UWA STUDENT GUILD
POSTGRADUATE

# 2026 PSA SURVEY

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2026 Postgraduate Student Association Survey received 446 responses in the early months of 2026, and drew strong representation across coursework and research students, domestic and international cohorts, as well as full-time and part-time study modes.

Students were generally positive regarding assessment diversity; however feedback quality was a common and recurring weak point, in particular surrounding clarity of feedback, turnaround time, marks given without reasonable explanation and clustering of assessments, all of which showed significant variation by Board of Study. Awareness of academic support services was high, though this did not necessarily translate into meaningful use, which suggests visibility alone isn't sufficient.

Financial stress stood out as a key and unevenly distributed issue, with international students consistently more impacted than domestic students, regardless of their relevant income source.

Research students raised distinct concerns centered on supervision, with satisfaction and contact frequency varying significantly between Boards of Studies, with some students reporting conflicting advice, or difficulty accessing their supervisors. Requests were made for clearer communication, funding and social connection. Research students were far more likely than coursework students to feel overlooked in wellbeing initiatives. Overall, postgraduates reported only moderate connectedness to the University community as a whole.

These findings provide clear direction for future support for postgraduates. Priority should be given to improving the accessibility and visibility of support services, strengthening assessment feedback practices, and enhancing financial and wellbeing initiatives, whilst also working to foster a greater sense of community within students. Targeted initiatives within the Higher Degree by Research community should also be explored to improve supervisor relationships and student connection.

The PSA views these areas as critical to enhance the student experience and is committed to working alongside the University to advance these priorities and ensure UWA remains an attractive and enjoyable place for postgraduates to study.

**Promotional Note**

The Postgraduate Student Association Survey was open from 25 February 2026 till 6 April 2026. The survey was first sent out on the 25th of February in the PSA Newsletter to all Postgraduates at the University. The PSA Survey was promoted in person at the PSA Connect on the 26th of February which was attended by over 100 students. The PSA Survey was published on the PSA Instagram on the 9th of March. The survey was again promoted in the PSA Newsletter on the 18th of March.

**1.** Question 1 asked students to list contact information if they wished to go in the draw for response prizes, and as such is not included in the report.

**2.** Question 2 asked students to identify whether they are either a Coursework student, Higher Degree by Research (HDR) student or a Combination of both. 446 students answered this question. 296 (66.4%) identified as a Coursework student. 111 (24.9%) identified as an HDR student. 39 (8.7%) identified as a combination of both.

**3.** Question 3 asked students to identify whether they are a part-time or full-time student. 446 respondents answered this question. 411 (92.2%) identified as a full-time student. 35 (7.8%) identified as a part-time student

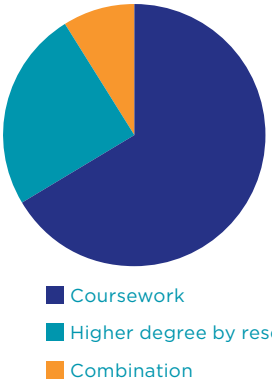
**4.** Question 4 asked students to identify whether they are a domestic or international student. 445 respondents answered this question. 200 (44.8%) identified as a domestic student. 245 (54.9%) identified as an international student. 1 student chose not to identify as either a domestic or international student.

**5.** Question 5 asked respondents to identify what course they are studying. 446 students answered this question, with 5 students not disclosing what degree they are studying. 75 unique courses were identified.

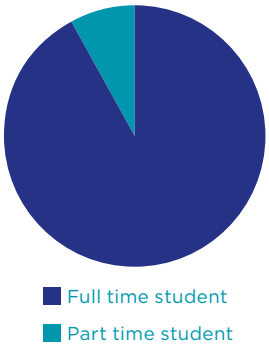
Whilst not asked in the survey, the Board of Studies for which each respondent belongs was applied to the data set. Master and Doctor of Philosophy students were allocated to the Graduate Research School. For students who it could not be determined which Board of Studies they belonged, they were allocated as Unclear.

Of the 441 students who answered what course they are studying, 138 (31%) were from Life, Health and Natural Sciences, 95 (21.3%) were from the Graduate Research School, 75 (16.8%) were from Society and Culture, 64 (14.3%) were from Mathematical and Physical Sciences, 60 (13.4%) were from Management and Commerce, and 7 (1.6%) were from Design and Creative Arts. 7 (1.6%) students were classed as unclear.

