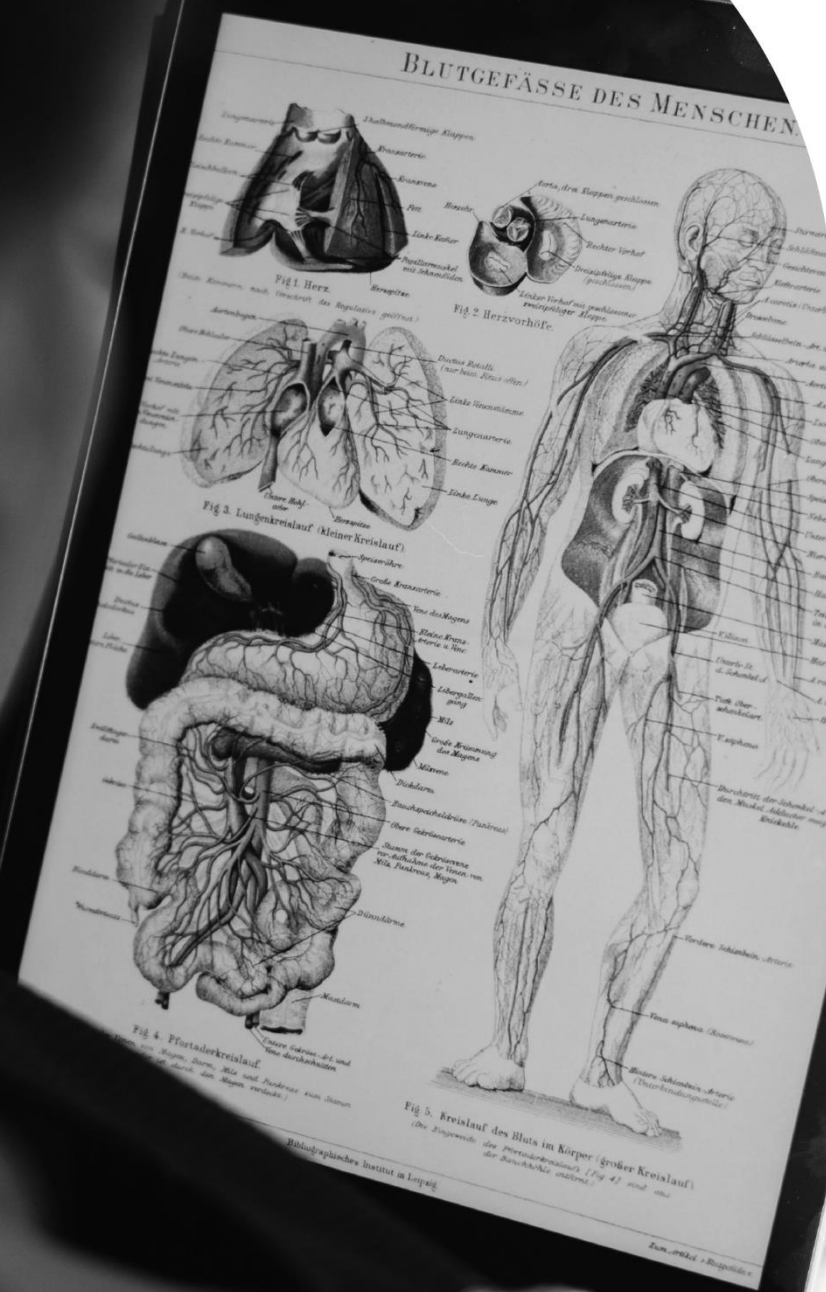


# Identifying Graduate Research Student Satisfaction

Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences  
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.

This report was produced by Dr Ryan Edwards. Should you have any questions in regard to the paper, please contact [Ryan.Edwards@monash.edu](mailto:Ryan.Edwards@monash.edu) for further information.

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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 Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences (MNHS) are summarised below:

### **MNHS graduate researchers are overwhelmingly positive in relation to their supervision experience**

The sentiment of MNHS respondents in relation to supervision was overwhelmingly positive.

The University's recommended meeting frequency was mostly met with 91% of full-time graduate researchers meeting with their supervisor weekly or fortnightly, while 100% of part-time MNHS respondents met once a month or more frequently.

Supervisors were largely meeting the expectations and needs of their students. Having their research supported by skilled supervisors and receiving constructive feedback were the most important aspect of supervision according to MNHS respondents. These were also the two areas (of sixteen) where students were most satisfied.

Career pathway support (-12.90%) was the area where the gap between importance and satisfaction was widest.

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

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

The most common response as to the most satisfying aspect of their academic unit was that they were treated in a respectful manner, while the most common dissatisfying aspects were in relation to being informed of tutorial/sessional work and being provided a student-specific space to use.

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

Respondents were widely satisfied their confirmation experience. In particular, they were satisfied that the behaviour and tone of the panel was professional.

Receiving feedback was both the best aspect and worst aspect of the experience, according to MNHS respondents.

### **Professional Development opportunities**

Having Professional Development (PD) opportunities that focus on data analysis techniques and presentation skills was of the utmost importance to MNHS 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 entrepreneurial skills and industry exposure. The widest gaps between importance and satisfaction were in recorded for data analysis techniques and industry exposure.

In terms of additions to existing PD, opportunities to improve their research skills was the clear stand out.

### **Increase in number of graduate researchers working for the University with respondents largely satisfied they are paid appropriately**

The likelihood of an MNHS graduate researcher at Monash being given an opportunity to conduct paid work for the faculty or university increased over the past three years; however, it remained below levels recorded across STEM at Monash and at other universities (in the field of medicine).

The majority of MNHS respondents believed that they were paid appropriately for the work they did for the University.

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

The majority of MNHS graduate researchers have, at some point, experienced imposter syndrome with 12% indicating that they experienced this feeling “often.”

Just under one-quarter of MNHS graduate researchers (23%) had never experienced a delay in their research, while 14% indicated that they often experienced delays.

Cost of living and/or financial concerns was the most common response for a delay in research among MNHS graduate research students – more than doubling since 2021 levels.

MNHS graduate researchers were less likely than those doing degrees in the field of medicine at other universities to have considered leaving their degree.

The most common reasons for considering leaving were a lack of motivation and mental health.

The most common responses for continuing with their degree was time already invested.

### **MGA engagement and satisfaction better among younger students**

Younger graduate researchers were more likely to have engaged with the MGA; however, satisfaction with the Association was relatively consistent across the demographic groups.

## 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 MNHS at Monash University. In MNHS, a total of 186 graduate research students participated in the survey (see *Appendix 1: Demographics*), which we estimate to be approximately 12% 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 65 graduate research students in the fields of medicine, nursing, dentistry, psychology, physiotherapy, social work and health sciences 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 30% of total graduate research enrolments at the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences in 2024. In this survey, international students accounted for 44% of total responses in the Faculty. As a result, international students are over-represented and domestic students are 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?	MNHS 2021	MNHS 2024	Monash STEM 2024	Other Med 2024
Yes	89%	90%	89%	88%
No	11%	10%	11%	12%

The proportion of MNHS PhD candidates choosing their own supervisors has remained consistent over the past 3 years.

The result in MNHS was on par with STEM at Monash and graduate research students studying in the broad field of medicine across 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?	MNHS 2021	MNHS 2024	Monash STEM 2024	Other Med 2024
Yes	63%	73%	72%	77%
No	37%	27%	28%	23%

Between 2021 and 2024, there was a sizeable increase in the proportion of MNHS respondents choosing their own research topic.

However, students choosing their own topic was less likely in MNHS than it was in the field of medicine 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?	MNHS 2024	Monash STEM 2024	Other Med 2024
Weekly	44%	57%	35%
Fortnightly	45%	35%	48%
Once every 3 weeks	8%	4%	8%
Once a month	4%	3%	5%
Less than once a month	1%	2%	3%

The majority of MNHS 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 MNHS respondents, 91% met with their supervisor weekly or fortnightly, while 100% of part-time MNHS respondents met once a month or more frequently.

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:

*"No impactful progress to report, if we frequently meet."*

*"There is no need."*

*"Can do if needed; informal supervision received via email as needed."*

*"They are busy and I work fairly independently."*

## 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	6.68	6.32	-5.39%
Constructive feedback	6.63	6.29	-5.13%
I am heard	6.56	5.99	-8.69%
Timely feedback	6.48	6.05	-6.64%
Support for work/life balance	6.48	5.95	-8.18%
Access to supervisors	6.47	5.99	-7.42%
Mentor me	6.29	5.84	-7.15%
Act professionally	6.28	6.26	-0.32%
Help me belong academically	6.27	5.73	-8.61%
Career pathway	6.20	5.40	-12.90%
Guide me through the degree	6.19	5.81	-6.14%
Encourage ownership	6.12	6.05	-1.14%
Help me network	6.12	5.51	-9.97%
I am a priority	6.07	5.87	-3.29%
Clear role delegation	6.02	5.63	-6.48%
Inform me of support services	5.59	5.44	-2.68%
	6.28	5.88	-6.26%

Having their research supported by skilled supervisors and receiving constructive feedback were the most important aspect of supervision according to MNHS respondents. These were also the two areas where students were most satisfied.

The widest gap between importance and satisfaction was recorded in relation to career pathway support.

