing BusEco students – including the tension between academic and industry pathways – affect their sense of progress and professional direction.

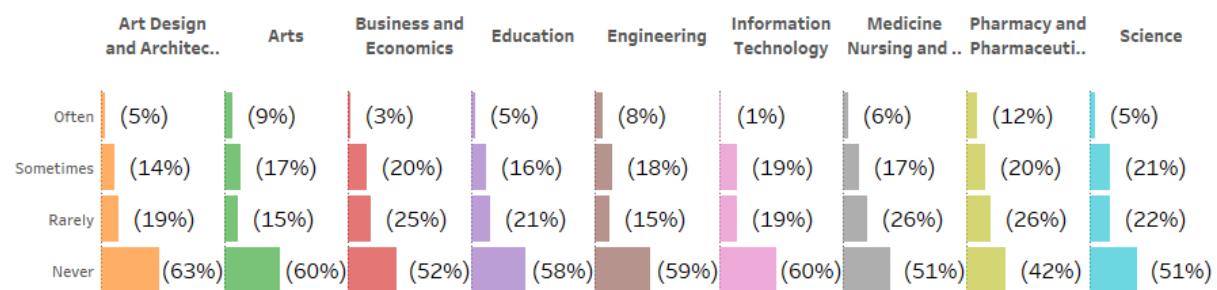
Completion Confidence:

BusEco students show modestly higher completion confidence than the university average (60% vs. 55% completely/mostly confident). This may reflect clear project scopes in applied business research, effective supervision practices within the faculty or the tangible relevance of business research that keeps students motivated. However, 23% still harbor a high degree of doubt about timely completion.



Considering Leaving:

Consideration of leaving one's degree represents a normal part of the graduate research journey for many students, reflecting moments when challenges feel overwhelming or alternative paths appear more appealing. Examining how frequently BusEco students experience these thoughts and how this compares to university-wide patterns, provides important context for understanding retention risks and the effectiveness of current support systems in sustaining students through difficult periods.

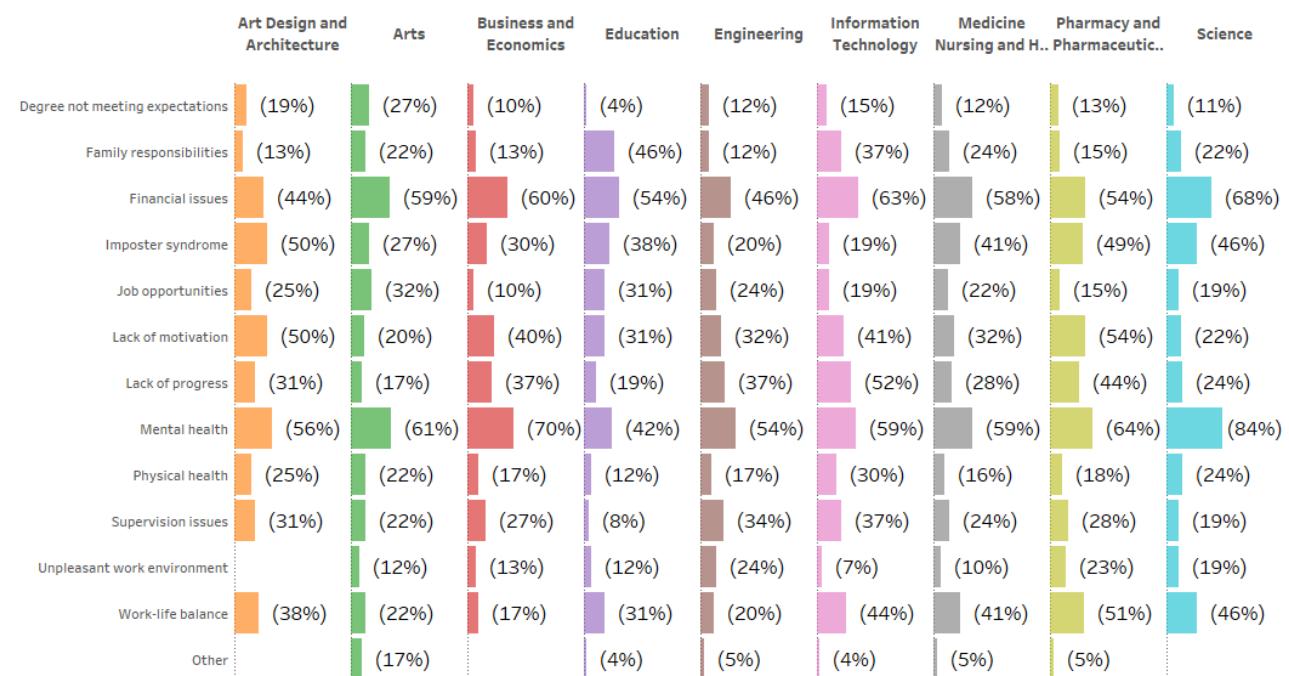


Almost half (48%) of BusEco students have considered leaving at some point, slightly higher than the 46% university-wide average, with 3% considering leaving often (vs. 6% university-wide). This pattern warrants careful attention given the faculty's demographic composition. BusEco has a higher proportion of international student respondents and across the university, international students consider leaving substantially less frequently than domestic students (38% vs. 56%). The fact that BusEco students report slightly elevated consideration of leaving despite having more international students – who typically show stronger persistence – suggests that discipline-specific or faculty-level factors may be influencing retention beyond demographic composition alone.

Several factors may contribute to this pattern. The visibility of lucrative industry alternatives may create ongoing tension about whether the PhD path is “worth it” financially, particularly when students face the financial pressures documented earlier in this report. The competitive culture in some research contexts may intensify feelings of inadequacy or questioning of fit. Additionally, the diverse career pathways available to business PhDs – while ultimately an advantage – may create decision paralysis or ongoing uncertainty about whether they are on the “right” path.

