2025 International Student Survey Report

CARE, STAND, ACT FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

REPORT EDITORS:

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Background

UMSU International (referred to in this document as "we", "us", or "our") is the official representative body for all international students at the University of Melbourne (referred to in this document as "the University"), regardless of whether they are an undergraduate, graduate, study-abroad, or exchange student. As one of the largest international student organisations in Australia and a branch of the University of Melbourne Student Union (UMSU), we are responsible for holding various events and initiatives, conducting surveys, providing outreach, support and resources, and attending regular meetings with the University to constantly improve the experience of international students at the University of Melbourne.

As a part of our mission to advocate for international students, we organised the International Student Survey (ISS). This survey aims to enhance our understanding of currently enrolled international students and their experiences at the University of Melbourne. In 2025, the ISS was conducted from the 25th of March to the 30th of April and focused on nine different sections: General Information, UMSU International Awareness and Perception, Accommodation, University Experience, Academic Experience, Graduate Experience, Health, Safety and Inclusivity, Work and Employment, and Financial Situation.

Acknowledgements of University and Students

UMSU International expresses its heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has contributed to the publishing of this report, and we extend our thanks to all the participants who made this report possible. We believe that this comprehensive report will provide crucial insights into the University and its stakeholders, enabling them to make necessary decisions to enhance the experience of international students at the University of Melbourne.

A special thanks goes to Prof. Gregor Kennedy, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), whose invaluable suggestions and support with survey promotions significantly improved our survey's quality and consistency between questions. Another special thanks to Prof. Elaine Wong, Pro Vice-Chancellor (People and Equity), whose suggestions and advice on Health, Safety and Inclusivity gave us a lot of insights, and Marnie Long, Manager, Careers & Employability.

Lastly, immense appreciation to the entire UMSU International 2024/2025 Committee. Your remarkable dedication and willingness to prioritise the ISS, even amidst other planned programming, was truly remarkable. Your passionate campaigning, promotions, and unwavering support exemplify the spirit of a united and enthusiastic group. We are grateful for your outstanding effort and teamwork.

Methodology

The International Student Survey was conducted using Typeform and was embedded on UMSU International's website, which could also be accessed directly through the survey's link or our social media.

The ISS is designed to be anonymous, however, students were required to provide their University of Melbourne student email and student ID for validity verification and as a form of contact for lucky draw prize collection. All personal information is managed under the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic) and the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic).

The survey questions consisted of ranking questions and multiple-choice questions, where participants could choose one or multiple listed answers to the questions or fill in their answers at the "other" option. The survey also allowed participants to provide us with extra comments and/or suggestions in each session that the survey did not cover or required strong justification. The ranking questions were used to indicate satisfaction or level of agreement with different statements, with 1 indicating completely dissatisfied and 5 for very satisfied. The scales 3, 4, and 5 indicate different degrees of satisfaction, with 3 indicating somewhat satisfied.

A total of 2041 responses were collected, and 1865 of them were identified as valid responses. As this report focused on international students' responses, the international students who provided a valid response will be referred to in this document as "students", "they", "them" or "their". Furthermore, correlations were calculated using the Chi Square Test for categorical data and Correlation Coefficient for continuous numerical data. The correlation is considered significant if under the p-value of 0.05.

Demographics – General information

Enrollment Status:

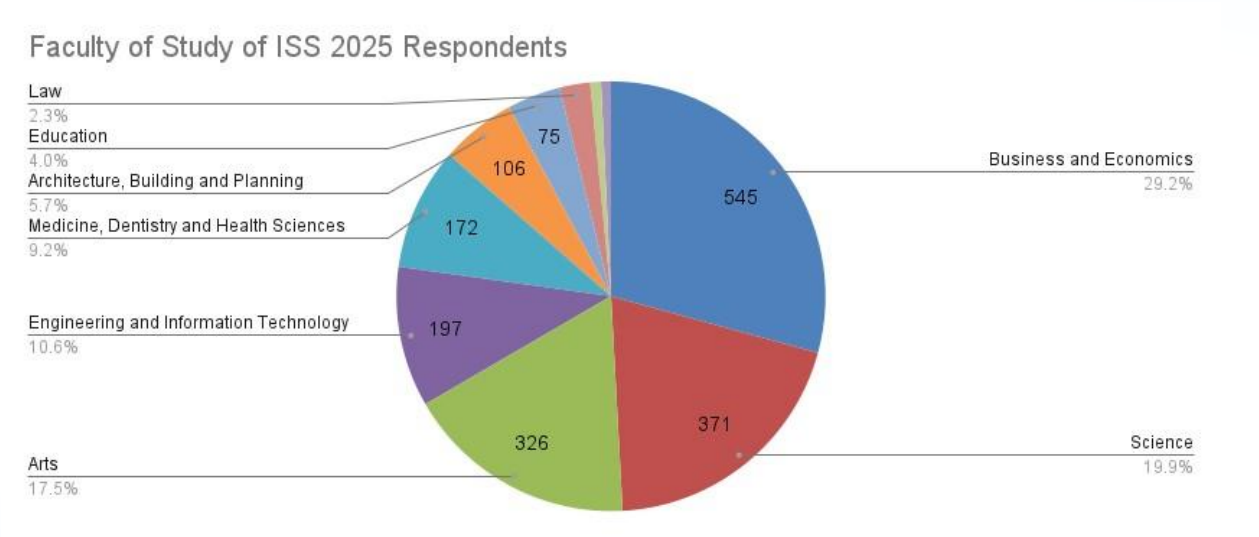
95.2% of the respondents were enrolled as part-time or full-time students in the University while 4.8% of the respondents were exchange students.

Education Level:

50.3% of the respondents were enrolled in a Master's Degree (n=914) and 43.2% in a Bachelor's Degree (n=806). Other degrees made up 7.77% (n=145) of the respondents.

Faculty of Study:

Figure 1. Faculty Distribution of International Students



29.2% of the respondents belonged to the Business and Economics faculty, followed by 19.9% from the Science faculty, 17.5% from the Arts faculty, 10.6% from the Engineering and Infromation Technology faculty. The other faculties include Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, Architecture, Building and Planning, Education, as well as Law.

Gender Identities:

72.1% of the respondents identified as Female, 26% identified as Male, 1.1% identified as Non-Binary and the rest preferred their gender to remain undisclosed.

Sexual Orientation:

The respondents' sexual orientation mainly consisted of 78.9% heterosexual, 6.3% bisexual, 6.2% undisclosed, 2.0% lesbian and 1.4% asexual.

Campus Distribution:

97.7% of respondents were from the University's Parkville campus, with the others from Southbank, Creswick, Burnley, Werribee and Dookie.

Accessibility and Disability:

In terms of accessibility and disability self-identification, 6.0% of the respondents were identified with a disability.

Graduate Student Experience

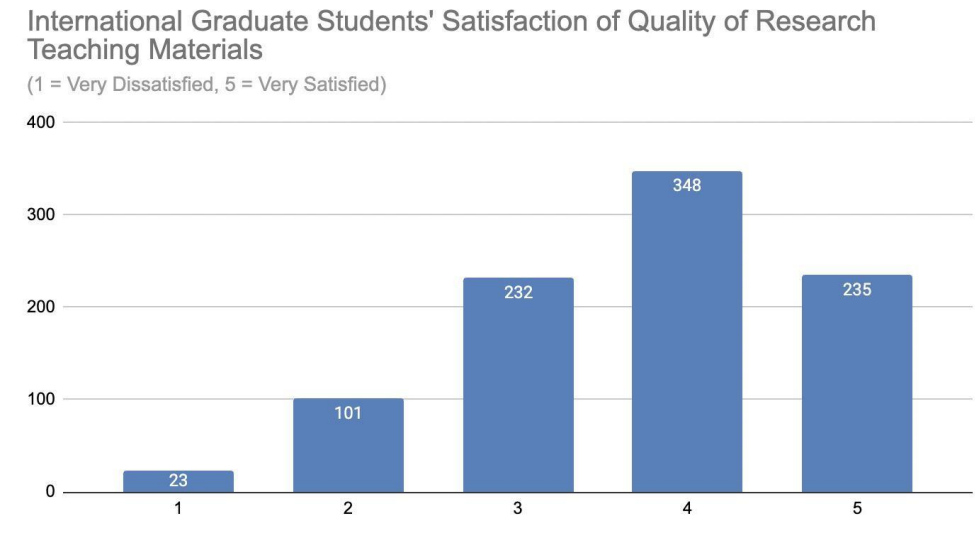
Introduction

This section analyses the experiences of graduate students at the University and the issues that they currently face. A total of 939 students participated in this section, including master's, PhD, and JD students, making up around 50% of ISS 2025 respondents. This section explores their satisfaction with teaching quality, career-related opportunities, networking, and core subject relevancy, while also inviting feedback on potential areas for improvement.

Overall, students reported satisfaction with aspects of their academic experience, including course content and available resources. However, they faced several challenges, such as managing intensive coursework, understanding assessment requirements, and accessing relevant career and professional opportunities. Limited social interactions and networking, as well as the need for more practical, industry-focused experiences, were also highlighted as areas for improvement.

Key Findings

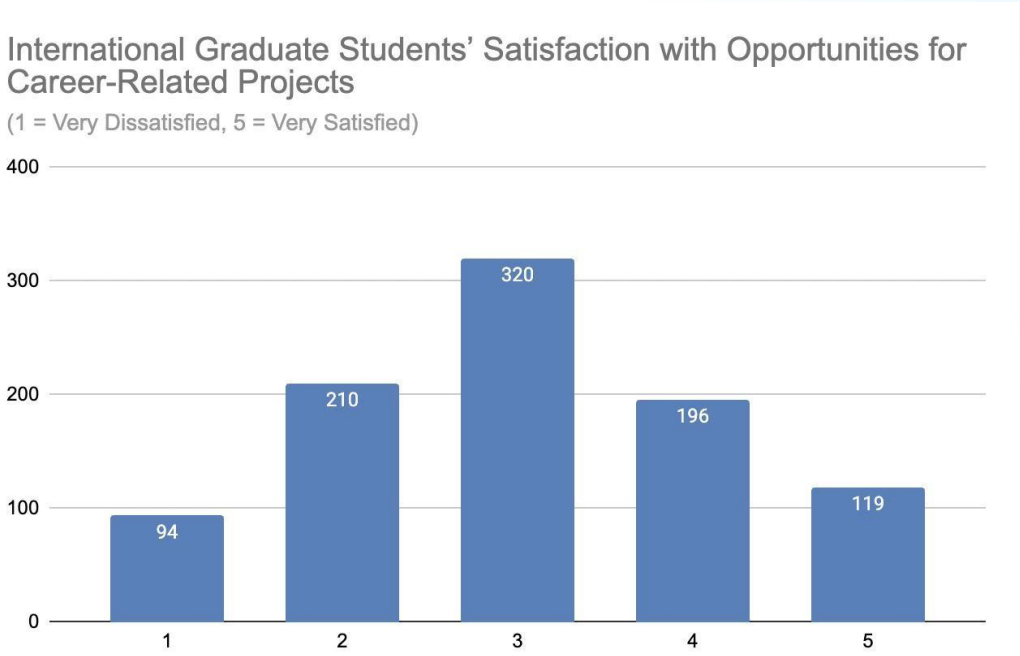
Figure 2. Satisfaction with Quality of Research Teaching Materials



Overall, 62% of graduate students expressed satisfaction with the quality of research teaching materials (25% very satisfied, 37% somewhat satisfied). However, nearly a quarter (24.7%) gave a neutral rating, suggesting that while materials are generally adequate, they

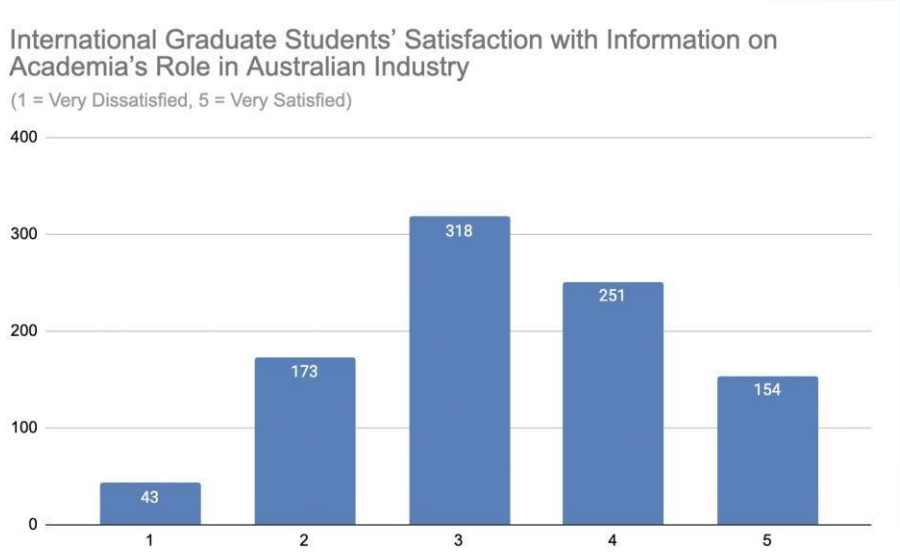
may lack consistency or depth in some cases, or that the quality is unremarkable rather than exceptional. This indicates room for improvement, potentially in enhancing clarity, comprehensiveness, and alignment with each students' research needs.

Figure 3. Satisfaction with Opportunities for Career-Related Projects



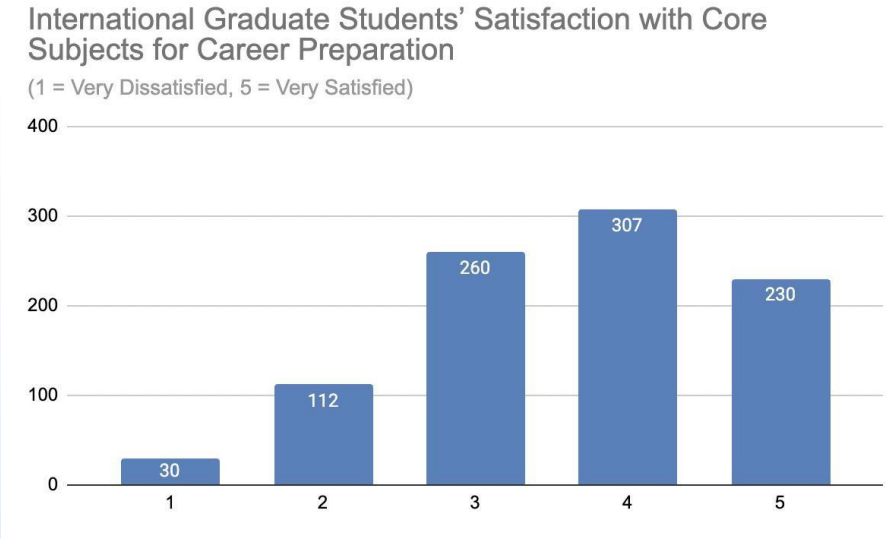
Satisfaction with opportunities for career-related projects is mixed, with the largest share of respondents (n=320) giving a neutral rating of 3. While 315 students expressed satisfaction (with ratings of 4 or 5), a comparable number (n=304) reported dissatisfaction (with ratings of 1 or 2). This suggests that opportunities are perceived as adequate but uneven, with many students feeling that opportunities could be strengthened to enhance career development.

