

# Identifying Graduate Research Student Satisfaction



Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture

*Monash University 2024*



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.

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## Executive summary

In April and May 2024, the Monash Graduate Association (MGA) conducted a survey of graduate students at Monash and nine other Australian universities. Similar surveys were conducted in 2017 and 2021, which have allowed for some comparisons throughout this report.

The main findings as they relate to graduate research students enrolled in the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture (MADA) are summarised below:

### **MADA graduate researchers are mostly positive about their supervision experience**

The sentiment of MADA respondents in relation to supervision was mostly positive.

The University's recommended meeting frequency was mostly met with 82% of full-time graduate researchers meeting with their supervisor weekly or fortnightly, while 100% of part-time MADA respondents met once a month or more frequently.

Supervisors were coming close to meeting the expectations and needs of their students. The most important aspects of supervision, according to MADA graduate researchers, were having their research supported by skilled supervisors and having supervisors guide them through the degree.

Helping them feel like they belong academically (-18.78%) was the area where the gap between importance and satisfaction was widest.

### **Student satisfaction with their academic unit high**

Across the board, MADA graduate researchers were predominantly satisfied with the department or school in which they were enrolled.

Satisfaction was highest in relation to respondents feeling that they are treated in a respectful manner (83%) and their academic unit organising regular seminars and guest speakers (83%), while dissatisfaction was highest in relation to respondents feeling like they could have a career in a place like this (41%).

### **Confirmation process is largely satisfactory**

Respondents were predominantly satisfied their confirmation experience. None of the 8 respondents who had passed confirmation were dissatisfied with the experience, although two were neutral.

### **Professional Development opportunities**

Having Professional Development opportunities that focus on career development and mental health and wellbeing were of the utmost importance to MADA graduate researchers, while experiencing PD with students from other fields was the least important of the themes.

Respondents were most satisfied with PD on professional ethics and least satisfied with grant writing.

The widest gap between importance and satisfaction was in relation to career planning, which was first for importance, but second last for satisfaction.

In terms of additions to existing PD, opportunities to improve their research skills was the most common response.

### **Minor decrease in number of graduate researchers working for the University, but MADA respondents likely to feel they are paid appropriately for their work**

There was a slight rise of MADA respondents reporting that they had worked for the University - down from 58% in 2021 to 50% in 2024. Of those who had worked for Monash, 33% were employed on a casual contract, while 33% had a fixed-term contract.

Half of MADA respondents believed that they were definitely paid appropriately for the work they did for the University and a further 17% indicated they were probably paid appropriately. This was better than it was across HASS (21% definitely yes, 29% probably yes).

### **Doubts, delays and drop outs**

The majority of MADA graduate researchers have, at some point, experienced imposter syndrome with 17% indicating that they experienced this feeling “often.”

Roughly one-fifth of MADA graduate researchers (21%) had never experienced a delay in their research, while 8% indicated that they often experienced delays.

Family responsibilities were the most common response for a delay in research among MADA graduate research students – followed by a change in research direction and preparing for a milestone

The overwhelming majority of MADA respondents (92%) had never considered leaving their course, which was a sharp contrast to other HASS students at Monash.

### **MGA engagement has room for improvement**

MADA respondents were more likely to have no engagement with their student association than were the equivalents from other universities.

Meanwhile, respondents from the Faculty were most likely to have a neutral opinion about the MGA; however, more were satisfied than dissatisfied.

## Introduction

The Monash Graduate Association (MGA) ran a survey of graduate students in April and May 2024 across nine Australian universities. In relation to graduate research students, the aim of the MGA's *National Postgraduate Student Satisfaction Survey* was to better understand their degree experience.

This report explores many of the pillars of a research degree, including supervision, the academic unit, confirmation and professional development. It also looks into some common associated experiences, including paid employment opportunities, imposter syndrome, research delays and thoughts of dropping out. Finally, the report highlights the engagement and satisfaction of Monash graduate research students with the Monash Graduate Association (MGA) and includes suggestions for how the MGA could better support the University's students.

This report provides data and findings specifically for respondents enrolled at in the Faculty of MADA at Monash University. In MADA, a total of 14 graduate research students participated in the survey (see *Appendix 1: Demographics*), which we estimate to be approximately 11% of enrolled graduate research students at the Faculty.

The survey was advertised in the MGA newsletter, on the MGA website, through MGA social media channels and through contacts with Monash faculty groups and associate deans, many of whom agreed to forward the advertising of the survey to their students. Participants were self-selecting, so an incentive scheme (comprising the opportunity to win one of 100 gift cards worth \$50 in value) was used to assist in attracting a representative sample.

With the support of colleagues at student associations across Australia, this survey was offered to postgraduate students at nine other universities. Respondents from the University of Queensland, Griffith University, Queensland University of Technology, Southern Cross University, University of Sydney, University of New South Wales, University of Technology Sydney, Victoria University and Federation University are all represented in this survey. A total of 8 graduate research students in the field of architecture completed the survey across these universities.

Where appropriate, comparisons between Monash and non-Monash respondents have been made.

This research has been approved by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (Project ID: 41520).

## Limitations

While this report provides valuable insight into graduate research student satisfaction, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations that may impact the interpretation of results. Two such limitations are outlined below.

### *Over- and under-representation of demographic groups*

When considering results, it is important to acknowledge that the response rate is not consistent across demographic groups.

For example, international enrolments accounted for approximately 26% of total graduate research enrolments at the Faculty of MADA in 2024. In this survey, international students accounted for 86% of total responses in the Faculty. As a result, international students are substantially over-represented and domestic students are substantially under-represented. This is true also of full-time (over-represented) and part-time (under-represented) students.