However, the low rate of frequent consideration (3% often vs. 6% university-wide) provides some reassurance. While nearly half of students have contemplated withdrawal at some point, very few do so persistently, suggesting that most students who experience these thoughts ultimately find reasons to recommit – whether through supervisor support, research breakthroughs, career clarity or connection with the academic community.

Primary Reasons for Considering Leaving (among those who have considered):



Among BusEco students who have considered leaving, the pattern of reasons reveals both shared challenges with the broader graduate research population and some distinctive emphases. Mental health emerges as the overwhelmingly dominant factor, cited by 70% of BusEco students who have considered leaving – the second highest rate across all faculties and substantially above several others. This finding, combined with the lower mental health support access rates documented earlier (34% vs. 45% university-wide), suggests a critical gap: *BusEco students experience severe mental health impacts on their persistence, yet access support at lower rates than their peers.*

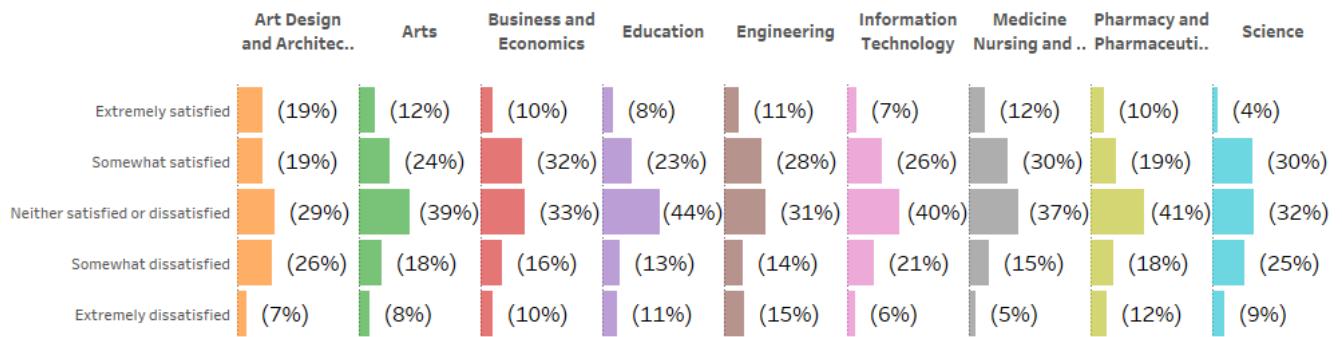
Financial issues represent the second most common reason at 60%, consistent with the substantial financial pressures documented throughout this report. While this rate is high, it is comparable to or slightly lower than several other faculties (Arts at 59%, Engineering at 46%, compared to Science at 68% and IT at 63%), suggesting that financial stress affects consideration of leaving across disciplines, not uniquely within BusEco.

Notably, BusEco students cite job opportunities (10%) and degree not meeting expectations (10%) at relatively low rates compared to some other faculties, suggesting that most students remain confident in the value and relevance of their PhD, even when considering leaving for other reasons. Work-life balance concerns (17%) are also comparatively low, particularly when contrasted with faculties like Pharmacy and Pharmaceutics (51%) or IT (44%), indicating that the intensity of work demands may be more manageable in BusEco contexts or that students have more flexibility in structuring their research time.

The combination of factors – high mental health concerns, substantial financial stress, moderate rates of lack of motivation (40%) and lack of progress (37%) – suggests that consideration of leaving among BusEco students typically stems from the cumulative burden of psychological and financial pressures rather than dissatisfaction with the degree itself or insurmountable work demands. This pattern reinforces the priority areas identified throughout this report: improving mental health support access (particularly for international students) and addressing financial sustainability are the most critical interventions for supporting retention within Business and Economics.

Career Guidance Satisfaction:

Career guidance represents a critical component of graduate research training, yet one that often receives less attention than academic supervision or research skill development. Graduate researchers must navigate complex career decisions – including whether to pursue academic positions, transition to industry, or explore alternative pathways – while simultaneously managing the demands of their research projects. The timing, networking strategies, skill development priorities and application approaches differ substantially across these trajectories, making discipline-specific career guidance particularly valuable. Understanding how satisfied BusEco students are with the career support they receive provides insight into whether current services adequately prepare them for the diverse professional pathways available to PhDs.



BusEco students' satisfaction with career guidance reveals an important area for potential improvement. The relatively low satisfaction likely reflects the complexity of business PhD career trajectories: students need guidance on navigating consulting, corporate research, policy analysis, entrepreneurship and various academic specialisations – each requiring different strategies.

The Business and Economics Career Challenge:

Business and Economics graduate research students face unique career navigation challenges:

- Academic vs. industry tension: Pressure to choose between academic career paths and lucrative industry opportunities.
- Diverse career trajectories: Consulting, finance, policy, academia, entrepreneurship – each requiring different networking and skill development.
- Timing questions: When to pursue industry internships/consulting without derailing research progress.
- Relevance concerns: “Will my research matter outside academia?” concerns more acute in applied field.

Student Voices on Career Guidance:

Student feedback reveals specific gaps in current career support for BusEco researchers. The testimonies below illustrate both what students need – proactive outreach, discipline-specific guidance, industry connections – and what current services may be missing:

“Make a 1-on-1 consultation. Special consultation spot for impostor syndrome and mental burden as a PhD student.”

