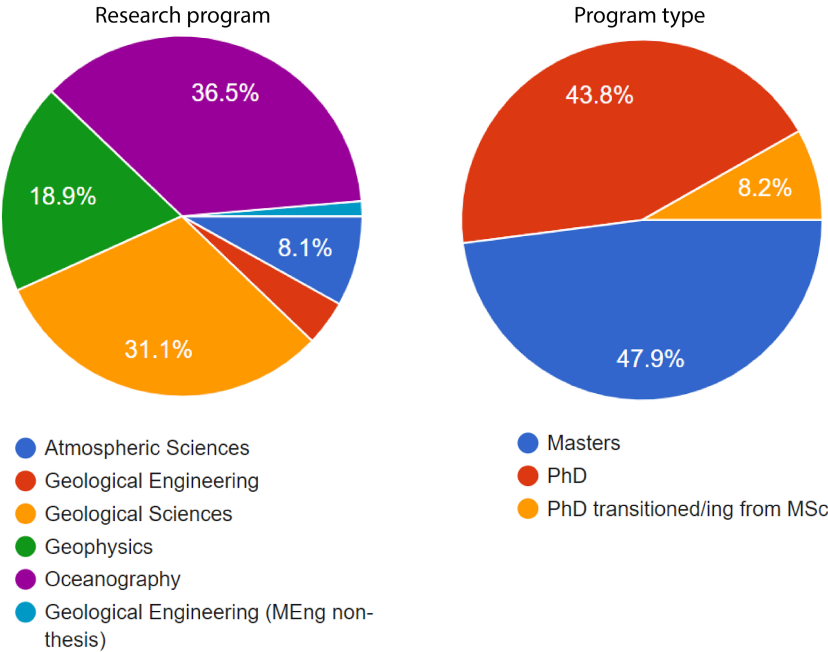


EOAS Graduate Student Survey Results 2020

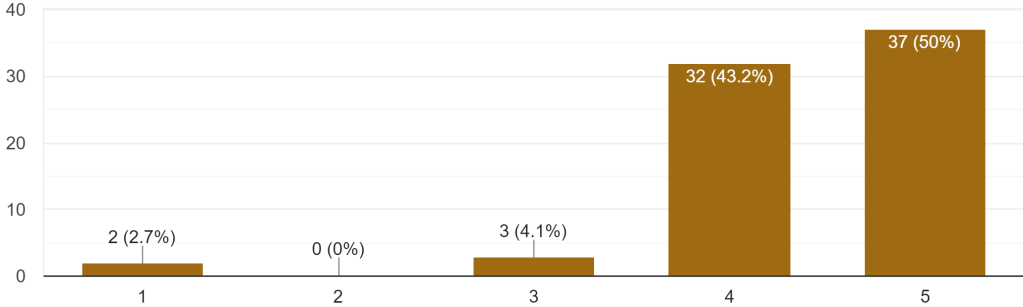
74 students responded to the survey between 8th-15th September 2020. This is a participation rate of approx. 50%, as there are currently around 150 active EOAS graduate (24 of which started in September 2020).

1) General



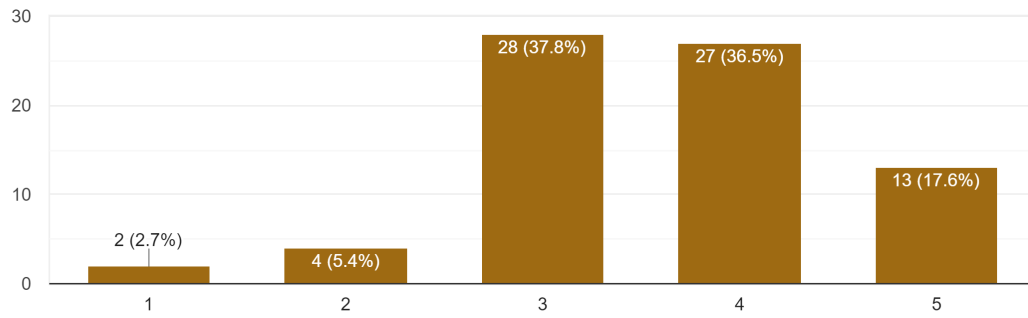
On a scale from 1-5 how happy are you with your research subject?