Figure 4. Satisfaction with Information on Academia's Role in the Australian Industry



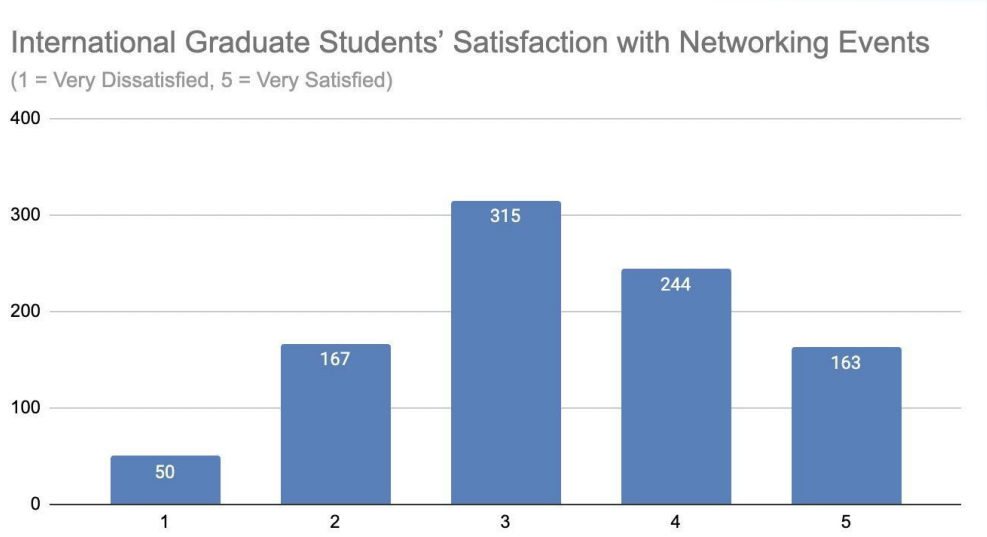
Regarding international graduate students' satisfaction with information on academia's role in the Australian industry, responses were also mixed. While 405 students expressed satisfaction (with ratings of 4 or 5), a larger group of 534 rated their experience as neutral or dissatisfied (with ratings of 1, 2 or 3), with the highest concentration at 3 (n=318). This suggests that although a considerable proportion find the information useful, many perceive it as limited or insufficient, pointing to the need for greater clarity and depth in how this information is presented.

Figure 5. Satisfaction with Core Subjects for Career Preparation



On the relevance of core subjects to career paths, most international graduate students expressed positive views. Over half of respondents (537) rated their subjects as useful (with ratings of 4 or 5), while 260 provided a neutral rating (3). Only a minority (142) indicated dissatisfaction (with ratings of 1 or 2). These results suggest that core subjects are generally seen to be equipping students with essential knowledge and skills.

Figure 6. Satisfaction with Networking Events



Feedback on networking events is largely positive. More than half of respondents (n=1,791) rated the events as helpful (with ratings of 4 or 5), suggesting they provided valuable insights into different careers and pathways. A substantial proportion (n=945) offered a neutral rating (3), while fewer (n=384) expressed dissatisfaction (with ratings of 1 or 2). Overall, the results indicate that networking events are generally well regarded.

Further Insights and Recommendations

Graduate students, especially international students, face challenges securing employment and professional experience. Many students requested more guidance on casual, part-time, and internship opportunities in Melbourne, including clear pathways to approach employers. Despite university job portals, students often struggle to find roles relevant to their fields, and on-campus hiring, at times, may favour external candidates over enrolled students. The university could improve fairness by prioritising its own students and implementing structured, transparent recruitment processes for on-campus roles.

Graduate students highlighted limited exposure to industry and professional environments, with requests for more guidance on placement allocation, supervisor selection for research projects, and clearer pre-enrollment advice on subject requirements and industry-relevant skills. Hosting industry visits, practical workshops, and networking sessions throughout the semester would enhance career readiness for international graduate students.

Some graduates reported that intensive courses and overlapping assessment deadlines create unsustainable workloads. Subjects could be better paced, with earlier releases of learning materials to support preparation. For example, making teaching material such as lecture slides available earlier in the semester would give students more time to familiarise themselves with the material and plan their studies effectively. This way, students have more control over their learning pace, potentially reducing stresses caused by overlapping deadlines by being able to start early. Respondents also expressed a desire for more practical, industry-focused content and less repetitive or redundant material. There also seems to be a demand for more interdisciplinary subjects, technical skill-building courses, and hands-on projects aligned with future employment needs. Moreover, respondents noted a need for better mentorship, clearer advisor expectations, and improved communication about resources such as career services, health, and financial support.

Overall, graduate students are generally satisfied with university facilities and academic resources but consistently expressed challenges in securing professional experience, navigating intensive coursework, and accessing tailored support as international students. To enhance graduate experiences, the university could introduce structured work-integrated learning programs as part of coursework, provide dedicated on-campus part-time and casual roles specifically for graduate and international students, and implement a transparent on-campus hiring process prioritising enrolled students. Additional potential initiatives, as suggested in the responses, could include industry visits and hands-on project collaborations during the semester, mentorship programs connecting students with international alumni, along with smaller interactive classes with attention to language accessibility.

Also, it is important to note that the survey questions encompass all support and do not indicate whether the support/resource in question is from the university or from other resources such as student organizations, clubs and societies, or faculty-specific initiatives. This is something that can be explored further in the next survey.

University Experience – Academic

Introduction

This section explores international students' engagement with teaching staff, course content, learning resources, and academic support, as well as the challenges they encounter in their studies. These findings highlight how students interact with lecturers, tutors, and peers, how effectively they can access and utilise course materials and university facilities, and how well their learning prepares them for professional and postgraduation opportunities. Understanding these factors provides insight into areas where the academic experience can be enhanced, including improving teaching quality, course design, accessibility, and support systems, hence, promoting academic success and student wellbeing while guiding future improvements.

Key Findings: Satisfaction

Feedback on the quality of academic staff is generally positive. A majority of respondents (n=1,111) rated lecturers and tutors as satisfactory or very satisfactory (ratings of 4 or 5), indicating that students found the teaching quality valuable. A substantial proportion (n=490) gave a neutral rating (3), while relatively few (n=210) expressed dissatisfaction (ratings of 1 or 2).

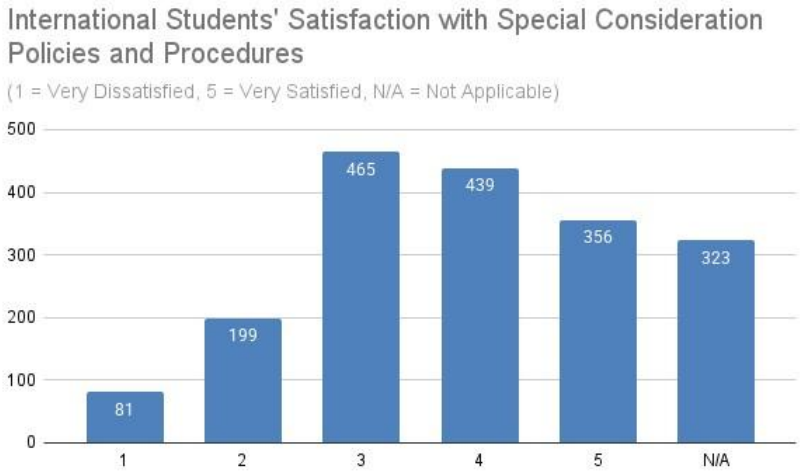
For feedback on the quality of courses, a majority of respondents (n=1,046) rated their course as satisfactory or very satisfactory (ratings of 4 or 5), indicating that students generally find the course content and structure valuable. A notable proportion (n=516) gave a neutral rating (3), while fewer (n=256) expressed dissatisfaction (ratings of 1 or 2).

Student satisfaction with the Learning Management System (LMS) is generally positive. A majority of respondents (n=1,163) rated the LMS as satisfactory or very satisfactory (ratings of 4 or 5), indicating that most students find it useful and effective for supporting their learning. A notable proportion (n=453) gave a neutral rating (3), while fewer (n=193) expressed dissatisfaction (ratings of 1 or 2).

Feedback on the accessibility and inclusiveness of in-person classes is largely positive. A majority of respondents (n=1,101) rated these aspects as satisfactory or very satisfactory (ratings of 4 or 5), indicating that most students find the classes accessible and inclusive. A substantial proportion (n=465) gave a neutral rating (3), while fewer (n=209) expressed dissatisfaction (ratings of 1 or 2).

Feedback on opportunities for engagement with lecturers, tutors, and peers is generally positive. A majority of respondents (n=1,064) rated these opportunities as satisfactory or very satisfactory (ratings of 4 or 5), suggesting that most students feel that they can connect with teaching staff and peers. A notable proportion (n=475) gave a neutral rating (3), while fewer (n=267) expressed dissatisfaction (ratings of 1 or 2). Overall, the results indicate that students are largely satisfied with the opportunities available for engagement.

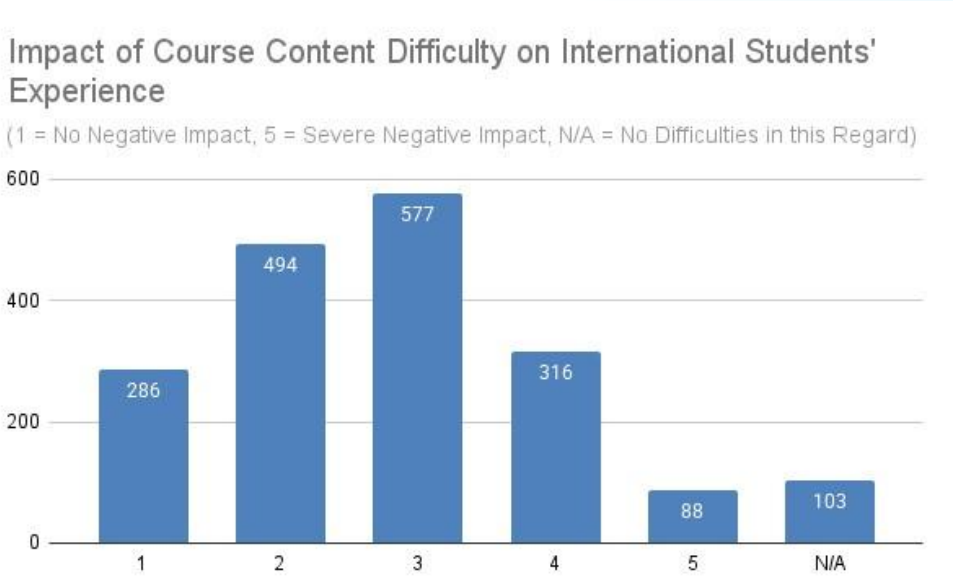
Figure 7. Satisfaction with Special Consideration Policies and Procedures



Feedback on Special Consideration policies and procedures is more mixed compared to other areas. While a considerable proportion of respondents (n=795) rated them as satisfactory or very satisfactory (ratings of 4 or 5), a similar number (n=746) either gave a neutral rating (3) or expressed dissatisfaction (ratings of 1 or 2). A large number of students (n=323) selected “Not Applicable,” indicating that many may not have engaged with these policies. Overall, the results suggest that while some students are satisfied, there is room for improvement in the clarity and accessibility of Special Consideration processes.

Key Findings: Difficulties

Figure 8. Impact of Course Content Difficulty on International Students



Feedback on course content difficulty shows that it has a noticeable impact on international students' experiences. More than half of respondents (n=981) reported a moderate to high impact (ratings of 3 to 5), suggesting that keeping up with course material is a significant challenge for many students. A smaller proportion (n=780) reported little to no impact (ratings of 1 or 2), while 103 had no difficulties in the regard. Overall, the results indicate that course content difficulty is a considerable factor influencing international students' academic experiences.

Feedback on understanding assessment requirements indicates that the impact is moderate for most students. Around one third of respondents (n=715) reported little to no impact (ratings of 1 or 2), while a further 421 students indicated a moderate impact (rating of 3). A smaller group (n=294) reported a high or very high impact (ratings of 4 or 5). An additional 136 students had no difficulties in this regard. In general, the results suggest that while some students face substantial difficulties understanding assessment requirements, for the majority, the impact is relatively limited.

Regarding the impact of difficulties in course planning, feedback is quite moderate for many students. Nearly half of respondents (n=962) reported little to no impact (ratings of 1 or 2), while a further 439 students indicated a moderate impact (rating of 3). A smaller group (n=325) reported a high or very high impact (ratings of 4 or 5). An additional 138 students had no difficulties in this regard. Overall, the results suggest that while some students struggle with course planning, for most the impact is relatively limited.

The lack of opportunities to engage with tutors and lecturers affects some students, though the overall impact is moderate. Around half of respondents (n=998) reported little to no impact (ratings of 1 or 2), while 429 students indicated a moderate impact (rating of 3). A smaller group (n=305) reported a high or very high impact (ratings of 4 or 5). An additional 132 students had no difficulties in this regard. Overall, the results suggest that while limited engagement opportunities do pose challenges for some, most students experience a relatively low impact.

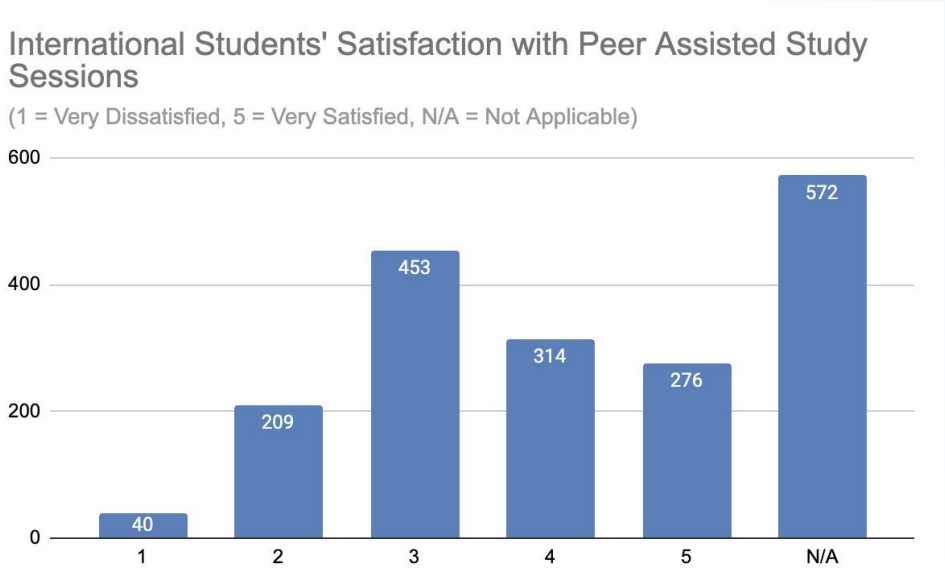
Most students reported minimal difficulties in socialising with peers. Including those who selected "Not Applicable" (n=120), a majority of respondents (ratings of 1, 2, or N/A) indicated little to no impact (n=959). A substantial proportion (n=452) reported a moderate impact (rating of 3), while a smaller group (n=453) experienced a high or very high impact (ratings of 4 or 5). Overall, the results suggest that while some students face challenges in social engagement, most do not experience significant difficulties.

Key Findings: Satisfaction with Academic Support and Services

Feedback on Stop 1 services is generally positive. A majority of respondents (n=1,046) rated their satisfaction as high (ratings of 4 or 5), suggesting that most students value the support provided. A notable proportion (n=485) gave a neutral rating (3), while fewer students (n=282) expressed dissatisfaction (ratings of 1 or 2). An additional 51 selected "Not Applicable."

Students expressed generally positive views about tutor and lecturer consultations. High satisfaction was reported by 994 respondents (ratings of 4 or 5), showing that many students value the opportunities to seek academic support directly from staff. Neutral responses were also common (n=472), while a smaller group (n=198) reported dissatisfaction (ratings of 1 or 2). A further 200 students selected "Not Applicable," suggesting they had not made use of these consultations. These results highlight that consultations are a well-regarded form of support, though there may be scope to encourage more consistent engagement.

Figure 9. Satisfaction with Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS)



Opinions on Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) are more mixed, reflecting both positive experiences and limited engagement. Among those who attended, 590 respondents rated the sessions highly (ratings of 4 or 5), while 453 gave a neutral response (3) and 249 expressed dissatisfaction (ratings of 1 or 2). Notably, a large proportion of students (n=572) selected “Not Applicable,” indicating that many had not participated in PASS. These results suggest that while students who use PASS generally find it beneficial, its reach across the wider student cohort remains limited due to its implementation in only a small number of subjects.