“There needs to be sessions on how to search and apply for jobs for both PhD and Masters. It’s better to have a placement cell to facilitate recruitment and connect industry and academia. I worked in placement cell back ... which helped students to connect with recruiters and also helped recruiters to conduct assessments for recruiting. Such a dept would help solve the anxiety of international students and other domestic students regarding the networking and gives everyone (especially introverts and who struggle with networking socialising and making connections) a fair chance.”

“If we can have regular experience sharing sessions on the current academic job market it will help us improve our competitiveness.”

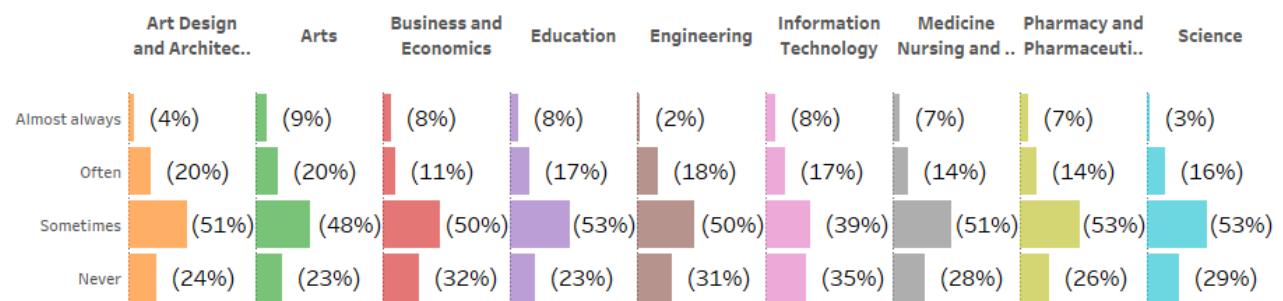
“Reach out to students rather than waiting for them to reach you.”

4. Peer Connection and Disciplinary Community

Social connection and peer relationships provide essential support throughout the extended graduate research journey, yet the independent nature of doctoral work creates particular challenges for community building. This section examines how BusEco students experience isolation, belonging and meaningful contact across different relationship types. Understanding these patterns reveals where existing community-building efforts reach BusEco students effectively and where discipline-specific factors – such as methodological diversity, competitive cultures or varied career orientations – may create barriers to connection.

Isolation and Belonging:

Feelings of isolation and lack of belonging represent common challenges in graduate research, where students often work independently on specialised projects over extended periods. The following data reveal how BusEco students experience connection – or disconnection – within their academic community.

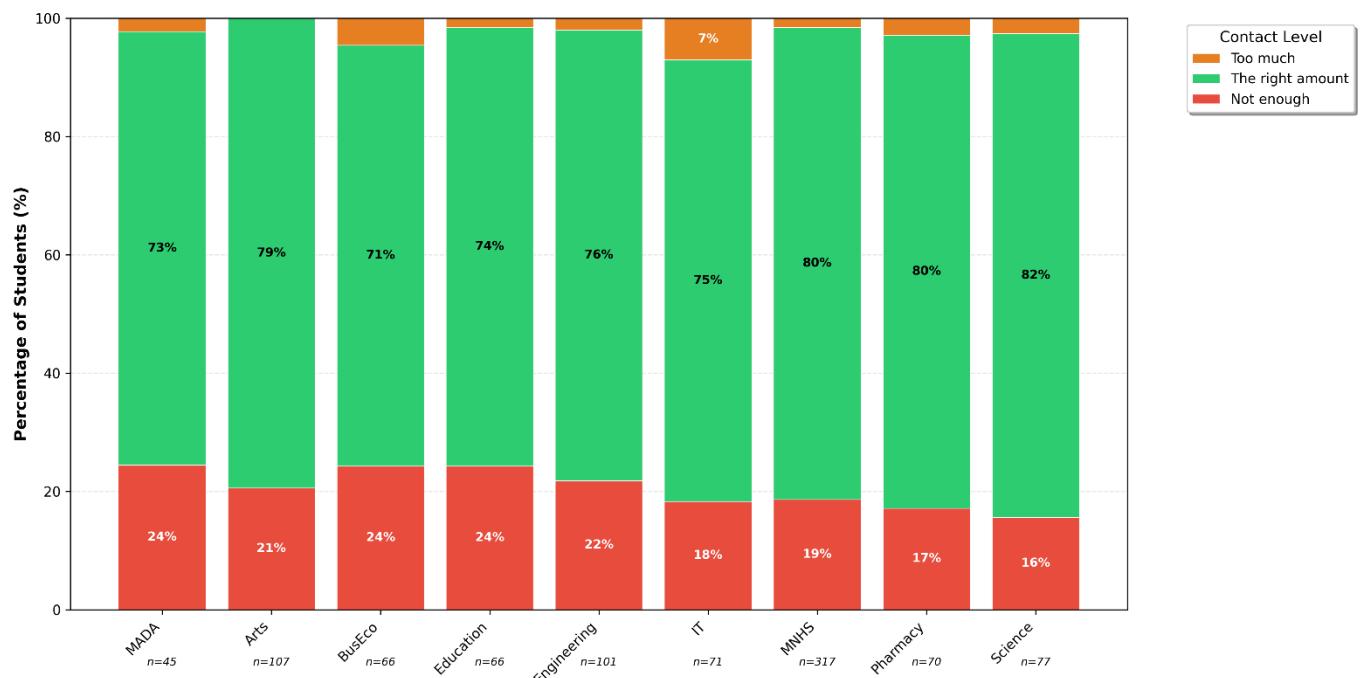


- 68% of BusEco students experience some degree of isolation (vs. 72% university-wide).
- 19% experience high levels of isolation (“often” or “almost always”) vs. 22% university-wide.