### *Positive-negative asymmetry (PNA) effect*

Across the entire report, the responses of students have been taken at face-value. As such, it is important to reflect on the positive-negative asymmetry (PNA) effect. The PNA effect is two-part: firstly, it incorporates the positivity bias, which refers to an individual's inclination towards favourable perceptions of phenomena that are novel or do not directly impact them,<sup>1</sup> and, secondly, it incorporates the negativity bias which, in part, relates to how individuals are more curious about negative than positive stimuli and therefore are more mobilised by negative events.<sup>2</sup> In the context of this report, this may mean that answers to the quantitative questions in the survey are disproportionately positive, while the responses to the qualitative (open-ended) questions are disproportionately negative, given that students were not required to provide a response.

In relation to the qualitative questions in this survey, effort was made to overcome the PNA effect by splitting questions and asking for a positive and negative reflection.

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<sup>1</sup> Maria Lewicka, Janusz Czapinski and Guido Peeters, "Positive-negative asymmetry or 'When the heart needs a reason'," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 22 (1992): 426.

<sup>2</sup> Reanna M. Poncheri, Jennifer T. Lindberg, Lori Foster Thompson and Eric A. Surface, "A comment on employee surveys: negativity bias in open-ended responses," *Organizational Research Methods* 11, no. 3 (2008): 615-16.



## Supervision

Respondents were asked a series of questions in relation to their supervision experience.

### Choice of supervisor

Did you choose your supervisor?	MADA 2021	MADA 2024	Monash HASS 2024	Other Architecture 2024
Yes	75%	69%	65%	67%
No	25%	31%	35%	33%

There has been a minor drop since 2021 in MADA PhD candidates choosing their own supervisors.

The result in MADA is, however, slightly higher than it was across HASS at Monash, while it is largely on par with that recorded among those studying architecture at other participating universities.

Previous studies have identified that doctoral students who choose their own supervisor are more likely to complete their degree than those assigned a supervisor.<sup>3</sup>

### Choice of topic

Did you choose your own topic?	MADA 2021	MADA 2024	Monash HASS 2024	Other Architecture 2024
Yes	90%	77%	86%	100%
No	10%	23%	14%	0%

Between 2021 and 2024, there was a drop in the proportion of MADA respondents choosing their own research topic.

Students choosing their own topic was marginally more likely in MADA than it was across HASS at Monash, but less likely than it was across other participating universities.

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<sup>3</sup> Karen Hunter and Kay Devine, "Doctoral student's emotional exhaustion and intentions to leave academia," *International Journal of Doctoral Studies* 11 (2016): 40.

## Contact with supervisors

Participants were asked, on average, how often they meet with their supervisors?

How often do you meet with your supervisor?	MADA 2024	Monash HASS 2024	Other Architecture 2024
Weekly	23%	15%	22%
Fortnightly	46%	47%	33%
Once every 3 weeks	0%	6%	22%
Once a month	23%	16%	11%
Less than once a month	8%	16%	11%

The majority of MADA graduate research respondents met with their supervisors on a weekly or fortnightly basis.

The Monash University *Graduate Research Student Supervision Procedure* recommends full-time graduate researchers meet with their main supervisor at least every two weeks, while part-time students should meet monthly.

Of full-time MADA respondents, 82% met with their supervisor weekly or fortnightly, while both part-time MADA respondents met once a month.

Those who met their supervisors once a month or less were asked to respond to the question ***Why don't you meet more frequently with your supervisors?***

Comments included:

*"Distance."*

*"Because I am part-time and can't produce work fast enough to meet more frequently."*

## Supervision: Importance and Satisfaction

Participants were asked to rate how important certain aspects of supervision were and how satisfied they were with their own experience. For the purposes of analysis, this 7-point *Likert*-scale has been converted to a numerical value and averaged across graduate research respondents.

The gap was calculated as below:

$$\text{Gap} = \frac{(\text{Satisfaction} - \text{Importance})}{\text{Importance (\%)}}$$

In regard to satisfaction, respondents were asked to consider their supervision experience overall or as a collective, rather than their experience with individual supervisors.

	Importance (1-7)	Satisfaction (1-7)	Gap (%)
Skilled supervisors	6.31	5.58	-11.57%
Guide me through the degree	6.31	5.36	-15.06%
Support for work/life balance	6.23	5.60	-10.11%
Help me belong academically	6.23	5.06	-18.78%
I am heard	6.15	5.53	-10.08%
Access to supervisors	6.08	5.73	-5.76%
Constructive feedback	6.08	5.78	-4.93%
Mentor me	6.00	5.33	-11.17%
Act professionally	5.92	5.90	-0.34%
Help me network	5.92	5.02	-15.20%
Encourage ownership	5.85	5.77	-1.37%
Clear role delegation	5.85	5.30	-9.40%
Timely feedback	5.85	5.71	-2.39%
I am a priority	5.69	5.31	-6.68%
Career pathway	5.69	5.00	-12.13%
Inform me of support services	5.54	5.02	-9.39%
	5.98	5.44	-9.02%

Having their research supported by skilled supervisors and having supervisors guide them through the degree were the most important aspects of supervision according to MADA respondents.

Meanwhile, supervisors acting professionally and providing constructive feedback were the two aspects MADA respondents were most satisfied with.

The widest gaps between importance and satisfaction were recorded for helping them feel like they belong academically and help with networking.