Student feedback on the University Peer Mentoring Program shows a balance of positive experiences and moderate engagement. Among participants, 669 respondents rated the program highly (ratings of 4 or 5), while 461 gave a neutral response (3) and 336 expressed dissatisfaction (ratings of 1 or 2). A significant proportion (n=398) selected “Not Applicable,” indicating that many students had not taken part in the program. Overall, the results suggest that while the program is valued by a large number of students, its reach and impact could be strengthened through broader participation and visibility.

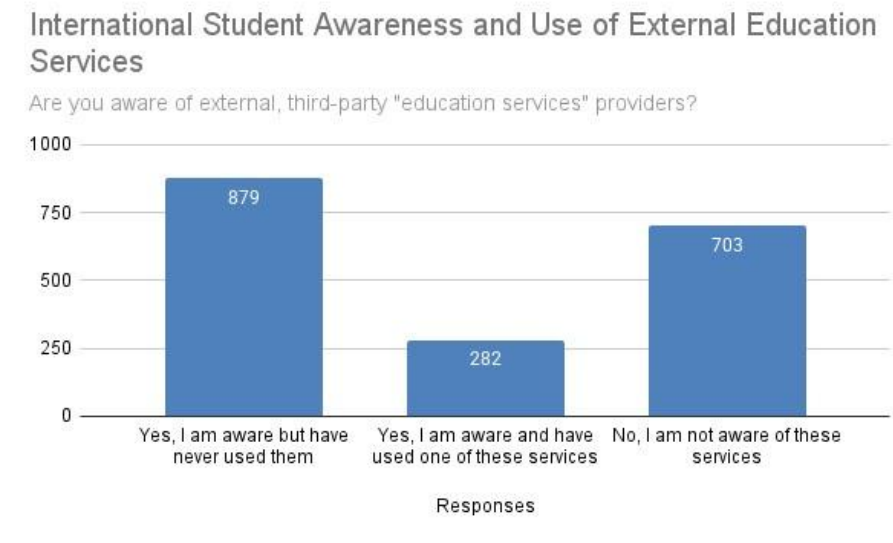
Responses to University Academic Skills services are generally favourable among students who accessed them. A total of 866 respondents gave high ratings (4 or 5), indicating that many found their services useful. Neutral feedback was also common (n=491), while a smaller group (n=213) reported dissatisfaction (ratings of 1 or 2). A considerable number of students (n=294) selected “Not Applicable,” suggesting they had not used these services. Overall, the results show that Academic Skills services are well-regarded, though awareness and uptake could be further improved.

Perceptions of Academic Mentoring are mixed, with both positive feedback and signs of limited engagement. Among those who participated, 655 respondents rated their experience highly (ratings of 4 or 5), while 489 provided a neutral response (3) and 266 expressed dissatisfaction (ratings of 1 or 2). Many students (n=454) selected “Not Applicable,” suggesting that many had not accessed mentoring opportunities. Overall, the results indicate that Academic Mentoring is valued by students who use it, but its overall reach remains restricted.

Student engagement with Academic Adjustment Plans appears limited, though those who use them generally report positive experiences. Among participants, 641 respondents rated the plans highly (ratings of 4 or 5), while 458 gave a neutral response (3) and 229 expressed dissatisfaction (ratings of 1 or 2). A substantial number of students (n=536) selected “Not Applicable,” indicating they had not accessed these plans.

Key Findings: External Education Services (Third-Party)

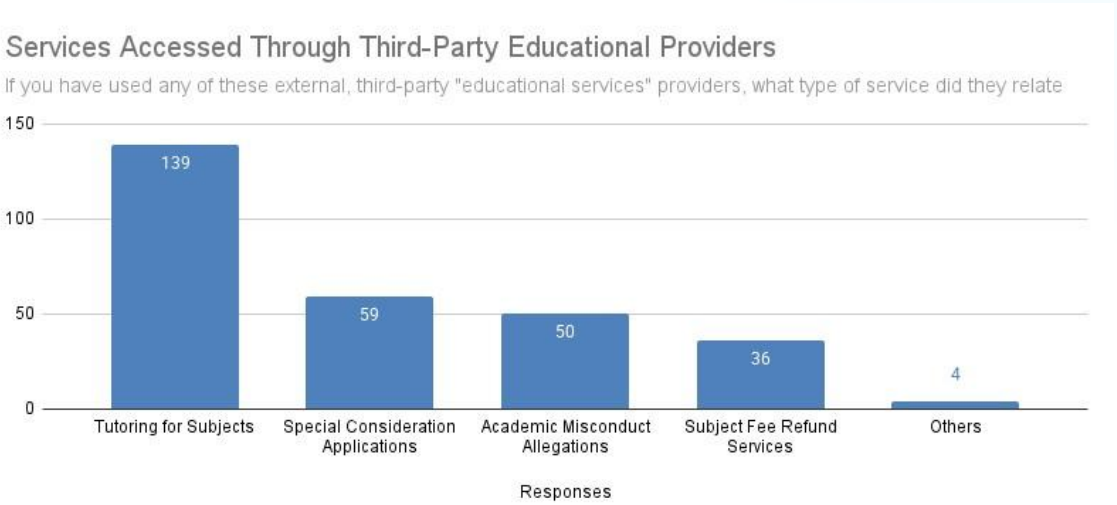
Figure 10. International Student Awareness and Use of External Education Services



Student awareness of external, third-party education services is moderate. A majority of respondents (n=879) indicated that they are aware of these services but have never used them, while 282 students reported both awareness and usage. A sizeable proportion (n=703) were not aware of these services at all.

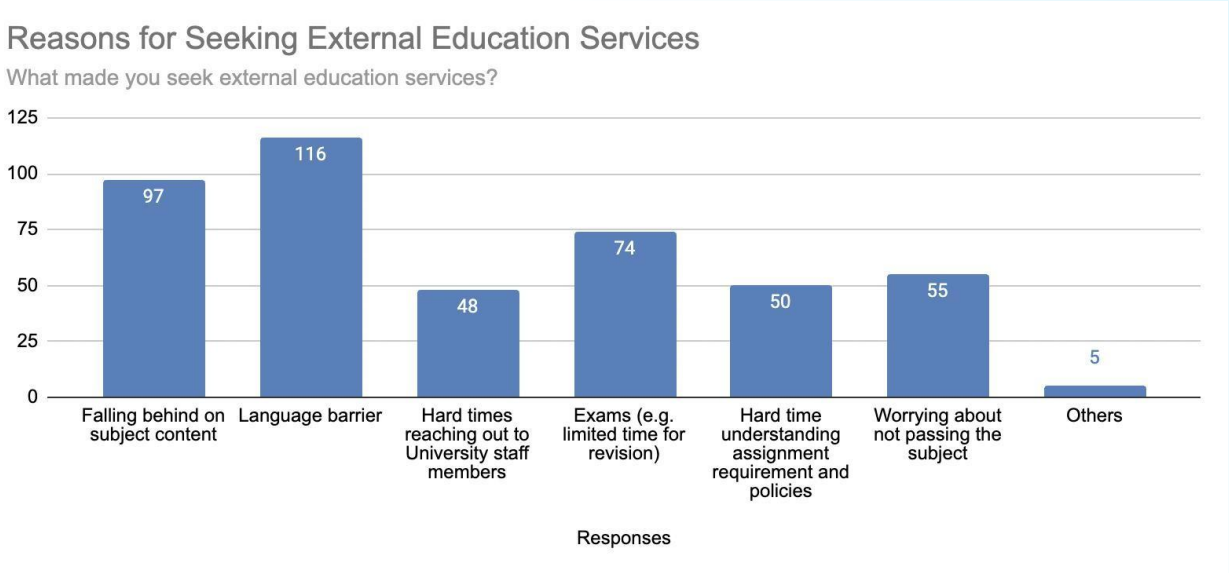
Third-party service usage is also correlated with a lower satisfaction in several academic-related aspects. There is a gap between the average satisfaction of students who access third-party services and those who do not, in regard to university facilities (mean 3.49 [user] vs 4.00 [non-user], p = 2.1e-8), LMS (mean 3.47 vs 3.85, p = 1.2e-5), quality of academic staff (mean 3.44 vs 3.78, p = 7.2e-5), quality of course (mean 3.40 vs 3.67, p = 0.001), and opportunities to engage with lecturers/tutors (mean 3.45 vs 3.70, p = 0.004).

Figure 11. Services Accessed Through Third-Party Educational Providers



Among the students who reported using external, third-party educational services (n=282), the most common type of support accessed was tutoring for subjects (n=139). Other services included special consideration applications (n=59), academic misconduct support (n=50), and subject fee refund services (n=36). A very small number of respondents (n=4) used other types of services. These results suggest that tutoring is the primary driver for engagement with external educational services, while other support services are accessed less frequently.

Figure 12. Reasons for Seeking External Education Services



Among students who used external, third-party educational services, the most common reasons were language barriers (n=116), falling behind on subject content (n=97), and exam pressures (n=74).

Key Findings: Open-Ended Responses

Analysis of open-ended responses reveals several recurring themes that consistently impact international students' academic experience at the University of Melbourne.

Language barriers emerge as the most frequently cited challenge, with students reporting difficulties in understanding lecturers with unfamiliar accents, participating in group discussions, and communicating effectively with peers and staff.

Academic writing and research skills represent another major concern, with many students requesting more support for essay writing, citation practices, and understanding assignment expectations.

Financial pressures appear repeatedly, with students citing high tuition fees, expensive living costs, and limited part-time work opportunities that force them to balance employment with studies. Social isolation and difficulty making connections, particularly with domestic students, is mentioned consistently, often compounded by cultural differences and self-segregation patterns. Infrastructure and service access issues are also prominent, including overcrowded libraries, limited study spaces, a lack of 24/7 study spaces, difficulties booking support services, and problems with course planning and timetabling systems.

Additionally, students frequently report concerns about academic integrity issues (witnessing cheating and essay services), inconsistent teaching quality, and the challenge of navigating complex university bureaucracy across multiple departments and offices.

Correlational Findings (Academic Support Services with Career Support Services)

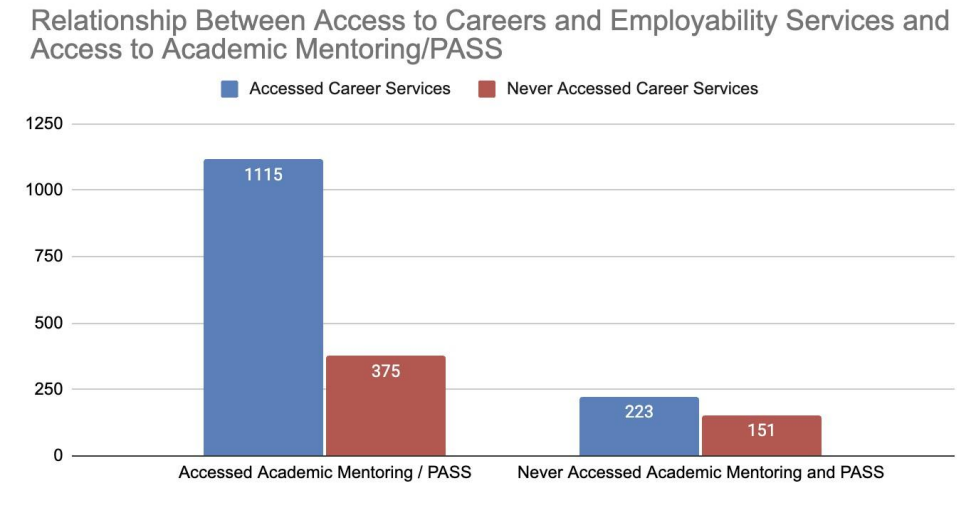
Hypothesis:

Students who do not engage in academic mentoring or PASS sessions are also less likely to have accessed career mentoring or one-to-one advising services.

Findings:

The analysis reveals a significant pattern of disengagement across multiple support services at the University of Melbourne:

Figure 13. Relationship Between Access to Careers and Employability Services and Access to Academic Mentoring/Pass



- Academic Mentoring/PASS vs Career Mentoring Access: $X^2 = 3.3824$, $p = 7.571e09$ (significant, Pearson's Chi-Square testing)
- Students who have never accessed academic mentoring or PASS sessions were significantly more likely to have never accessed career mentoring or one-to-one advising (*n=1864*).

- This positive correlation indicates that disengagement is not categorical but spans across different types of university support services.
- This means students who have not used either academic mentoring or PASS are about twice as likely to also never have used careers services compared to students who have used at least one of these academic support services.

Interpretation:

These results suggest that student engagement with support services follows a pattern rather than being isolated to specific service types. Students who disengage from academic support systems (Academic Mentoring and PASS) tend to be similarly disengaged with career-focused services (career mentoring, advising). This indicates that disengagement is not limited to particular categories of support but represents a broader reluctance or barrier to accessing university services altogether. The correlation suggests that students who struggle to connect with one type of support system face similar challenges accessing other forms of institutional assistance.

Correlational Findings (Academic Disconnection with Discrimination/ Exclusion Experiences)

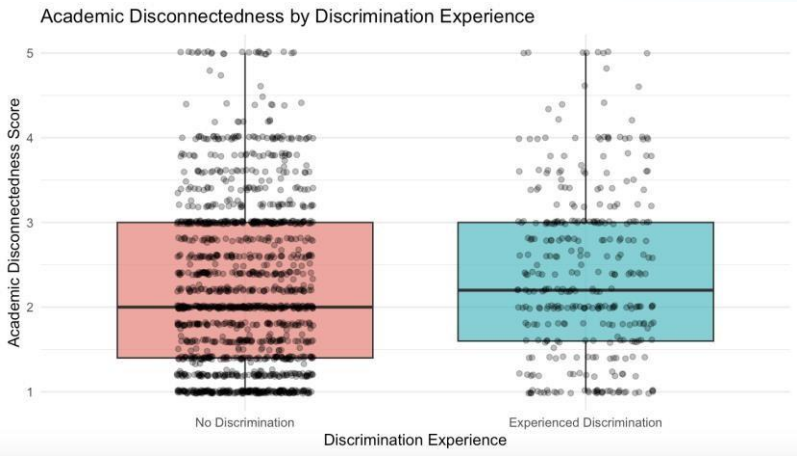
Hypothesis:

Students who report experiencing discrimination or exclusion on campus are more likely to feel academically disconnected.

Key Findings:

The analysis demonstrates a significant positive relationship between experiences of discrimination/exclusion and academic disconnection:

Figure 14. Relationship Between Academic Disconnectedness and Experiences of Discrimination



- Academic Disconnection vs Discrimination/Exclusion: *r = 0.091 p = 1.168e-04* (significant, Pearson's Correlation Coefficient).
- Students reporting higher levels of discrimination or exclusion experiences showed significantly greater academic disconnection including lower preparedness and fewer engagement opportunities (n=1786).
- The correlation indicates that among various potential factors affecting academic connection, discrimination emerges as a measurable contributor.
- This relationship suggests that addressing discrimination could have dual benefits for both inclusivity and academic engagement.

Interpretation:

These findings confirm that experiences of discrimination or exclusion are not isolated social issues but directly correlate with students' academic connection and engagement. Students who face discriminatory treatment appear to experience less academic preparedness and reduced participation in engagement opportunities. This correlation indicates that discrimination creates barriers to academic success beyond its immediate social impact, potentially creating a cycle where excluded students become increasingly disconnected from their academic experience.