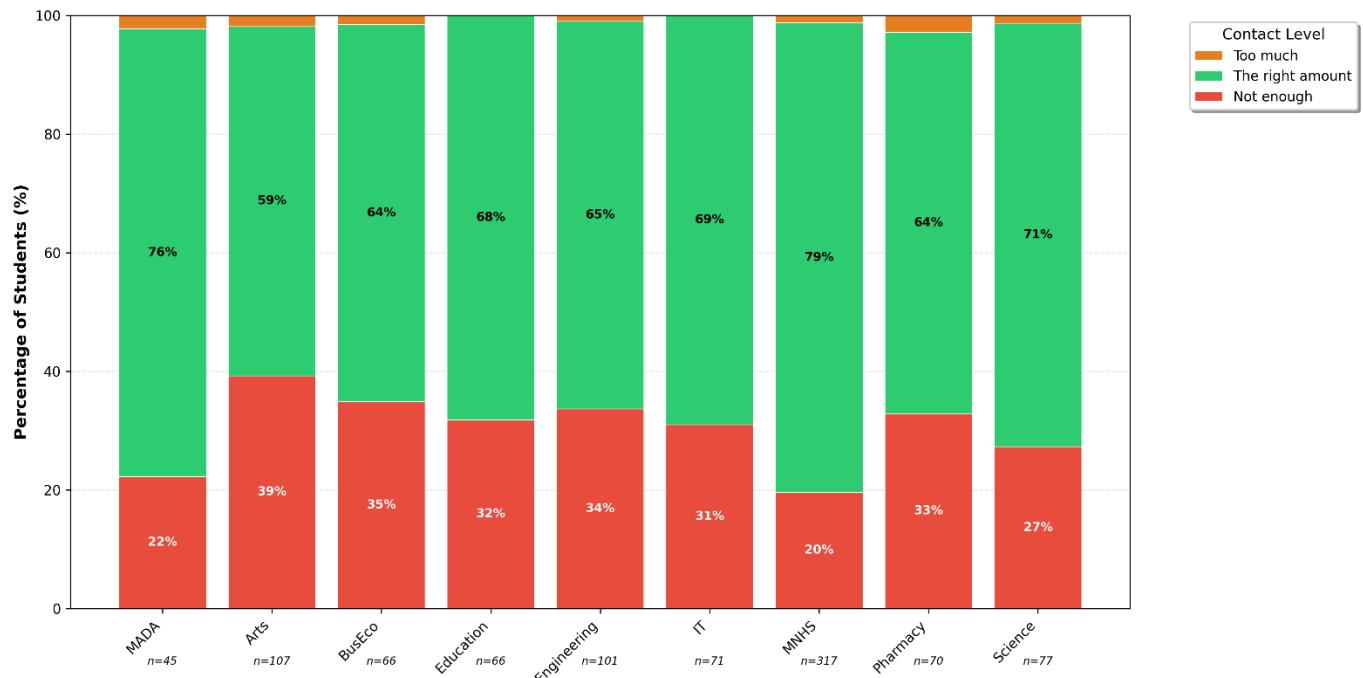
Meaningful Contact:

To better understand connection patterns, students were asked to evaluate whether they have sufficient meaningful contact with five key groups: academic staff, administrative staff, peers, friends and family. The following data reveal where BusEco students feel adequately connected and where they experience insufficient contact.

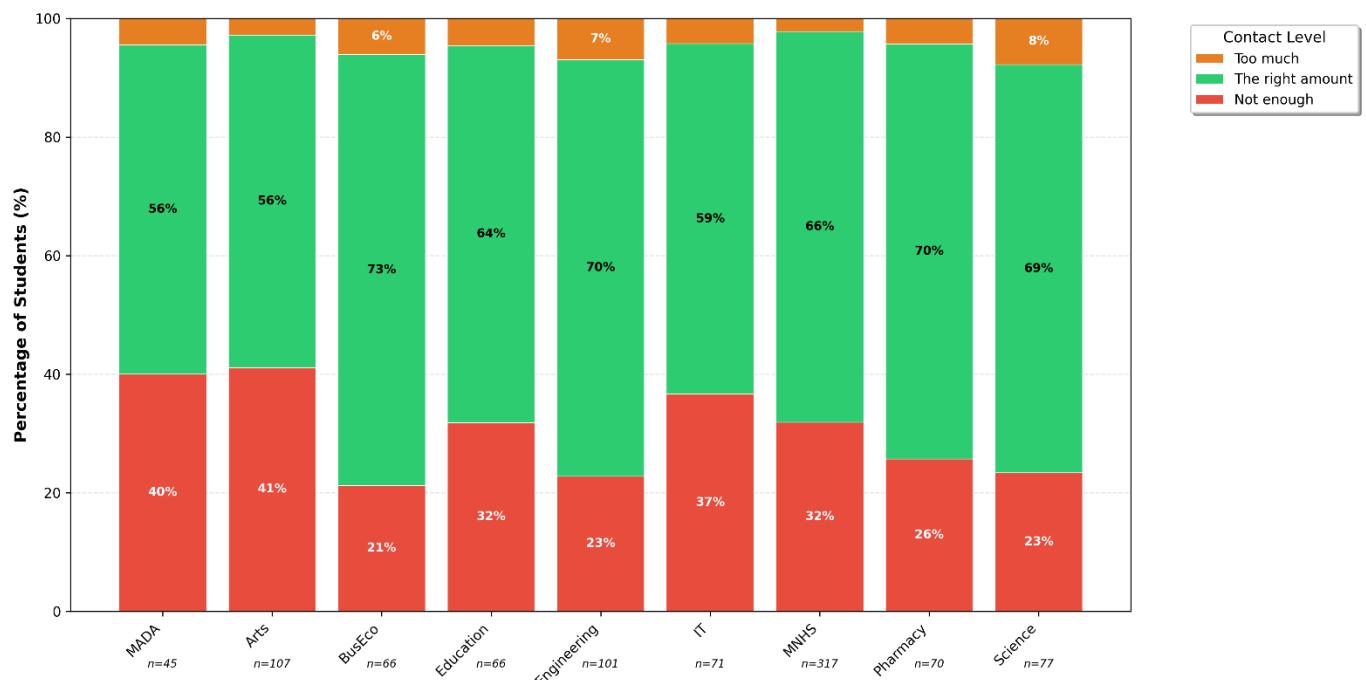
**Meaningful Contact with Academic Staff
Graduate Research Students by Faculty**