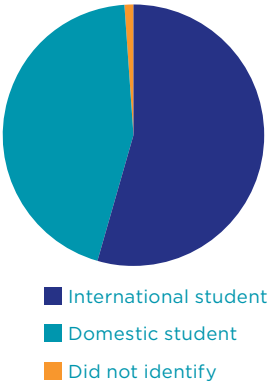
**TYPE OF STUDENT**



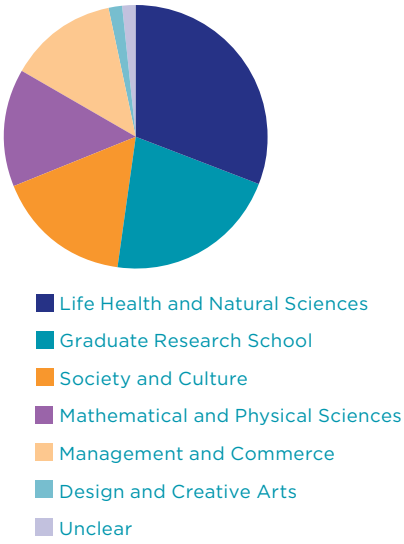

**FULL TIME VS PART-TIME STUDY LOAD**




**DOMESTIC VS INTERNATIONAL STUDENT**

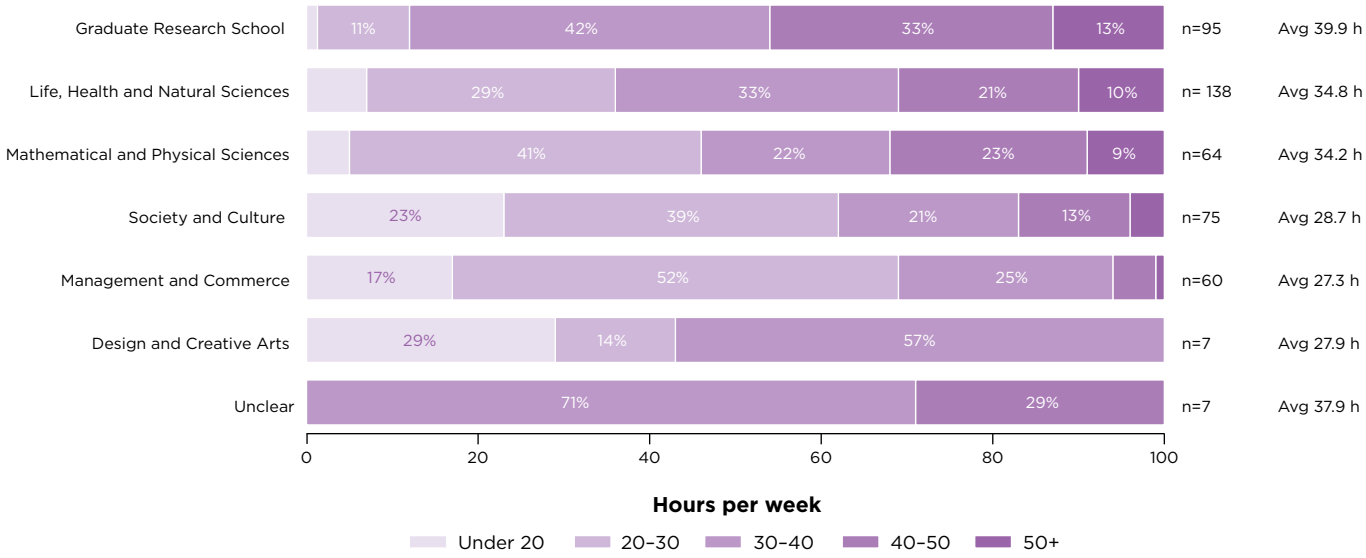



**BOARD OF STUDIES**



**6.** Question 6 asked respondents how many hours per week they spend on their degree. 446 students answered this question. Students were able to select from 5 answers, under 20 hours, 20-30 hours, 30-40 hours, 40-50 hours, or 50 + hours. The exact question asked was as follows.

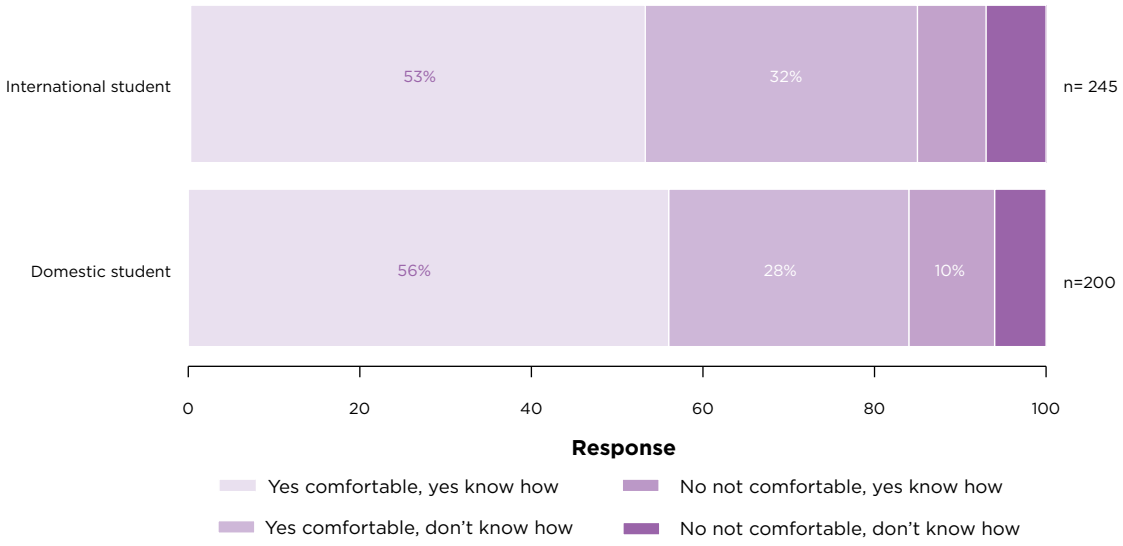
## How many hours per week do you spend on your degree?




Across the Boards of Studies, Graduate Research School students reported the highest weekly workload, averaging 39.3 hours (n=95): 40 (42%) spent 30-40 hours, 31 (33%) spent 40-50 hours, and 12 (13%) spent 50+ hours, the largest 50+ cohort of any board, with only 2 (2%) spending under 20 hours. Life, Health and Natural Sciences (n=138, Avg 34.8h) showed a similar spread, with 45 (33%) in the 30-40 hour band, 29 (21%) in the 40-50 band, and 14 (10%) at 50+ hours. Mathematical and Physical Sciences (n=64, Avg 34.2h) students were fairly evenly spread across the higher bands, with 15 (23%) spending 40-50 hours and 6 (9%) spending 50+ hours. Society and Culture (n=75, Avg 28.7h) had a smaller proportion at the top end, with 10 (13%) in the 40-50 band and 3 (4%) at 50+, while 17 (23%) reported under 20 hours, the highest such proportion among the larger boards. Management and Commerce (n=60, Avg 27.3h) students were concentrated in the lower bands, with 31 (52%) spending 20-30 hours and just 3 (5%) and 1 (2%) in the 40-50 and 50+ bands respectively. Design and Creative Arts (n=7, Avg 27.9h) had no students in the 40-50 or 50+ bands at all, with the majority (4, 57%) spending 30-40 hours.

**7.** Question 7 asked respondents whether they would feel comfortable raising an academic or supervision concern, and whether they knew how to seek support. 445 students answered this question, with students able to choose from 4 different answers. The exact question asked was as follows.

## If you have an academic or supervision concern, would you feel comfortable raising the concern? And do you know how to seek support?