Recommendations:

To address the broader pattern of disengagement identified in Correlation 1 (Academic Support Services with Career Support Services), the University should enhance measures to increase awareness of academic support (Academic Mentoring, PASS) and career services (Career Drop-ins, Mentoring programs). In addition, given that Correlation 2 (Academic Disconnection with Discrimination/ Exclusion Experiences) demonstrates how discrimination experiences contribute to academic disconnection, addressing discrimination could simultaneously help resolve the wider disengagement issue. Reducing instances of discrimination through practical anti-racism classroom guidelines, events that destigmatize help-seeking behavior, and proactive bystander intervention training could help alleviate both academic disconnection and the broader pattern of service disengagement.

More in-depth recommendations for promoting inclusivity can be found in Section 8. Health, Safety, and Inclusivity.

Further Insights and Recommendations

The findings highlight that while international students are generally satisfied with teaching staff, course content, and support services, there remain several areas where improvements could meaningfully enhance their academic experience. Addressing these challenges requires a combination of academic and structural initiatives.

First, teaching quality and assessment practices could be strengthened by improving the consistency of tutors and lecturers, particularly with regard to communication and marking standards. Providing clearer assignment expectations, opportunities to review exam papers, and access to practice assessments would help students better understand requirements and build confidence. Increased investment in training staff to manage diverse classrooms and support students from varied language backgrounds would also reduce barriers to participation.

Second, learning resources and facilities should be expanded to meet growing demand. Students reported overcrowded libraries and study spaces, as well as limited access to specialised equipment and software. Extending library opening hours, increasing the availability of quiet and group study areas, and modernising teaching and learning spaces would make resources more accessible. At the same time, improvements to lecture recording quality and the streamlining of digital learning systems would enhance the reliability and usability of core study tools.

Third, academic support services could be broadened and promoted more actively to increase awareness and engagement. While most services are valued, their reach remains limited. Expanding these programs, embedding them more consistently across courses, and increasing their visibility at key transition points such as orientation would help students access support earlier and more effectively. Similarly, clearer communication of Special Consideration policies and simplified application procedures would make essential support more equitable and transparent.

Together, these recommendations aim to enhance the quality and accessibility of academic support, promote inclusivity, and strengthen the overall learning environment for international students. By addressing these barriers, the university can improve student success, wellbeing, and engagement while reinforcing its reputation as a welcoming and supportive institution for international cohorts.

University Experience – Social & Welfare

Introduction

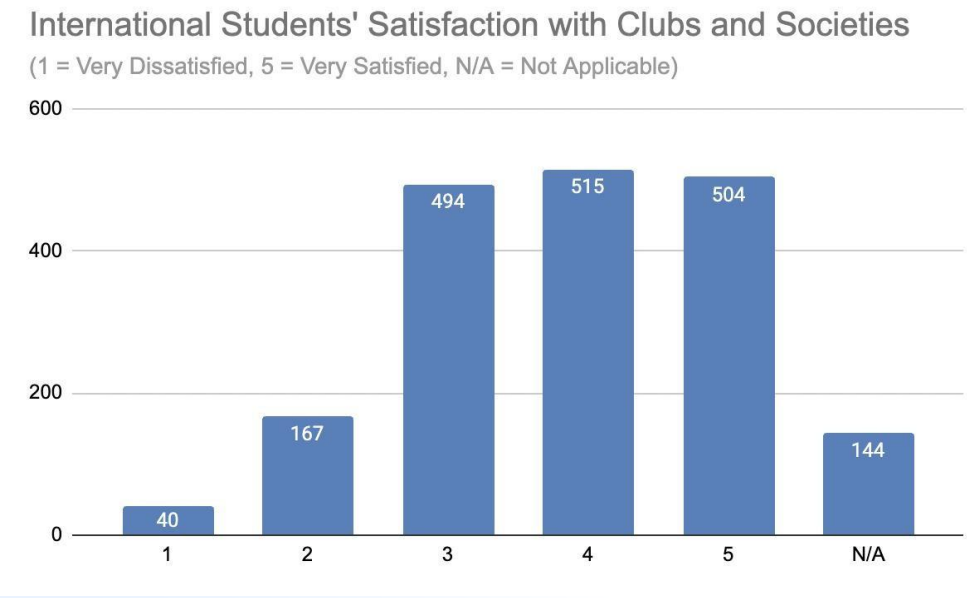
The Social and Welfare experience greatly impacts the university experience. This section explores student's engagement with the facilities, opportunities for social engagement and which areas students struggle with the most. These findings highlight how students connect with peers, how they participate in activities and which facilities are the most accessible and utilized. Understanding these factors allows insight into how the social and welfare experience can be used to enhance student wellbeing, promote belonging and provide direction for future improvements.

For University facilities, it was found that 37.7% of students were very satisfied while 1.5% were very dissatisfied. 1.8% of international students had not accessed these facilities.

30.5% of students were very satisfied with the outdoor study areas at the University of Melbourne while 2.1% were very dissatisfied. 5.7% of these students had not accessed the outdoor study areas.

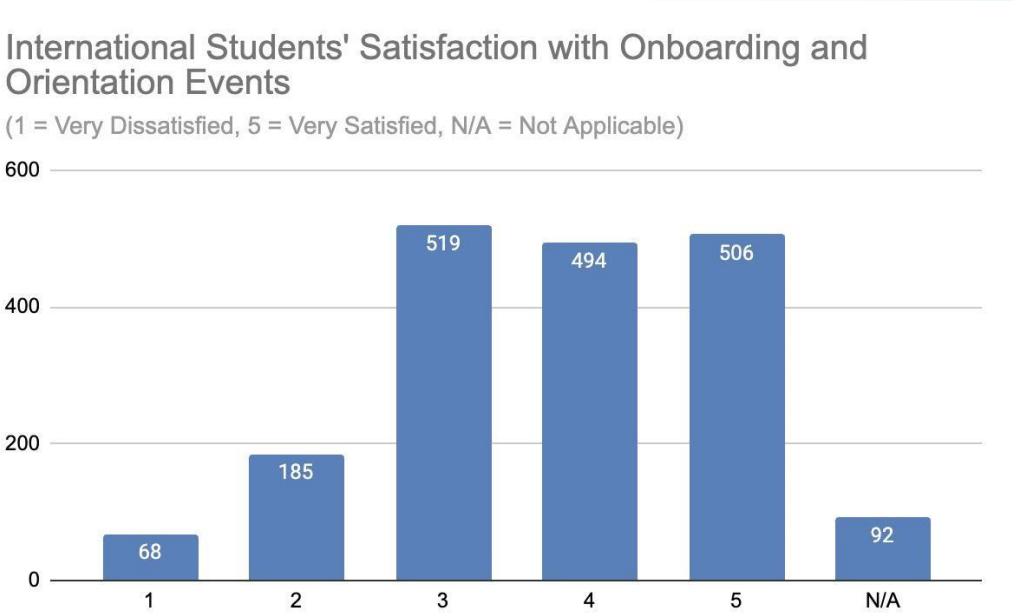
Key Findings

Figure 15. Satisfaction Ratings for Clubs and Societies



With regards to clubs and societies, 27.0% were very satisfied, 27.6% rated them a 4 on a 5-point scale and 26.5% rated them a 3. 7.7% of students had not accessed and participated in any clubs or societies.

Figure 16. Satisfaction Ratings for Onboarding and Orientation Events

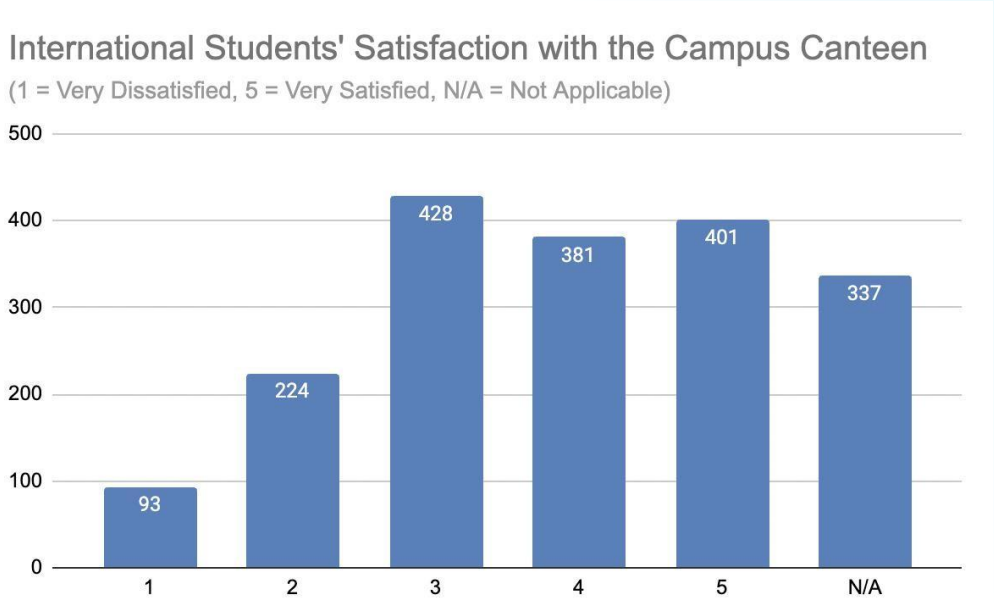


International students most commonly rated Onboarding and Orientation events at the university a 3 on a 5-point scale (27.8%). 27.1% of students were very satisfied and rated them a 5 and 26.5% of students rated them a 4. 4.9% of students did not participate in Onboarding and Orientation events.

Additionally, international students most commonly rated kitchen and dining spots at the university a 3 on a 5-point scale (26.6%). 23.5% of students were very satisfied and rated them a 5 and 26.2% of students rated them a 4. 9.6% of students had not participated in Onboarding and Orientation events.

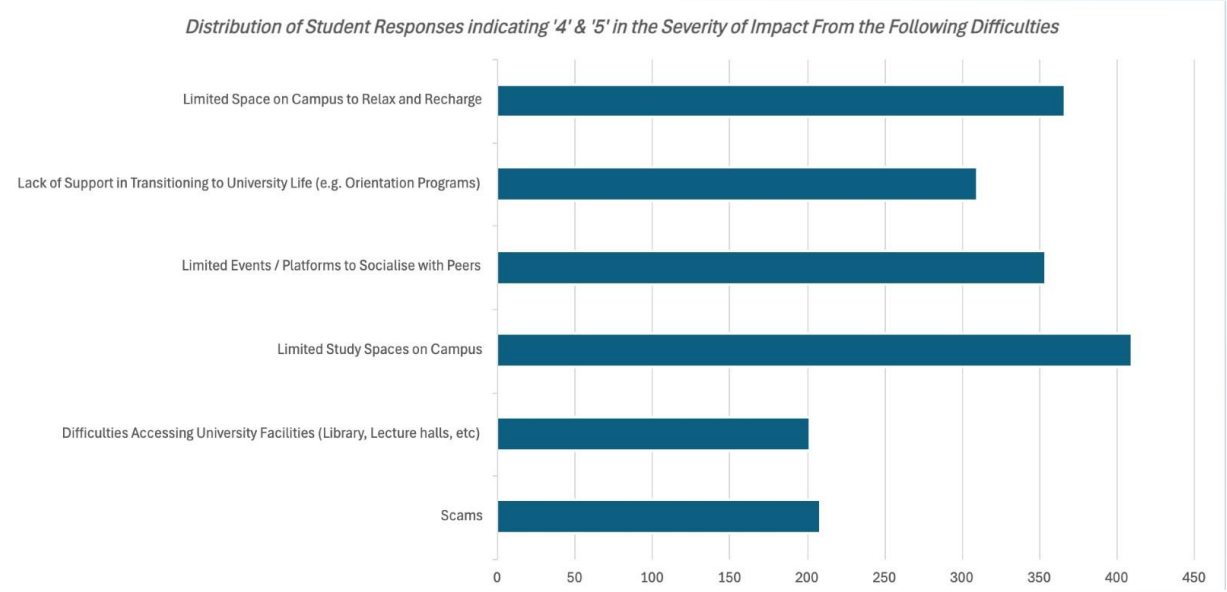
The food and beverage options available at the University of Melbourne were most commonly rated a 3 on a 5-point scale (27.7%), followed by a rating of 4 (26.0%). 25% of students were very satisfied and rated it a 5 while 4.0% of students were very dissatisfied and rated food and beverage options a 1. 3.6% of the students had not accessed food and beverage options on campus.

Figure 17. Satisfaction Ratings for the Campus Canteen



The newly opened Campus Canteen was rated a 5 on a 5-point scale by 21.5%, a 4 by 20.4% and a 3 by 23% of students. A large 18.1% of students had not accessed the campus canteen yet and 5.0% of students were very dissatisfied with the Campus Canteen, rating it a 1.

Figure 18. Difficulties with the Greatest Impact on Students



The most common difficulty experienced by international students at the University of Melbourne was the limited study spaces on campus (n=413), followed by limited space on campus to relax and recharge (n=369) and limited events or platforms to socialize with peers (n=352). Out of the difficulties listed, smaller numbers of students struggled with accessing university facilities (n=201) and scams (n=208).

Key Findings: Open-Ended Responses

Student responses reveal several social and welfare challenges that significantly impact daily university life. Food security and accessibility emerge as dominant concerns, with students consistently reporting long queues for free food programs, limited variety in affordable campus dining options, and insufficient halal and vegetarian choices.

Campus infrastructure issues are frequently mentioned, including inadequate study spaces during peak periods, overcrowded libraries with insufficient noise control, dirty or poorly maintained toilets, and lack of proper rest areas or napping spaces. Safety and security concerns appear regularly, with students reporting bike theft even in secure campus areas, concerns about personal safety, and harassment from non-university affiliated groups on campus.

Students particularly highlight social isolation challenges, expressing difficulty connecting with domestic students, limited opportunities for cross-cultural interaction, and feeling excluded from mainstream campus social life.

Additional recurring themes include high accommodation costs, inadequate kitchen facilities in graduate spaces, poor building access on weekends, technology issues with booking systems and campus Wi-Fi, lack of affordable recreational facilities, insufficient mental health support capacity, and communication gaps regarding available services and events. Students also frequently mention practical concerns such as expensive student ID replacement fees, inadequate charging stations in study areas, and difficulties navigating university bureaucracy when seeking support.

Recommendations

When asked what students struggled with the most, the most common issue concerned food and dining. Likewise, when asked which area they would like to see improved the most, the most common answer again was in food and dining. To increase the range of affordable food options on campus, the University should look towards providing more dietary-friendly options across the campus, expanding on the work that has been done at the Campus Canteen. This expansion of dietary-friendly options should also be implemented in the University's Food Relief programs where students have also requested mandatory halal certification for halal food. Furthermore, many students were seeking more microwaves, coffee machines, and student kitchens to avoid long wait times at mealtimes. Since there are already many microwaves within the Student Pavilion Precinct, distributing them throughout the campus may provide a better approach to decrease wait times.

Creating a fulfilling social experience, especially for international students, should be of importance to the University. Creating and holding more intercultural events, building upon the events held for significant cultural holidays, alongside smaller and more casual intercultural events may promote the social experience for these students. Furthermore, more promotion of clubs and societies across the semester may increase participation and consequently, increase satisfaction and social welfare experiences.

Safe spaces away from discrimination are important to students at University of Melbourne. Creating more spaces such as dedicated prayer rooms, women's rooms, disability rooms will build upon a safer and more inclusive community where everyone feels a sense of belonging.

Furthermore, to increase the limited supply of study spaces and relaxation spaces on campus, under-utilized rooms may be converted into temporary bookable rooms when not used. During seasons of good weather, increasing outdoor study spaces with shelter from the sun will increase the number of available study spaces. While this is occurring on a small scale, increasing the rooms that are available and promoting this information with flyers to increase awareness may help tackle the limited study spaces available for students, increasing the proportion of students studying on campus, interacting with peers, allowing for a greater university experience.

Additional requests include subsidized gym memberships and sports facilities, expanded mental health support beyond current Counselling and Psychological Services limitations, more affordable club memberships, and practical life skills workshops covering topics like budgeting and scam prevention.

