

# **New to UBC Survey 2015 for Graduate Students: Okanagan Campus**



**a place of mind**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA**

**Okanagan Planning and Institutional Research**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

The 2015 New to UBC (Okanagan campus) Survey for graduate students was administered to new incoming graduate students to UBC's Okanagan campus between August 11<sup>th</sup> and September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Ninety three graduate students completed the survey, yielding an overall response rate of 48%. A higher proportion of international than domestic students responded to the survey (57% of international students compared to 43% of domestic). In the sample of domestic respondents, MSc students were overrepresented and MSW and MASc students were underrepresented. MASc, Masters, and MA students were underrepresented, and MEng, PhD and MSc students were overrepresented in the sample of international respondents.

### Demographics

Most respondents were between the ages of 21 to 25. About two-thirds of domestic respondents were female, while about two-thirds of international respondents were male.

The majority of domestic respondents first learned to speak English in childhood (83%), while international respondents first learned a variety of languages. Nearly all domestic respondents reported their ethnicity as Canadian (91%). South Asian (28%) and Chinese (23%) were the most common ethnicities identified by international respondents.

Ninety three percent of domestic and 88% of international respondents will be living off-campus for this academic year. Most commuting respondents said they would utilize public transportation (89% of international and 53% of domestic respondents).

Sixty two percent of domestic and 70% of international respondents were not married. Most respondents noted they did not have any children (89% domestic, 93% international).

About three in ten international and two in ten domestic respondents reported their mother had obtained a high school level of education or less. About a quarter of domestic respondents' mothers/guardians completed some college or university education (26%), a college-level certificate/diploma (23%), or a university degree (23%). Twenty three percent of international respondents said that their mother/guardian had completed a university degree. Over half of domestic respondents' fathers/guardians had some college or university education or less. More than one third of international respondents indicated their father completed a university degree (35%), and 23% said their father had finished high school or less.

Forty two percent of domestic student respondents reported to be enrolled in a research (thesis-based) Master's program (42%) and 43% in a professional (course-based/major project) Master's program. International respondents most often reported to be enrolled in a research (thesis-based) Master's program (50%) or a Doctorate program (30%). The majority of student respondents, both domestic and international, had not completed a prior graduate program.

Overall, student respondents perceived that they were quite healthy –88% of domestic and 95% of international respondents rated their health as a 7 out of 10 or higher. Most international respondents (81%) planned to access health care through on-campus services, while most domestic respondents planned to visit walk in clinics (63%).



### Choosing UBC and a Supervisor

Most respondents stated that UBC Okanagan was their first choice of school for post-secondary education. For both domestic and international respondents, the most influential factors in choosing a supervisor were that their supervisor was willing to work with them, has intellectual interests that match theirs, and is doing interesting research.

### Academic Concerns and Barriers to Academic Success

Both domestic and international respondents were most concerned with customary practices regarding publication and commitments for the funding of their graduate studies. Work/financial commitments were often identified as a major obstacle to academic progress by both international (28%) and domestic (21%) respondents.

### Opportunities for Graduate Students

Among domestic respondents, 68% would be very likely to participate in an orientation for new graduate students in the program and 62% would be very likely to do so in a graduate student handbook for the program. International respondents were keen to participate in almost all of the proposed activities. Specifically, 85% and 78% would be very likely to participate in a graduate student handbook for the program and a seminar or course to develop them as a prospective faculty member, respectively. The majority of respondents stated they saw themselves partaking in the graduate student orientation (88% domestic, 93% international). Another 53% of international respondents saw themselves participating in the Create New Students Orientation. Ongoing coaching to accomplish their academic goals was identified as very important by many international (78%) and domestic (47%) respondents. Domestic student respondents were also interested in a workshop on career opportunities outside of academia, which was rated as very important by 58%.

Most student respondents were aware of the opportunities for recreation/fitness/athletics on UBC Okanagan's campus, and over half of both domestic and international respondents valued these opportunities to a great extent.

### Time Commitments

Generally, student respondents planned to communicate with their supervisors regarding their ongoing research and results and the writing of their dissertation draft on a regular basis (four or more times per month). Forty six percent of international and 36% of domestic respondents planned to work for pay outside of appointments that are part of their funding package for 11 or more hours per week. Most international respondents planned to work on campus, while most domestic respondents planned to work off campus.