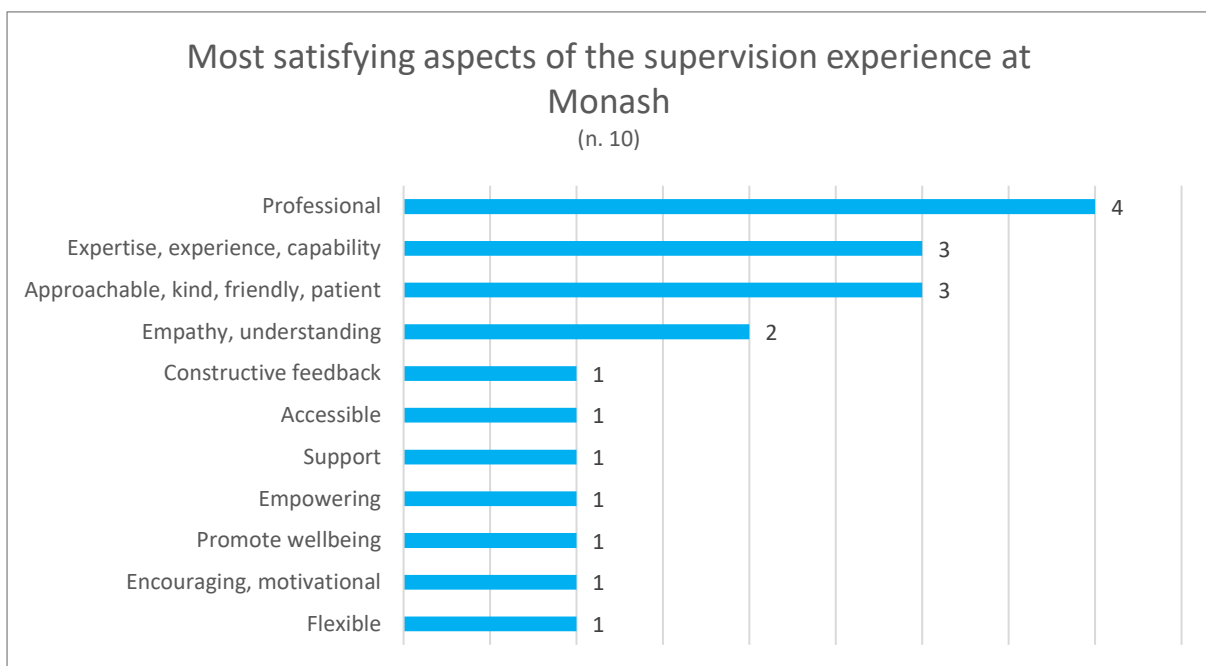
## The supervision experience

Participants were asked to reflect on what aspects of their supervision experience they found most satisfying and what aspects they found most dissatisfying.

### Most satisfying aspects of supervision

In order to gain further insight into what graduate research students most value in their supervisors, participants were asked to *Tell us about what aspects are most satisfying about your supervision experience.*

Below is a summary of the responses from MADA:



Interesting comments included:

*“The meetings are structured and the deliverables are clearly defined. Everyone's expectations and schedule is balanced.”*

*“Both of my supervisors have a clear idea of what they bring to the table and hence there are hardly any conflicts when it comes to decisions.”*

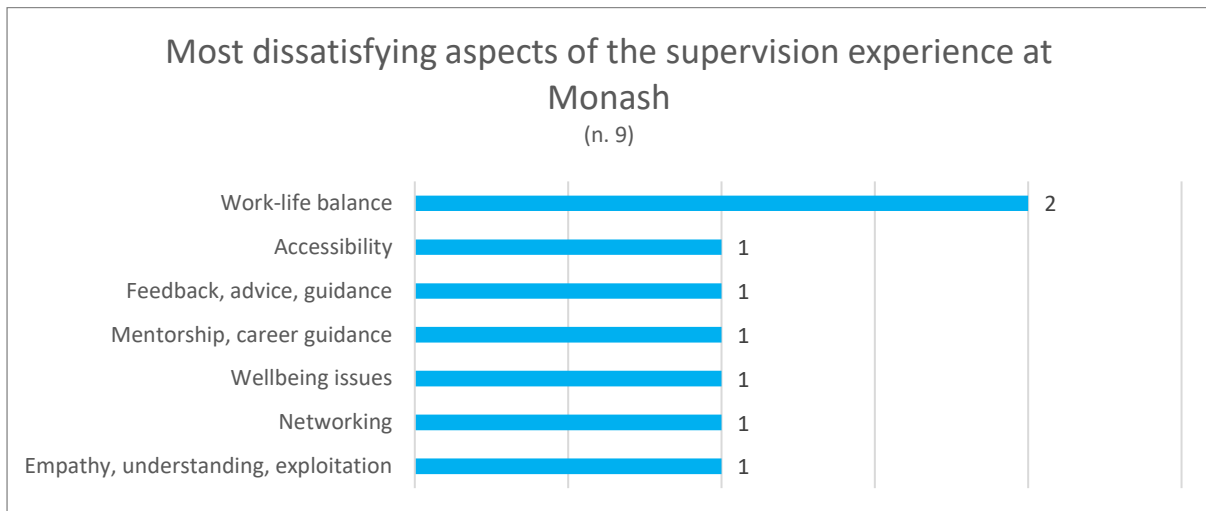
*“Supervisors are supportive, really encouraging of my research and positive. They are really helpful with administrative issues with MGRO. They are really supportive of managing work/study balance which is extremely hard with part time study.”*

*“I could see that my supervisors care about my the quality of my personal life and feelings as a new international student.”*

## Most dissatisfying aspects of supervision

In order to gain insight into what traits graduate research students find most problematic about their supervisors, participants were asked to *tell us about what aspects are most dissatisfying about your supervision experience.*

Below is a summary of responses from MADA:



Interesting comments included:

*"I expect them to help me find more opportunities to work as RA or Tutor but I haven't received any help on this. I also need to feel comfortable to talk with them about my work life situation but they only talk about my work and it feels that I don't have any other aspects in my life except for working. I told them a couple of times that I'm struggling with money as I only live by my scholarship and it's not that much to live easily, but they didn't help me to do another project or even tutoring to earn more money."*

*"Being a remote student there is very limited support services offered and it does feel pretty isolating at times. The PhD symposiums that happen every semester are too much for part time students, they should really only be required to participate in one symposium a year to reflect the part time nature."*

*"My previous supervisor had wasted my precious time and failed to guide me about my direction."*

*"Since I am an exchange student I do miss out on more ... interactions."*

## Conflict with supervisor

Have you ever had a disagreement with a supervisor that was challenging to overcome?	MADA 2017*	MADA 2021*	MADA 2024	Monash HASS 2024	Other Architecture 2024
No, I've never had a serious disagreement with a supervisor	(no) 83%	(no) 55%	77%	69%	57%
Yes, but it was only minor	(yes) 17%	(yes) 45%	23%	22%	43%
Yes, I have had a serious disagreement			0%	9%	0%

\*Please note that in 2017 and 2021 this was a “yes” or “no” question and “conflict or misunderstanding” was used in place of “disagreement.”