74 responses



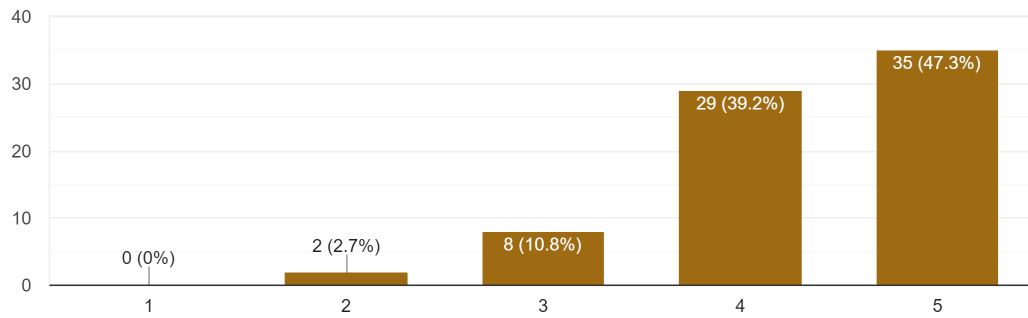
On a scale from 1-5 how happy are you with courses offered?

74 responses



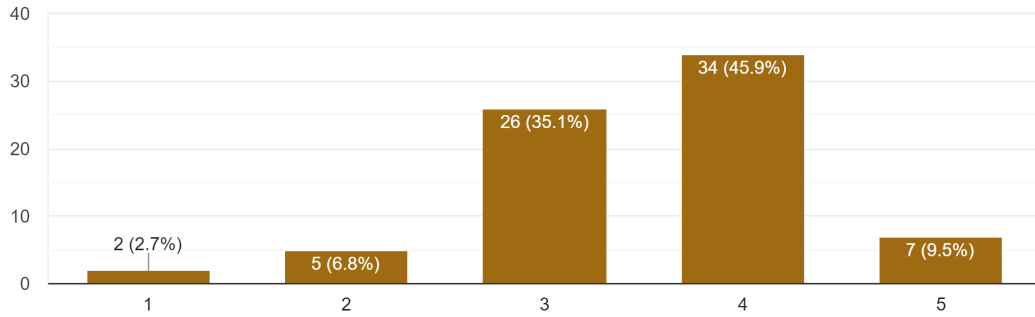
On a scale from 1-5 how happy are you with your relationship with your lab group and other students/post-docs/members of EOAS?

74 responses



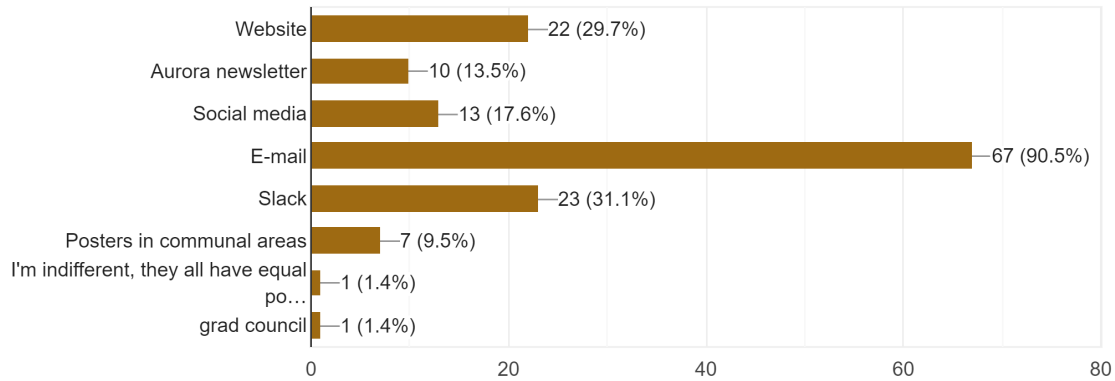
On a scale from 1-5 how familiar are you with the academic activities/opportunities available in the department?