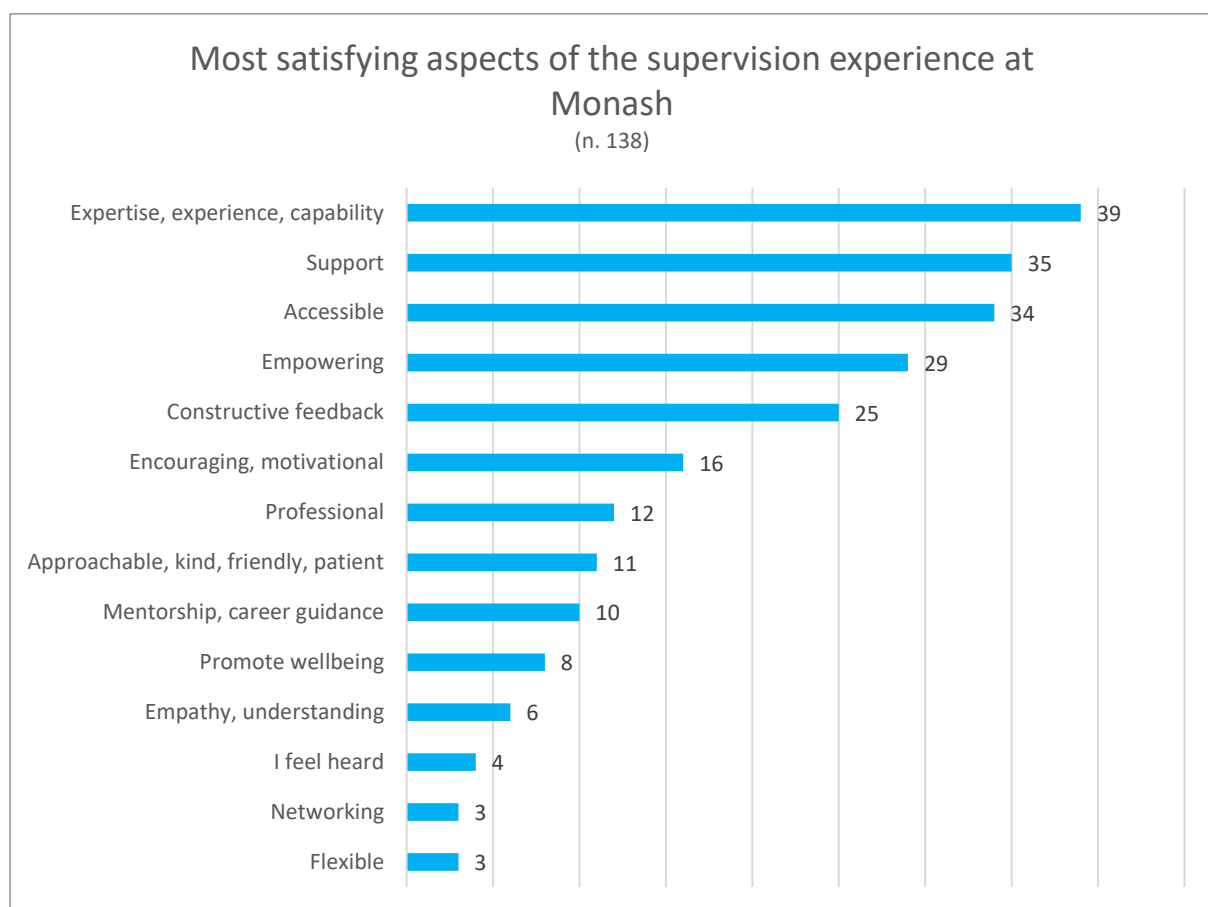
## The supervision experience

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 MNHS:



The primary theme to emerge from the responses related to the **expertise, experience and capability** of supervisors. Comments included:

*“I have a very supportive supervisor that always backs me and supports my decisions. My supervisors are very knowledgeable and help out when I need it the most. They do a lot for me when it comes to edits and feedback towards manuscripts. My supervisor even came overseas to see me on how I was going when I was collecting data in the UK at King’s College London and met my host supervisor.”*

*"I think my supervisor is very skilled in the field that my research is on, so he is able to guide me well. His timely feedback on my manuscripts is well appreciated."*

*"I am most satisfied by the training methods used by my supervisor, he is able to help me understand the content in a very kind way and I feel extra capable due to his support."*

*"I have one main supervisor and two associate supervisors. I am grateful that I have them in my supervision team as they complement each other with their own expertise. Everyone always come into the meeting and open to each other. Nothing to hide, nothing to talk behind."*

Other interesting comments included:

*"A good mix of supporting, guiding and humour in the supervising role. Supervisors are approachable, flexible and easy to get along with."*

*"The friendliness of my supervisors in establishing a strong relationship of support. The encouragement that is given and opportunities identified."*

*"My supervisor is providing regular check-ins and always makes time when I need extra supervision/meetings. When they're away, they always organise everything in advance (e.g. alternative supervisors) and still checks in periodically over slack."*

*"My supervisors are engaging and respect me and have high expectations of me. They believe I am capable. They are fairly good at staying in touch and communicating with me."*

*"My supervisors have expressed their expectations of me clearly. Words of encouragement when I send them a draft and encouragement to keep asking questions and learn. This made me feel more comfortable coming into a new field of research."*

*"My supervisors provide me timely and constructive feedback and they prioritise my learning. I am fortunate to have concerned, motivated and dedicated supervisors."*

*"My primary supervisor provides significant guidance, while encouraging my independence. They also advocate for a good work/life balance."*

*"They have cared about me as a person. This is a long journey and life can be tough."*

*"I'm always heard and listened which is really good. The discussions also helped with improving my critical thinking skills."*

*"Given freedom to control the direction of the research, having some help with problem solving and being encouraged and supported to connect with other researchers."*

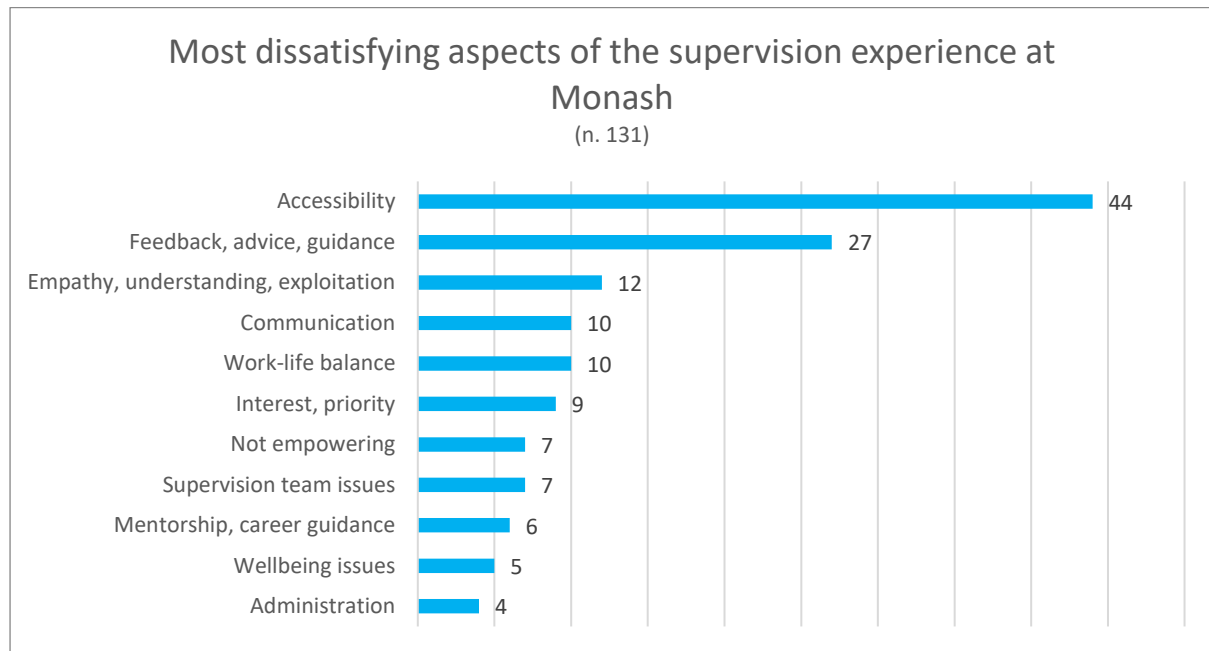
*"We interact professionally and they do not micro-manage student. Most of the time our decision and opinion are respected and listened."*

*"Supportive and engaged team, encouraging of my research journey."*

## 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 MNHS:



The most common frustration with supervisors related to **accessibility issues**. These included:

*“They are very busy people and hard to reach at times. Emails go unanswered most of the time and I have to wait till our next supervision meeting to discuss often urgent matters.”*

*“Since I am working for a company that is affiliated with Monash sometimes I do feel like I/my PhD project isn’t the priority of my supervisors and sometimes I do feel left out.”*

*“Supervisors are often forced to juggle far too many things and therefore spread themselves thin. This then makes it hard to organise times to catch up.”*

*“Professors are quite busy and difficult to obtain their time to help review work.”*

Another common theme to emerge related to issues with **feedback, advice and guidance**.

Comments included:

*“The disconnect between the advice I am given and accountability for the direction of the research. Importance on positive results is present but no recognition for the amount of work being put in to the project.”*

*“A little more guidance sometimes would be good. But I think a lot of this work is figuring things out for yourself so it is a fine balance.”*

*“There is a big gap between what I understand I am meant to do and what I should be doing and they do not always bridge that gap. They have a huge amount of demand on their time and capacity and although they are great supervisors, providing feedback to me is a long way down the priority list, so it does not always happen.”*

Other interesting comments included:

*“I don't feel like I receive adequate scientific training from my supervisors, as they are mostly not interested in my project and all meetings are via zoom, which I find is not a medium that encourages robust scientific discussion.”*

*“With a diverse supervisor panel comes a plethora of knowledge, but also disagreements and differences of priority. This is very hard to navigate and also not knowing which supervisor to trust/required to follow.”*

*“Unable to understand the parameters of my disability and inflexible to my needs.”*

*“Because my supervisors are skilled and competent, they are very busy, meaning feedback, when it occurs, is not timely.”*

*“I sometimes find it difficult to raise my ideas and push back against my primary supervisor. She is very experienced and often has good advice, but sometimes feel that our goals for my PhD are not aligned.”*

*“My supervisor doesn't like the idea of working because it affects my focus on my PhD, however, I need to work to support myself.”*

*“The lack of understanding of other priorities in life to establish a work-life balance. Often piling on tasks that is beyond the hours expected for the work week.”*

*“I mostly hate supervision unless there is something tangible and practical to discuss. Unclear expectations, passive feedback, using comparison to other students which is demotivating and often times providing inaccurate advice.”*

*“They do not work together as a team, and do not communicate to one another, I do not know which roles they share among them, they do not use labarchive, they do not provide feedback on my writing.”*

*“I get very little active supervisor or help from my supervisors. They have clearly lost interest in my PhD project and I feel as though they are no longer providing adequate support.”*

*“Supervisors are too diluted with many responsibilities and sometimes, my research gets low priority.”*