Respondents from MADA were less likely to report experiencing conflict with a supervisor than their HASS colleagues, while the proportion reporting conflict dropped substantially from 2021 levels.

## Dealing with conflict

Respondents who had experienced a form of conflict were asked to select if they had dealt with it and, if so, the ways in which they had dealt with it.

How did you deal with this “disagreement”?	MADA 2021*	MADA 2024	Monash HASS 2024	Other Architecture 2024
Decided to do nothing	44%	0%	12%	0%
Sorted it out directly with supervisor(s)	22%	100%	64%	33%
Sought assistance from a friend/colleague	0%	33%	24%	0%
Sought assistance from student association	0%	0%	5%	67%
Sought assistance from my chair	NA	33%	14%	33%
Sought assistance from grad. coordinator or head of school	33%	0%	14%	67%
Other	0%	0%	17%	0%

\* Please note, when we asked this question in 2017 and 2021, “conflict” was used in place of “disagreement” i.e. *How did you deal with the conflict?*

Sample size was low (3) in the Faculty; however, 100% of respondents addressed their issue directly with their supervisors.

## Changing supervisors

Participants were asked a series of questions relating to changing supervisors.

### Considered changing supervisors

Have you thought about changing supervisors?	MADA 2024	Monash HASS 2024	Other Architecture 2024
Never	77%	69%	29%
Rarely	8%	16%	43%
Often	15%	9%	29%
All the time	0%	6%	0%

MADA respondents were far less likely than those from other universities and slightly less likely than those from the HASS faculties at Monash to have considered changing their supervisors.

### Supervisor changes

Have you ever changed supervisors?	MADA 2024	Monash HASS 2024	Other Architecture 2024
No	69%	69%	57%
Yes, but it wasn't my choice	23%	17%	0%
Yes, my supervisor and I agreed to make a change	8%	5%	43%
Yes, I decided to change a supervisor(s) even though they did not want to be replaced	0%	3%	0%
Other	0%	8%	0%

MADA respondents were as likely as those across HASS at Monash, but less likely than architecture students from other universities to have changed supervisors.

## Why students did not change supervisors

Only one respondent took the opportunity to comment on why they had not changed supervisors even though they had considered it. They said it would have delayed their research and taken “a long time to look for a replacement.”

## Comments on the process of changing supervisors

Respondents who had changed supervisors were asked to comment on the process of changing supervisors.

Two respondents commented:

*“Yes, it took more time (mainly to look for the right supervisors) than I expected and brought negative effect for my milestone.”*

*“It was very disruptive to find another supervisor, and while I understand these things happen, it was during a stressful time of my candidature, and I do think that there should've been an understanding of adjusting timelines for hand-ins that took this into account. I felt unsupported by MADA at the time.”*



## Academic Unit

The following questions were asked in relation to the faculty, department or school in which a student was enrolled.

### Academic unit satisfaction

Participants were asked how satisfied they were with their academic unit across a range of areas.

The results of MADA graduate researchers are presented below:

	Extremely Dissatisfied	Moderately Dissatisfied	Slightly Dissatisfied	Neutral	Slightly Satisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied
I feel included in my academic unit	8%			17%	8%	25%	42%
I am treated in a respectful manner	8%			8%		33%	50%
I am encouraged by staff to socialise with other research students in my area	8%			17%		17%	58%
I am informed about opportunities for tutoring/sessional work	17%			25%	17%	8%	33%
My academic unit provides appropriate facilities for my field of research	17%		8%	8%	33%	17%	17%
My academic unit provides a student-specific social area for me to use	17%			25%	17%	17%	25%
My academic unit organises regular seminars and guest speakers for research students and staff	8%	8%			25%	25%	33%
Other research students in my academic unit are supportive	8%			17%	17%	8%	50%
I feel the policies, rules and regulations around doing research are there to support me	8%		8%	17%	17%	33%	17%
Provides an academically stimulating environment	8%	17%		8%	8%	17%	42%
I can see myself having a career in a place like this	8%	8%	25%	8%	8%		42%

Across the board, MADA graduate researchers were predominantly satisfied with their academic unit.

Satisfaction was highest in relation to respondents feeling that they are treated in a respectful manner (83%) and their academic unit organising regular seminars and guest speakers (83%), while dissatisfaction was highest in relation to respondents feeling like they could have a career in a place like this (41%).