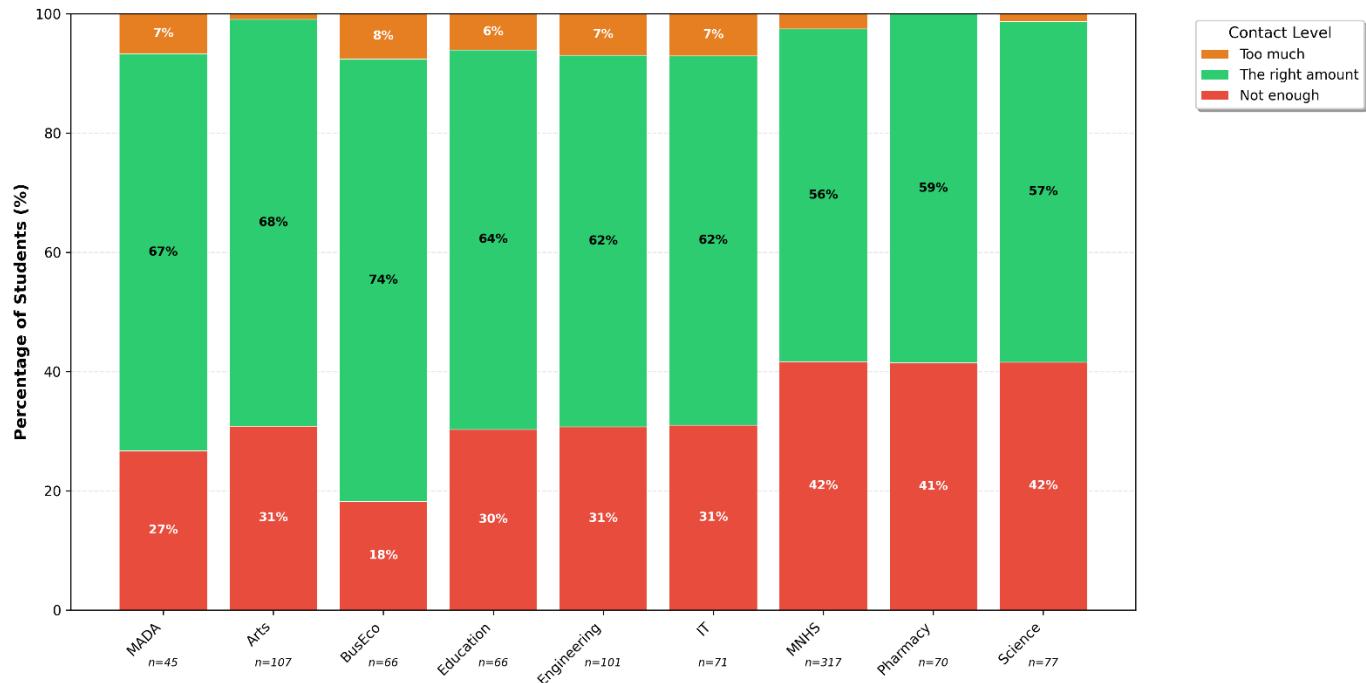
**Meaningful Contact with Administrative Staff
Graduate Research Students by Faculty**