*“I am dissatisfied with his understanding of the milestones and how much he knows about the PhD process at Monash. It is not a part of his training to know this.”*

*“I needed more career guidance. Not enough networking opportunities in general. Sometimes feedback and communication would take a long time as well.”*

## Conflict with supervisor

Have you ever had a disagreement with a supervisor that was challenging to overcome?	MNHS 2017*	MNHS 2021*	MNHS 2024	Monash STEM 2024	Other Med 2024
No, I've never had a serious disagreement with a supervisor	(no) 20%	(no) 20%	69%	70%	75%
Yes, but it was only minor	(yes) 80%	(yes) 80%	23%	23%	19%
Yes, I have had a serious disagreement			8%	7%	5%

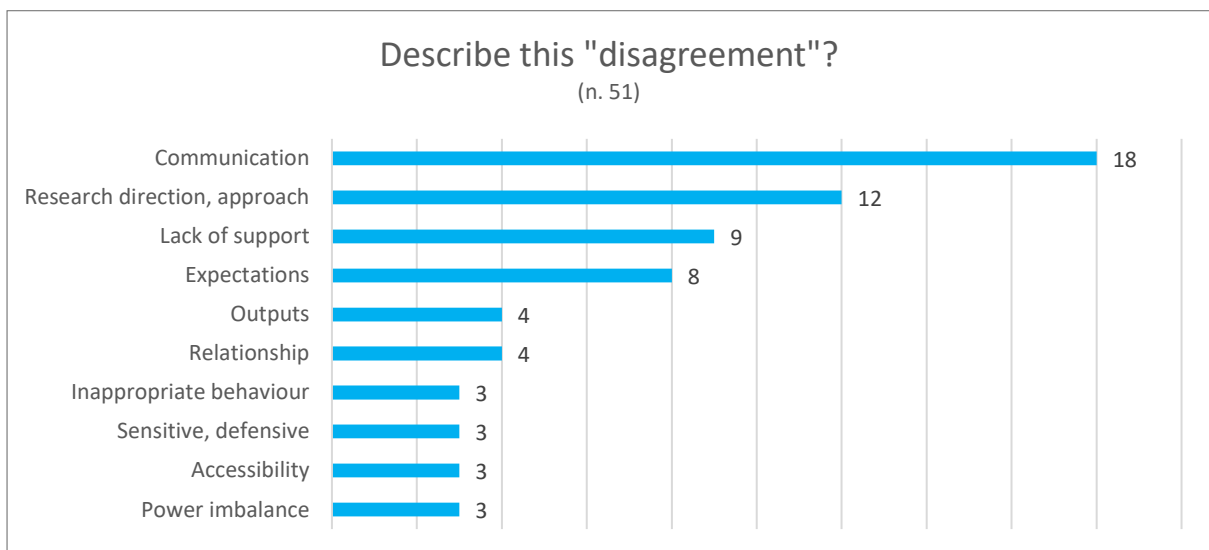
\*Please note that in 2017 and 2021 this was a “yes” or “no” question and “conflict or misunderstanding” was used in place of “disagreement.”

Respondents from MNHS were slightly more likely to have had a serious disagreement with a supervisor than medical respondents from other universities.

## Type of conflict

Respondents who had experienced a disagreement with a supervisor (“minor” or “serious”) were asked to describe this disagreement.

Below is a summary of the responses of MNHS respondents:



The most common form of conflict related to **communication** issues. Comments included:

*“I often have disagreements with my supervisor, but I try to remain quite about it as being an international student I have many things at stake and my supervisor is my primary source of recommendation everywhere. Throughout my PhD journey, I have realised that my*



*supervisor cannot take criticism or any kind of disagreement. He always expects things his way without understanding the challenges we may face as students.”*

*“I approached my supervisor to tell them I didn't appreciate the manner in which I received feedback (not constructive and often aggressive) and I was met with a similar response (not constructive and aggressive). The other supervisors in the room had said I approached the situation politically correct and in the right manner, but it was still not responded with any professionalism.”*

*“Unclear expectations around communication and attendance requirements, given flexibility but discouraged from taking time off when unwell or required. Now 'over-communicate' to compensate.”*

Other interesting comments included:

*“I often have disagreements with my supervisor, but I try to remain quite about it as being an international student I have many things at stake and my supervisor is my primary source of recommendation everywhere. Throughout my PhD journey, I have realised that my supervisor cannot take criticism or any kind of disagreement. He always expects things his way without understanding the challenges we may face as students.”*

*“Supervisor interpreted mid candidature milestone feedback as "your student is lazy/ not trying hard enough" despite persisting with a challenging project during COVID-19. Led to months of disagreements, and culminated ... [in him berating] me via Zoom for 30+ minutes leading to significant emotional distress. Lab head called after the fact and made light of the situation, stating "it was needed to let them get it out of there system", and implied it was not an accurate depiction of my skills or ability as a student (i.e., allowed it to happen to make the supervisor feel better).”*

*“I felt unsupported in the resources that were available to me in order to complete a research task that was allocated to me, and as a result was falling behind on the expected schedule. I had then felt like there was a lack of communication and support regarding the expectations placed on me.”*

*“Serious life circumstances getting in the way of being able to properly prioritise my PhD. Although he was understanding, there was still some underlying tension about projects falling behind etc.”*

*“It looks like it is irrational to disagree with my supervisor, especially since I only have 30 minutes biweekly. For busy supervisors, I always agree with this because I do not want to waste 30 minutes on a disagreement, in which you are not confident in proving you're correct as a novice in this field.”*

*“My supervisor is very busy and sometimes forgets she said something to me and when I raise it, she makes it sound like I misunderstood. I have disagreed with her many times on things but basically my opinion does not matter and she treats me as though I am a problem rather than valuing my perspective.”*

*“A co-supervisor wanted to include some outcomes in our study which would double the study collection time and not relevant to my PhD. I felt uncomfortable employing the methods.”*

## 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"?	MNHS 2017*	MNHS 2021*	MNHS 2024	Monash STEM 2024	Other Med 2024
Decided to do nothing	37%	45%	24%	7%	19%
Sorted it out directly with supervisor(s)	43%	21%	57%	72%	59%
Sought assistance from a friend/colleague	29%	7%	33%	43%	30%
Sought assistance from student association	34%	3%	6%	7%	3%
Sought assistance from my chair	NA	NA	14%	0%	9%
Sought assistance from grad. coordinator or head of school	29%	17%	18%	14%	14%
Other	NA	7%	22%	14%	18%

\* 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?*

The proportion of respondents at MNHS who directly respond to conflict by speaking with their supervisor increased substantially.

Similarly, the proportion of respondents who decided to do nothing decreased substantially in 2024.

## Changing supervisors

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

### Considered changing supervisors

Have you thought about changing supervisors?	MNHS 2024	Monash STEM 2024	Other Med 2024
Never	71%	75%	77%
Rarely	18%	17%	19%
Often	7%	6%	0%
All the time	4%	2%	4%

MNHS respondents were slightly more likely than those from other universities and the STEM faculties at Monash to have considered changing their supervisors.

### Supervisor changes

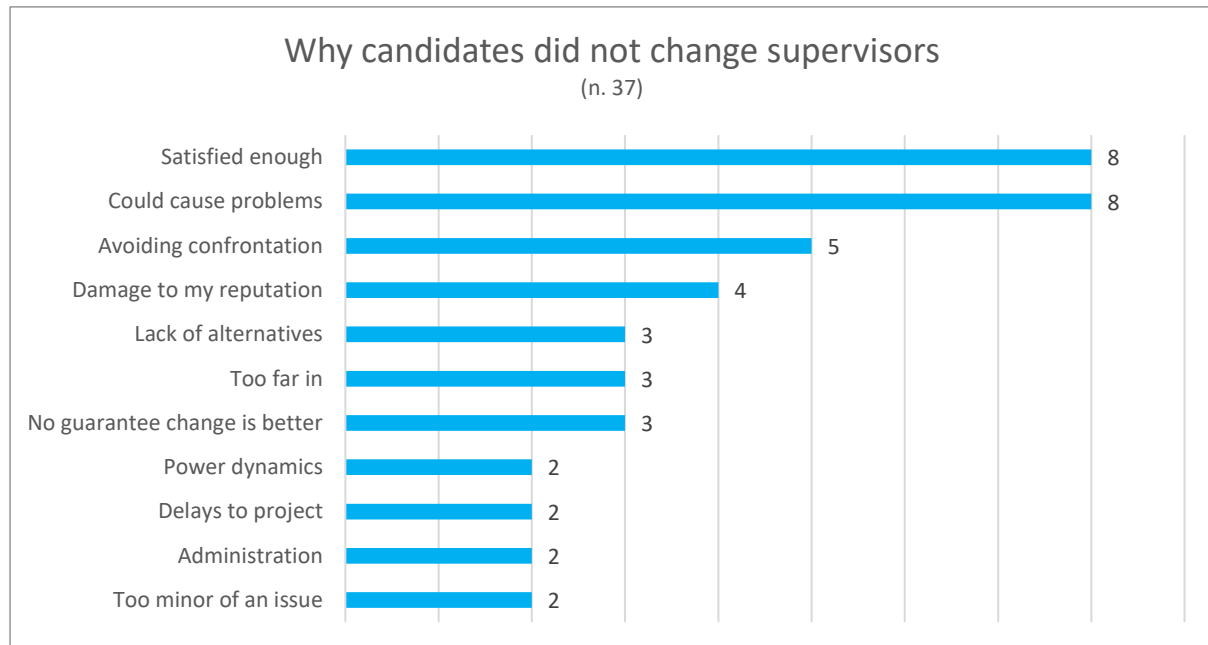
Have you ever changed supervisors?	MNHS 2024	Monash STEM 2024	Other Med 2024
No	83%	86%	84%
Yes, but it wasn't my choice	7%	7%	5%
Yes, my supervisor and I agreed to make a change	6%	5%	7%
Yes, I decided to change a supervisor(s) even though they did not want to be replaced	2%	1%	2%
Other	5%	4%	4%

MNHS respondents were marginally more likely than those across STEM at Monash to have changed supervisors.