74 responses



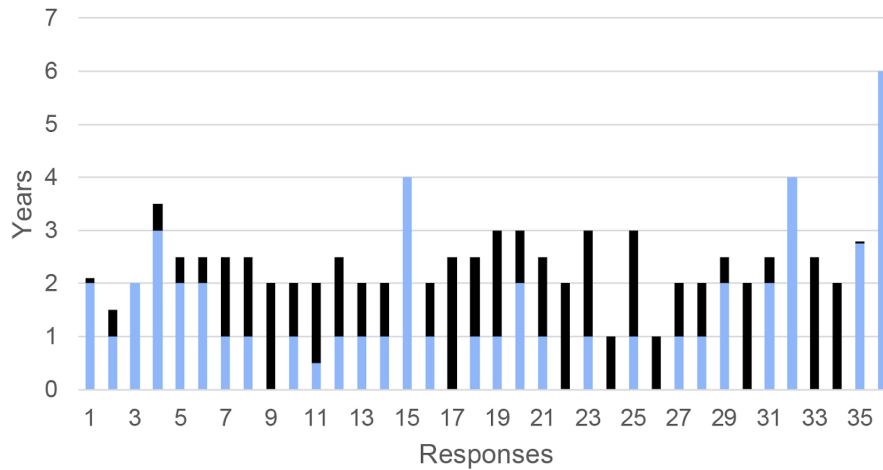
What outlets do you prefer to receive information about EOAS events/resources available for students?

74 responses

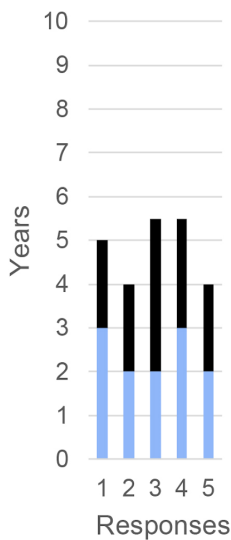


2) Graduate Completion Times

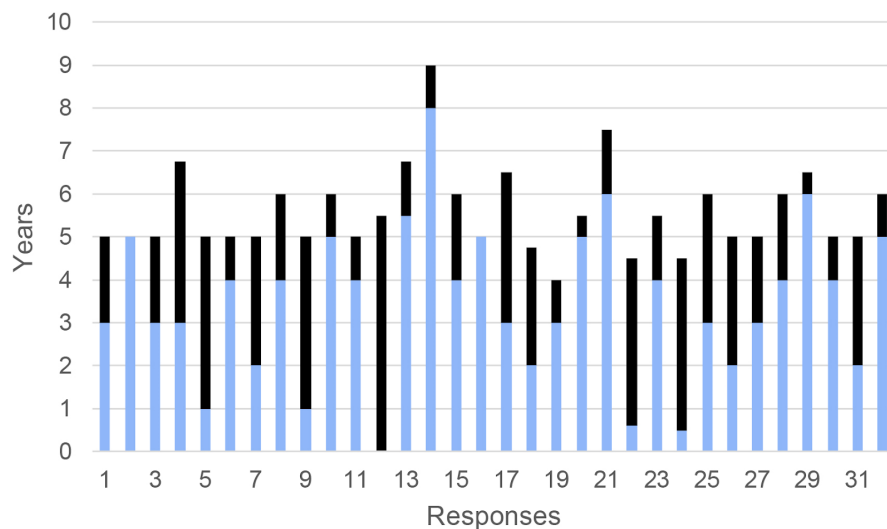
MSc Students



Phd Students transitioned/ing



PhD Students



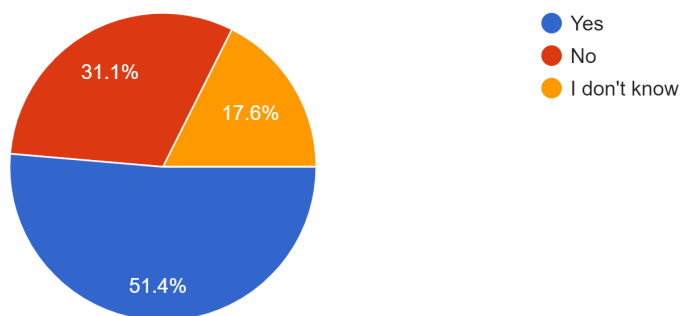
- How long have you been in the program (years)?
- How many more years do you anticipate it will take to complete your degree?

For these responses:

- MSc Students: Average time (years): 2.48, s.dev: 0.87
- PhD transitioned/ing from MSc: Average time (years): 4.80, s.dev: 0.68
- PhD Students: Average time (years): 5.57, s.dev: 0.98

Is the program what you expected before you started?

74 responses



If you envision finishing your degree in more time than expected - what are the reasons?

49 students answered this question. Some students mentioned several reasons.