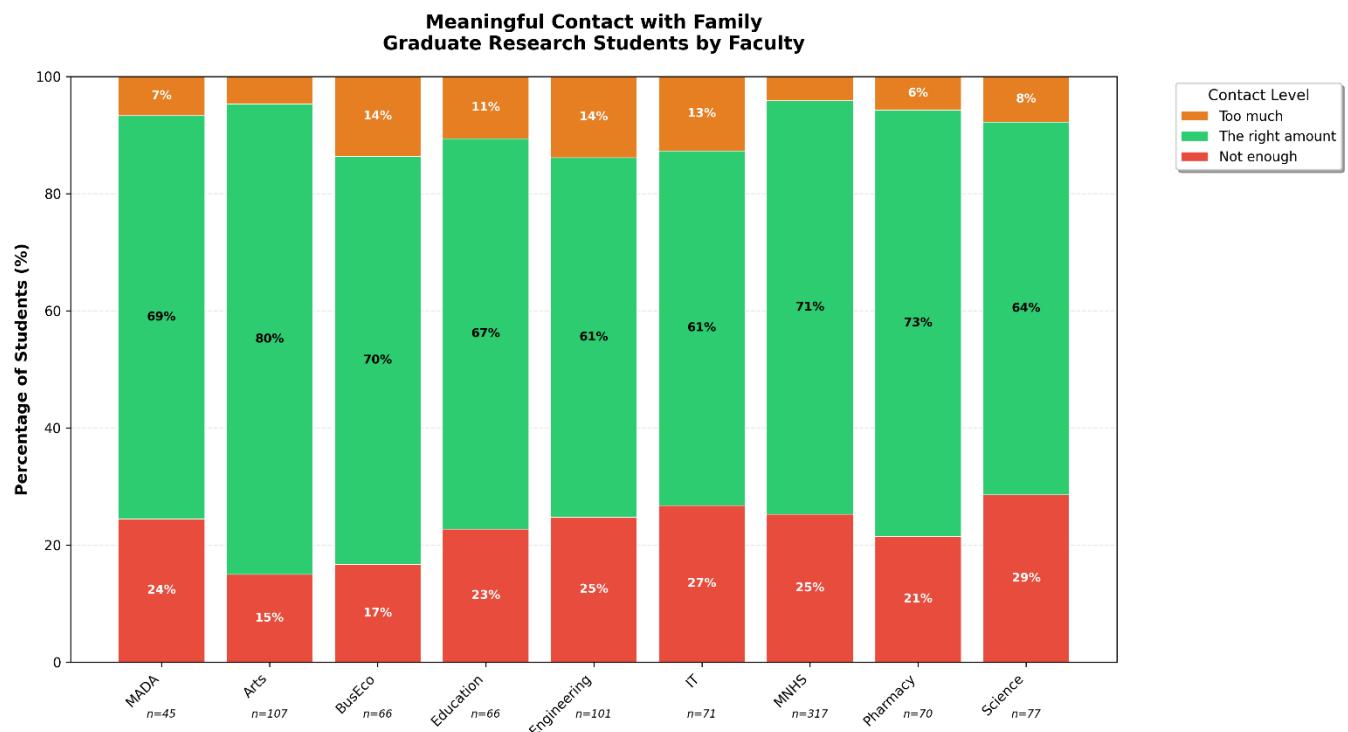


Meaningful Contact with Other Students/Peers
Graduate Research Students by Faculty



Meaningful Contact with Friends
Graduate Research Students by Faculty





These patterns of meaningful contact reveal a relatively positive picture for BusEco students, particularly in areas most critical to the graduate research experience. BusEco students report the highest having “the right amount” of contact with both peers and friends of any faculty across Monash, suggesting that social and collegial connections – often the most challenging aspects of graduate research given its independent nature – are functioning reasonably well for most students in the faculty. This finding indicates that existing community-building efforts, whether through formal faculty events, informal student-organised gatherings, or natural peer networks, are reaching a substantial portion of the BusEco graduate research population.

The success in peer and friend connection provides a foundation to build upon rather than a problem to solve. The faculty’s challenge lies not in creating peer community from scratch, but in ensuring that existing networks remain accessible to all students – including part-time students, those studying primarily off-campus, international students who may face additional barriers to social integration and students whose financial constraints limit their ability to participate in social activities. Additionally, while most students report adequate peer contact, the 21% who experience insufficient connection represent an important minority whose isolation may be masked by overall positive patterns.

The relatively strong peer and friend connections among BusEco students may reflect several positive factors: cohort-based coursework in early candidature that builds relationships, active student-led initiatives, effective faculty social events, or perhaps a collaborative rather than purely competitive research culture that encourages peer support. Understanding and preserving whatever factors contribute to these positive patterns should be a priority even as the faculty works to extend similar connection opportunities to students not currently benefiting from existing networks.

What Makes Business and Economics Distinct: Key Themes

Based on both quantitative patterns and qualitative student voices, two themes distinguish the Business and Economics graduate research experience from most other disciplines at Monash.

The Mental Health Paradox: High Need, Lower Access and International Student Composition

BusEco students present a distinctive mental health profile characterised by both high psychological burden and lower support access compared to university averages. While 70% of BusEco students who have considered leaving cite mental health as a primary reason – the second highest rate across all faculties – only 34% have accessed mental health support compared to 45% university-wide. This paradox requires careful interpretation: the faculty's lower access rates are largely explained by demographic composition rather than unique cultural barriers. With a high proportion of international student respondents (who access support at only 32% across the university compared to 62% for domestic students), the 34% access rate for BusEco students reflects this demographic reality rather than indicating a discipline-specific problem. However, this explanation does not diminish the urgency for intervention – it simply clarifies where efforts should focus.

The intersection of mental health challenges with BusEco's international student composition creates compounding disadvantages. International students in business fields face not only generic cultural barriers to help-seeking (visa concerns, unfamiliarity with Australian mental health systems, cultural stigma) but also discipline-specific pressures including expensive international travel expectations, professional presentation standards and career uncertainty amplified by visa constraints. The 83% of BusEco students reporting imposter syndrome (above the 80% university average) combined with lower support access suggests that many students are managing substantial psychological distress without formal help. This pattern underscores the need for culturally responsive mental health strategies specifically designed for BusEco's international student majority, including multilingual support options, explicit messaging that accessing support does not affect visa status and reframing mental health as performance optimization rather than crisis intervention – language that may resonate more effectively in business-oriented contexts where professional excellence and competitive advantage are valued.

Collaborative Foundations Amid Competitive Pressures: The Peer Connection Advantage

BusEco students report the strongest peer and friend connection patterns across all Monash faculties. BusEco students report having “the right amount” of contact with both peers (74%) and friends (79%) – the highest rates university-wide – while experiencing lower isolation levels (68% experiencing some isolation vs. 72% university-wide, with only 19% experiencing high isolation vs. 22% university-wide). These patterns suggest that existing community-building efforts, whether through formal faculty events, student-organised initiatives, or natural peer networks, successfully reach a substantial portion of the BusEco graduate research population. This represents a significant strength to build upon rather than a problem requiring wholesale intervention.