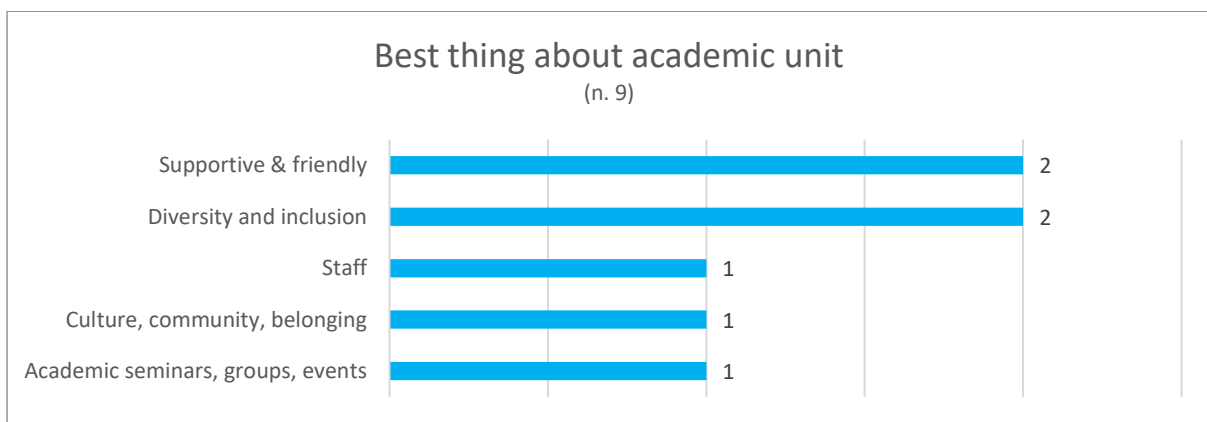
## Academic unit comments

Respondents were asked to reflect on what aspects of their supervision experience they found most satisfying and what aspects they found most dissatisfying.

### Best aspects of academic unit

Participants were asked to comment on what they thought was the best thing about their academic unit.

The responses of MADA graduate researchers are summarised below:



Comments included:

*“People are welcoming.”*

*“Very friendly, supportive academic unit.”*

*“Collaborative and multicultural.”*

*“I was involved in setting up an online writing group but otherwise I feel pretty isolated from the architecture cohort. Given there is such a range of topics and areas of architecture and that our cohort began online during a lockdown it was difficult to create connections.”*

## Worst aspects of academic unit

Participants were asked to comment on what they thought was most-dissatisfying about their academic unit.

A handful of MADA students responded. Comments included:

*“Not providing facilities such as laptop, Not informing us about the sessional and casual positions for teaching or research assistant.”*

*“I understand there is very limited spaces and resources for the PhD students on campus, recently that space was jeopardised and this was really disruptive to students. I do find it strange there is not a space dedicated to work from. The funding to access conferences and travel for research is super limited for students too. There are very limited funding opportunities for students in architecture too.”*

*“I am the only international student.”*

*“it is multi-disciplinary, so it is sometimes confusing in what direction we are headed post-PhD.”*

## Confirmation

Relevant participants were asked to reflect on their experience of confirmation.

Have you passed your confirmation?	Respondents
We don't have this requirement where I study	1 (8%)
No, I'm not at this stage yet	3 (25%)
No, I presented my research, but I need to make amendments	0 (0%)
Yes, I passed first time	7 (58%)
Yes, I passed, but after I needed to make amendments	1 (8%)

### Satisfaction with confirmation process

Participants were firstly asked how satisfied they were with the confirmation process.

The overwhelming majority of respondents expressed that they were satisfied (50% extremely satisfied, 13% moderately satisfied, 13% slightly satisfied). None of the 8 respondents were dissatisfied, while 2 were neutral.

### Most useful aspects of confirmation

Respondents were asked to reflect on what they found most useful about the confirmation process.

Below are some of their responses:

*"It helps us to clearly define the research direction. Comments from panel are valuable for that."*

*"Being aware of the importance and depth of my research concepts. Being familiar with other viewpoints that helped me see my project precisely."*

*"The feedbacks that I got wasn't totally fair but helped me to think differently about my research."*

*"I found this process pretty anxiety inducing. I think it would be great if there was more support provided to understand what is required. I felt pretty in the dark having not written academic writing in such a long time. There should be more examples of what is expected, and perhaps a working group so that you have comfort in numbers? This would set you up for success for future milestones I believe."*

## Least useful aspects of confirmation

Respondents were asked to reflect on what they found least useful about the confirmation process.

Below are some of their responses:

*“I think having written feedback or marked up documents from the panel would be great? I wish this had been captured more.”*

## Professional Development

Respondents were provided with an opportunity to reflect on their experiences of Professional Development at their university.

Only students for whom Professional Development was relevant (i.e. included in their degree) and who had completed some Professional Development units were asked to respond in regard to their satisfaction and experiences.

### Professional Development included in degree

Is Professional Development included in your degree?	MADA 2024	Monash HASS 2024	Other Architecture 2024
No	17%	13%	33%
Yes, but it was optional	17%	11%	50%
Yes, it is mandatory	67%	76%	17%

Professional Development was mandatory for the majority of MADA respondents. It was mandatory for 76% of respondents from HASS at Monash, but only 17% of those studying humanities at a different university.

## Professional Development: Importance and Satisfaction

Participants were asked to rate how important certain Professional Development themes were and how satisfied they were with what Monash University provides in relation to that theme.

Question	Importance	Satisfaction	Gap (%)
<i>Career planning</i>	6.25	3.63	-41.92%
<i>Mental health and wellbeing</i>	6.25	4.88	-21.92%
<i>Networking skills</i>	6.08	4.89	-19.57%
<i>Research methodologies</i>	6.00	5.25	-12.50%
<i>Professional ethics</i>	6.00	5.75	-4.17%
<i>Industry exposure</i>	6.00	4.80	-20.00%
<i>Presenting findings e.g. conferences, meetings, seminars</i>	5.92	5.70	-3.72%
<i>Project/research management</i>	5.92	4.63	-21.79%
<i>Publishing skills and knowledge</i>	5.67	4.90	-13.58%
<i>Grant writing</i>	5.58	3.50	-37.28%
<i>Coursework relevant to my research</i>	5.50	4.44	-19.27%
<i>Entrepreneurial skills</i>	5.23	4.25	-18.74%
<i>Data analysis techniques</i>	5.17	4.25	-17.79%
<i>PD with students from other fields</i>	4.58	5.00	9.17%
	5.73	4.71	-17.36%

Having Professional Development opportunities that focus on career development and mental health and wellbeing were of the utmost importance to MADA graduate researchers, while experiencing PD with students from other fields was the least important of the themes.