## Why students did not change supervisors

Respondents who had not changed supervisors, but who had considered it, were asked what stopped them from changing supervisors.

Below is a summary of the responses of MNHS respondents:



Interesting comments included:

*“Red tape surrounding the process and deciding that I could manage my circumstances regardless of difficulties with supervisor.”*

*“Despite some limitations, like occasional busy schedules and lack of access to all resources, I haven't changed supervisors because of the value I get from the existing relationship. It can be challenging to find a good fit, and I appreciate the mentorship I'm already receiving.”*

*“Sour the relationship is the biggest fear. I also do not want to be seen as an unfriendly, unruly student by other people in the department. It is difficult to find alternative supervisors whose expertise align with your PhD projects.”*

*“I am worried that if I tried to change primary supervisor, it is going to have negative repercussions on my career and reputation.”*

*“I would've had to change my topic and I didn't want to burn bridges with someone who has a lot of authority in our research area.”*

*“Sunk cost fallacy, fear of repercussion.”*

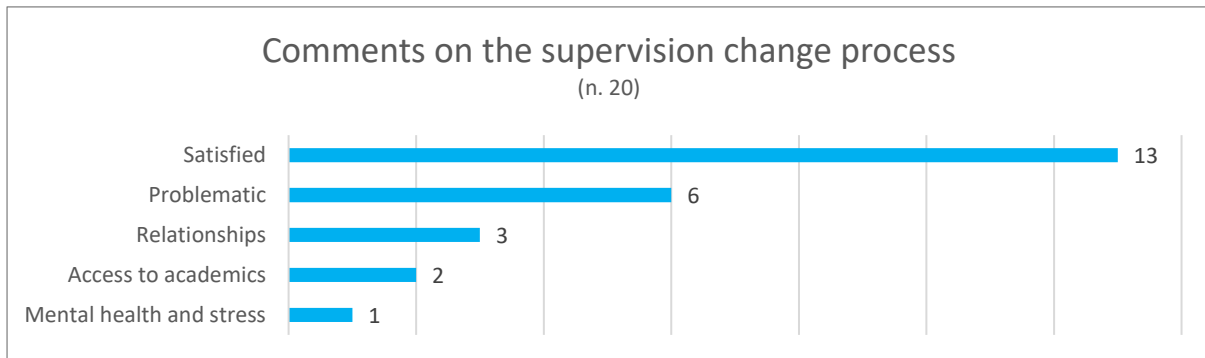
*“Better the devil you know.”*

*“Office politics. My supervisors are good friends and tied financially through funding, so dropping one of them wouldn't have been well received.”*

## Comments on the process of changing supervisors

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

The responses from MNHS are summarised below:



Interesting comments included:

*“The process is troublesome and has a huge negative impact on students as it can reduce accessibility to the supervisor and the academic system at Monash does not have support for supervision changes in terms of mental health check-ins.”*

*“I think it has been quite easy to make changes to supervision (outside of main supervisor). I have to say however that my project was changed after a year working in it. It was due to circumstances outside of my control (office politics). My main supervisor has been very supportive though and helped me get back on track with my new project.”*

*“I really appreciated that all the supervisory changes had been organised before my supervisor announced their maternity leave. It took a lot of stress from the absence away.”*

*“I had no idea I could even go to my chair to voice concerns. But now that I know that, I still think that I would be hesitant due to the possible fallout. The process of changing supervisors was relatively simple but my primary supervisor basically made all the decisions about that and just told me what to write in the form.”*

*“A lot of information was required to add a new supervisor to my team, seemed a bit excessive.”*

*“It was smooth on the administrative side. The supervisor had a choice of harsh words to say to me when informed of my decision.”*

*“My other co-supervisors and department were all very helpful and supportive of navigating this change.”*

## 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 MNHS 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	4%	4%	4%	8%	14%	35%	30%
I am treated in a respectful manner	3%	2%	3%	4%	8%	30%	51%
I am encouraged by staff to socialise with other research students in my area	3%	4%	4%	8%	16%	31%	35%
I am informed about opportunities for tutoring/sessional work	9%	5%	6%	16%	14%	26%	25%
My academic unit provides appropriate facilities for my field of research	1%	4%	5%	10%	12%	37%	31%
My academic unit provides a student-specific social area for me to use	9%	6%	5%	16%	15%	26%	23%
My academic unit organises regular seminars and guest speakers for research ...	3%	2%	1%	8%	12%	31%	43%
Other research students in my academic unit are supportive	1%	2%	3%	7%	14%	33%	40%
I feel the policies, rules and regulations around doing research are there to sup...	3%	3%	4%	11%	13%	36%	30%
Provides an academically stimulating environment	2%	2%	5%	8%	19%	32%	32%
I can see myself having a career in a place like this	4%	8%	4%	12%	14%	27%	30%

Across the board, MNHS 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 (89%), while dissatisfaction was highest in relation to respondents being informed about tutorial/sessional work (20%) and being provided a student-specific social area to use (20%).

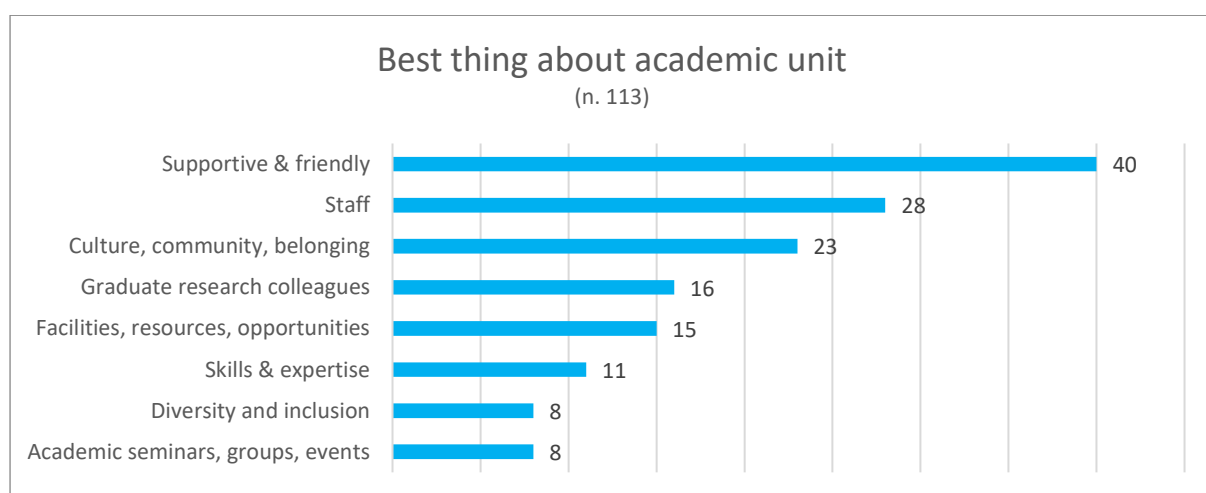
## Academic unit comments

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 MNHS graduate researchers are summarised below:



The most common response related to the **supportive and friendly** environment. These included:

*"We are a very supportive department and have academic seminars each week as well as a graduate research group every fortnight for all our students within the department."*

*"Fellows are supportive and friendly. Everyone in my project works together as a team."*

*"The warmth and kindness. Many opportunities to do RA work."*

*"The vibrant and supportive community, where students and faculty alike are encouraged to collaborate, innovate."*

Other interesting comments included:

*"They send information to PhD students about grant, scholarship, academic sessions etc."*

*"The community and encouragement. We are all treated like equals and everyone is very kind, supportive and cordial."*

*"There is a broad range of topics and specialties so I can learn about more than just my project. There is also opportunity to connect and collaborate with others."*

*“Regular wellbeing sessions and communications via e-mail.”*

*“Lab members are very nice and help me a lot at the beginning of my PhD study when my English was not well.”*

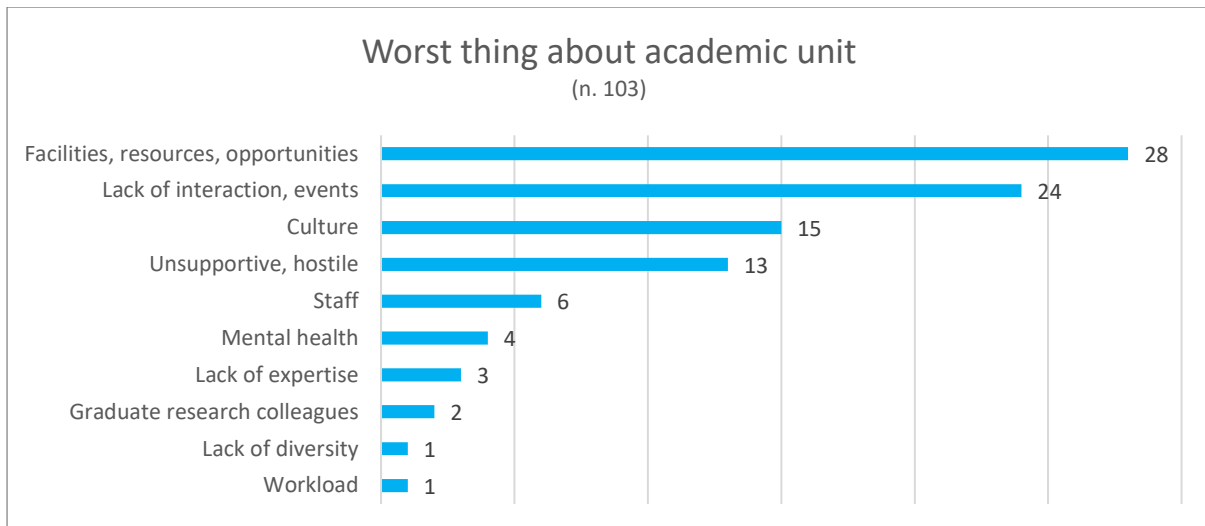
*“The flexibility in work set-up.”*

*“Fellow PhD students are supportive and great, love the flexibility to work from home.”*

## Worst aspects of academic unit

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

The responses of MNHS graduate researchers are summarised below:



Interesting comments included:

*“The lack of funding to support conference travel.”*

*“There is no feeling of inclusivity between the HDRs and the academic staff in my department. There is lack of communication, research and teaching opportunities.”*