Students anticipate needing more time to finish their degrees because of the following reasons **related to COVID-19**:

- Lacking efficiency while working from home, or other COVID-19-related setbacks (not specified) (12 students)
- Delayed field work sessions, experimental work, collaborations and visits that had to be postponed (10 students)
- Mental health issues (2 students)
- Projects needed to change due to funding (1 student)

Reasons **not related to COVID-19** included:

- Unclear research projects and not enough guidance, especially in the beginning (7 students)
- They had to switch/expand projects or discovered new research questions that they wanted to pursue (5 students)
- Personal challenges (3 students)
- Insufficient funding (3 students)
- Lack of communication and difficulties coordinating with their supervisor, lack of support (3 students)
- Delayed fieldwork due to weather, etc., experimental failure or cancelled/delayed research collaborations (not COVID-19-related) (3 students)
- Lack of fluency with research methodologies/field of studies and publishing (3 students)

- Summer placements/co-ops (2 students)
- More time for sampling and data analysis than originally anticipated (2 students)
- Students wanted to take more time to develop different skill sets (2 students)
- Ambitious/Larger than expected research project (2 students)
- They were helping out with projects in their research groups that were unrelated to their own thesis (2 students)
- Unrealistic expectations from supervisors, too much work (2 students)
- Part-time jobs (1 student)
- Part-time PhD (1 student)
- Expectation to publish more and more papers (1 student)
- Time needed to spend on TAing (1 student)
- Co-advising BSc students (1 student)
- Unwillingness to publish from supervisors (1 student)
- Some courses are not offered every year, so it takes longer to complete the course work (1 student)
- Little collaborative work (1 student)
- Scheduling conflicts with courses and fieldwork (1 student)
- Systemic racism (1 student)
- Their supervisors never assumed that they would finish within four resp. two years (1 student)
- Students would have benefited from more thorough initial training and coursework without the expectation of concurrent research progress during the first year (1 student)

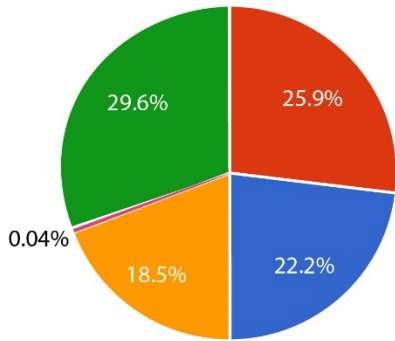
When evaluating all individual students' responses, it became evident that the above negative comments around unclear research projects, problematic relationships with supervisors, etc., were directly reflected in the rating that the respective students gave to the questions in section 1) on their level of satisfaction with their research project and relationship with their lab group/EOAS members, and 2) on the relationship with their supervisor. However, a few students selected low ratings for those questions but didn't give an explicit explanation.

PhD candidacy exam

If you're a PhD student or candidate, how many months after starting the program did you complete - or foresee (for not completed students)- to the candidacy exam (if you're a PhD candidate transferred from Masters, the clock starts ticking after the transfer)?