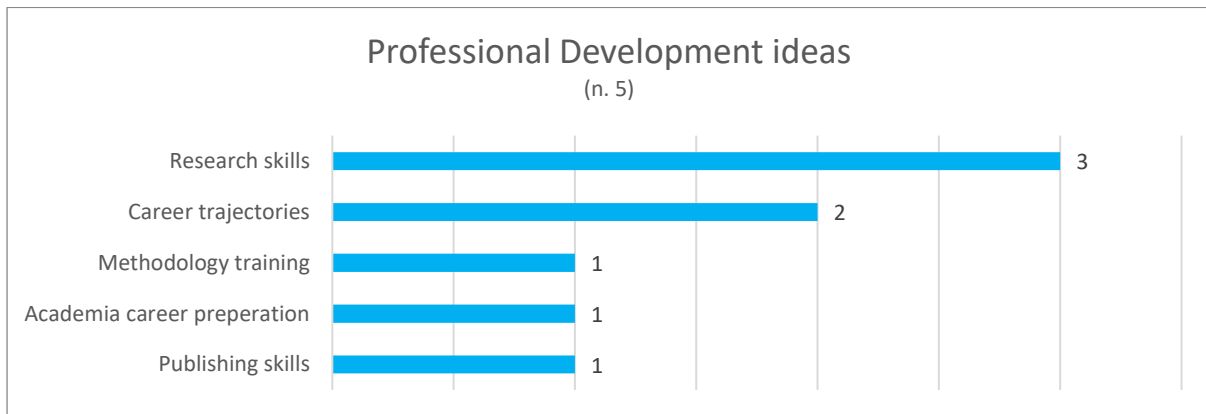
Respondents were most satisfied with PD on professional ethics and least satisfied with grant writing.

The widest gap between importance and satisfaction was in relation to career planning, which was first for importance, but second last for satisfaction.

## Professional Development ideas

Participants were asked what they would like to see offered in relation to Professional Development that was not currently available to them.

Below is a summary of the responses of MADA graduate researchers.



Interesting comment included:

*"I found one of the research methodologies/data analysis papers at the start so unhelpful for my area of research, the person taking the course had a very heavy focus on quantitative data and most of the students were writing from a qualitative perspective. I remember feeling very inadequate because I couldn't find any relationship to my research, and felt like I was on the wrong path. This was quite impactful at the start of my research journey, and I think more thought could be given to these courses as they are some of the first touch points for the PhD program and re-entering academia."*

*"Courses about organisation of ideas and structuring thesis."*

*"Writing structures, writing for publications, career and job planning after graduation, how to find a job (specific in each field)."*



## Paid Employment Opportunities

The following questions were asked in relation to paid employment opportunities.

### Paid work at the University

Participants were asked whether they had been given the opportunity to conduct paid work for the faculty or university.

Have you conducted paid work for the faculty or university?	MADA 2021	MADA 2024	Monash HASS 2024	Other Architecture 2024
Yes	58%	50%	54%	50%
No	42%	50%	46%	50%

\*Please note that in 2021 the wording of this question was slightly different. It asked if participants had been given the opportunity to “tutor.”

The likelihood of a MADA graduate researcher at Monash being given an opportunity to conduct paid work for the faculty or university decreased slightly over the past three years; however, it was on par with the reality of graduate researchers studying in the field of architecture at another university.

### Position at the University

Monash respondents were asked to specify the nature of their position at the University.

What was your position at Monash?	MADA 2024	Monash HASS 2024
Fixed-term (one of the 450 fixed-term roles offered at Monash)	33%	21%
Casual	33%	71%
Other	33%	8%

One-third of MADA respondents employed by the University were in fixed-term positions.

## Paid appropriately

Participants were asked if they felt they were paid appropriately for the work they conducted for their university.

Were you paid appropriately for your work at the university?	MADA 2021	MADA 2024	Monash HASS 2024	Other Architecture 2024
Definitely not	<i>(no)</i>	17%	32%	33%
Probably not	27%	17%	18%	0%
Probably yes	<i>(yes)</i>	17%	29%	67%
Definitely yes	73%	50%	21%	0%

\*Please note that in 2021 this question related to being paid for tutoring only and participants could only answer “yes” or “no”.

Half of MADA respondents believed that they were paid appropriately for the work they did for the University and a further 17% indicated they were probably paid appropriately. This was dramatically better than it was across HASS.

## Doubt, Delays and Drop Outs

The following section explores research delays and if and why graduate researchers consider leaving their degree.

### Imposter syndrome

Participants were asked: Do you ever feel like you don't belong in your field of study despite evidence of your accomplishments and abilities?

Do you ever feel like you don't belong in your field of study...?	MADA 2024	Monash HASS 2024	Other Architecture 2024
Never	25%	21%	33%
Rarely	42%	30%	17%
Sometimes	17%	28%	33%
Often	17%	21%	17%

The majority of MADA graduate researchers have, at some point, experienced imposter syndrome with 17% indicating that they experienced this feeling "often."

### Research delay

Participants were asked if they had experienced delays in the progress of their research.

Have you experienced delays in the progress of your research?	MADA 2017*	MADA 2021*	MADA 2024	Monash HASS 2024	Other Architecture 2024
Never	(no) 65%	(no) 37%	25%	21%	0%
Rarely	(yes) 35%	(yes) 63%	17%	30%	50%
Sometimes			50%	28%	17%
Often			8%	21%	33%

\*Please note that in 2017 and 2021 this was a "yes" or "no" question.