445 students answered this question (200 domestic, 245 international). The majority of both groups indicated they were comfortable raising concerns and knew how to do so: 111 (56%) domestic students and 131 (53%) international students fell into this category. A further 55 (28%) domestic students and 79 (32%) international students said they were comfortable raising concerns but did not know how to go about it, indicating that comfort alone does not always translate into knowledge of the process. Among students who were not comfortable raising concerns, 21 (10%) domestic students indicated they nonetheless knew how to do so, compared with 19 (8%) international students. A smaller group reported both discomfort and a lack of knowledge of the process, with 13 (7%) domestic students and 16 (7%) international students in this category.

Overall, domestic and international students reported broadly similar levels of comfort raising academic or supervision concerns, with the large majority in each group comfortable doing so. The main difference between the two groups was in the "yes comfortable, don't know how" category, where international students were somewhat more likely (32%) than domestic students (28%) to be comfortable but unsure of the process, suggesting a potential area to improve process clarity for international students in particular.

**8.** Question 8 asked students about their satisfaction with class scheduling availability and accessibility. This was a free text answer, with responses then grouped as Positive, Neutral or Negative. The exact question asked was as follows.

## Are you satisfied with class schedule availability and accessibility? If not list some key issues/concerns

391 students answered this question. 257 (65.7%) indicated that they were positively satisfied with class availability and accessibility. 91 (23.3%) indicated that they were not satisfied with class availability and accessibility. 43 (11%) indicated that they had a neutral opinion of class availability and accessibility.

Key negative responses included themes such as limited timetable / fixed-class availability (n=27), clashes between core units (n=18) and classes being spread across too many days/ having only 1 class per day for multiple days of the week (n=17).

Responses explicit about preferences between classes being delivered during the day vs during the evening to balance work and childcare commitments were equal at approximately 8 responses for each.

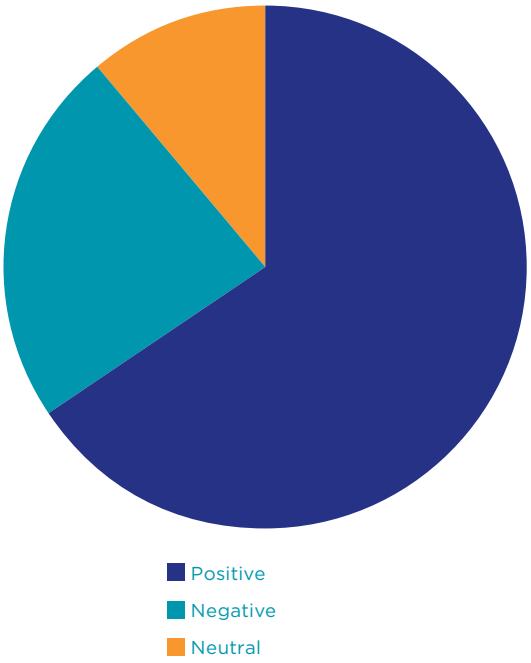
**9.** Question 9 asked students about their satisfaction with the diversity of assessment items available in their course. This was a free text answer, with responses then grouped as Positive, Neutral or Negative. The exact question asked was as follows.

## Are you satisfied with the diversity of assignments offered in your course? If not list your key issues/concerns

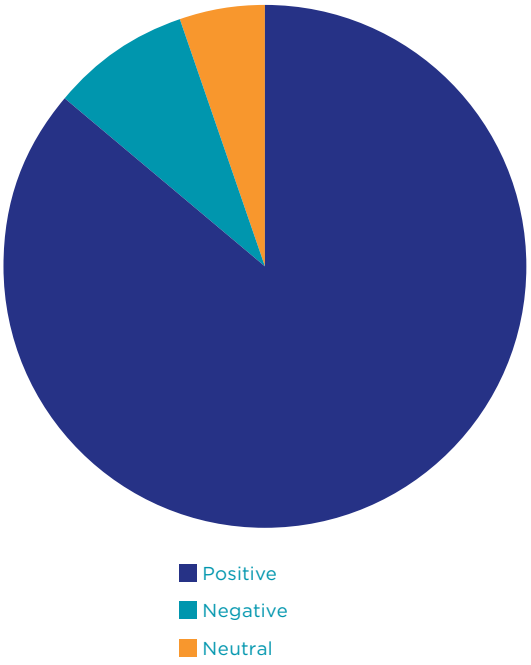
383 students answered this question. 330 (86.2%) indicated they were positively satisfied with the diversity of assignments offered in their course. 33 (8.6%) respondents indicated they were not satisfied, and a further 20 (5.2%) indicated that they had a neutral position of the diversity of assignments offered in their course.

Across positive responses, a majority of students explicitly stated they were satisfied

**OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH CLASS AVAILABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY**




**OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH ASSESSMENT DIVERSITY**



with the diversity of assessment formats (n=240). Across neutral and negative responses many students emphasized a perceived overreliance on exams and written assessments (n=25), whilst many others expressed a desire for more practical assignments (n=30). There were notable mentions of concerns around assessments from the same courses all being due at similar times and a perceived lack of coordination between Unit Coordinators (n=5).

**10.** Question 10 asked respondents about their awareness of academic support available at the University. This was a Yes/No answer. The exact question asked was as follows.

## Are you aware of the academic support available to you as a postgrad at UWA?

446 students answered this question. 347 (77.8%) indicated that they are aware of the academic support available to them, whilst 99 (22.2%) indicated that they were not aware of the services available to them. When this number is broken down between international (n=245) and domestic students (n=200), 79.2% (n=194) of international students said they were aware of the services available, compared to only 76% (n= 152) of domestic students.

**11.** Question 11 asked students about their satisfaction with the academic support available to them. This was a free text answer, with responses then grouped as Satisfied, Not Satisfied, Not Utilised and Unsure. The exact question asked was as follows.

## Are you satisfied with the academic support available? If not list your key issues/concerns

446 students answered this question. 311 (69.7%) said they were satisfied, compared to 46 (10.3%) who said they were not satisfied with the academic support available. 52 (11.7%) students did not comment as they were unsure of the services available, whilst a further 37 (8.3%) indicated they had not utilised any of the academic services available to them.