However, this overall success masks important nuances. The data reveal that 21% of BusEco students report insufficient peer contact and 19% experience high levels of isolation – representing important minorities whose disconnection may be obscured by aggregate positive patterns. These isolated students likely face compounding disadvantages: those excluded from peer networks not only miss social support but also lose access to informal knowledge sharing about navigating milestones, understanding supervisor expectations, identifying conference opportunities and accessing tacit disciplinary knowledge that flows through collegial relationships. The relatively strong peer connections among the majority suggest that when BusEco students do connect, they find value in these relationships – the challenge lies in ensuring accessibility for part-time students, those studying primarily off-campus, international students who may face additional barriers to social integration and those whose financial constraints limit participation in social activities requiring discretionary spending.

The success in peer connection may reflect several positive factors worth preserving and extending. Cohort-based coursework in early candidature builds foundational relationships that persist through later independent research phases. The methodological diversity within business research – spanning quantitative finance modelling, qualitative organisational studies, experimental behavioural work and applied business analytics – creates opportunities for complementary collaborations rather than pure competition. Students with different methodological strengths can support each other (the structural equation modeler helping the qualitative researcher understand statistical concerns; the ethnographer helping the finance student think about contextual factors) in ways that build community through mutual value rather than competitive ranking. Additionally, despite internal diversity, the shared professional identity around “business research” – despite internal diversity – may create stronger in-group cohesion than disciplines with more fragmented or contested boundaries. Understanding what drives these positive patterns – whether specific faculty initiatives, student-led community building or cultural factors – should inform efforts to extend similar connection opportunities to students not currently benefiting from existing networks.

Faculty-Specific Recommendations

These recommendations are tailored to patterns observed among BusEco students and prioritise actions the faculty can take to enhance support. For detailed implementation guidance, see the corresponding recommendations in *Graduate Research at Monash: Student Experience, Challenges and Opportunities for Enhancement*.

Based on the data, BusEco should focus faculty efforts on three distinctive challenges where targeted intervention will have maximum impact:

1. Improve Mental Health Support Access for International Students

The Problem: Only 34% of BusEco students have accessed mental health support compared to 45% university-wide. This lower rate reflects the faculty's high proportion of international students, who access support at only 32% across the university (versus 62% for domestic students). However, 70% of BusEco students who consider leaving cite mental health – the second highest rate across all faculties – indicating substantial unmet need.

What the Faculty Can Do:

Immediate Actions:

- Partner with Monash Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS) to develop BusEco-specific mental health messaging for international students:
 - Explicit statement: "Accessing mental health support does NOT affect your visa status."
 - Reframe support using language that resonates in business contexts: "performance optimisation" and "maintaining competitive advantage."
 - Feature testimonials from international students in business fields who successfully accessed support.
- Embed mental health information in BusEco-specific orientation and milestone communications.
- Normalise help-seeking in Associate Dean Graduate Research communications: "High-performing researchers proactively manage wellbeing."

Faculty Actions:

- Associate Dean Graduate Research coordinates with CAPS and international student services.
- Identify international student volunteers for testimonials (with appropriate support).
- Track whether messaging reaches international students effectively.

Success Metrics: Increase support access from 34% toward 45%; reduce disparity between international and domestic students in BusEco; student feedback on messaging relevance.

For detailed implementation guidance, see main report: Level 1 – "Develop Culturally Responsive Mental Health Service Delivery" and Level 3 – "Implement Culturally Responsive Mental Health Service Delivery."

2. Support Research Productivity for Financially Stressed Students

The Problem: 50% of BusEco students report that financial stress has an extreme or big impact on their ability to concentrate on research – substantially higher than 40% university-wide. This represents BusEco’s most concerning metric relative to other faculties. Financial stress directly undermines cognitive capacity needed for complex research, creating cycles where reduced productivity extends candidature and increases financial burden.

What the Faculty Can Do:

Immediate Actions:

- Develop quarterly workshop series: “Maintaining Research Productivity Under Pressure.”
 - Protecting research time when working multiple jobs.
 - Managing cognitive load during financial stress.
 - Strategic research planning on limited resources.
 - Accessing emergency support (MGA grants, financial counselling).
- Create online “Productivity Under Pressure” resource hub with:
 - Budget-conscious research planning templates.
 - Strategies from students who successfully navigated financial stress.
 - Crisis planning guides.
 - Links to emergency grants, financial counselling, hardship support.
- Train supervisors to recognise and talk about financial stress impacting productivity and making appropriate referrals.

Faculty Actions:

- Associate Dean Graduate Research coordinates workshop development (leverage MGRO infrastructure, invite CAPS/MGA Financial Counselling).
- Consider inviting successful graduate students to share strategies.
- Create and maintain online resource repository.
- Integrate financial awareness into supervisor training.

Success Metrics: Workshop attendance; student feedback on usefulness; reduction in concentration impact from 50% toward 40% university average in future surveys.

For detailed implementation guidance, see main report: Level 1 – “Develop Graduate Research-Specific Financial Literacy Resources and Workshops.”

3. Establish Business and Economics Career Pathways Program

The Problem: Students explicitly requested “sessions on how to search and apply for jobs,” “regular experience sharing on the academic job market,” and “a placement cell to connect industry and academia.” Generic university career services cannot adequately serve diverse BusEco pathways spanning academia, consulting, corporate research, policy and entrepreneurship – each requiring different strategies, networks and insider knowledge.

What the Faculty Can Do:

Immediate Actions:

- Integrate career discussions into milestone reviews:
 - Provide supervisors with conversation prompts and BusEco alumni contact list.
 - Include typical career timelines for business PhD markets (academic, consulting, industry, policy).
 - Document career discussions in milestone records.