Roughly one-fifth of MADA graduate researchers (21%) had never experienced a delay in their research, while 8% indicated that they often experienced delays.

## Reasons for delay

Respondents who had experienced a delay in the progress of their research were asked to select the reasons for that delay from a list of prepared reasons.

Please select all relevant reasons regarding the delay in progress to your research	MADA 2021	MADA 2024	Monash HASS 2024	Other Architecture 2024
Change of research project direction	50%	44%	23%	67%
Poor supervision	33%	11%	15%	0%
Lack of resources for my research	25%	11%	11%	33%
Preparing for hurdles/milestones	8%	44%	30%	33%
Unpleasant workplace/research environment	17%	0%	9%	0%
Lack of motivation	25%	33%	31%	0%
Procrastination	NA	22%	29%	0%
Health issues	50%	22%	30%	0%
Family responsibilities	0%	56%	25%	33%
Cost of living/financial concerns	50%	33%	30%	17%
Work commitments	25%	22%	25%	50%
Data collection issues	NA	22%	17%	50%
COVID-19	100%	22%	21%	33%
Other	25%	22%	12%	0%

Family responsibilities were the most common response for a delay in research among MADA graduate research students – followed by a change in research direction and preparing for a milestone.

## Considered leaving

Participants were asked if they had ever considered leaving their course.

Have you ever considered leaving your course?	MADA 2021*	MADA 2024	Monash HASS 2024	Other Architecture 2024
Never	(no) 58%	92%	59%	50%
Rarely	(yes) 42%	0%	22%	17%
Sometimes		0%	13%	33%
Often		8%	6%	0%

\*Please note that in 2017 and 2021 this was a “yes” or “no” question.

The overwhelming majority of MADA respondents had never considered leaving their course, which was a sharp contrast to other HASS students at Monash and their equivalents at other universities.

## Why leave

Respondents who had considered leaving were asked to elaborate as to why.

The one response from a MADA graduate researcher was:

*“it is very financially challenging to complete a PhD without a scholarship, I have tried a couple of times to get this not been successful. In order to stay in the program, I need to keep working, balancing this feels like a constant pull in two directions and is very financially straining. I often have to delay PhD deadlines to keep up with my work, and stay employed. wish there was more support offered to manage this.”*

## Why continue

Respondents who had considered leaving their course were asked why they had decided to continue.

The one response from a MADA graduate researcher was:

*“I have put a lot of time into this project, I enjoy working on the project when I get the time to do so and feel it will be useful for architecture and arts workers in our region.”*

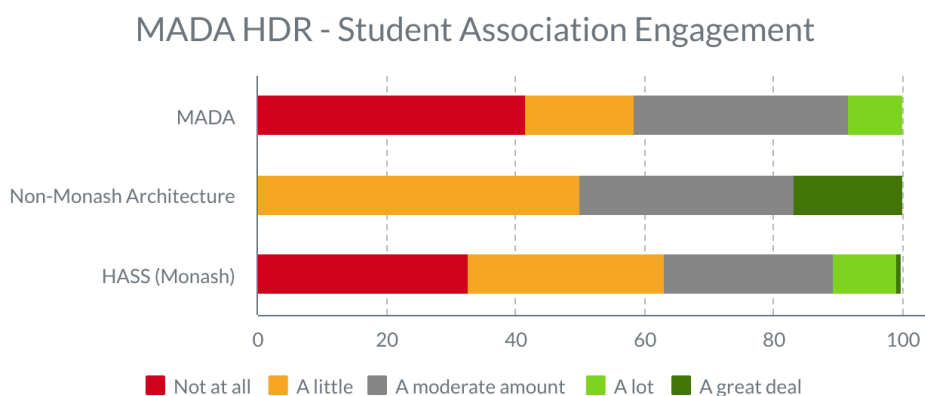
## Engagement and Satisfaction with the Monash Graduate Association (MGA)

This section highlights the engagement levels that MADA graduate research students have with their representative body - the Monash Graduate Association (MGA) – as well as their satisfaction with the MGA. It also includes respondents’ suggestions for how the MGA or equivalent student body could better support the university’s students.

### 3.1 MGA engagement

Participants were asked to respond to the question *how engaged do you feel with your student association or union or guild?*

Below is a summary of how key groups within MADA responded:

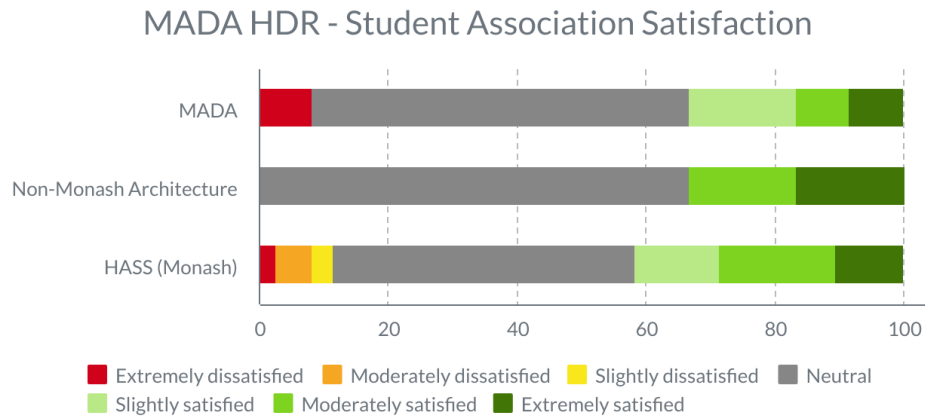


MADA respondents were more likely to have no engagement with their student association than were the equivalents from other universities.

### 3.2 MGA satisfaction

Participants were asked to respond to the question *how satisfied are you with your student association/union/guild?*

Below is a summary of how key groups within MADA responded:



MADA students were most-likely to have a neutral opinion of the MGA; however, more were satisfied than dissatisfied.