When the answers from Question 11 are considered in conjunction with the answers from Question 10, a greater insight into satisfaction becomes available. The results of this comparison are provided below, however care should be taken when interpreting these results. A number of students have indicated they are unaware of the support, but then commented on their satisfaction with said support.

| AWARENESS | SATISFACTION | COUNT | PERCENTAGE |
|---|---|---|---|
| NOT AWARE OF SERVICES AVAILABLE (N=99) | SATISFIED | 23 | 23.2% |
| | NOT SATISFIED | 11 | 11.1% |
| | UNAWARE | 52 | 52.2% |
| | NOT UTILISED | 13 | 13.1% |
| AWARE OF SERVICES AVAILABLE (N=347) | SATISFIED | 288 | 83% |
| | NOT SATISFIED | 35 | 10.1% |
| | NOT UTILISED | 24 | 6.9% |

**12.** Question 12 asked students about their satisfaction with the feedback received on assessment items. This was a free text answer, with responses then grouped as Positive, Neutral or Negative. The exact question answered was as follows.

## Are you satisfied with the feedback you get on your submissions (whether it be assignments, submissions or otherwise)? If not, why not?

390 respondents answered this question. 283 (72.5%) students responded that they are satisfied with the feedback received on assessment items. 46 (11.8%) students indicated a neutral position, whilst 61 (15.6%) students indicated they were not satisfied with the feedback received on assessment items.

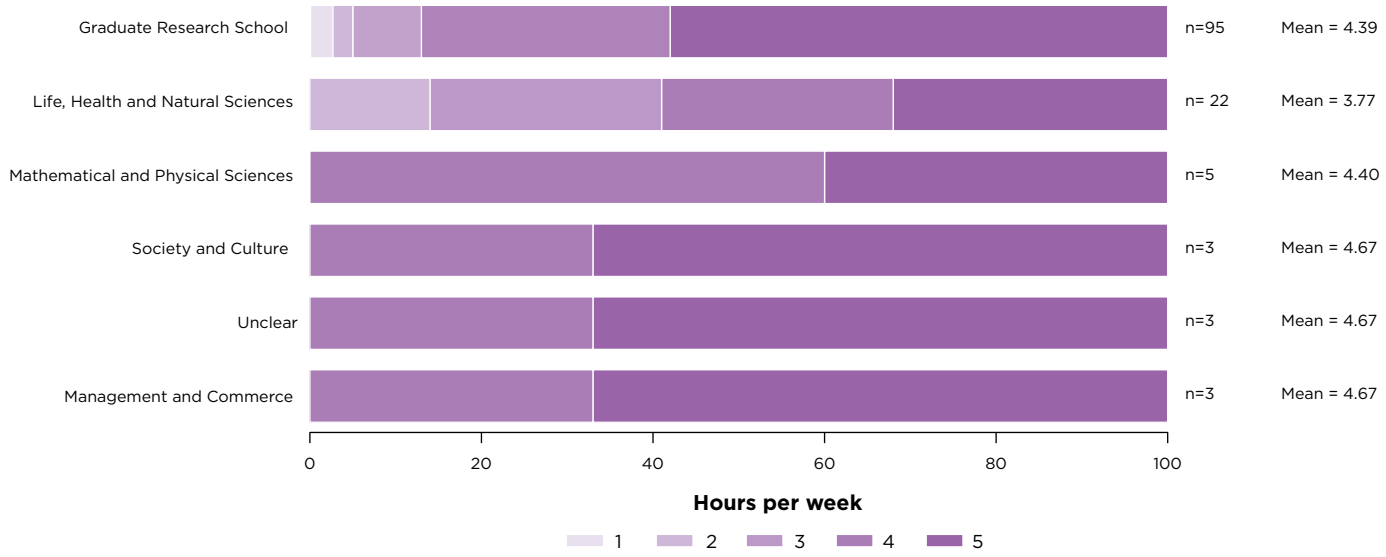
| BOARD OF STUDIES | SATISFACTION | COUNT | PERCENTAGE |
|---|---|---|---|
| LIFE HEALTH AND NATURAL SCIENCE (N=120) | POSITIVE | 83 | 69.2% |
| | NEGATIVE | 10 | 8.3% |
| | NEUTRAL | 27 | 22.2% |
| GRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOOL (N=81) | POSITIVE | 288 | 85.2% |
| | NEGATIVE | 35 | 7.4% |
| | NEUTRAL | 24 | 7.4% |
| SOCIETY AND CULTURE (N=66) | POSITIVE | 43 | 65.2% |
| | NEGATIVE | 11 | 16.7% |
| | NEUTRAL | 12 | 18.2% |
| MATHEMATICAL AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES (N=59) | POSITIVE | 38 | 64.4% |
| | NEGATIVE | 12 | 20.3% |
| | NEUTRAL | 9 | 15.3% |
| MANAGEMENT AND COMMERCE (N=52) | POSITIVE | 41 | 78.8% |
| | NEGATIVE | 5 | 9.6% |
| | NEUTRAL | 6 | 11.5% |
| DESIGN AND CREATIVE ARTS (N=6) | POSITIVE | 5 | 83.3% |
| | NEGATIVE | 1 | 16.7% |
| | NEUTRAL | - | - |
| UNCLEAR (N=6) | POSITIVE | 4 | 66.7% |
| | NEGATIVE | 1 | 16.7% |
| | NEUTRAL | 1 | 16.7% |

The Graduate Research School had the highest number of students satisfied with assessment feedback (85.2%), whilst Life, Health and Natural Science had the highest number of students not satisfied with assessment feedback (22.5%).

Key themes identified in negative responses included students receiving feedback that was unclear, insufficient, or couldn't be actioned (n=45). Specific examples provided by students included feedback from academics such as "awkward", "???", and "this doesn't make sense". Additionally, many students expressed only receiving marks and no feedback (n=28).

**13.** Question 13 asked Research students to rate their satisfaction with their supervision experience. Students were able to rank their supervision experience on a scale of 1 to 5. The exact question was as follows.