*“The men. The lack of females in positions of leadership and the lack of voice women have.”*

*“Few other PhD parents, most are undergrad and do not understand time constraints.”*

*“Being a research institute, it can be quite different to a university environment, particularly in giving students a space (physically and metaphorically) to feel they have to themselves. We are integrated into staff meetings and spaces which is great for learning, but sometimes uncomfortable with the power imbalance to speak up or feel entirely comfortable.”*

*“Rooms for PhD students are not that convenient as it is located in the middle of the building and have no direct views/windows to outside. I feel like being trapped and isolated when stay in the rooms. As the rooms are shared among other PhD students, we need to find*



*another private room if we have an on-line meeting with supervisors. Unfortunately, the private room is not available in the building. We had one in the past, but now it is gone because the school allocate the room for their new academic staffs."*

*"Placement (work desk) in the same big office somehow make me confuse who are my surroundings. Better to put student into one complex."*

*"My department is very isolated from the rest of Monash and most students are within my lab group. Additionally, being on a smaller campus means there it's harder to interact with other students."*

*"There is limited opportunity to interact with other research students in informal settings, as there is no communal area."*

*"Cliques or groups branch off and do individual social events."*

*"Sometimes hard to know who to talk to about issues. Feel a bit isolated in such a large unit."*

*"Departmental cohesivity is severely lacking. My old university was so much better for departmental seminars, journal clubs, and data meetings where students and ECRs regularly presented. Now I have barely any idea what anyone else in my department works on."*

*"Poor social culture. People (especially higher up academics) can be very abrupt or rude, often refusing to simply even acknowledge students."*

*"The learning efficiency of students needs to be improved."*

*"My school doesn't encompass everything about my project, so my panel members are not able to give any advice/suggestions. They don't seem to acknowledge students who are based off-campus at affiliated research institutions, and everyone seems to assume all students have the same conditions."*

*"They don't understand my field of work. There is also not a lot of accommodation for part time students or mature aged students who work as many events are not at a time I can attend."*

## 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	4 (2%)
No, I'm not at this stage yet	55 (33%)
No, I presented my research, but I need to make amendments	1 (1%)
Yes, I passed first time	103 (62%)
Yes, I passed, but after I needed to make amendments	3 (2%)

### 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 (38% extremely satisfied, 39% moderately satisfied, 15% slightly satisfied), while a small proportion indicated that they were dissatisfied (1% extremely dissatisfied, 0% moderately dissatisfied, 3% slightly dissatisfied).

Participants were then asked a series of questions about their satisfaction with certain aspects of the confirmation milestone.

The responses of MNHS graduate researchers are summarised below:

	Extremely Dissatisfied	Moderately Dissatisfied	Slightly Dissatisfied	Neutral	Slightly Satisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied
The expectations for my confirmation were clear		1%	3%	4%	10%	34%	48%
My supervisor(s) guided me through the confirmation process	1%		5%	12%	13%	22%	47%
The preparation required was a good use of my time	1%	8%	3%	6%	17%	22%	44%
I felt comfortable speaking openly with the panel	2%	2%	4%	9%	12%	24%	48%
The behaviour and tone of the panel was professional	1%			5%	5%	19%	70%
The panel provided useful feedback			4%	4%	10%	29%	53%

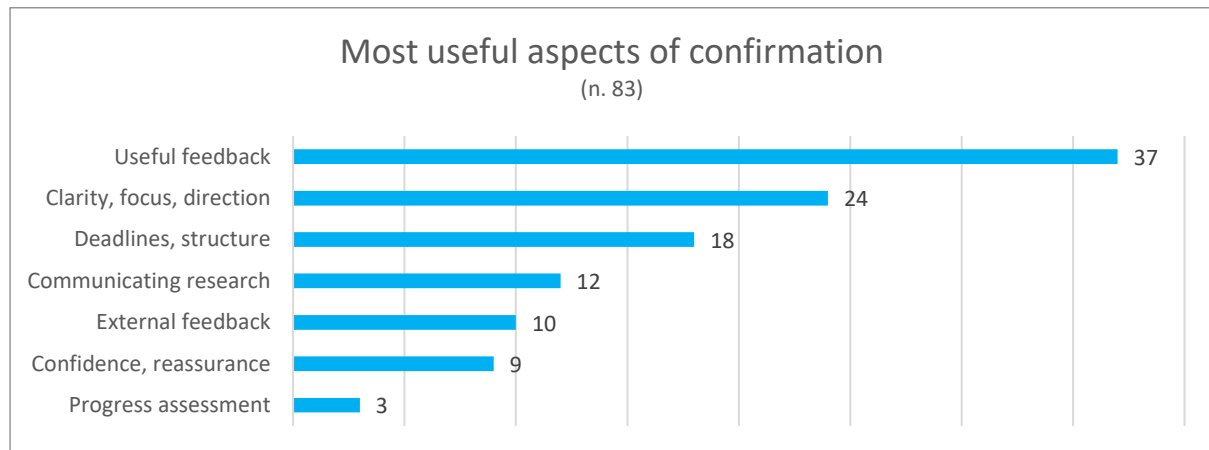
Respondents were overwhelmingly satisfied with confirmation. In particular, MNHS graduate researchers were satisfied with the behaviour and tone of the panel.

The highest level of overall dissatisfaction (12%) was in relation to the preparation required being a good use of my time.

## Most useful aspects of confirmation

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

Below is a summary of their responses:



The most common response from Monash graduate researchers related to how **helpful or useful the feedback** they received was. Comments included:

*"Panel members were providing me with useful feedbacks. It was also helpful to speak publicly to present my work."*

*"The opportunity for feedback was great. The process helps you work out a plan for the future of the thesis. It was a good opportunity to practice public speaking."*

*"Having feedback from panel members. I think they are more realistic and have a lower expectation about student's research than the supervisors."*

*"The feedback provided was useful in helping to structure the project long term."*

Other interesting comments included:

*"It is an opportunity to get external feedback on your research topic, but also on you as a developing academic. It also introduces you to communicating with other academics, which is obviously a valuable skill."*

*"Reassurance outside of my supervisory team that my progress is satisfactory and I'm not going too slow despite being told I was in comparison to other students. I appreciated the validation of the complexity of completing a systematic review independently and it was okay to not have published within the year. It was also useful to consolidate my findings and plan."*

*"It is a good opportunity to clarify the plans for your project and receive feedback from individuals outside of your main supervisor team."*

*"It was a great way to reflect, take stock and think about the next steps of my PhD in a holistic way."*

*“Understanding expectations for my PhD - how much I'm expected to achieve, how I'm currently tracking etc.”*

*“Opportunity to stop, think and reflect on my project to date and the direction of my research.”*

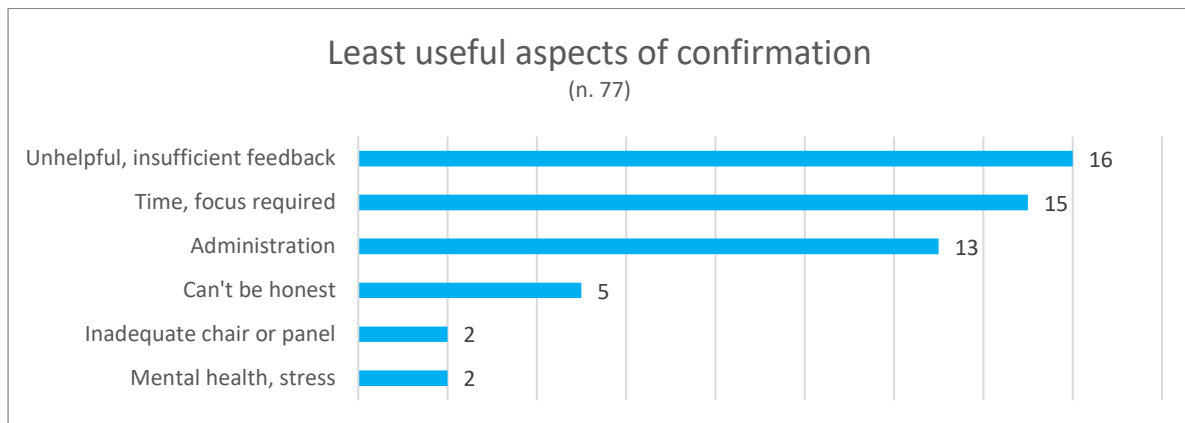
*“Knowing that the panel is there to help me and my project and not to examine or criticise me.”*

*“I like the fact that the confirmation takes place to see whether or not the student is on track and is able to complete their PhD in a timely manner.”*

## Least useful aspects of confirmation

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

Below is a summary of their responses:



Interesting comments included:

*“The time taken to prepare that could have been doing towards things that will be more useful for my PhD overall.”*

*“The presentation component saps more time than its usefulness in my opinion. Just presenting to the panel would have the same effect in my progress.”*

*“Panel members did not understand certain aspects of the project and kept asking irrelevant questions as a result. Unnecessary emphasis was placed upon extremely minor errors that had to be amended afterwards.”*

*“The amount of paperwork required took a significant amount of time to prepare. Since my confirmation, I have already modified my project direction which makes some of my preparation for confirmation redundant now.”*

*“Milestones are extremely stressful and lot needs to be completed before starting your project.”*

*“Throughout the milestone process it has been evident that the panel members are involved in a lot of student panels. This can give the impression that they are ticking a box, not reading your report or not providing strong advice about your project.”*

*“It was humiliating to fail my milestone and be required to retake it.”*

*“The time required for preparing the report is quite tricky, especially with the amount of uncompleted works in the lab. But I do realise that it is an important phase to get used to work and write balance.”*

*“Only seeing the panel once a year means that you don't build up much rapport. Would be good to get to know them better early on.”*

*“The report...only me and my main supervisor read it.”*

## 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?	MNHS 2024	Monash STEM 2024	Other Med 2024
No	20%	16%	28%
Yes, but it was optional	25%	21%	53%
Yes, it is mandatory	54%	63%	19%

Professional Development was mandatory for the majority of MNHS respondents. It was mandatory for 63% of respondents from STEM at Monash, but only 19% of those studying in the field of medicine at other universities.