### Financial Support

Over two thirds (69%) of domestic respondents selected loans, savings, or family assistance as a form of support they will receive while enrolled in their graduate studies. Fifty percent of international graduate student respondents said they would be taking on graduate research assistantships to support their graduate studies enrollment. The largest proportions of domestic and international respondents indicated they would not have to repay any undergraduate or graduate educational debt. Sixty three percent of domestic and 38% of international respondents said they would owe between \$1 and \$39,999 in graduate educational debt.



### Career Plans

Becoming a professor in a college or university was the second most popular desired career for domestic respondents and the most popular for international respondents, with 19% of domestic and 48% of international respondents saying they would definitely be interested. Working independently was rated as a career option domestic respondents were definitely interested in 27% of the time. International respondents were also often interested in conducting research in a college or university – 30% selected they would definitely be interested.



## INTRODUCTION

This report displays the findings of the 2015 New to UBC (Okanagan campus) Survey for graduate students, which was administered to new incoming students to UBC's Okanagan campus between August 11<sup>th</sup> and September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Graduate students participating in this survey were asked about why they chose to pursue their graduate studies at UBC Okanagan, their academic concerns, opportunities they may pursue, their time commitments, how they will finance their studies, and their career plans.

### Methodology and Response Rate

All new to UBC's Okanagan campus students entering a graduate degree program were invited to participate. To encourage participation, students were informed that, upon completing the survey, they would be entered into a draw to win a \$50 gift certificate for the UBC Bookstore.

Of the 194 invited graduate students, 93 completed the survey, yielding a response rate of 48%. The response rate for domestic students was 43% (n=52/124) and 57% for international students (n=40/70). In the cohort, 64% of students (n=124) were domestic (Canadian citizens or permanent residents) while 70 students were international (attending on a student Visa). In the sample (i.e. those who responded), 57% (n=53/93) of respondents were domestic. Throughout this report, responses are separated by domestic and international students.

### Sample Distribution

*Table 1: Demographic breakdown*

	Domestic				International			
	Sample (n=53)	Cohort (n=124)	Sample (n=40)	Cohort (n=70)	Sample (n=40)	Cohort (n=70)	Sample (n=40)	Cohort (n=70)
<b>Female</b>	66%	35	66%	82	35%	14	34%	24
<b>Masters</b>	87%	46	89%	110	70%	28	74%	52
<b>Thesis-based program*</b>	75%	40	n/a	n/a	83%	33	n/a	n/a
<b>MA</b>	15%	8	14%	17	5%	2	9%	6
<b>MASc</b>	2%	1	6%	8	23%	9	31%	22
<b>MEd</b>	6%	3	7%	9	-	-	-	-
<b>MEng</b>	-	-	-	-	18%	7	13%	9
<b>MFA</b>	6%	3	5%	6	-	-	-	-
<b>MSc</b>	26%	14	20%	25	23%	9	16%	11
<b>MSW</b>	32%	17	36%	45	3%	1	6%	4
<b>PhD</b>	13%	7	11%	14	30%	12	26%	18

*\*Note: For respondents in MA and MSW programs, it was not possible to determine whether they were registered in a thesis or not. For these respondents, their answer to the survey question "are you enrolled in a thesis-/dissertation-based graduate program" was used to determine their status. For all other respondents, SISC data was used.*

Comparing the sample with the cohort for domestic and international respondents, it is clear the sample is not an ideal representation of the cohort of new graduate students incoming to UBC's Okanagan campus. Among domestic respondents, MSc students were overrepresented (sample: 26%,



cohort: 20%) and MSW (sample: 32%, cohort: 36%) and MASc (sample: 2%, cohort: 6%) students were underrepresented. Among international respondents, the following groups were underrepresented: MASc (sample: 23%, cohort: 31%), Masters (sample: 70%, cohort: 74%), and MA (sample: 70%, cohort: 74%) students. MEng (sample: 18%, cohort: 13%), PhD (sample: 30%, cohort: 26%) and MSc (sample: 23%, cohort: 16%) students were overrepresented. ***Thus, the findings presented below should be interpreted with caution.***

### Notes

Readers should be aware that the percentages given in this report reflect the number of respondents who selected an option in terms of the total number of students who responded to a given item. In other words, “50%” denotes 50% of students who responded to a certain item rather than 50% of all domestic or all international students who completed this survey.