### 3.3 Suggestions for additional support

Participants were given the opportunity to respond to the question *how could your student association better support you?*

Below is a summary of responses from MADA:

*“By having meet ups for older students (35+ age group).”*

*“More interactions, especially one on one interactions.”*

*“Providing financial support for research equipment such as laptops, tablet etc. Holding more student events offering groceries.”*

*“Not sure. They have done well.”*

*“I have zero understanding of what they do, how to contact them or how to find out more information.”*



## Conclusion

The results of the MGA's *National Postgraduate Student Satisfaction Survey 2024* have provided valuable insights into what MADA graduate research students value in regard to their educational experience, as well as how satisfied they are with the structure and delivery of their degrees.

The key findings, as they relate to respondents from the Faculty of MADA, are summarised below:

### Key findings

#### **MADA graduate researchers are mostly satisfied with their supervision experience**

Across all sixteen metrics surveyed, satisfaction in relation to supervision was relatively high. MADA graduate researchers are predominantly satisfied with their supervision experience with supervisors largely meeting the expectations and needs of their students.

The most important aspects of supervision were having their research supported by skilled supervisors and having supervisors guide them through the degree. Supervisors were also accessible with the majority of students reporting that their meeting frequency fell within the University's guidelines.

#### **Students want more helpful with career planning**

In relation to Professional Development, the widest gap between importance and satisfaction was in relation to career planning (-41.92%), which was first for importance, but second last for satisfaction.

#### **Pay satisfaction is high in MADA**

Half of MADA respondents believed that they were paid appropriately for the work they did for the University and a further 17% indicated they were probably paid appropriately. This was dramatically better than it was across HASS.

#### **Imposter syndrome a common experience among MADA graduate researchers**

The majority of MADA graduate researchers have, at some point, experienced imposter syndrome with 17% indicating that they experienced this feeling "often." Only one-quarter of respondents said they had never experienced these feelings.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the MGA's *National Postgraduate Student Satisfaction Survey 2024*, the MGA recommends the following actions be taken to improve the graduate research student experience in the Faculty of MADA:

### *Renewed effort to increase the percentage of students choosing their own supervisors*

Where possible, an active effort to encourage and facilitate prospective graduate researchers to choose their own supervisor would be beneficial to overall student satisfaction, retention and completions.

### *Career planning to be incorporated into the PhD*

Building an initial career planning session, as well as annual reviews, with a professional career counsellor who is experienced working with PhD students, into the requirements of candidature would serve to address the gap in students' expectations, improve satisfaction and potentially lead to improved outcomes for research degree graduates.

Please note, career planning sessions may not be relevant to certain candidates e.g. mature-aged students. As such, a self-exclusion or "opt-out" mechanism must be built in to any new systems.

### *Tackle imposter syndrome in graduate research students*

Consider seminars and workshops on imposter syndrome and resilience to raise awareness and provide coping mechanisms.

Encourage and foster peer support opportunities which can be a valuable platform for candidates to share experiences, offer mutual encouragement, and build a sense of community and which can help to alleviate feelings of isolation and imposter syndrome.

### *The MGA to more actively engage with domestic and off-campus students*

Improve outreach with domestic and off-campus students by working with the faculties to interact with traditionally difficult to reach cohorts.

## Appendix 1: Demographics

<b>Academic Unit</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Architecture	3 (21%)
Design	7 (50%)
Fine Art	4 (29%)

<b>Campus</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
I do not regularly attend campus	1 (7%)
Clayton	1 (7%)
Caulfield	10 (71%)
Suzhou	1 (7%)
other	1 (7%)

<b>Domestic/International</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Local student (Australian or New Zealand citizen/permanent resident)	2 (14%)
International student	12 (86%)

<b>Study load</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Full-time	13 (87%)
Part-time	2 (13%)
On leave from study	0 (0%)

<b>Study location</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Entirely on-campus	5 (36%)
Multi-modal	7 (50%)
Entirely off-campus	2 (14%)
Other	0 (0%)

<b>Time since last degree</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Less than 1 year	3 (21%)
1-5 years	8 (57%)
6-10 years	3 (21%)
11+ years	0 (0%)

<b>Course progress</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
First year	5 (36%)
Second year	5 (36%)
Third year and beyond	4 (29%)

<b>Study hours</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Less than 5	1 (7%)
6-10	1 (7%)
11-20	4 (29%)
21-30	3 (21%)
31-40	4 (29%)
Over 40 hours	1 (7%)

<b>English proficiency</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Fluent	7 (50%)
Advanced	4 (29%)
Intermediate	3 (21%)
Elementary	0 (0%)
Beginner	0 (0%)

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Woman	11 (79%)
Man	2 (14%)
Non-binary/gender diverse	0 (0%)
Prefer to self-describe	0 (0%)
Prefer not to say	1 (7%)

<b>LGBTIQA+</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Yes	0 (0%)
No	13 (93%)
Prefer not to disclose	1 (7%)

<b>Indigenous (domestic students only)</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Yes	0 (0%)
No	2 (100%)
Prefer not to disclose	0 (0%)

<b>Disability</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Yes	0 (0%)
No	13 (93%)
Prefer not to disclose	1 (7%)

<b>Age</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
24 or under	2 (14%)
25-29	4 (29%)
30-39	7 (50%)
40 and over	1 (7%)

<b>Employment status</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Full-time	1 (7%)
Part-time	6 (43%)
Casual	3 (21%)
Unemployed and looking for work	4 (29%)
Not employed and not looking for work	0 (0%)

<b>Work hours</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Less than 5	3 (30%)
6-10	2 (20%)
11-20	2 (20%)
21-30	2 (20%)
31-40	0 (0%)
More than 40	0 (0%)