## 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 (1-7)	Satisfaction (1-7)	Gap (%)
<i>Data analysis techniques</i>	6.41	5.15	-19.66%
<i>Presenting findings e.g. conferences, meetings, seminars</i>	6.35	5.29	-16.69%
<i>Publishing skills and knowledge</i>	6.27	5.19	-17.22%
<i>Research methodologies</i>	6.25	5.32	-14.88%
<i>Project/research management</i>	6.15	5.36	-12.85%
<i>Grant writing</i>	6.07	4.95	-18.45%
<i>Career planning</i>	5.98	4.93	-17.56%
<i>Networking skills</i>	5.94	5.15	-13.30%
<i>Professional ethics</i>	5.90	5.39	-8.64%
<i>Mental health and wellbeing</i>	5.83	5.30	-9.09%
<i>Industry exposure</i>	5.70	4.64	-18.60%
<i>Coursework relevant to my research</i>	5.60	4.83	-13.75%
<i>Entrepreneurial skills</i>	5.27	4.62	-12.33%
<i>PD with students from other fields</i>	5.03	4.93	-1.99%
	5.91	5.08	-13.93%

Having Professional Development opportunities that focus on data analysis techniques and presentation skills was of the utmost importance to MNHS graduate researchers, while experiencing PD with students from other fields was the least important of the themes.

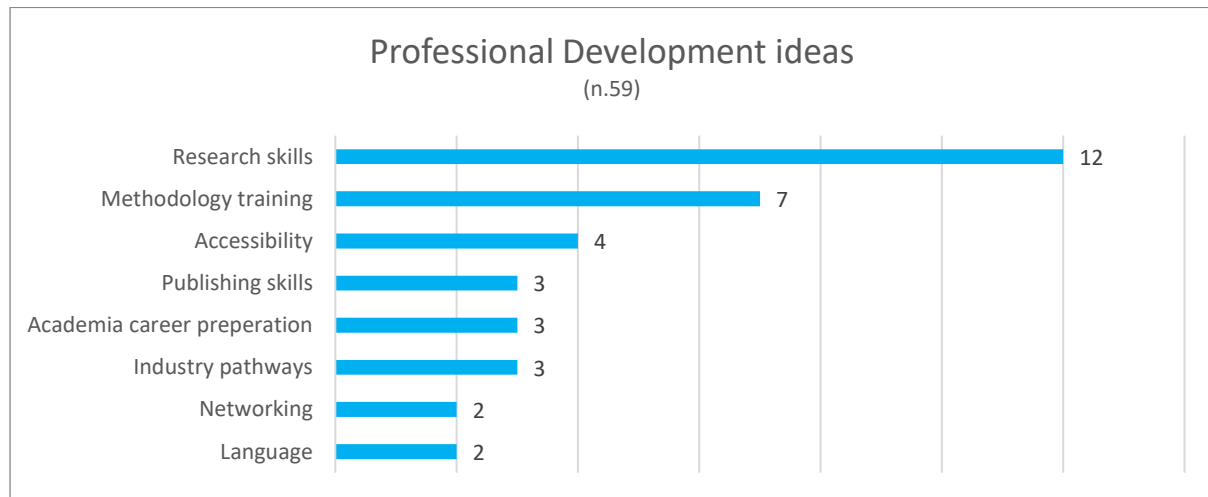
Respondents were most satisfied with PD on professional ethics and least satisfied with entrepreneurial skills and industry exposure.

The widest gap between importance and satisfaction was in relation to data analysis techniques and industry exposure.

## 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 MNHS graduate researchers.



The stand out area in which Monash graduate researchers wanted more PD opportunities related to **research skills**. Comments included:

*"A wider variety of research skills training relevant to different areas of research."*

*"I would like to see more PDs assisting with analysis of large biological datasets- e.g. RNA sequencing, proteomics."*

*"More data analysis techniques for beginners. I feel like I missed a foundational understanding and need to teach myself with every new project. Would be good to have a structured foundation program at the start of the PhD."*

*"I think all PhD students in health programs (medicine and health science faculty) need both basic and advanced research methodology courses (Quan, Qual, Mixed) in the first year. It is essential and I could not find any similar course in PD."*

*"The ability to take courses relevant to my research (e.g. advanced statistical analysis) without enrolling or doing the assessments, i.e. auditing a course."*

Other interesting comments included:

*"Allowing TA teaching hours to be included. I learnt more about communicating, content etc. from teaching than I did in any of the online modules which are a waste of time."*

*"Actual qualifications with a certificate."*

*"More offered to rural health students, more in person. More data analysis."*



*“Courses offered on-site at Monash Medical (rather than at the Alfred which is really far from Clayton).”*

*“The professional development course should be structured in the real-life settings, for example PD focussed internships.”*

*“Definitely more skills that are applicable to life after study - grant writing, fellowship applications, manuscript writing and publishing strategies.”*

*“Academic culture support for international students.”*

*“Networking with industry.”*

*“English study for international students whose mother language is not English.”*

*“Make the coursework directly related with the current PhD project.”*

## 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?	MNHS 2021	MNHS 2024	Monash STEM 2024	Other Med 2024
Yes	35%	45%	57%	53%
No	65%	55%	43%	47%

\*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 an MNHS graduate researcher at Monash being given an opportunity to conduct paid work for the faculty or university increased over the past three years; however, a graduate researcher studying in STEM across Monash and those studying in the field of medicine at another university were more likely to have had the opportunity to conduct paid work at 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?	MNHS 2024	Monash STEM 2024
Fixed-term (one of the 450 fixed-term roles offered at Monash)	14%	13%
Casual	78%	82%
Other	8%	5%

The overwhelming majority of MNHS graduate researchers employed by the University were on (or had been on) casual contracts.

## 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?	MNHS 2021	MNHS 2024	Monash STEM 2024	Other Med 2024
Definitely not	<i>(no)</i>	11%	10%	19%
Probably not	29%	14%	15%	15%
Probably yes	<i>(yes)</i>	46%	50%	41%
Definitely yes	71%	29%	24%	26%

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

The majority of MNHS respondents believed that they were probably paid (46%) or definitely paid (29%) appropriately for the work they did for the University. This was in line with how students felt across STEM at Monash and at the other universities.

## 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...?	MNHS 2024	Monash STEM 2024	Other Med 2024
Never	30%	33%	31%
Rarely	22%	24%	18%
Sometimes	36%	31%	45%
Often	12%	11%	6%

The majority of MNHS graduate researchers have, at some point, experienced imposter syndrome with 12% indicating that they experienced this feeling "often."

Imposter syndrome levels in MNHS were largely on par with those experienced across STEM at Monash and at other universities; however, those experiencing it often was elevated in MNHS compared to across the other universities.

### 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?	MNHS 2017*	MNHS 2021*	MNHS 2024	Monash STEM 2024	Other Med 2024
Never	(no) 56%	(no) 55%	23%	24%	20%
Rarely	(yes) 44%	(yes) 45%	20%	23%	18%
Sometimes			43%	39%	47%
Often			14%	14%	16%

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

Approximately one-quarter of MNHS graduate researchers (23%) had never experienced a delay in their research, while 14% 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	MNHS 2021	MNHS 2024	Monash STEM 2024	Other Med 2024
Change of research project direction	28%	29%	30%	34%
Poor supervision	22%	16%	15%	15%
Lack of resources for my research	17%	20%	28%	27%
Preparing for hurdles/milestones	25%	30%	36%	29%
Unpleasant workplace/research environment	19%	11%	11%	10%
Lack of motivation	40%	34%	38%	37%
Procrastination	NA	31%	35%	29%
Health issues	26%	27%	28%	39%
Family responsibilities	26%	27%	25%	32%
Cost of living/financial concerns	15%	35%	32%	37%
Work commitments	15%	17%	14%	37%
Data collection issues	NA	31%	29%	37%
COVID-19	95%	15%	18%	24%
Other	15%	19%	13%	7%

Cost of living and/or financial concerns was the most common response for a delay in research among MNHS graduate research students – more than doubling since 2021 levels.

## Considered leaving

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

Have you ever considered leaving your course?	MNHS 2021*	MNHS 2024	Monash STEM 2024	Other Med 2024
Never	(no) 33%	66%	65%	55%
Rarely	(yes) 67%	15%	19%	16%
Sometimes		14%	14%	26%
Often		5%	3%	4%

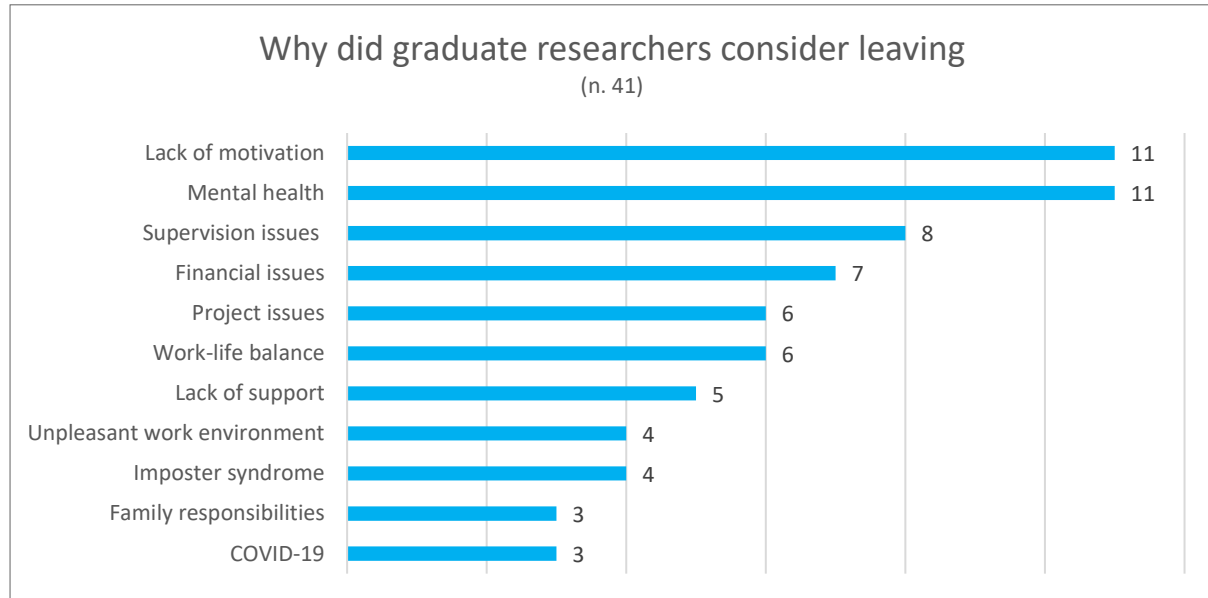
\*Please note that in 2017 and 2021 this was a “yes” or “no” question.