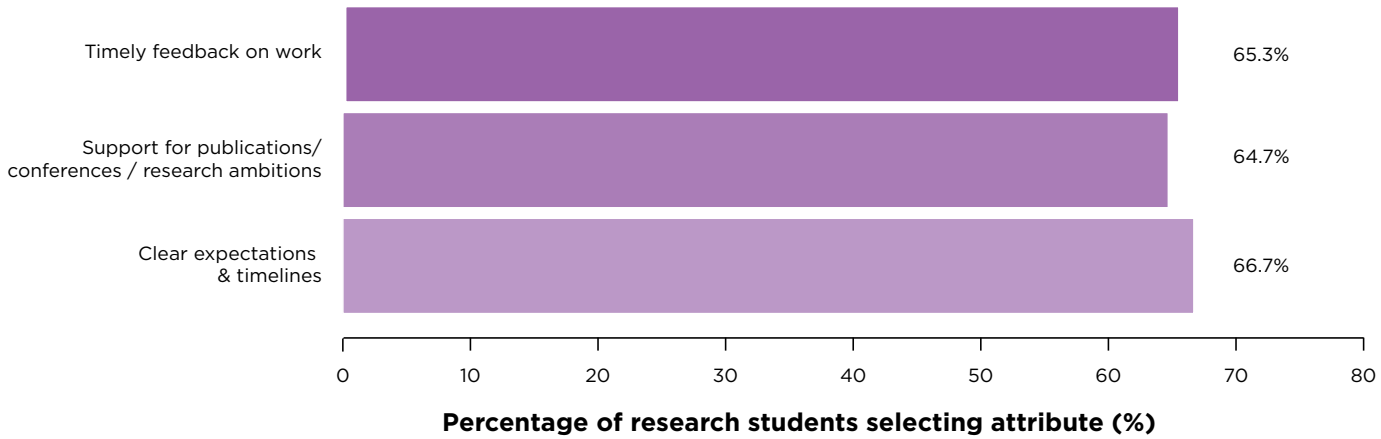
## For Research Students: Overall, how satisfied are you with your supervision experience (1 - very dissatisfied, 5 - very satisfied).




131 Research students answered, with students from Design and Creative Arts excluded. Graduate Research School reported the largest sample (n=95, Mean=4.39), with 58% rating their experience a 5. Management and Commerce, Unclear, and Society and Culture each reported the highest average satisfaction (Mean=4.67), though with small samples (n=3, 3, and 3 respectively). Mathematical and Physical Sciences (n=5, Mean=4.40) and Life, Health and Natural Sciences (n=22, Mean=3.77) fell in between, with the latter showing the lowest average satisfaction and the widest spread across scores.

**15.** Question 15 asked Research students about support provided by their supervisors. Students were able to select multiple options from 3 answers including feedback, support in research and expectations. The exact question asked was as follows.

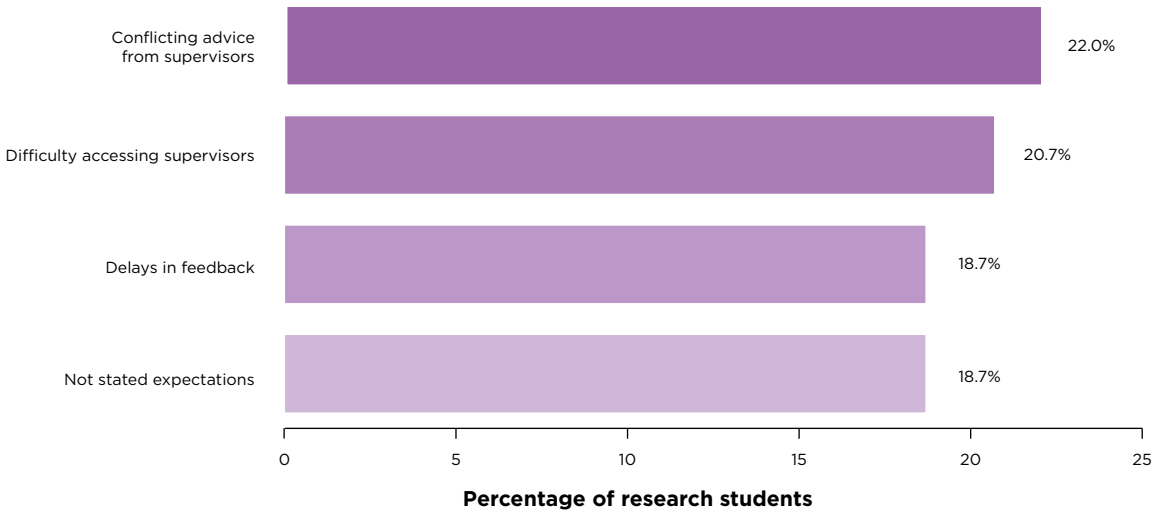
## For Research Students: Do you feel your supervisor provides the following (feel free to add any additional comments in the other section). If not relevant to you put N/A



All three forms of supervisor support were valued fairly evenly, with Clear expectations and timelines rated slightly highest (66.7%), followed by Timely feedback on work (65.3%) and Support for publications/ conferences/research ambitions (64.7%). A notable minority (19.3%) of Research students still responded N/A despite the question applying to them.

**16.** Question 16 asked Research students whether they had experienced a range of supervision issues. Students were able to select multiple of 5 options including conflicting advice, difficulty accessing supervisors, delays in feedback and no stated expectations, or none of the above. The exact question asked was as follows.