Overall, students were generally satisfied with the different facilities that are provided while at university but still expressed concerns regarding food, safe spaces, and socializing. To further improve their social and welfare experience, the University must continue to make changes, building on the momentum from the campus canteen.

Work and Employment

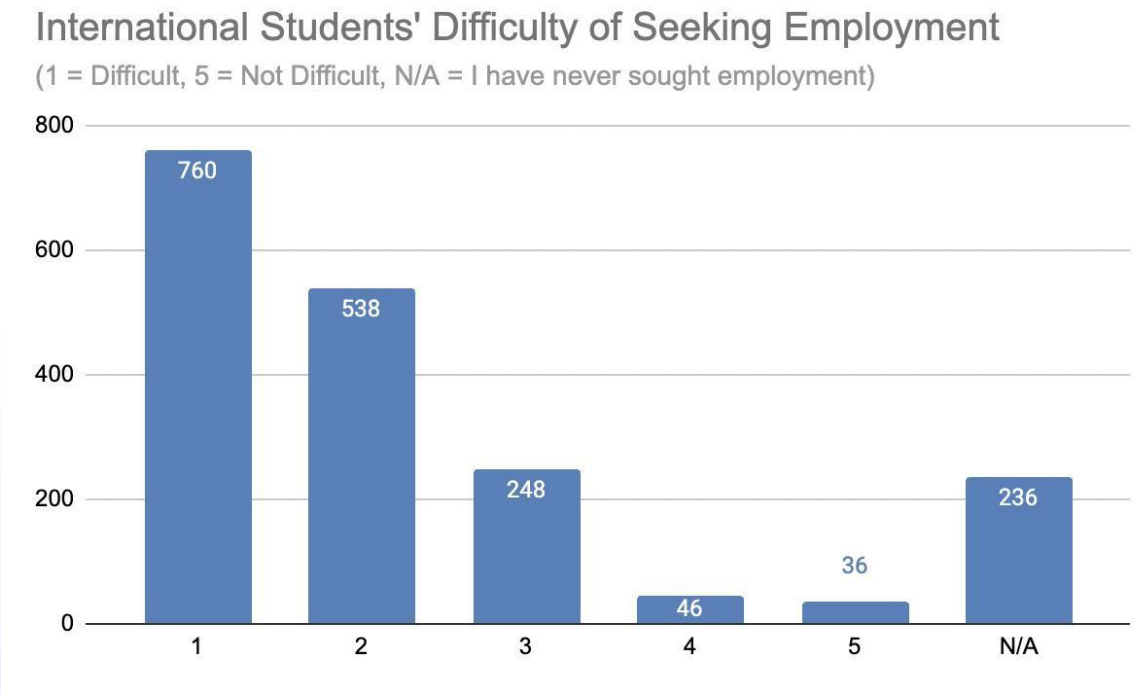
Introduction

Work and employment form a vital part of international students' experiences, shaping both their financial stability and future career pathways. This section examines how students at the University of Melbourne engage with career services, the challenges they face in securing fair and stable work, and the degree to which existing programs support their employability.

This section highlights patterns of service use, levels of awareness around workplace rights, and the barriers students encounter when seeking employment. The analysis also considers the impact of personalized services, mentoring, and degree related opportunities, alongside the effectiveness of broader initiatives such as fairs and workshops, to provide insights into how the University can strengthen its support for international student employment outcomes.

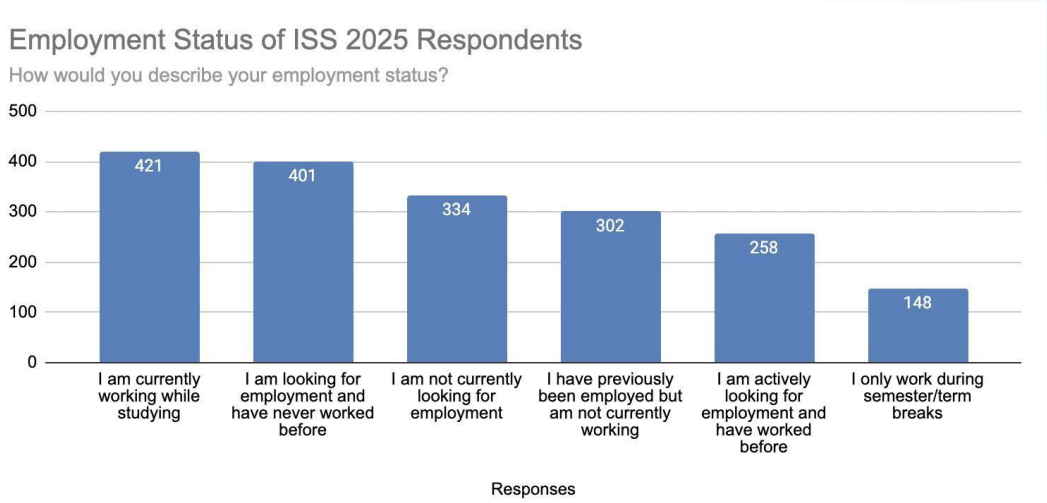
Key Findings: General

Figure 19. Difficulty Ratings for International Students Seeking Employment



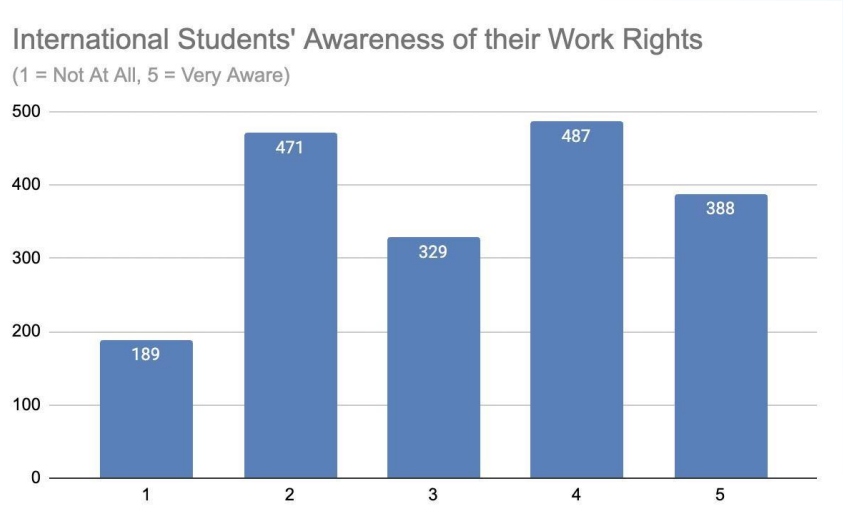
This graph highlights that most international students find it difficult to seek employment. The largest group (n=760) rated difficulty as 1 - very difficult, followed by 538 students at 2, showing that barriers to finding work are widespread. Only a small number (n=82) reported little to no difficulty, while 236 students indicated they had never sought employment. The majority face substantial barriers in securing employment, pointing to systemic challenges in access to fair job opportunities.

Figure 20. Employment Status of International Students



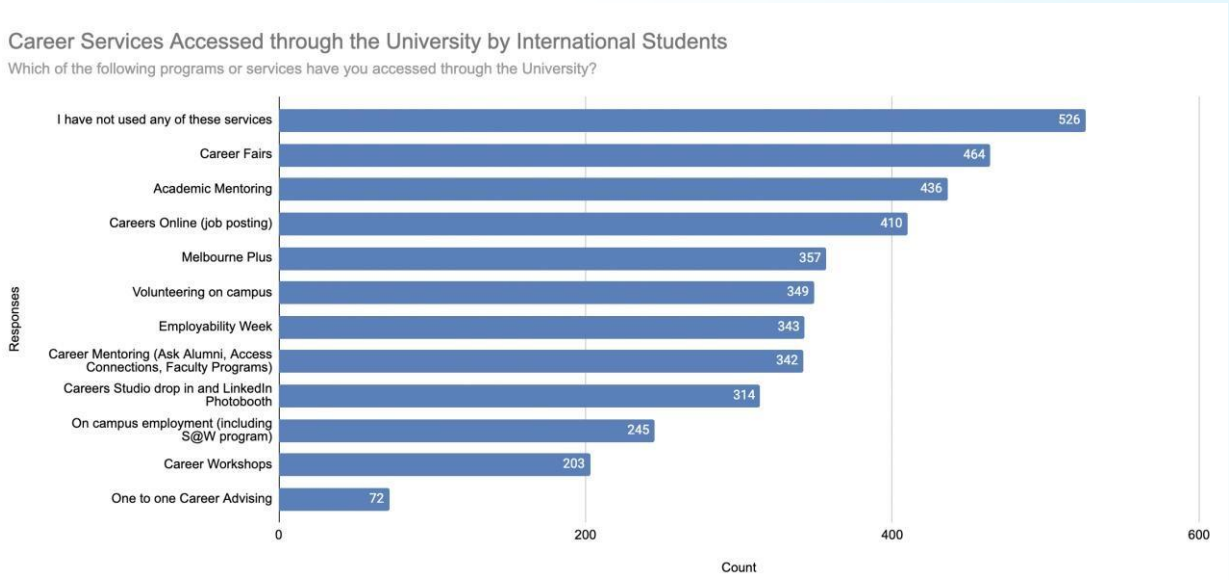
The employment status graphs show a diverse employment landscape, with students currently working, seeking work, or not working at all. The largest group (n=421) are currently working while studying, showing how common part-time work is for students. A significant number (n=401) are seeking employment for the first time, suggesting strong demand for entry-level opportunities and support. Meanwhile, 334 students reported that they are not currently looking for work. International students are highly engaged in the workforce, but job stability and continuity appear limited.

Figure 21. Ratings of Awareness of International Students' Work Rights



International students' awareness of their work rights is mixed but leans toward moderate to high levels. A significant number rated themselves as somewhat aware (n=800), while 487 students rated 4 and 388 rated 5, suggesting strong awareness. However, 189 students selected 1, highlighting a vulnerable group with very low awareness. Despite progress, a sizeable portion of students lack adequate knowledge of their rights, leaving them at risk of exploitation.

Figure 22. Career Services International Students Have Accessed



This graph highlights three key insights into international students' use of career services at the University of Melbourne. Firstly, the largest group (n=526) reported not using any career services, suggesting a need for greater awareness and accessibility. Secondly, career fairs (n=464) and academic mentoring (n=436) are the most popular services, showing strong demand for structured guidance and networking opportunities. Lastly, personalized support such as one-to-one career advising (n=72) is least accessed, indicating either low awareness or barriers to engagement.

Key Findings: Impact

Figure 23. Extent of Impact of International Student Internship Fair on Students

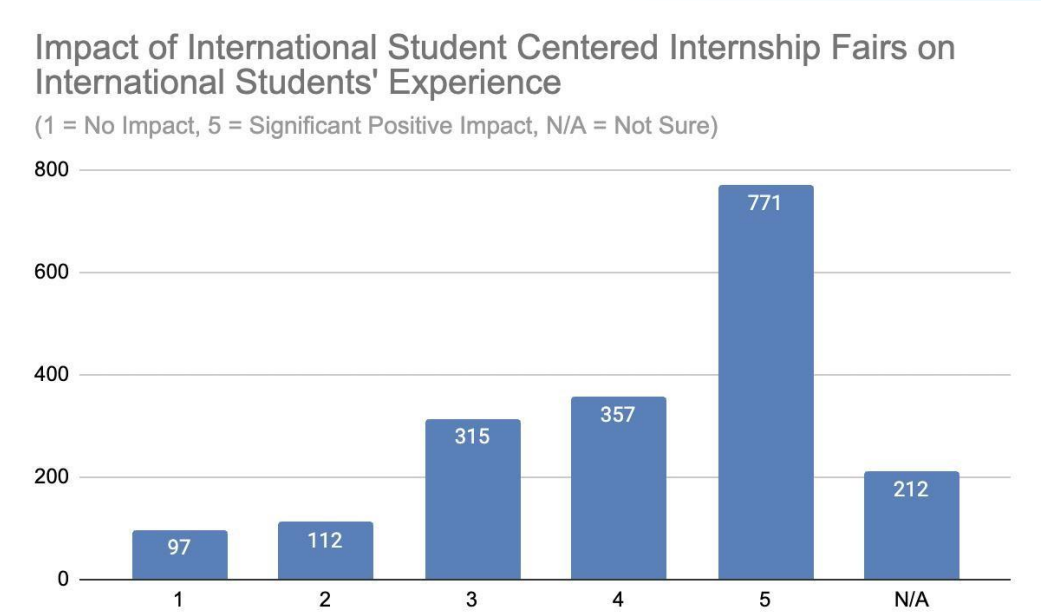
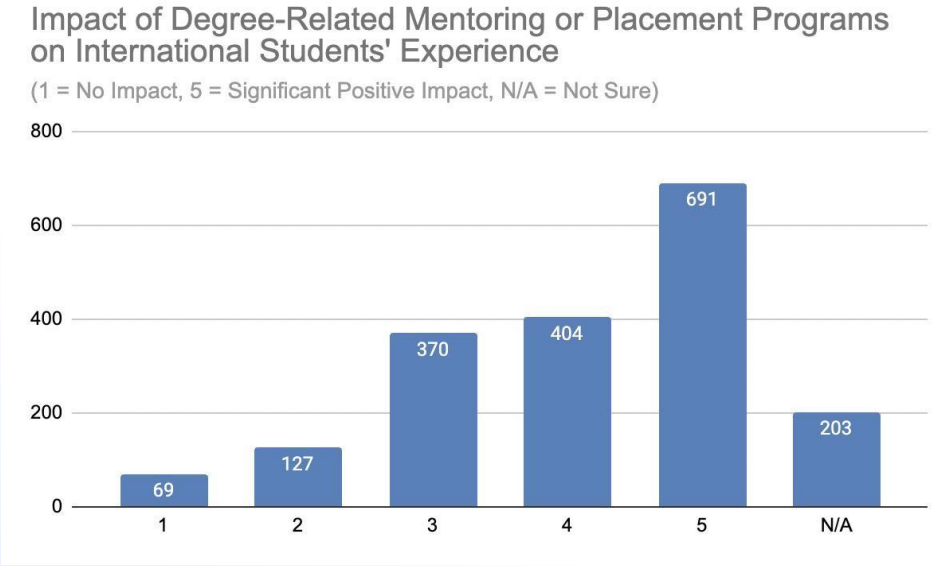


Figure 24. Extent of Impact of Mentoring or Placement Programs on Students



The survey shows that degree-related mentoring and placement programs, employability workshops, and international student-centered internship fairs all have a strong positive impact on students' experiences. Mentoring and placements were rated highly by most students (n=1095), while employability workshops also proved valuable, with (n=549) rating them as highly impactful and (n=458) as positive, though some (n=420) saw only moderate benefits.

Among all initiatives, internship fairs tailored to international students stood out as the most impactful, with n=771 rating them at the highest level. Online communities were also rated strongly (n=627 at level 5, n=443 at level 4), highlighting the importance of peer-driven support in navigating employment. Overall, the findings suggest that while all initiatives are beneficial, internship fairs and mentoring provide the greatest impact, supported by workshops and online networks as complementary pathways.