Already completed

27 responses

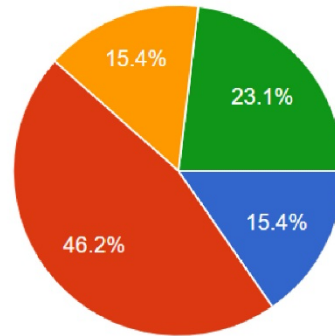


Months

- 0-9
- 9-18
- 18-27
- 27-36
- >45

Not completed/foreseen

13 responses

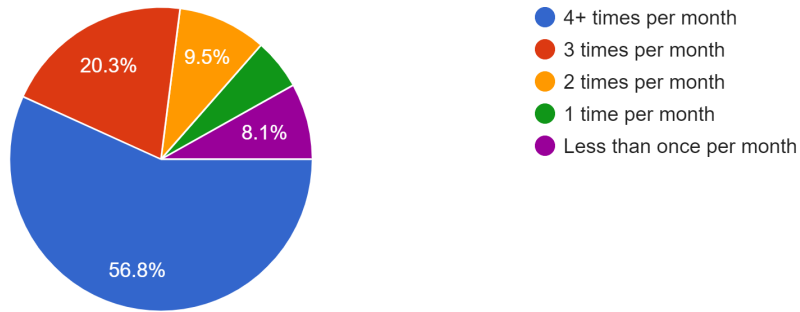


Months

- 12
- 18
- 24
- 30

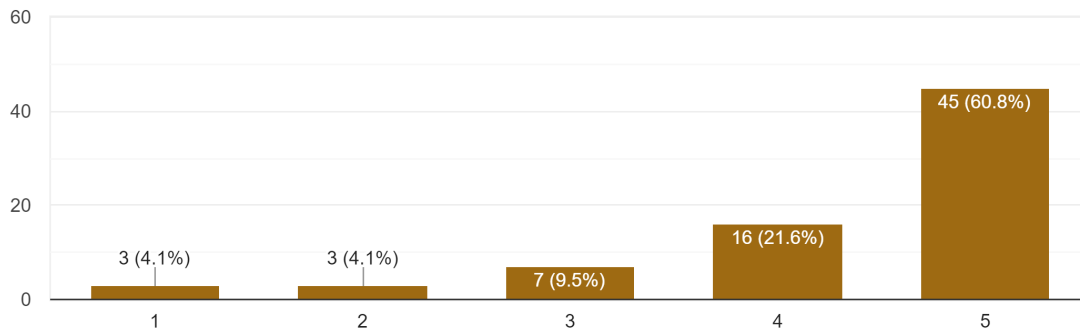
3) Relationship with Supervisor

How often do you meet with your supervisor?
74 responses



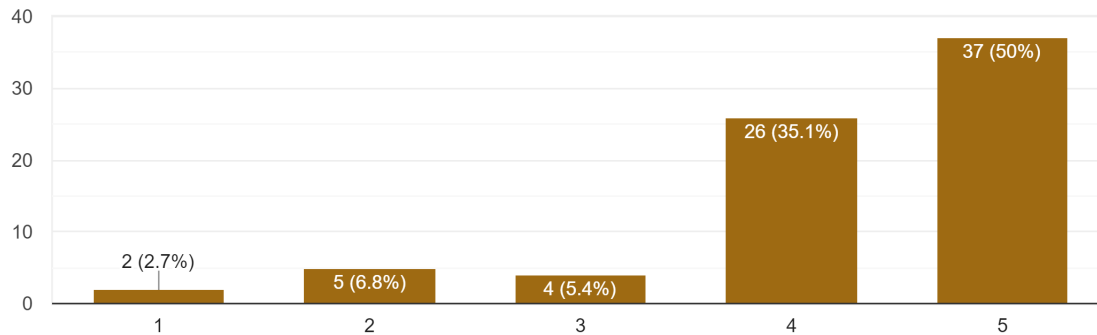
**To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the two following statements?
(1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neutral, (4) Agree, (5) Strongly agree.**

I'm happy with my relationship with my supervisor.
74 responses



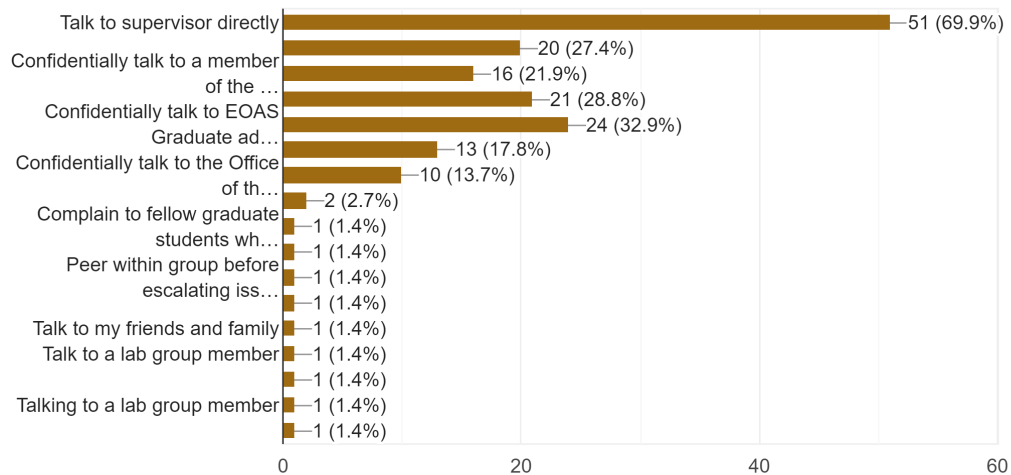
My supervisor and I are on the same page regarding my research and work expectations.

74 responses



If you have problems with your supervisor or authority figure within the group, who would you feel most comfortable talking to? Select all those that apply.