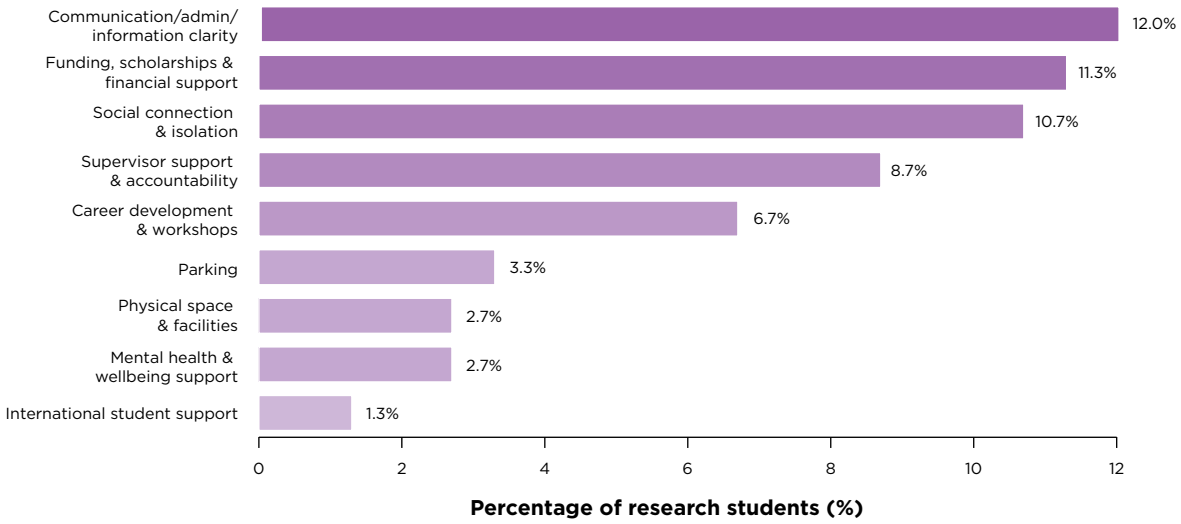
## For Research Students: Have you experienced any of the following? If not relevant to you select none of the above.




150 Research students answered. Conflicting advice from supervisors was the most commonly reported issue (22.0%), followed by Difficulty accessing supervisor/s (20.7%), while Delays in feedback and Not stated expectations were equally reported at 18.7% each. 84 students (56.0%) selected “None of the above.”

**17.** Question 17 asked Research students what additional support they would like from the PSA or University. This was a free text question, with responses then grouped into the below themes. The exact question asked was as follows.

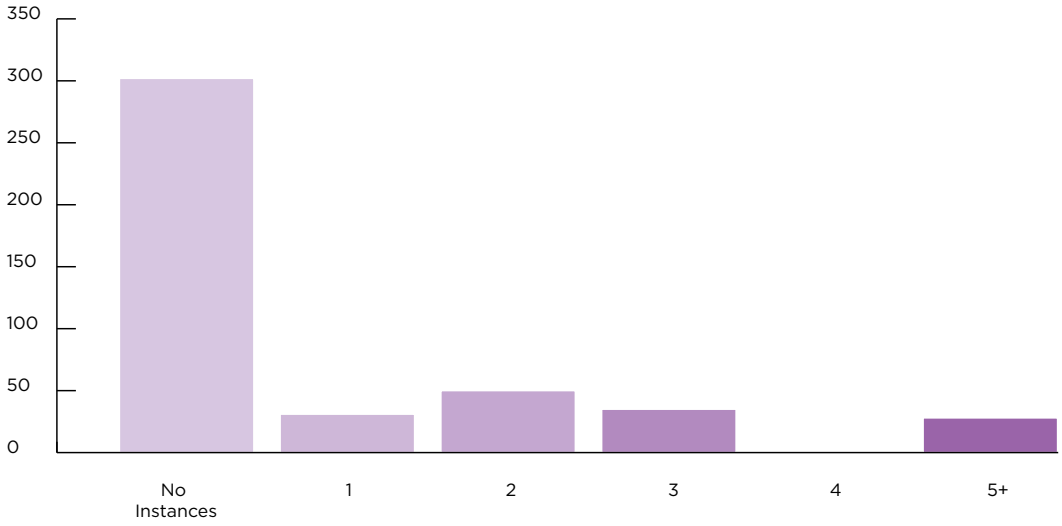
## For Research Students: What additional support would you like for HDR Students either from the PSA or the University? If not applicable to you put N/A.




Of 150 Research students, 53 left this blank and 14 gave a dismissive "N/A" response, leaving 83 substantive suggestions. The most common themes raised were requests for clearer communication and administrative information (12.0%), greater funding and financial support such as scholarships and stipends (11.3%), and more opportunities for social connection to reduce isolation (10.7%). Supervisor support and accountability (8.7%) and career development opportunities (6.7%) were also frequently mentioned, with smaller numbers raising parking, physical workspace, mental health support, and international student support.

**18.** Question 18 asked students about the University's Policy about assessment turnaround times and receiving feedback beyond the required 15 days. Students were able to choose from 6 different options ranging from no instances to 5+ instances. The exact question was as follows.

## UWA Policy is to receive feedback within 15 University working days of the due date for assignments. How many instances in the past year have there been where you've received an assignment beyond the 15 working day deadline?



446 students answered this question. 302 (67.7%) students said there had been no instances of them receiving an assessment more than 15 after the due date. 31 (7%) indicated there had been 1 instance, 50 (11.2%) indicated 2 instances, 35 (7.8%) indicated 3 instances, 0 students indicated 4 instances and 28 (6.3%) students indicated 5+ instances. It is worth noting that 32.3% of students have experienced at least 1 breach of this policy.

These results broken down across the various Boards of Studies are displayed below.