MNHS graduate researchers were less likely than those doing medicine degrees at other universities to have considered leaving their degree.

## Why leave

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

The responses of MNHS graduate researchers are summarised below:



Revealing comments included:

*"There are points where I get incredibly overwhelmed and not convinced I can ever finish my thesis. I also feel like my research does not contribute anything to the field."*

*"Stress due to experiments not going my way."*

*"My supervisors created a toxic work environment and I did not feel supported in my degree. It has been an isolating process, and it has significantly impacted my mental health."*

*"The pressure often feels too much alongside working full time."*

*"Unsatisfied with doing a PhD, the career outcomes and financial burden. I've felt many times I would have just been better to have gone into the work force and worked my way up without having wasted time and finances to have completed a PhD. Also, the impact it's had on my mental health due to the stress and toxic work culture."*

*"Sometimes it just felt overwhelming and like I was destined to fail. I couldn't see the end of the tunnel, and wondered if it would be better to cut my losses."*

*"I don't have a feeling of accomplishment for long. As an international student, it's hard to communicate and reach mutual understanding with my supervisor. Two, during this process I just lost interests in my project."*

*"I just didn't/don't feel well supported by my supervisors. Complaints usually fall on deaf ears."*

*“Constantly feeling behind and on the back foot with PhD work and the associated pressure from some of my supervisors during period of extremely heavy coursework deadlines and assessments.”*

*“I didn’t feel self-confident. Family responsibilities built up a lot and I was financially struggling on the scholarship most of the degree.”*

*“Money is terrible, hard for us to stay passionate when we could work at McDonalds for more money.”*

*“Financial/cost of living concerns. Also, I don't think I want to have an academic career, I think most of the jobs I would like to do would be satisfied with Masters.”*

*“Without a stipend (extremely competitive to achieve at this stage., especially for PhD students commencing after completion of an honours degree) life as a PhD student can become quite poor (lack of money). I was thinking of quitting for a while to earn some cash.”*

*“Lack of progress in my research, minor disagreements about research direction with supervisors, difficulty managing work-life balance.”*

*“Time and amount of work and milestone sometimes can be unrealistic.”*

*“COVID-19 significantly delayed my PhD project. I felt incredibly unsupported by the university. We were only given a 3-month extension for project and scholarship which was nowhere near enough time. In total, my PhD has been delayed by 12 months. I was unable to collect data during extended lockdowns throughout Victoria.”*

*“Lack of support and challenges during my data collection sometimes have made me feel like quitting.”*

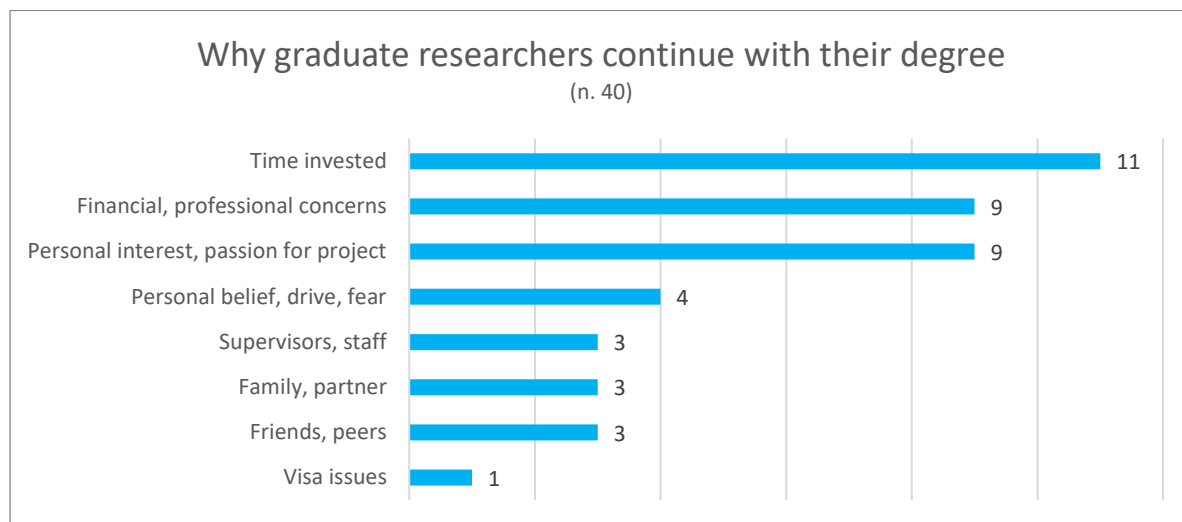
*“The final products seemed unattainable. It is super stressful and I felt I was never going to finish.”*

*“Parent duties and wanting more time with family - 3 kids.”*

## Why continue

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

The responses of MNHS graduate researchers are summarised below:



The most common reason Monash graduate researchers continue with their degree despite considering leaving is because of the **time they have already invested**. Comments include:

*“No point quitting halfway through because then it's entirely wasted, and I still think I can get a lot of benefit from it.”*

*“I'd already made it this far and it would be a waste to quit. My supervisor is also not concerned about my progress and has repeatedly said they would tell me if that ever changed.”*

*“That I was already 1.5 years into it when I realised this and was already half way through, so might as well stick it out.”*

*“I came all the way to Australia to receive Education from the world-class university, it's just such a shame to give up.”*

Other interesting comments included:

*“Speaking to other students and listening to online (non-Monash) resources (e.g., YouTube) speaking about doing a PhD made me realise this was not an uncommon reaction during times of stress.”*

*“My love for research and commitment towards my work. Circumstantial challenges also played a role to keep me going.”*

*“I still believe in the importance of my research and would like to see it through. I also recognize that I am here because of my merits and am grateful for the scholarships that have given me the financial opportunity to be here.”*



*“For the most part I enjoy learning, doing my research, and getting to talk to other researchers/HDR students. I also like the flexibility to mostly work to my own schedule.”*

*“I knew the degree was necessary to progress in my academic/scientific career. I also wanted to create change in the current research world so that future research students have a better experience and better opportunities.”*

*“I do want a PhD. And didn't think I would get a job without it. And also, I would probably miss it once I left.”*

*“I wanted a PhD for my own self fulfillment.”*

*“Wanting to finish this for myself and not because external sources have made me question my ability.”*

*“I am afraid of being judged by my peers and supervisors if I took a break from my PhD.”*

*“Good supervisors. Ultimately degree will be useful to my career.”*

*“I didn't want to look back and regret not completing my degree. I've also made a family here and dropping out would result in my deportation.”*

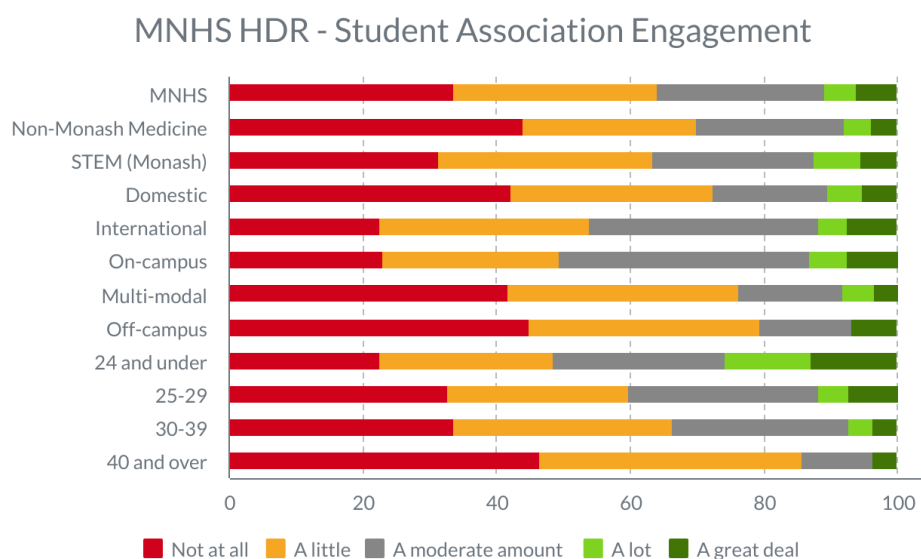
## Engagement and Satisfaction with the Monash Graduate Association (MGA)

This section highlights the engagement levels that MNHS 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 MNHS responded:

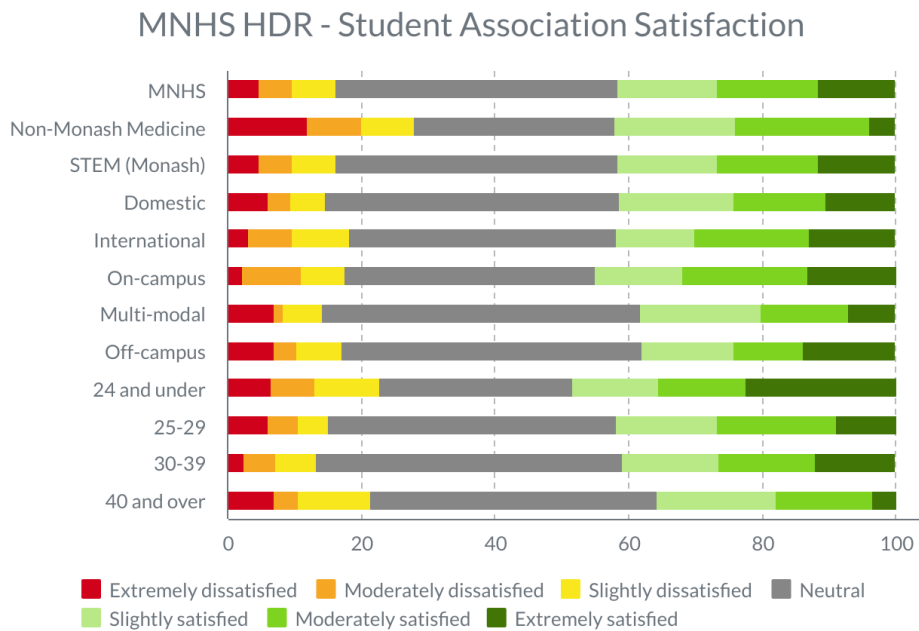


The younger the graduate research student, the more likely they were to have engaged with the MGA.