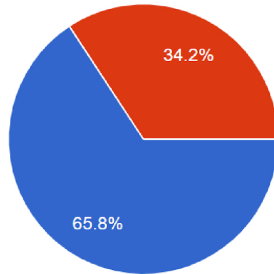
73 responses



4) COVID-19

Does COVID-19 significantly affect your research, completion time or work?

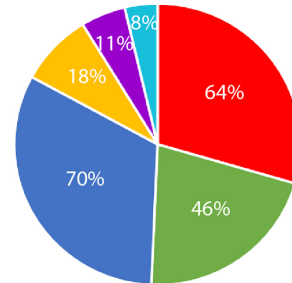
73 responses



● Yes
● No

If yes, it is due to (select all that apply):

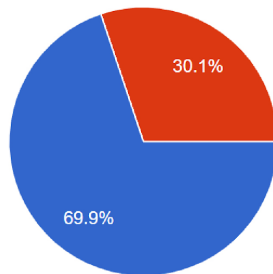
50 responses



- No real office or peaceful place to work
- Limited/no access to laboratories, material, field work
- Collaboration with external groups is now harder
- Harder family situation (e.g. no access to daycare for my kid(s))
- Harder financial situation (e.g. unable to find work to pay for tuition/student fees/bills)
- Poorer mental health in general, more stress, hard for in-depth communication, and/or remote start of program

Has COVID-19 taken a toll on your mental or physical health?

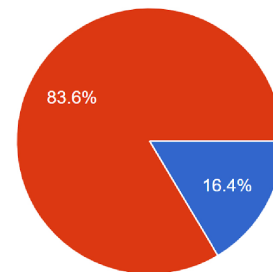
73 responses



● Yes
● No

Have you used any of the health and wellbeing resources provided by UBC?

73 responses



● Yes
● No

Please elaborate on the question “Has COVID-19 taken a toll on your mental or physical health”, if you feel comfortable.

36 students answered this question. Some students mentioned several reasons.

The answers are as follows:

- Sadness, anxiety, fear of getting sick, worries about the future, tough mental adjustment, hopelessness, increased stress levels, feelings of exhaustion, depression (20 students)
- Little separation from home and work, decreased productivity and efficiency, frustration, decreased motivation to get work done, hard time to focus for long periods, difficulty to retain information, difficulties with work-life balance (e.g. working 7 days a week while being less productive), no healthy boundaries, feelings of guilt (12 students)
- No/less social interactions, loneliness, living alone, isolation (12 students)
- Worries for family and friends, and worries about the situation in the U.S. (including election, protests and fires) (7 students)
- Less exercise, disrupted health routines (no proper schedule for exercise and eating), spending most time indoors (7 students)
- Difficult housing situation (living in basements, etc.), no proper workspace at home (e.g. have to share custody of the only table in the house), no ability to go back to the office, no access to resources on campus/field site (data, media, books, notes, etc.) (7 students)
- Worries about the degree and research (6 students)
- Closed borders and no ability to visit families and friends (abroad), not able to see partner who lives abroad (3 students)
- More time needed to plan each outing and reflect on each action (e.g., grocery shopping) (2 students)
- Worries about funding (2 students)
- Transitioning to Zoom meeting for several hours a day increased stress levels (does not feel natural, increased social anxiety) (1 student)
- Difficulty to find friends for new students; online classes (1 student)
- Existential crisis (1 student)
- Sickness (1 student)
- Limited contact with supervisor (1 student)
- Challenging internet connectivity issues (1 student)

Positive comments included:

- Regular meetings and check-ins with lab group (2 students)
- Few external distractions (1 student)
- Spending more time with partner (1 student)
- Flexible schedule allows more time for physical exercise (1 student)
- Less transit stress (1 student)

If you answered yes to “Have you used any of the health and wellbeing resources provided by UBC?”, do you feel that the support provided was helpful?

Answers varied a lot, and out of the 11 students that answered this question, around half of the students answered with “yes” and the other half answered with “no”. Positive comments included that it was great to discuss with a counsellor via counselling services, such as “Empower Me”. However, other students noted down that phone-based counselling was not helpful, or that the counselling services are only a temporary resource. Moreover, students wrote down that they think that psychologists provided by UBC do not necessarily have the capacity (personnel and time) to help students that need it.

If not, is there something limiting you?

33 students answered this question. Only few people answered that nothing is limiting them, and that everything is working out well enough for them so far and that they could control the situation (7 students). Some were using different resources or have therapy outside of UBC (3 students).