Key Findings: Satisfaction

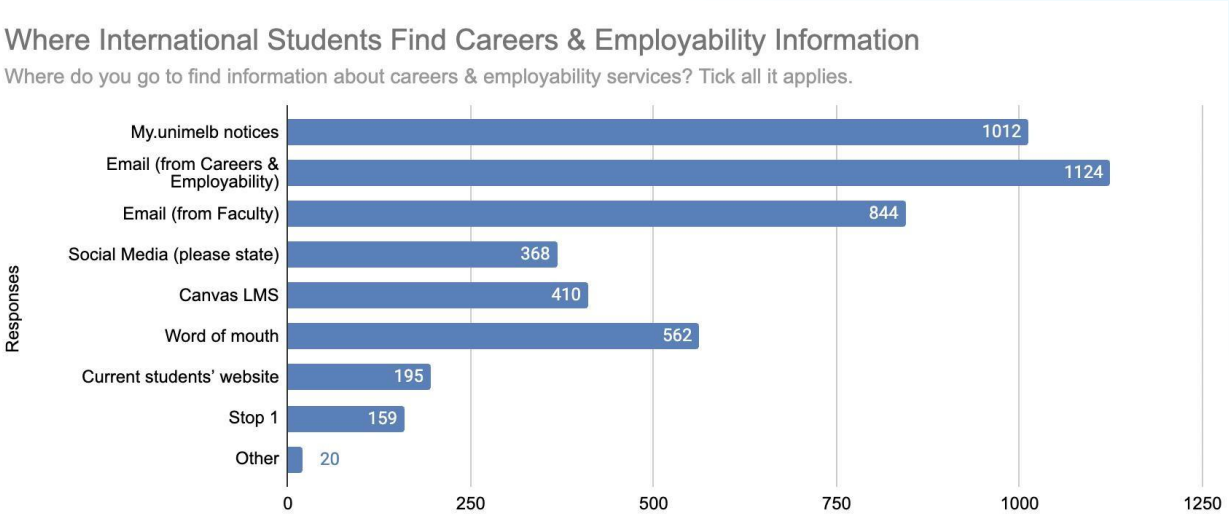
The survey shows that satisfaction with university career and employability services is generally mixed, with most ratings clustering around the mid-level (3). Academic Mentoring (n=433), Career Fairs (n=401), Career Mentoring (n=392), Career Workshops (n=397), Careers Online (n=425), Employability Week (n=404), Melbourne Plus (n=410), and Career Advice Drop-In/LinkedIn Photobooths (n=401) all recorded their highest responses at moderate satisfaction, suggesting that while these services are useful, students are not strongly satisfied.

At the higher end, a smaller but notable group expressed satisfaction, with many services receiving between 180–270 responses at level 5 (very satisfied). Volunteering opportunities (n=260), Melbourne Plus (n=212), Careers Online (n=201), and Employability Week (n=196) were among those showing positive outcomes. However, dissatisfaction was also present, as each service recorded over 150 responses at ratings of 1–2, indicating that accessibility, quality, or effectiveness may not be meeting expectations for all students.

A key finding is that across all services, the largest group of respondents marked N/A, ranging from (n=670) Careers Online to (n=948) One-on-One Career Advising. This suggests that many international students have not engaged with these services at all. The gap between engagement and satisfaction points to both low awareness and limited utilisation, with students often unaware of or not accessing the full range of career and employability opportunities available to them. While the services provide some value, student

satisfaction remains moderate overall, and non-participation is the biggest barrier. Strengthening promotion, tailoring services to student needs, and ensuring clearer pathways to engagement are critical for improving outcomes.

Figure 25. Platforms That Students Access Careers and Employability Information



The most common sources of information are emails from Careers & Employability (n=1,124) and my.unimelb notices (n=1,012), followed by faculty emails (n=844). Informal channels also play a role, with word of mouth (n=562), Canvas LMS (n=410), and social media (n=368) being notable. Far fewer students rely on the Current Students' website (n=195), Stop 1 (n=159), or other sources (n=20). Insight: Students primarily depend on direct communication channels like email and university notices, while formal platforms and support centers remain underutilized.

Correlation (Work and Employment with University Support Services)

Hypothesis:

Students who attend career fairs or workshops have higher employment rates (or internships secured).

Key Findings:

The analysis shows that personalized career services significantly improve employment outcomes for international students:

- Career Advice Drop-In: $r = 0.076$, $p = 0.001$ (significant, Pearson's Correlation Coefficient).
    - Users had an employment rate of 55.1% vs 45.0% for non-users (+10.1 percentage points).
- Career Mentoring: $r = 0.078$, $p = 0.001$ (significant, Pearson's Correlation Coefficient).
    - Users had an employment rate of 55.0% vs 44.9% for non-users (+10.1 percentage points).
- Total Services Used: $r = 0.060$, $p = 0.010$ (significant, Pearson's Correlation Coefficient). ○ Greater number of services used correlated with a higher likelihood of employment.

By contrast, **group or event-based services** (career fairs, workshops) did not show statistically significant correlations with employment outcomes ($p > 0.05$), despite high attendance rates.

Interpretation:

These results suggest that **personalized, high-touch services** (Career Advice Drop-In and Career Mentoring) provide measurable benefits, with about a 10-percentage point increase in employment outcomes. The significance of results ($p < 0.01$) confirms that the positive effects are not due to chance. Personalized services deliver impact through one-on-one guidance, deeper engagement, and continuous support. In contrast, **career fairs and workshops** appear less effective in directly improving employment, likely due to their one-off nature and lack of structured follow-up. However, they may still be rated as highly impactful by students because they offer broad exposure to employers, networking opportunities, and immediate access to industry insights.

These results suggest that students who used personalized, high-touch services (Career Advice Drop-In and Career Mentoring) were 10% more likely to be employed than those who did not use them. The significance of results ($p < 0.01$) confirms that the positive effects are not due to chance. Personalized services deliver impact through one-on-one guidance, deeper engagement, and continuous support. In contrast, career fairs and workshops appear less effective in directly improving employment, likely due to their one-off nature and lack of structured follow-up.

However, this does not undermine that they are still rated as highly impactful by students (n=771 for significant positive impact, as seen in Figure 15). These insights, that appears contradictory, one indicating that career fairs have strong positive impact and the other indicating that personalized services such as Career Advice Drop-In and Career Mentoring show stronger measurable links to employment outcomes, highlights the nuance of this topic and difficulties in ascertaining specific cause-and-effect relationships. This suggests that future surveys should consider defining what "impact" means, as its interpretation may vary across students. For some, impact may refer to immediate outcomes such as securing an internship or job offer, while for others it may mean gaining confidence, building networks, or developing long-term career readiness.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, the University should expand personalized support by scaling up Careers Advice Drop-In and Mentoring programs, increasing advisor capacity, and embedding regular follow-up check-ins. Alumni mentoring programs emerged as particularly valuable, with students requesting connections to graduates who share similar international backgrounds and career trajectories. Career fairs and workshops should be redesigned into structured pipelines with stronger employer involvement (e.g., mock interviews, hiring booths, and application follow-ups) to convert attendance into outcomes. Students specifically called for more international student-focused career fairs, as most current events often feature employers who primarily recruit domestic students or those with permanent residency.

To boost awareness and access, stronger promotion is needed at orientation, alongside multilingual support and student ambassadors to engage those who have never used services. Students frequently mentioned being unaware of available programs or finding existing communication insufficient. At the same time, the University must tackle

employment challenges such as low wages and unstable working hours by working with employers on fair standards and providing rights-based workshops covering visa requirements, tax obligations, and workplace protections specifically for international students. Degree-linked mentoring and placements, which is rated highly impactful by students, should be expanded through industry partnerships that integrate practical experience into courses. Students consistently requested mandatory or built-in internship subjects, with many expressing frustrations that internships remain highly competitive for international students.

The Students@Work program requires significant expansion and improvement based on student feedback. Multiple responses highlighted that the program offers too few positions relevant to students' degrees, creates excessive competition for limited roles, and lacks transparency in selection processes. The program should be expanded to offer more diverse opportunities across all faculties and provide application feedback to help students improve.

Finally, online communities can be better leveraged by building a university-backed digital career hub and offering training on platforms like LinkedIn to improve networking confidence. Students requested more networking events, industry visits, and guest speaker sessions, particularly featuring professionals who can share practical career pathways. Industry-specific programming emerged as a key gap, with students in specialized fields like food science, veterinary medicine, and health sciences requesting tailored career events rather than generic business-focused fairs.

Overall, the University should prioritize personalized, degree-relevant, and follow-up driven services, redesign group-based events for greater conversion, and address both student barriers and employer practices to deliver stronger employment outcomes. The emphasis must shift from simply providing opportunities to ensuring these opportunities are accessible, relevant, and lead to tangible career advancement for international students who face unique visa and cultural barriers in the Australian job market.

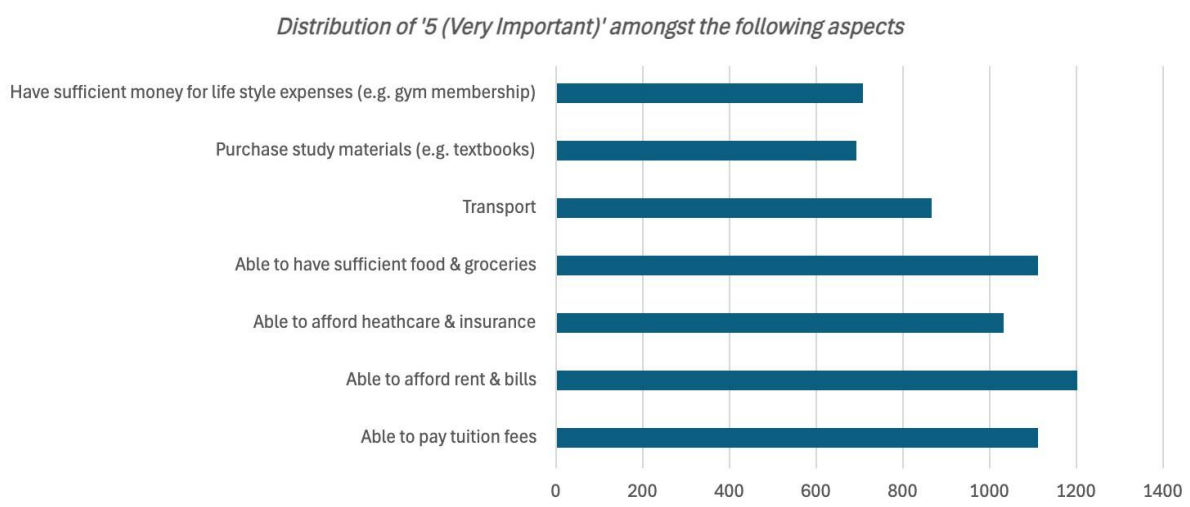
Financial Situation

Introduction

Finances and financial situations are a key area that can greatly impact other aspects of a student life and shape the university experience. This section explores the financial situation of international students at the University of Melbourne including challenges, utilization of financial support services and improvements that students are hoping for.

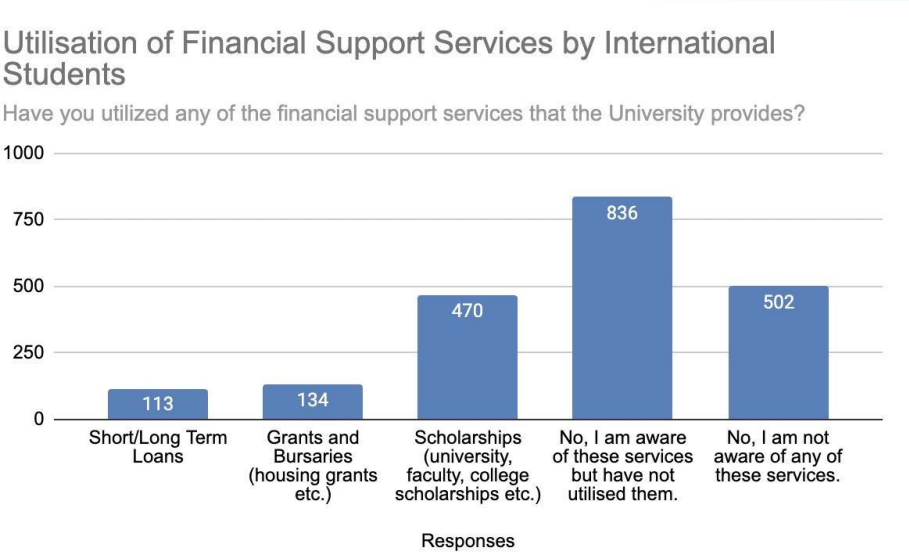
Key Findings

Figure 26. Importance of Factors on Students' Financial Wellbeing



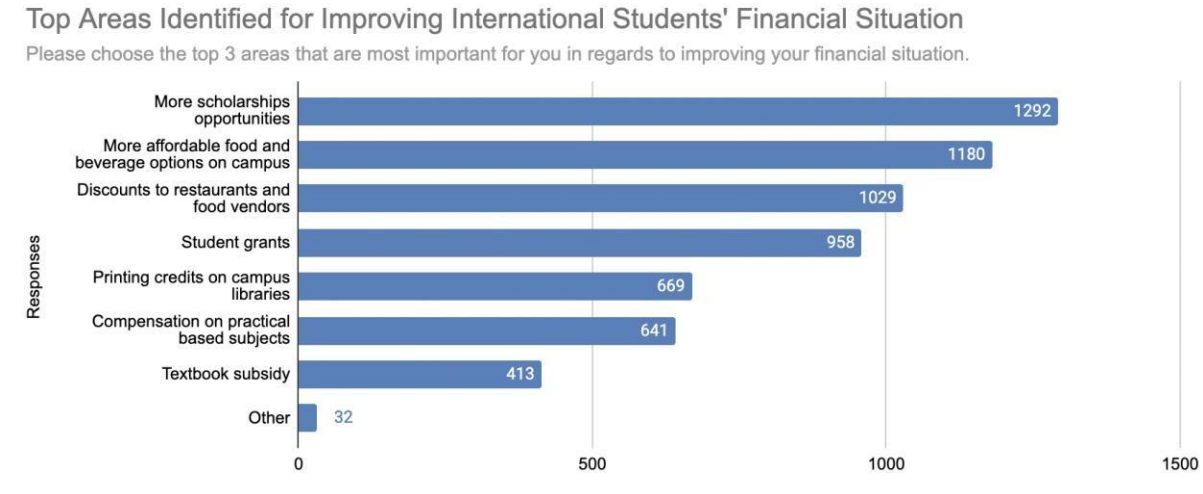
Students rated being able to afford rent and bills as the most important to their financial wellbeing, closely followed by having sufficient food and groceries and being able to pay tuition fees. Purchasing studying materials and having sufficient money for lifestyle expenses were rated as less important to international student's financial wellbeing. Students who rated healthcare and insurance as major expenses reported a significantly higher amount of financial strain. The high costs of healthcare, which may also be unexpected at times, place additional stress. Measures to decrease these costs may reduce these stresses, increasing student wellbeing.

Figure 27. Utilisation of Financial Support Services by International Students



The majority of international students at the University of Melbourne do not utilize Financial Support Services that are available (65.1%). 24.4% are not aware of these services while 40.7% are aware of these services but do not utilize them. On the other hand, 22.9% of international students utilize scholarships available to them, 6.5% have grants and bursaries and 5.5% use short-term and long-term loans. Students who are more aware of these Financial Support Services have an overall higher satisfaction with university life, this may be because by being aware and using the support services, students can put more effort into other aspects of their university life such as studying and socializing.

Figure 28. Top Areas Identified for Improving International Students' Financial Situation



To improve their financial situation, international students most wanted more scholarship opportunities (20.8%). Likewise, 19.0% of students are seeking more student grants, 16.6% are looking for textbook subsidies and 15.4% want printing credit on Campus Libraries. 10.8% of international students want more discounts to restaurant and food vendors and 10.3% seek more affordable food and beverage options on campus. 6.6% of the students look for compensation on practical-based subjects. It was found that having access to affordable food and beverages on campus was significantly correlated with higher financial wellbeing of students. More affordable food and beverage options on campus may further increase financial wellbeing.

Recommendations

To improve the financial situation of international students, the University should target aspects that are of greatest concern as well as those that cause the most stress such as utilities, food and rent. Expanding the variety of affordable food on campus would support students on a daily basis.

Furthermore, increased promotion of financial support services should be implemented to increase awareness and usage of them. Promotion at the initial Melbourne Commencement Ceremony and throughout the semester may increase the utilization of these services. By utilizing financial support services, students can stress less over their financial situation and place more effort into other aspects to increase their wellbeing. In extension, financial literacy emerges as an important support need, with requests for budgeting workshops and money management seminars to help students make informed financial decisions.