### 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 MNHS responded:

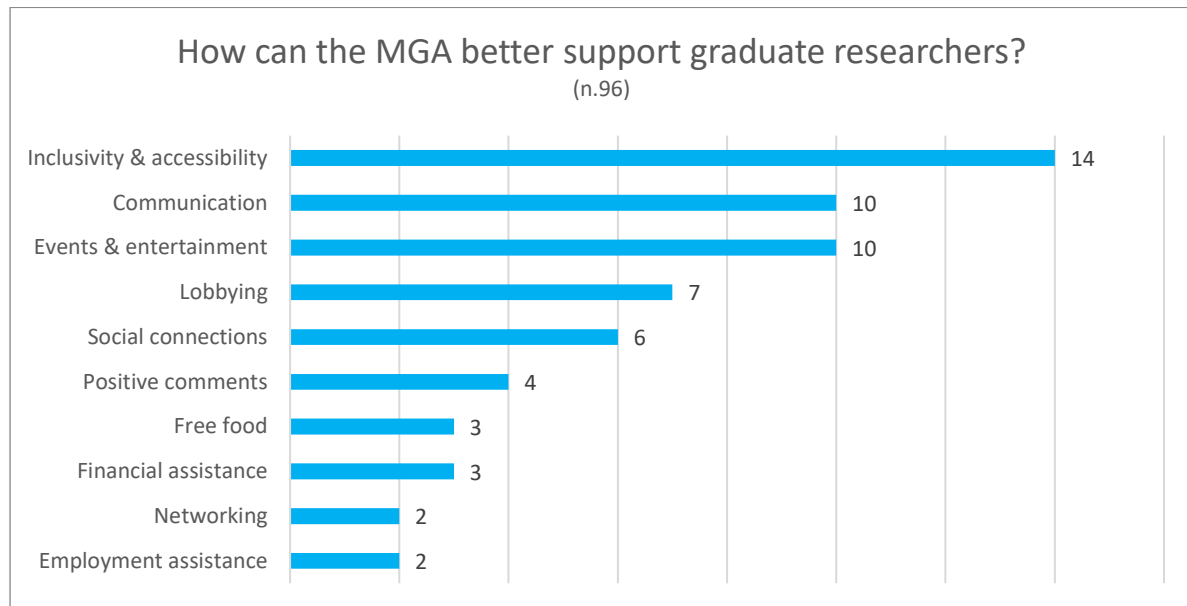


Satisfaction with the MGA was relatively consistent across the demographic groups.

### 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:



The most frequent response from graduate researchers related to **inclusivity and accessibility**. These comments included:

*"It's very difficult for students not at main campuses - there's limited opportunities for interaction without the facilities provided to students at the large campuses. All student association events are at the cafe/bar away from the offices which makes them less convenient to attend."*

*"I pay the student services amenities fee, which is not unsubstantial, and get nothing out of it since I'm not at Clayton/Caulfield. Doesn't seem fair."*

*"Take into account different students' situations, rather than assuming we're all the same."*

*"I am based at Hudson, I do not feel involved in Monash community because I could not attend most of the on-campus events."*

Other interesting comments included:

*"Host better events that students would actually attend."*

*"I feel like there should be more clubs or meetups for postgraduate students."*

*"By providing sharing sessions for student about experience that we can learn from each other."*

*“Posting more things on social media like Facebook or Instagram so that people know what events are happening.”*

*“Reaching out to students to department level. Because our department do not have a representative, it is difficult to keep updated with everything.”*

*“Keep doing what you are doing. The MGA punches way above its weight in representation and advocacy!”*

*“I think they do a great job but I find the Indigenous students support through William Cooper is much more engaging and supportive.”*

*“All events and activities that would allow us to meet and get to know the rest of the cohort and the association members happen on the same days of the week every time, severely limiting the opportunity for those of us in hybrid working arrangements and set days for attending the campus to actually feel a part of the community.”*

*“It's less what they can do, but more I do not see any of these students outside of events meaning that they always know each other/their research and I feel like an outsider for not already knowing people.”*

*“Maybe advocate for more conducive working spaces within the academic faculty.”*

*“Provide students with more than free coffees, e.g. standing desks and mental health workshops.”*

*“Advocate for improved access to resources we need, like lab equipment, software subscriptions, or mental health services. They could negotiate with the administration or organize fundraising events to fill funding gaps.”*

*“Discuss with management on how supervisor share roles especially when they are more than two.”*

*“I think the post graduate student association especially for HDR should include more provisions that may help in their research journey. This can be done via including small grants as a top up to help facilitate the work.”*

*“It is important to support out demands from university such as job opportunities. I feel the associations are concentrated on mostly the entertainment gatherings.”*

## Conclusion

The results of the MGA's *National Postgraduate Student Satisfaction Survey 2024* have provided valuable insights into what MNHS 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 MNHS, are summarised below:

### Key findings

#### **MNHS graduate researchers are largely satisfied with their supervision experience**

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

The two most important aspects of supervision to MNHS respondents were having skilled supervisors and receiving constructive feedback. These were also the two areas where respondents were most satisfied, indicating that in relation to supervision the Faculty is meeting the most important needs of their students.

#### **A focus on the academic skillset is desired from Professional Development**

Students in MNHS placed great importance on Professional Development themes that focused on developing their academic skillset with publishing, research methodologies, presenting and data analysis techniques occupying the first four places on their ranking. Satisfaction with what is being delivered in relation to these themes was comparatively low, which meant there was a wide gap between importance and satisfaction.

#### **Paid work opportunities at the University increase for MNHS respondents, but remain well below other STEM faculties**

The likelihood of an MNHS graduate researcher at Monash being given an opportunity to conduct paid work for the faculty or university increased from 35% in 2021 to 45% in 2024; however, a graduate researcher studying in STEM across Monash and those studying in the field of medicine at another university were more likely to have had the opportunity to conduct paid work at university.

#### **MGA engagement better among younger students, but satisfaction levels consistent across demographic groups**

The MGA better engages with younger graduate researchers, but satisfaction with the Association remained relatively consistent across the demographic groups.

## 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 Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences:

### *Improving academic skillset offerings*

Improving students' access to seminars or Professional Development on data analysis techniques, presenting skills, publishing skills and research methodologies would be beneficial to the MNHS cohort.

### *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.

### *Continue to improve on gains in providing employment opportunities to graduate researchers in the Faculty*

Although sizeable inroads have been made over the previous three years, it is important to continue to increase offering employment opportunities to graduate researchers.

## Appendix 1: Demographics

<b>Academic Unit</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Education portfolio	1 (1%)
Jeffrey Cheah School of Medicine and Health Sciences	7 (4%)
School of Biomedicine Sciences/Biomedical Discovery Institute	20 (11%)
School of Clinical Sciences at Monash Health	40 (22%)
School of Nursing and Midwifery	9 (5%)
School of Primary and Allied Health Care	10 (5%)
School of Psychological Sciences	12 (7%)
School of Public Health and Preventative Medicine	39 (21%)
School of Rural Health	3 (2%)
School of Transnational Medicine	33 (18%)
Other	5 (3%)

<b>Campus</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
I do not regularly attend campus	18 (10%)
Clayton	64 (34%)
Caulfield	8 (4%)
Peninsula	10 (5%)
Parkville	2 (1%)
Alfred Hospital	54 (29%)
Box Hill Hospital	2 (1%)
Hudson Institute of Medicine	27 (15%)
Notting Hill	9 (5%)
Malaysia	6 (3%)
Suzhou	3 (2%)
other	23 (12%)

<b>Domestic/International</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Local student (Australian or New Zealand citizen/permanent resident)	104 (56%)
International student	82 (44%)

<b>Study load</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Full-time	165 (88%)
Part-time	22 (12%)
On leave from study	0 (0%)



<b>Study location</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Entirely on-campus	84 (45%)
Multi-modal	68 (37%)
Entirely off-campus	29 (16%)
Other	5 (3%)

<b>Time since last degree</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Less than 1 year	60 (32%)
1-5 years	95 (51%)
6-10 years	24 (13%)
11+ years	7 (4%)

<b>Course progress</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
First year	67 (36%)
Second year	47 (25%)
Third year and beyond	72 (39%)

<b>Study hours</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Less than 5	6 (3%)
6-10	13 (7%)
11-20	20 (11%)
21-30	26 (14%)
31-40	61 (33%)
Over 40 hours	60 (32%)

<b>English proficiency</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Fluent	131 (70%)
Advanced	27 (15%)
Intermediate	26 (14%)
Elementary	2 (1%)
Beginner	0 (0%)

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Woman	136 (73%)
Man	42 (23%)
Non-binary/gender diverse	4 (2%)
Prefer to self-describe	0 (0%)
Prefer not to say	2 (2%)

<b>LGBTIQA+</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Yes	25 (13%)
No	151 (81%)
Prefer not to disclose	10 (5%)

<b>Indigenous (domestic students only)</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Yes	1 (1%)
No	99 (95%)
Prefer not to disclose	4 (4%)

<b>Disability</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Yes	16 (9%)
No	166 (89%)
Prefer not to disclose	4 (2%)

<b>Registered disability with DSS</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Yes	6 (38%)
No	10 (63%)

<b>Age</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
24 or under	27 (15%)
25-29	64 (34%)
30-39	73 (39%)
40 and over	22 (12%)

<b>Employment status</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Full-time	19 (10%)
Part-time	45 (24%)
Casual	58 (31%)
Unemployed and looking for work	26 (14%)
Not employed and not looking for work	44 (24%)

<b>Work hours</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Less than 5	25 (21%)
6-10	38 (32%)
11-20	34 (29%)
21-30	7 (6%)
31-40	11 (9%)
More than 40	3 (3%)