Limiting factors included:

- They were not aware of the available offers at all, or haven’t checked out the websites yet (e.g., new students) (5 students)
- Missing motivation to finally make a call and book an appointment (3 students)
- UBC resources are incredibly overbooked and it is impossible to get an appointment in a timely manner, or nobody answered the phone (2 students)
- Time constraints (2 students)
- They would go off-campus to receive help but their stipend makes them unable to pay for actual effective mental health care (2 students)
- Missing and confusing information on what to expect (2 students)
- Missing offers/information for remote (international) students (2 students)
- Only short-term help (1 student)
- Not the right kind of help/tools (1 student)
- There is nothing that could be done to improve the situation that they couldn’t do on their own right now or with the help of friends online (1 student)
- They would rather fall back on close support networks that they can trust (e.g., friends, family) (1 student)

Especially regarding COVID-19, what (if any) kinds of virtual department events would you like to see offered for graduate students to improve connectivity?

26 students answered this question. Some students gave several suggestions/comments.

Positive responses included:

- Virtual meetings:
 - Trivia nights / pub quiz (10 students)
 - (Weekly) grad socials, Zoom beer nights (6 students)
 - Board games (4 students)
 - (Short) research talks (2 students)
 - Coffee socials (1 student)
 - Discussion groups (1 student)
 - General information about the department would help to feel less disconnected (1 student)
 - Seminar on mental health (1 student)
 - Networking or alumni event (apparently there was a networking event a few years ago where past students talked about their career paths) (1 student)
 - Presentations on how COVID-19 has affected people and solutions that they found, support from other students to cope with the situation and to move forward with the program (1 student)
 - Sponsored/facilitated access to some home wellness/fitness/yoga/nutrition programs or counselling, or consultations with personal trainers, ergonomics experts, etc. (e.g., where EOAS members can participate in groups) (1 student)
 - Book club (1 student)
- In-person meetings following social distancing guidelines
 - Picnic (1 student)

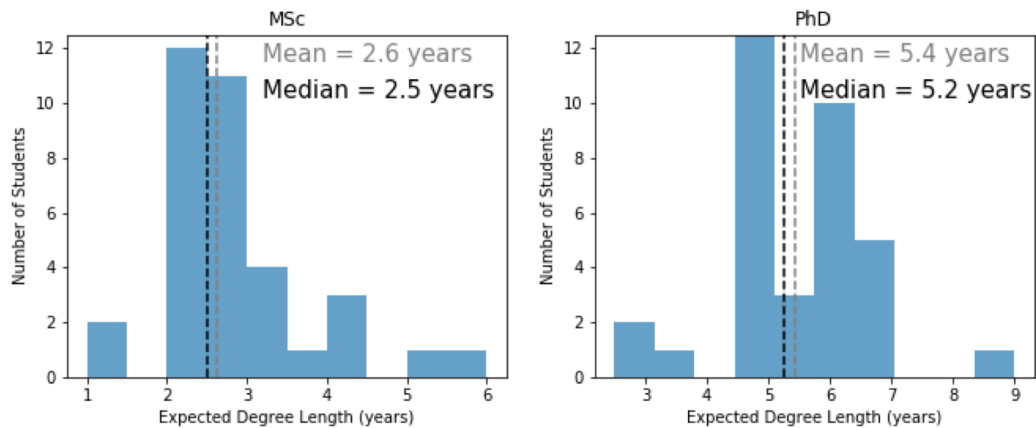
Negative responses included:

- No interest in virtual meetings (2 students)
- Too many Zoom meeting during the day already, too much time already in front of the computer screens (2 students)
- No interest in EOAS meetings, or students don't feel connected to EOAS (1 student)
- Difficulty to have a real conversation with many strangers at once on Zoom (1 student)
- No time to connect outside of their lab groups (1 student)

5) Finance

Below is a short synthesis from publicly available data and survey responses. Just a note on these responses, these are from the time before the minimum stipend was increased.

Expected Degree Length

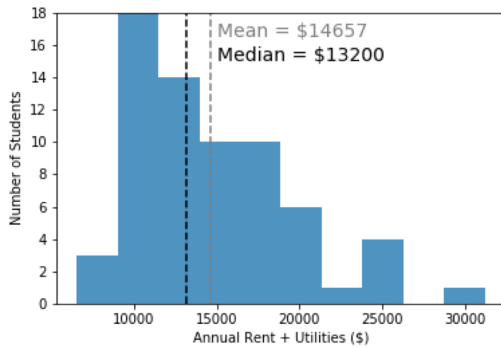


Average MSc lengths across all degrees in EOAS are 2.45 years. This aligns closely with expected degree graduation times.