Increasing financial support availability such as increasing scholarship, grant numbers and increasing printing credit were also approaches that were raised by the students. Likewise, many students (n=32) have expressed their concern about rising tuition fees, requesting for fees to either not be raised further, or to be reduced. Furthermore, students (n=42) have also expressed interest in more on-campus part time and casual jobs catered towards international students which will allow for an income and alleviate financial stresses.

Student responses reveal several other critical areas requiring attention. Housing support extends beyond affordability to include guidance services, with students requesting workshops on rental rights, accommodation search assistance, and protection from housing scams that particularly target international students.

Transportation costs represent a significant ongoing expense, with students consistently requesting public transport concessions for international students and transportation subsidies, especially for those required to travel to rural placements.

Medical and educational expenses also create unexpected financial burdens, with students reporting difficulties affording specialist consultations, diagnostic tests not fully covered by insurance, and essential software subscriptions, particularly Adobe, for their studies.

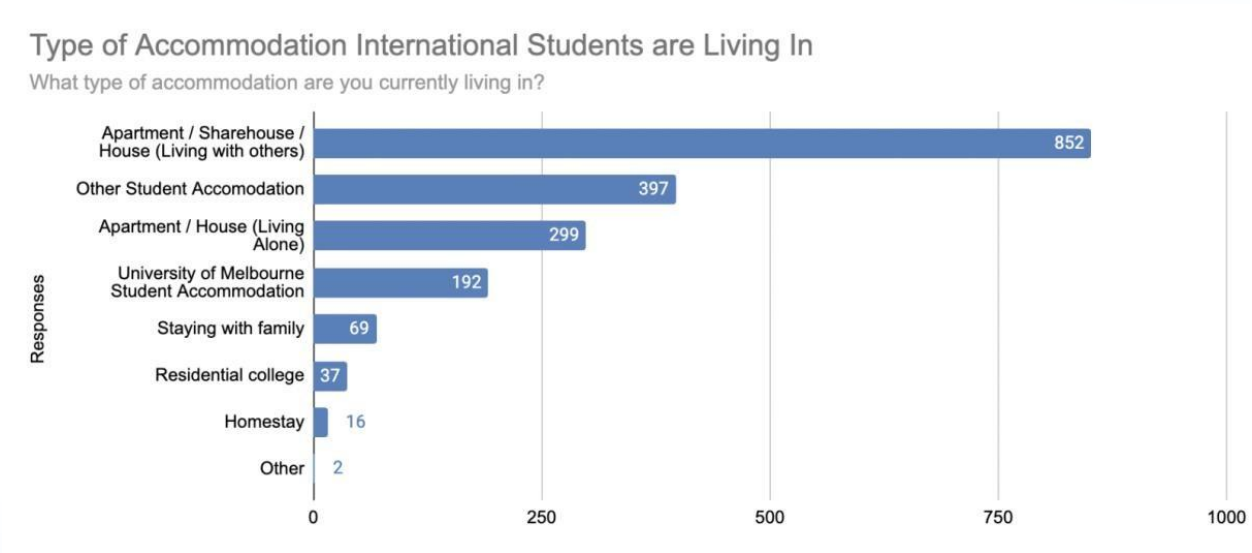
Accommodation

Introduction

This section explores the variety of accommodation types that international students live in and struggles they have faced in securing and living in their chosen accommodation. Factors that have been taken into consideration include safety issues, financial issues, housekeeping issues and securing accommodation issues. These issues can greatly impact other aspects of student life such as academic and social. Understanding these factors can identify the common challenges of housing and how changes can be implemented to better aid international students.

Key Findings

Figure 29. Type of Accommodation International Students are Living In



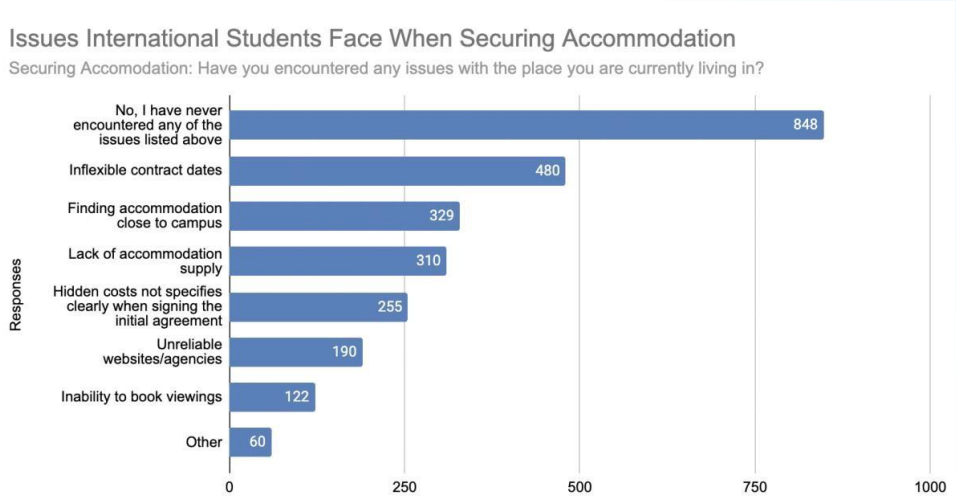
Accommodation plays an essential role in university life and impacts the wellbeing of students. International students at the University of Melbourne most commonly live with others in apartments, share houses or houses (45.7%). 31.6% of students live in Student Accommodation, either at University of Melbourne affiliated Student Accommodation (10.3%) or other Student Accommodation (21.3%). 16.0% of students live alone in an apartment or house, 3.7% stay with family and 2.0% stay in a Residential College. A small percentage (0.9%) live with a homestay.

Figure 30. Financial Issues International Students are Facing in their Current Accommodations

The most common financial issue international students face in their current accommodation is the affordability of the accommodation (n=809). Students also faced overcharging for damage (n=230), hidden costs (n=224) and increasing rent price during their stay (n=202).

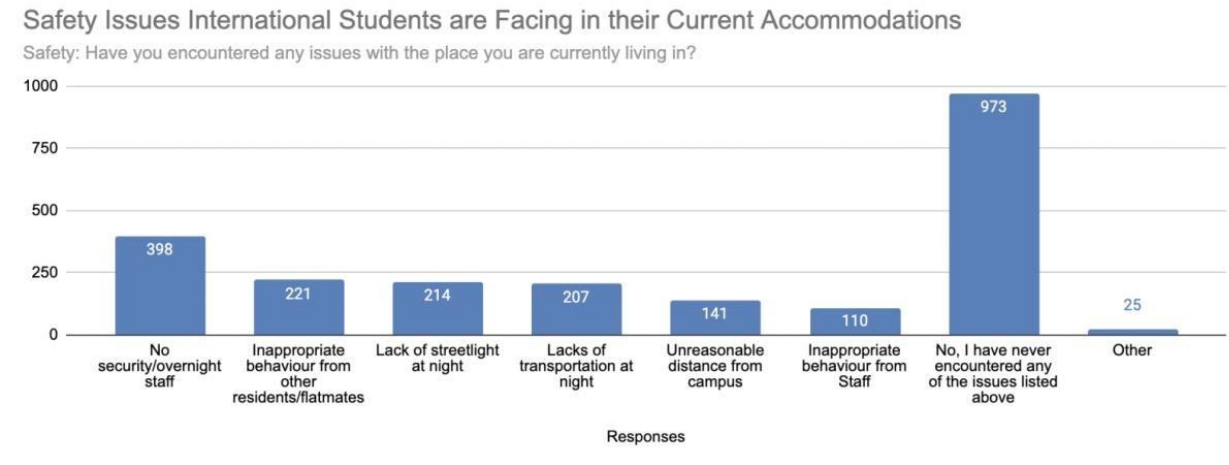
Housekeeping issues faced by international students most commonly related to the timeliness and resolution of maintenance issues (n=399) and dirty communal spaces (n=330). Other problems included timeliness of general enquiry answers (n=263), poor ventilation and odors in shared spaces (n=249) and insufficient waste disposal and recycling services (n=206).

Figure 31. Issues Faced by International Students in Securing Accommodations



When securing accommodation, students had the most issues with inflexible contract dates (n=480). The location of accommodation posed an issue (n=329) alongside the limited supply of accommodation (n=310). Students also reported that hidden costs not specified in initial agreements were a problem (n=255). Furthermore, unreliable websites and agencies (n=190) and inability to book viewings (n=122) made it harder for students to secure accommodation. Difficulty in securing accommodation significantly increases academic stress due to taking time away from study time to find appropriate accommodation. Raising awareness of accommodation support services and educating students on how to best find accommodation early may help reduce stress.

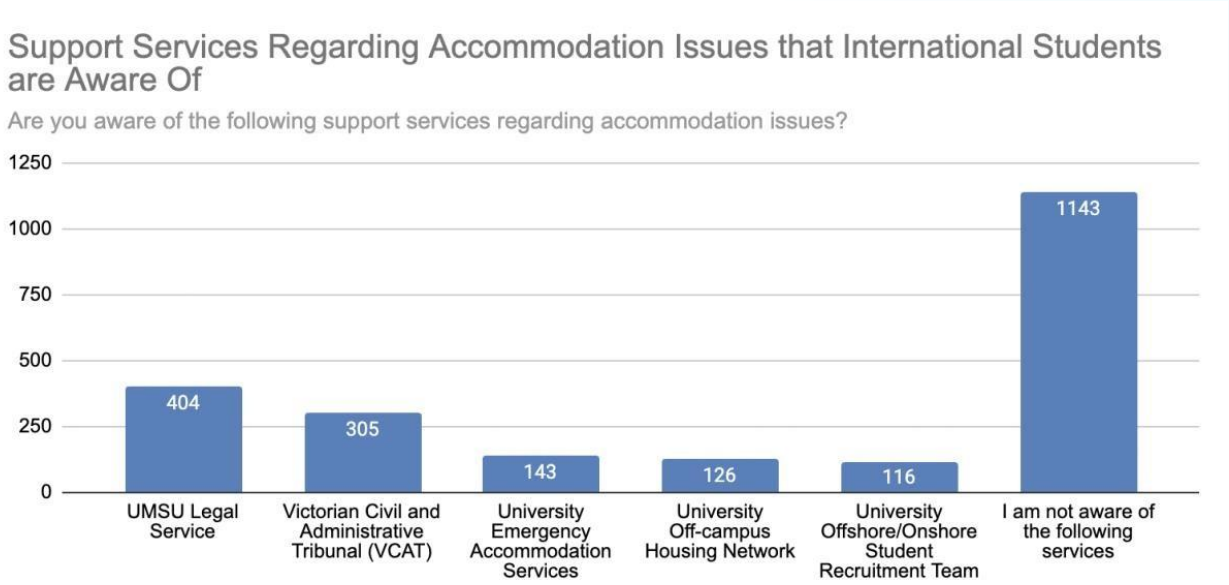
Figure 32. Accommodation Safety Issues Faced by International Students



In their current accommodation, students reported safety issues such as no security/overnight staff (n=398), inappropriate behavior from other residents and flat mates

(n=221) and inappropriate behavior from staff (n=110). Students reported that, at night, the lack of streetlights (n=214) and transportation (n=207) posed an issue. Furthermore, accommodation being an unreasonable distance from campus was another safety concern for the students (n=141). Feeling safe in accommodation is an important aspect of wellbeing. Therefore, it is important to put in efforts to increase safety regarding accommodation in order to support students more. Furthermore, living far away from campus decreases participation in clubs and societies on campus as it increases transportation costs and commuting time which reduces budget that may be used for club fees and time that may be spent socializing.

Figure 33. International Students' Awareness of Accommodation Support Services



The majority of students were not aware of support services regarding accommodation issues (n=1143). Accommodation support services that students were aware of included UMSU Legal Service (n=404), the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (n=305), University Emergency Accommodation Services (n=143), University Off-campus Housing Network (n=126), and the University Offshore/Onshore Student Recruitment Team (n=116). It is reported that students that were aware of these accommodation support services feel significantly safer and more supported. It is therefore important to raise awareness of these services and educate students on how they can be utilized to best support their wellbeing.

Recommendations

To improve the housing and accommodation issues that international students face daily, the University should work closely with students and provide workshops and easily accessible information that will educate students on how to secure accommodation, how to best find suitable accommodation and to increase awareness of support services. This should be implemented, especially before students commence university and throughout the semester for students who are looking to move.

Furthermore, the University can also look towards working with housing providers, especially popular student accommodation businesses such as UniLodge and Scape to provide capped rent, increased transparency, and overnight security staff to increase safety.

By addressing accommodation issues, major stresses on students can be alleviated, allowing for the investment of their time into other aspects of their lives that will allow for a fuller and richer university experience.

Health, Safety, and Inclusivity

Introduction

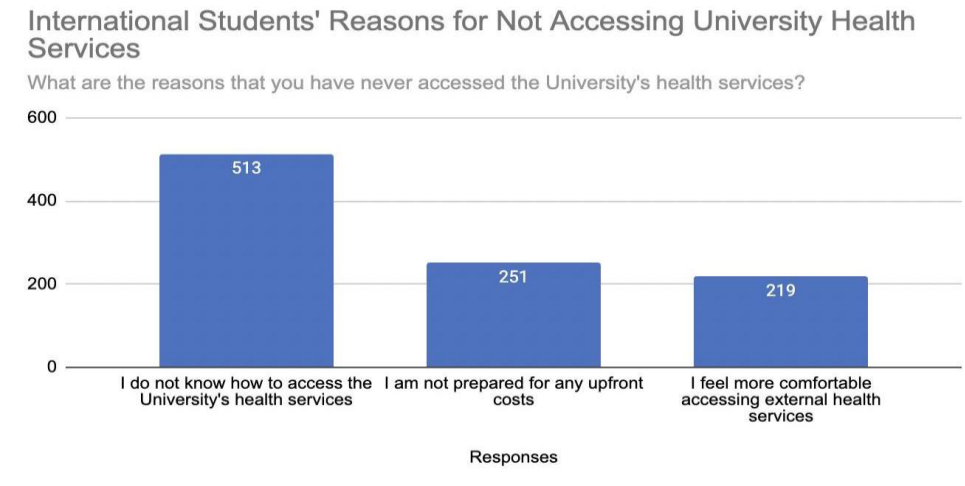
International students often face various challenges regarding services surrounding health and safety concerns, especially in areas of accessibility and discrimination. As such, familiarity with available resources and addressing their obstacles and concerns are salient in ensuring a safe environment and providing support to students.

The survey results revealed statistics that raise several concerns regarding discrimination faced by students, and particularly racism. When referring to the ISS 2024 report, racism has been consistently reported as the most common form of discrimination faced by international students for previous years as well. Therefore, this highlights the prevalence of this issue that should be attended to.

Key Findings: Health

Among the 1864 survey respondents, 73.07% (n=1362) reported to have never accessed the University Health Services. The reasons for students that indicated include the majority being unaware of how to access the University's Health Services (n=513). Additionally, 2515 respondents were not being prepared for any upfront costs (n=251) and others felt more comfortable accessing external services (n=219). In comparison to last year's ISS report, there was a slight increase in the number of students that are unaware of the University's Health Services offered from 312 to 343 students this year.

Figure 34. Reasons for Students Not Accessing University Health Services



For respondents who have accessed the University's Health Services, the most prevalent challenge that students face was the long wait times (n=466). This was followed by issues surrounding costs (n=147), stigma (n=54), and various other issues (n=39).

In terms of satisfaction with the overall University Health services, the average rating across respondents was 3.6/5. The most common rating indicated that they were very satisfied with the University's health service, rating their satisfaction level as a '5' (n=148). A few responses (n=38) indicated dissatisfaction with a rating of 1. Specifically with the University's Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS), most students who have accessed this service rated their satisfaction with CAPS as a '5', indicating that they are 'very satisfied'. This is followed by 84 responses indicating a '4', 71 responses indicating a '3', 63 responses indicating a '2' and 45 responses indicating a '1' (very dissatisfied). The average response was found to be 3.4/5.