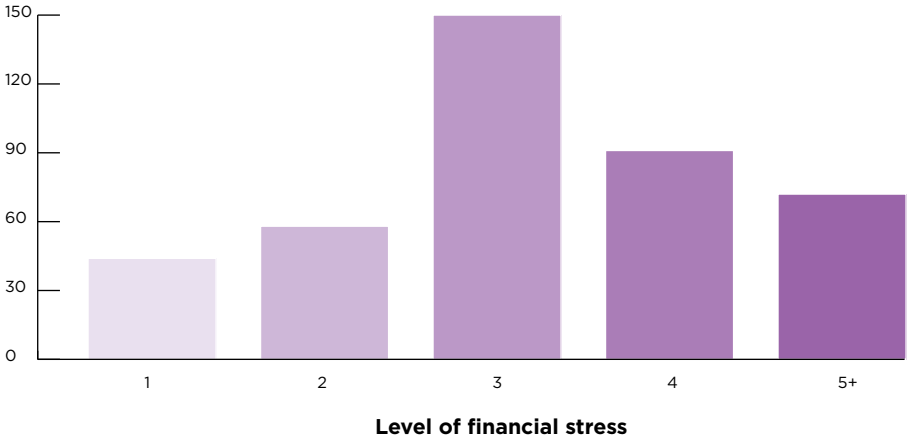
| BOARD OF STUDIES | 0 INSTANCES | 1 INSTANCES | 2 INSTANCES | 3 INSTANCES | 4 INSTANCES | 5 INSTANCES |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| LIFE HEALTH AND NATURAL SCIENCE (N=138) | 94 (68.1%) | 8 (5.8%) | 16 (68.1%) | 94 (11.6%) | - | 12 (8.7%) |
| GRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOOL (N=95) | 79 (83.2%) | 2 (2.1%) | 7 (7.4%) | 3 (3.2%) | - | 4 (4.2%) |
| SOCIETY AND CULTURE (N=61) | 37 (49.3%) | 5 (6.7%) | 16 (21.3%) | 10 (13.3%) | - | 7 (9.3%) |
| MATHEMATICAL AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES (N=64) | 42 (65.6%) | 4 (6.3%) | 6 (9.4%) | 8 (12.5%) | - | 4 (6.3%) |
| MANAGEMENT AND COMMERCE (N=60) | 40 (68.1%) | 10 (68.1%) | 5 (68.1%) | 5 (68.1%) | - | - |
| DESIGN AND CREATIVE ARTS (N=7) | 4 (57.1%) | 1 (14.3%) | - | 1 (14.3%) | - | 1 (14.3%) |
| UNCLEAR (N=7) | 6 (85.7%) | 1 (14.3%) | - | - | - | - |

Excluding the students who could not be grouped to a Board of Studies, the Graduate Research School had the highest rate of compliance with the policy (83.2%). The Board of Studies (Society and Culture) was identified as having the lowest rate of compliance (49.3%) with the University's policy on assessment feedback.

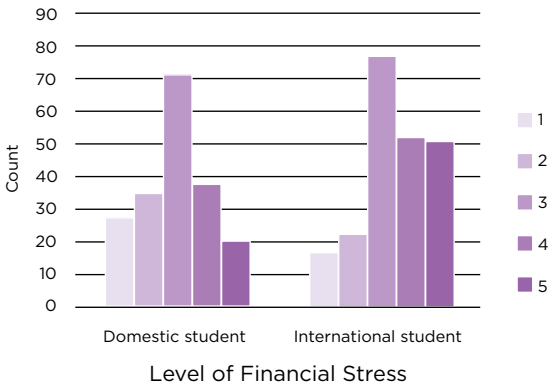
**19.** Question 19 asked students about their level of financial stress. Students were able to rank their self-determined level of financial stress on a scale from 1-5. The exact question answered is as follows.

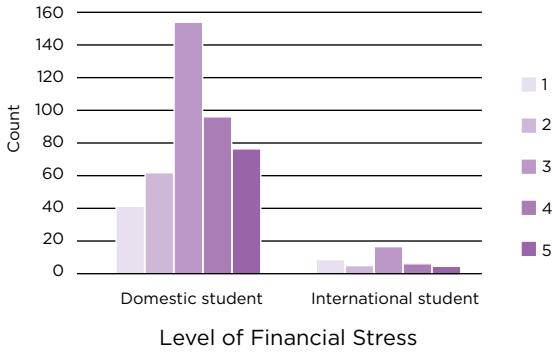
## How would you rate your current level of financial stress? 1 being no stress, 5 being severely financially stressed (If you do not feel comfortable answering leave blank).

415 students responded to this question. 44 (10.6%) of students identified their level of financial stress as 1, 58 (14%) identified as level 2, 150 (36.1%) identified as level 3, 91 (22%) identified as level 4, and 72 (17.3%) identified as level 5.




Responses are negatively skewed, indicating a higher number of students have self-identified as being in higher level of financial stress. The below graphs consider demographic factors of full-time vs part-time students and domestic vs international students.




When comparing domestic to international students, domestic students show a relatively normal distribution, whereas international students are negatively skewed towards higher levels of self-identified financial stress. 183 (82.4%) of international students self-identified as being in a level of financial stress of 3 or more. Full-time students are also negatively skewed towards higher levels of self-identified financial stress. Part-time students are positively skewed towards lower levels of self-identified financial stress.

**20.** Question 20 asked students about their main source of income. Students were able to select multiple different options from a predetermined list. As students could select multiple income sources, each response is analysed independently. The options available to them were “Scholarship/Stipend”, “Paid academic work”, “Paid work”, “Family support”, or “Government Support”. The exact question asked was as follows.

## What is your main sources of income? Select multiple if apply (If you do not feel comfortable answering leave blank).

425 students responded to this question. 217 students indicated their dominant source of income is paid work. 181 indicated family support as their primary source. 138 indicated scholarships and stipends, whilst

44 students indicated government support. 35 indicated paid academic work as a source of income. The results of these responses between full-time and part-time students and domestic vs international students are displayed below.

| CATEGORY | | PAID WORK | FAMILY SUPPORT | SCHOLASHIP/ STIPHEND | PAID ACADEMIC WORK | GOVERNMENT SUPPORT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| DOMESTIC | FULL-TIME | 104 | 42 | 49 | 23 | 36 |
| | PART-TIME | 27 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| INTERNATIONAL | FULL-TIME | 85 | 135 | 87 | 9 | 7 |
| | PART-TIME | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| UNGROUPED | | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Further insight can be gained when analysing sources of income in conjunction with self-identified levels of financial stress from Question 19. These results are displayed below