However, average PhD graduation times across Oceanography, Geophysics, and Geological Sciences (no data for Atmospheric Sciences) are 6.25 years. There is more of a disparity here. Students have expressed that once 4YF terminate and they are required to TA more hours and their tuition is no longer covered, the financial burden becomes significant, as (on average) they will have over 2 years of grad school remaining. Comments concerning this are at the end of this Document.

Averages from: <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/prospective-students/graduate-degree-programs>

Rent and Utilities

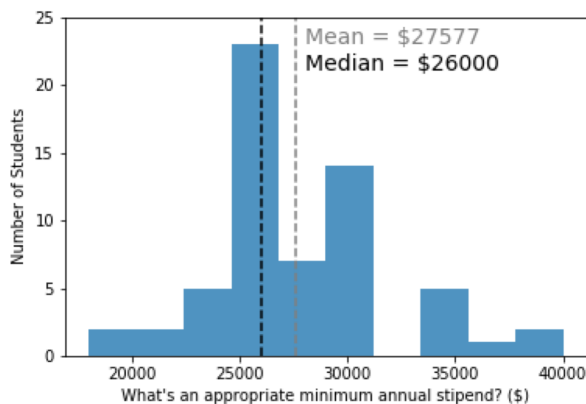


Here, the outliers on the low end are accounted for by students with 4+ roommates, and the high end is from students that live with their significant other. We imagine that they provided the cost of their rent without dividing it by two.

An MSc student will have to pay \$6000 in tuition and fees (increasing by 2-3% every year) and approximately \$300 in tenant insurance. If paying the median rent and making the base salary (\$21536), this gives \$2036 to cover everything else, equating to \$170/month for food/recreation/emergencies.

International students have to pay \$75/month in MSP, leaving those making the base salary with \$1136, or \$95 per month.

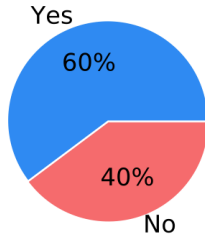
Suggested Base Salary



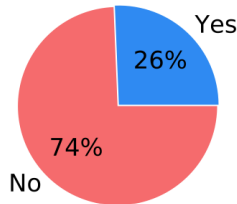
Again, working with the median, this amount of funding would provide an international MSc student with \$465 per month. If they are European and want to fly home to visit their family once per year (conservatively \$1000, substantially more if flying at Christmas), this leaves \$383/month to cover everything else.

“Yes/No” Financial questions

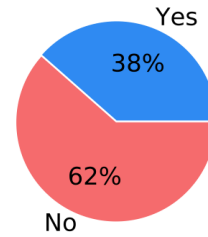
Was the price of living in Vancouver what you expected before you started your degree?



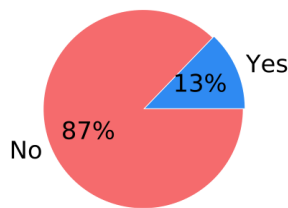
Would you have made any different decisions knowing what you know now?



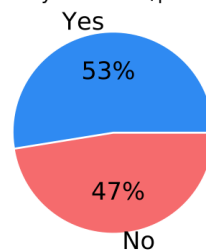
Have you taken a part-time job to supplement your base income during your graduate degree?



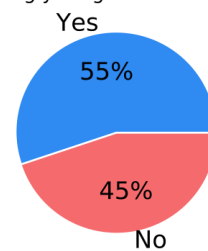
Have you taken student loans during your graduate degree?



Have you relied on financial support from your family members/partner?



Have you been concerned about your ability to make ends meet at any point during your graduate degree?



Students that state they have relied on financial assistance from their family members/partner on average pay more for rent and suggest a lower base salary. A higher proportion of these students are concerned about their ability to make ends meet, have taken out more loans, and have taken more part-time jobs.

Additionally, of the 43 students who said they have relied on financial support from their family members/partner, only 13 live with their partner. Although it is fully possible that some of the remaining 30 receive assistance from a partner they don't live with, it is very likely that many of these students are being supported by their family. However, not all students have that luxury. We believe that the minimum stipend should be enough that more than half of the grad students don't have to rely on external financial support. This is especially important to encourage diversity and inclusivity within grad students in the department.