When enquired about potential improvements for the health services, the students cited the operating hours, appointment waiting times, care quality, and communication as areas for improvement.

Regarding accessibility, most students rated their satisfaction with Student Equity and Disability Services (SEDS) as a '3' (n=72), excluding the 240 'N/A' responses. Moreover, with accessibility to sexual health products, most students seemed satisfied with this service, with the 'very satisfied' rating of '5' having the highest number of responses (n=79), excluding 'N/A' responses

For the University's Health, Safety, and Inclusivity services,1029 students indicated that they have not sought support from these resources and services. 597 students said that they were not aware of any of the University support resources available.

Key Findings: Open-Ended Responses

Analysis of health-related responses reveals significant barriers to accessing university health services, with appointment availability being the most frequently cited issue. Students consistently report difficulty booking appointments online, with many forced to call during work hours for initial consultations, long waiting times extending weeks or months, and insufficient appointment slots leading to fully booked services.

The 10-session limit for counselling services emerges as a major concern, with students expressing fear of using sessions early when they might need them more later. Mental health support appears particularly strained, with students reporting that CAPS appointments fill up quickly, counsellors who lack adequate English proficiency or cultural understanding, and generic advice that fails to address specific issues.

Additional concerns include high costs for services not covered by student insurance, limited walk-in availability for emergencies, unclear fee structures, and inadequate support for complex conditions requiring specialist referrals. Students also frequently mention the need for better publicity about available services, as many remain unaware of what support is offered.

Recommendations: Health

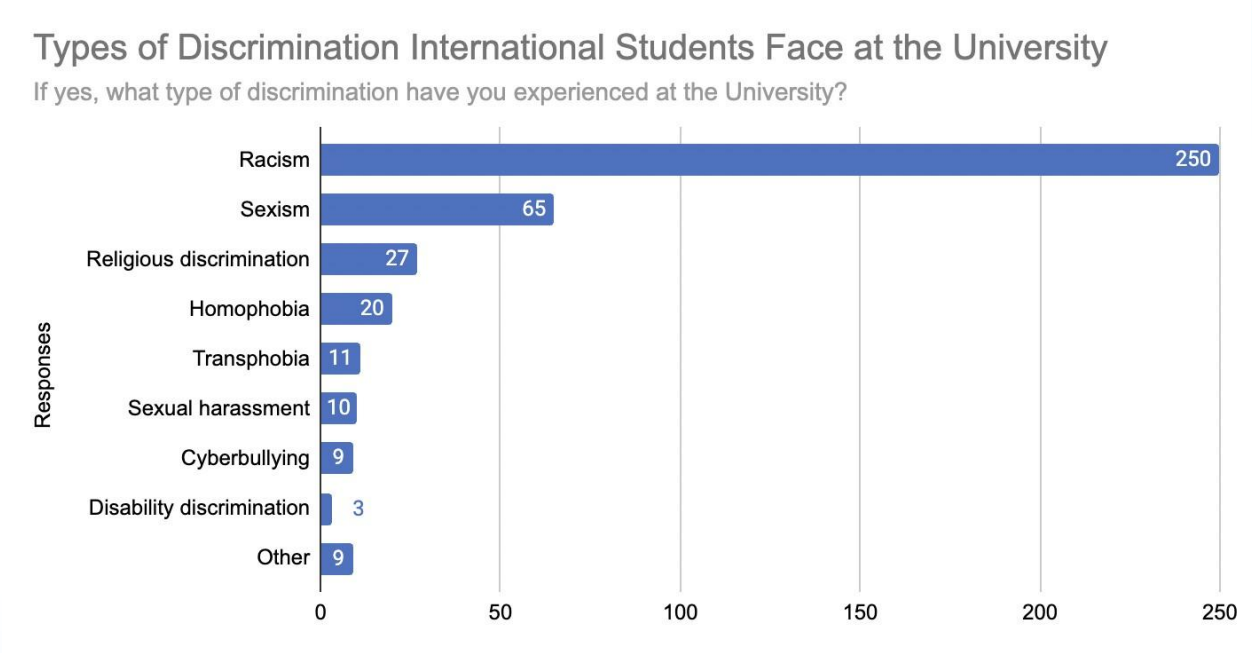
The University could raise awareness around the health services and resources provided along with guides on how to access these services due to 30.84% of respondents reporting a lack of awareness and difficulty navigating these services available to them. A general breakdown of costs for international students in these guides could be considered as well.

The University could provide more slots or waiting lists for last-minute cancellation slots for consultations to address the long waiting times to access these services. A directory of other health services and resources (especially those offering fully covered medical fees with students' OSHC) could be recommended to students on waitlists. Further surveys on the implications of health service barriers on special consideration policies could be analysed as well.

Key Findings: Safety and Inclusivity

From the survey, it was revealed that 1498 respondents (80.37%) did not experience acts of discrimination at the University while 366 (19.63%) of the respondents have experienced acts of discrimination at the University. Within those who have experienced acts of discrimination, it was found that 250 people (68.3%) had experienced racism. The second most common act of discrimination experienced by the respondents was sexism, followed by religious discrimination, homophobia, transphobia, sexual harassment, cyberbullying, and disability discrimination. These results mirror the findings from ISS 2024, thus emphasising the perpetual issue on campus that should be addressed accordingly.

Figure 35. Types of Discrimination Faced by International Students



Additionally, it was found that 1493 respondents have not witnessed acts of discrimination while 371 respondents have witnessed acts of discrimination. Among the 371 respondents who have witnessed acts of discrimination, it was found that 305 people (82.21%) had witnessed acts of racism. The second most common act of discrimination witnessed by the respondents was sexism (22.64%), followed by religious discrimination (14.29%), homophobia, transphobia, sexual harassment, cyberbullying, and disability discrimination.

Concerns were raised by students when asked about what they would like to see from the University and their experiences with discrimination. The most expressed concern would be microaggressions and discriminatory behaviour due to accents or language biases.

Key Findings: Open-Ended Responses

Discrimination responses reveal pervasive experiences of racism and exclusion, particularly affecting international students. Students repeatedly report being ignored in group discussions, excluded from social activities, experiencing microaggressions from both peers and staff, and facing comments like "go back to your country" or being called "COVID virus." Many describe a pattern of academic discrimination where local viewpoints are consistently preferred over international perspectives, with some reporting that their work is unfairly criticized for language issues without adequate support being offered.

Muslim students report feeling unsafe and discriminated against, with hijabi students experiencing differential treatment and Islamophobic attitudes. The responses indicate widespread "neglect", a form of racism manifested through systematic ignoring of international students' contributions and social isolation that leads students to withdraw from participation.

Regarding issues of sexual harassment, students reference the need for better reporting mechanisms for discrimination occurring both on and off campus, and several note the challenge of addressing deeply rooted prejudices and microaggressions that are difficult to formally report or prove.

Responses also indicated that social isolation may be a particular concern for students with disabilities. One respondent expressed frustration with the current accommodation system, preferring "a curriculum that was actually engaging for lots of learning styles" rather than relying on "a strong remedial accommodation system which catches the many students that fall through the cracks." This suggests that some students may prefer inclusive design approaches over traditional disability accommodations. Additionally, accessibility barriers were noted, with one medical student reporting difficulty accessing their own faculty building for workshops.

Recommendations: Safety and Inclusivity

Students were keen in understanding and navigating procedures for reporting discriminatory acts due to the lack of awareness regarding resources available to them.

Regarding the reports lodged, transparency involved in reporting processes, confidentiality factors and addressing reports swiftly should be considered by the University.

Furthermore, educational training programs for staff members to diminish stigma and educate them on issues related to discrimination and racism could be considered. Promoting inclusivity on campus through open dialogues and equipping staff members

with knowledge on implications of discrimination could aid stigma and discrimination reduction.

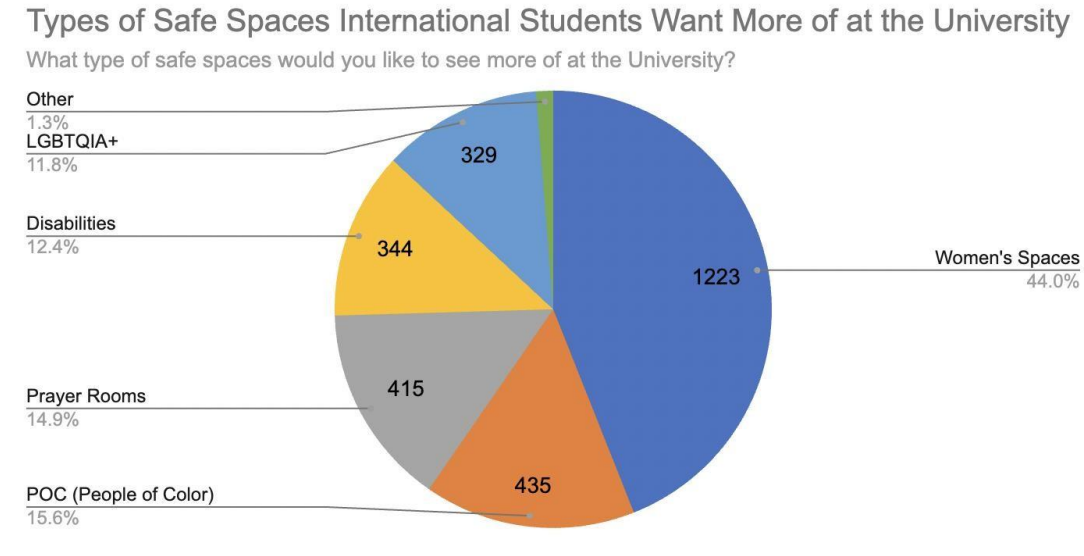
Integrating these solutions will be pivotal in sustaining students' wellbeing and addressing these issues would create a safer environment that benefits both staff and students without hindering their focus in their roles within the University. Future surveys could analyse safety and inclusivity ratings before and after learning about resources and discrimination reporting procedures.

Key Findings: Safe Spaces

The percentage of international students that reported awareness of safe spaces in the University was 58.26%. 671 out of the 1086 respondents that are aware of the safe spaces have visited these spaces on campus while 415 respondents have not explored these safe spaces. The rest of the respondents (41.74%) were not aware of such safe spaces available on campus.

When enquired about the types of safe spaces wanted at the University by international students, majority of the respondents (44.0%) would like to see more Women's Spaces, as well as People of Color (POC) Spaces (15.6%), Prayer Rooms (14.9%), Disabilities spaces (12.4%) and LGBTQIA+ spaces (11.8%).

Figure 36. Safe Spaces Requested by International Students

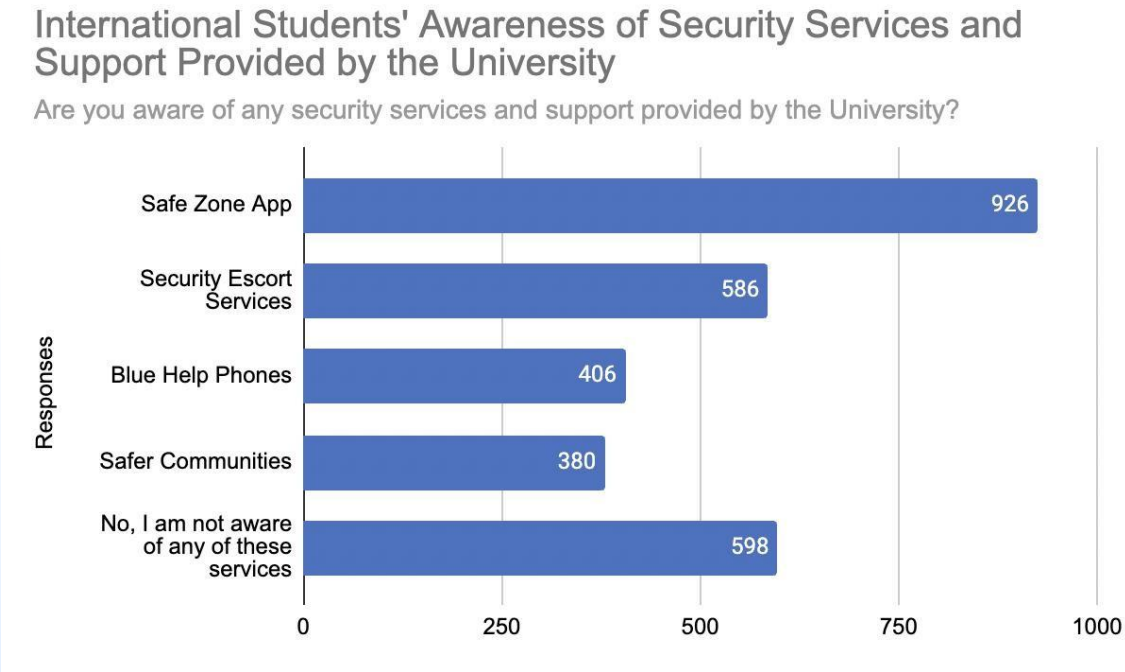


The satisfaction rate for environments and platforms for cultural expressions and intercultural interactions had an average of 3.73 out of 5. Most of the respondents (34.82%) provided a rating of 4 out of 5. The average satisfaction rating with university support for diversity and difference was 3.85 out of 5. Most of the respondents (38.78%) provided a rating of 4 out of 5, with 3 and 5 being the second most common ratings.

The satisfaction for university guidelines on managing intercultural and social group conflicts had an average rating of 3.72 out of 5. The highest frequency rating score was 4 out of 5. Additionally, the satisfaction with spaces to facilitate constructive and respectful debate had an average rating of 3.70 out of 5. Once again, most respondents provided a rating of 4 out of 5.

The surveyed awareness of security services and support provided by the University reported that the Safe Zone App is the most well-known security service provided by the University, with 926 students indicating that they are aware of the service. The second most well-known security service amongst students is the University's Security Escort Services (n=586), followed by Blue Help Phones (n=406) and lastly, Safer Communities (n=380). However, approximately a third of respondents (n=598) indicated that they were unaware of any of the security services and support provided by the University.

Figure 37. Awareness of Security Services and Support



Recommendations: Safe Spaces

The University should work on advertising to raise awareness for their services and resources available such that support will be more readily accessible to international students. This could be done through newsletters, information sessions during orientation events and social media for wider outreach and ensuring the safety of students on campus. Similarly, with the Safe Zone App garnering the highest levels of awareness, replicating advertising efforts that have been previously successful could be utilised again.

With creation of additional safe spaces, a focus on ensuring a welcoming and safe environment for women and POCs through further engagement initiatives and events at the dedicated women's/POC rooms with UMSU could raise awareness about the spaces that are already available. Prayer rooms have also been requested by students to allow religious expression on campus.

Future surveys and studies could be conducted on understanding the relationship between opportunities for cross-cultural socialisation and inclusivity ratings at relevant events.

Summary

The 2025 International Student Survey highlights both the strengths and challenges of the international student experience at the University of Melbourne. Overall, students expressed satisfaction with teaching quality, course content, and university facilities, while also valuing initiatives such as mentoring programs, internship fairs, and employability workshops. These opportunities were consistently reported as having a strong positive impact on students' academic and professional development.

At the same time, the findings reveal persistent challenges in areas such as financial strain, accommodation affordability and safety, employment barriers, and limited awareness of available support services. Issues of discrimination, social connection, and access to inclusive spaces also remain important concerns that directly affect students' academic engagement and wellbeing.

The results underscore that meaningful improvement requires a dual approach: strengthening high-impact services like personalized mentoring and degree-related placements, while also addressing systemic barriers around employment practices, housing, financial support, and inclusivity. By expanding awareness, tailoring services to diverse needs, and embedding equity into every aspect of university life, the University can create a more supportive environment that enables international students to thrive academically, socially, and professionally.