Short-Term Program (6-12 months):

- Launch quarterly alumni career panels featuring diverse pathways:
 - Academic positions (preparation, timelines, publication strategies).
 - Consulting transitions (McKinsey, BCG, Deloitte pathways).
 - Industry research (corporate R&D, data science).
 - Policy and think tanks.
 - Entrepreneurship.
- Host discipline-specific workshops:
 - “The BusEco PhD in Consulting: Skills, Applications, Transitions.”
 - “Navigating the Academic Job Market in Business and Economics.”
 - “From PhD to Policy: Economic and Business Research Careers.”
- Partner with Business School’s industry advisory board for networking events connecting graduate researchers with industry.
- Offer individual career planning conversations (Associate Dean Graduate Research or trained peer mentors).

Long-Term Investment (2+ years):

- Advocate for dedicated 0.5-1.0 FTE BusEco Graduate Research Career Advisor to provide comprehensive support, industry relationship building and program coordination.

Faculty Actions:

- Associate Dean Graduate Research coordinates program.
- Leverage alumni network (partner with Alumni Office).
- Utilise Business School industry connections.
- Budget ~\$10-15K annually for events, alumni travel, materials.

Success Metrics: Career guidance satisfaction improvement (target 60%+); event attendance; student feedback on discipline-relevance; career outcome tracking showing diverse successful pathways.

For detailed implementation guidance, see main report: Level 1 – “Enhance Supervisor Capacity: Resources and Prompts for Career Conversations”; Level 2 – “Develop Graduate Research Alumni Mentoring Network”; Level 3 – “Establish Discipline-Embedded Career Advisors.”

Conclusion

These three recommendations directly address BusEco's most distinctive challenges – mental health support access gaps driven by international student composition, financial stress undermining research concentration and career guidance inadequacy for diverse business PhD pathways. All three are immediately actionable at faculty level, require modest initial investment and build from immediate low-cost interventions toward longer-term strategic enhancements. By focusing faculty efforts on these targeted priorities, BusEco can meaningfully improve outcomes for its graduate research students while establishing a model for discipline-responsive support.

Appendix: Business and Economics Demographics

Campus	Respondents
I do not regularly attend campus	1 (1%)
Clayton	27 (38%)
Caulfield	61 (86%)
Peninsula	0 (0%)
Parkville	0 (0%)
Malaysia	2 (3%)
Hospital or Medical Centre	0 (0%)
Indonesia	0 (0%)
Suzhou	0 (0%)
other	0 (0%)

School/Department	Respondents
Accounting	16 (23%)
Banking and Finance	6 (9%)
Business Law and Taxation	2 (3%)
Centre for Global Business	1 (1%)
Centre for Health Economics	6 (9%)
Econometrics and Business Statistics	8 (11%)
Economics	8 (11%)
Management	11 (16%)
Marketing	8 (11%)
Other	5 (7%)

Domestic/International	Respondents
Local student (Australian or New Zealand citizen/permanent resident)	8 (11%)
International student	64 (89%)

Study load	Respondents
Full-time	67 (93%)
Part-time	5 (7%)
On leave from study	0 (0%)

Study location	Respondents
Entirely on-campus	24 (33%)
Mix of on-campus and off-campus	46 (64%)
Entirely off-campus	2 (3%)
Other	0 (0%)

Time since last degree	Respondents
Less than 1 year	20 (28%)
1-5 years	44 (62%)
6-10 years	3 (4%)
11+ years	4 (6%)

Degree progress	Respondents
First year	33 (46%)
Second year	24 (33%)
Third year and beyond	15 (21%)

Study hours	Respondents
Less than 5	1 (1%)
6-10	7 (10%)
11-20	9 (13%)
21-30	20 (28%)
31-40	20 (28%)
Over 40 hours	15 (21%)

English proficiency	Respondents
Fluent	24 (34%)
Advanced	29 (41%)
Intermediate	14 (20%)
Elementary	4 (6%)
Beginner	0 (0%)

Gender	Respondents
Woman	45 (63%)
Man	26 (37%)
Non-binary/gender diverse	0 (0%)
Prefer to self-describe	0 (0%)
Prefer not to say	0 (0%)

LGBTIQA+	Respondents
Yes	7 (10%)
No	51 (72%)
Prefer not to disclose	13 (18%)

Indigenous (domestic students only)	Respondents
Yes	0 (0%)
No	8 (100%)
Prefer not to disclose	0 (0%)

Disability	Respondents
Yes	2 (3%)
No	66 (93%)
Prefer not to disclose	3 (4%)

Registered disability with DSS	Respondents
Yes	0 (0%)
No	2 (100%)

Age	Respondents
24 or under	15 (21%)
25-29	35 (49%)
30-39	17 (24%)
40 and over	5 (7%)

Parental status	Respondents
Yes – living with me	1 (2%)
Yes – not living with me	9 (14%)
No	56 (85%)

Primary carer	Respondents
Yes	3 (33%)
Shared responsibility	6 (67%)
No	0 (0%)

Carer status	Respondents
Yes	6 (9%)
No	60 (91%)

Employment status	Respondents
Full-time	9 (14%)
Part-time	3 (5%)
Casual	19 (29%)
Unemployed and looking for work	11 (17%)
Not employed and not looking for work	24 (36%)

Work hours	Respondents
Less than 5	8 (26%)
6-10	9 (29%)
11-20	7 (23%)
21-30	5 (16%)
31-40	2 (7%)
More than 40	0 (0%)

Scholarship recipients	Respondents
Yes	46 (70%)
No, but I previously held a scholarship	6 (9%)
No	14 (21%)

Value of scholarship	Respondents
Less than \$33,511	3 (7%)
\$33,511 (National full-time RTP stipend minimum)	9 (20%)
\$33,512 - \$36,062	1 (2%)
\$36,063 (Monash full-time RTP stipend)	25 (54%)
\$36,064 - \$47,626	7 (15%)
More than \$47,627 (National minimum wage)	1 (2%)