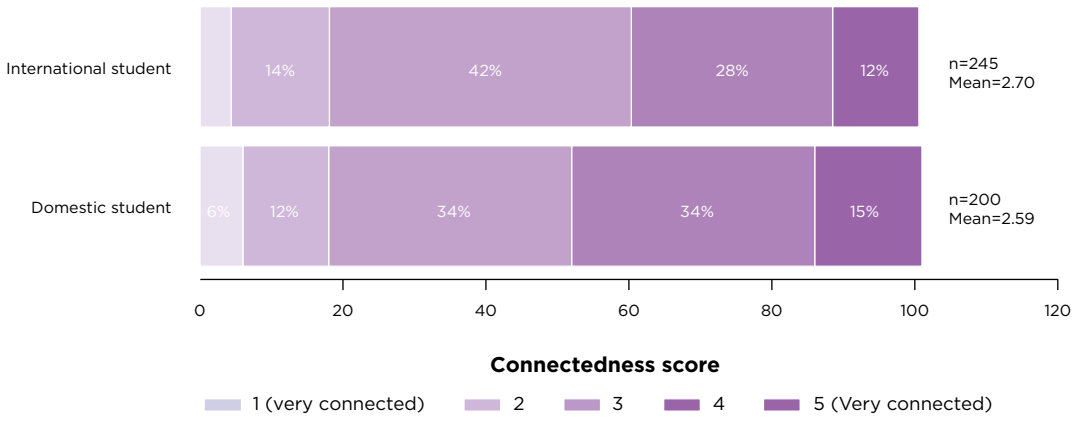
| INCOME SOURCE | DOMESTIC STUDENTS | HIGH STRESS (4-5) | INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS | HIGH STRESS (4-5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| PAID WORK | 129 | 38 (29.7%) | 82 | 41 (50%) |
| FAMILY SUPPORT | 42 | 10 (23.8$) | 127 | 57 (44.9%) |
| SCHOLARSHIP/STIPEND | 49 | 15 (30.6%) | 81 | 33 (40.7%) |
| PAID ACADEMIC WORK | 25 | 8 (32%) | 8 | 2 (25%) |
| GOVERNMENT SUPPORT | 36 | 14 (38.9%) | 7 | 3 (42.9%) |

*Note, the number of responses in this table differs from the numbers in the previous table. This table only includes students who also self-identified their level of financial stress.*

Across almost every source of income, international students self-identified in higher levels of financial stress. Most notably, reliance on paid work as an income source greatly exacerbated levels of high financial stress between domestic students (29.7%) and international students (50%). 50% of international students who rely on paid work, self-identified as being in high levels of financial stress. Family support does little to eliminate levels of financial stress for international students, with 44.9% identifying as being in high levels of financial stress. Additionally, students who rely on Government support identify as being in high levels of financial stress, with 38.9% of domestic students who rely on it identifying as being in high levels of financial stress.

**21.** Question 21 asked postgraduates how connected they feel to the UWA community. Students were able to select a response on a scale of 1 (very isolated) to 5 (very connected). The exact question asked was as follows.

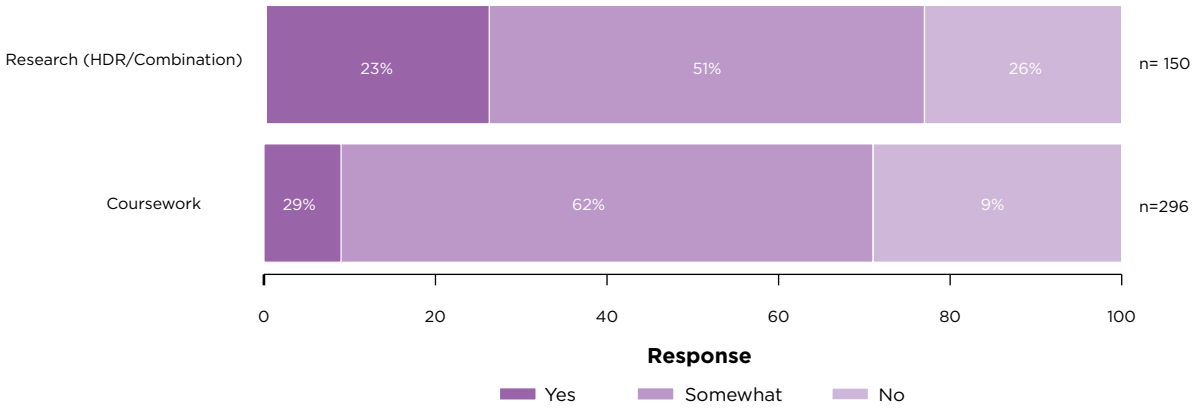
## How connected, as a postgraduate, do you feel to the UWA community? 1 being very isolated, 5 being very connected.




445 students answered this question. Both groups reported similarly modest connectedness overall, with means just below the midpoint (domestic: 2.59, international: 2.70). Domestic students were somewhat more likely to report feeling very isolated (15% rated a 1, compared to 12.2% of international students), while international students clustered more heavily around the neutral midpoint (42% rated a 3, compared to 34% of domestic students). Relatively few students in either group reported feeling strongly connected, with only 5.5% of domestic and 4.1% of international students rating their connectedness a 5.

**22.** Question 22 asked postgraduates whether they feel adequately considered in University or Guild wellbeing initiatives and events. Students were able to select from 3 answers, yes, no, or somewhat. The exact question asked was as follows.

## Do you feel postgraduate students are adequately considered in University or Guild wellbeing initiatives and events?



446 students answered this question. Research students were substantially more likely to say “No” (26.0%) compared to Coursework students (8.8%), roughly a three-fold difference. Coursework students were more likely to feel at least “Somewhat” considered (61.8% vs 50.7% for Research students), and slightly more likely to say “Yes” outright (29.4% vs 23.3%). This gap is consistent with earlier free-text feedback from Research students, several of whom noted feeling separated from and overlooked relative to the broader coursework postgraduate population.

Questions 23 through 26 relate specifically to the Postgraduate Students Association and our operations/ initiatives, and as such have not been included in the analysis published in this report. For transparency purposes, the questions asked are stated below.

**23.** Before this survey, were you aware of the PSA and what it does?

**24.** What kind of events or initiatives would you like the PSA to run that you would engage in? Feel free to list as many as you can think of

**25.** What issue(s) should the PSA prioritise in 2026 and beyond. Select as many that apply.

**26.** Any other comments, feedback or issues you’d like to raise to the PSA’s attention? If you’d like us to get in touch about any of these please also include a contact email in your answer.