***In total, there were 53 domestic and 40 international students who completed the NUBC survey for graduate students. Thus, it should be noted that figures should be interpreted with a degree of caution as they can only represent a maximum of 93 respondents.***

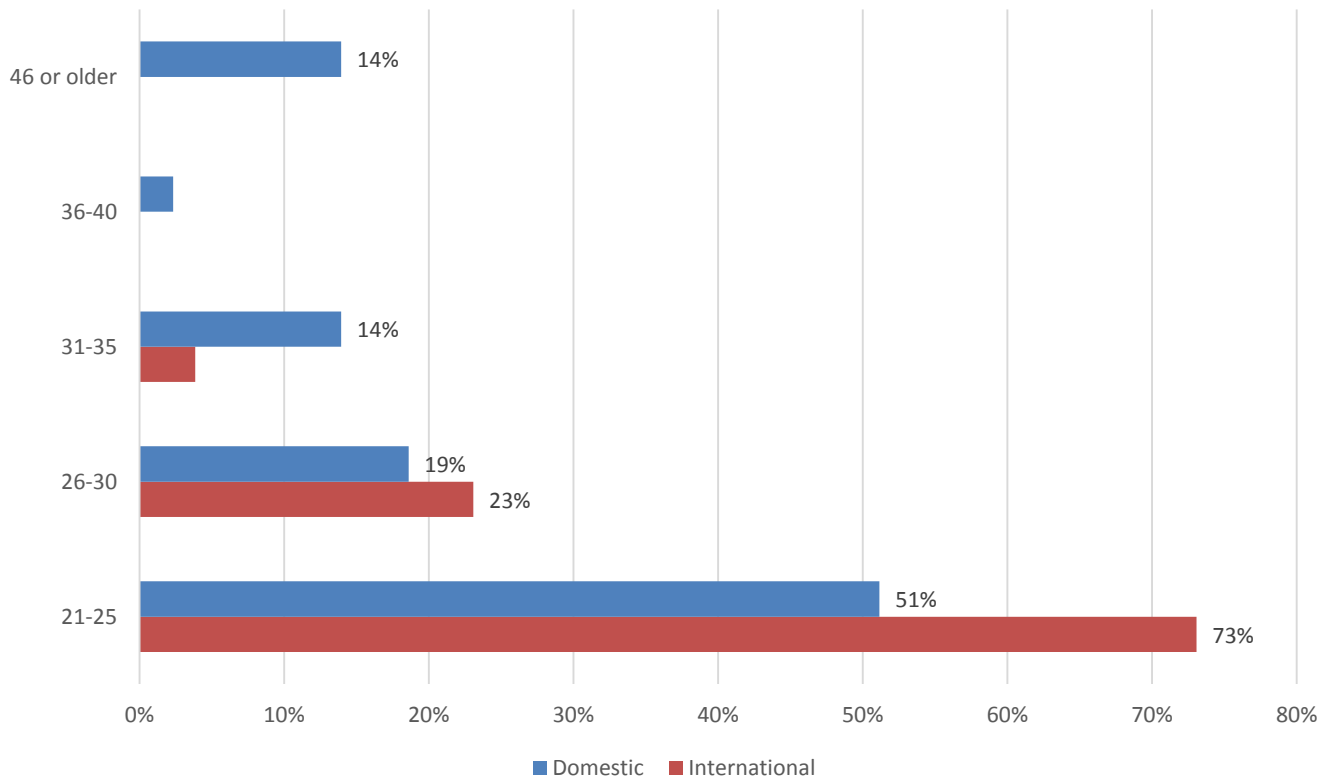


## DEMOGRAPHICS

### Age

The majority of graduate student respondents indicated they were between the ages of 21-25, with 73% of international and 51% of domestic respondents selecting this age range. No student respondents, neither international nor domestic, were 20 years old or younger or between 41 to 45. No international respondents were older than the age of 35.

Figure 1: Age distribution



### Gender

In terms of gender, the distribution was different for international versus domestic respondents. Specifically, about two-thirds of international student respondents were male (62%), while about two-thirds of domestic student respondents were female (65%).

### First Language Learned and Languages Spoken

The majority of domestic respondents noted that they first learned to speak English in childhood (83%). Another 8% selected “Other” languages and 6% selected French. For international graduate student respondents, “Other” was the most commonly selected language category (40%). English (35%) and Mandarin (20%) were also frequently indicated.

Of those whose first language was not English, students were asked to report when they learned English. Thirty three percent of domestic student respondents said they learned English before they turned six years old, 22% said 6 to 10, 11% said 11 to 15, and 33% said after turning 16. Among





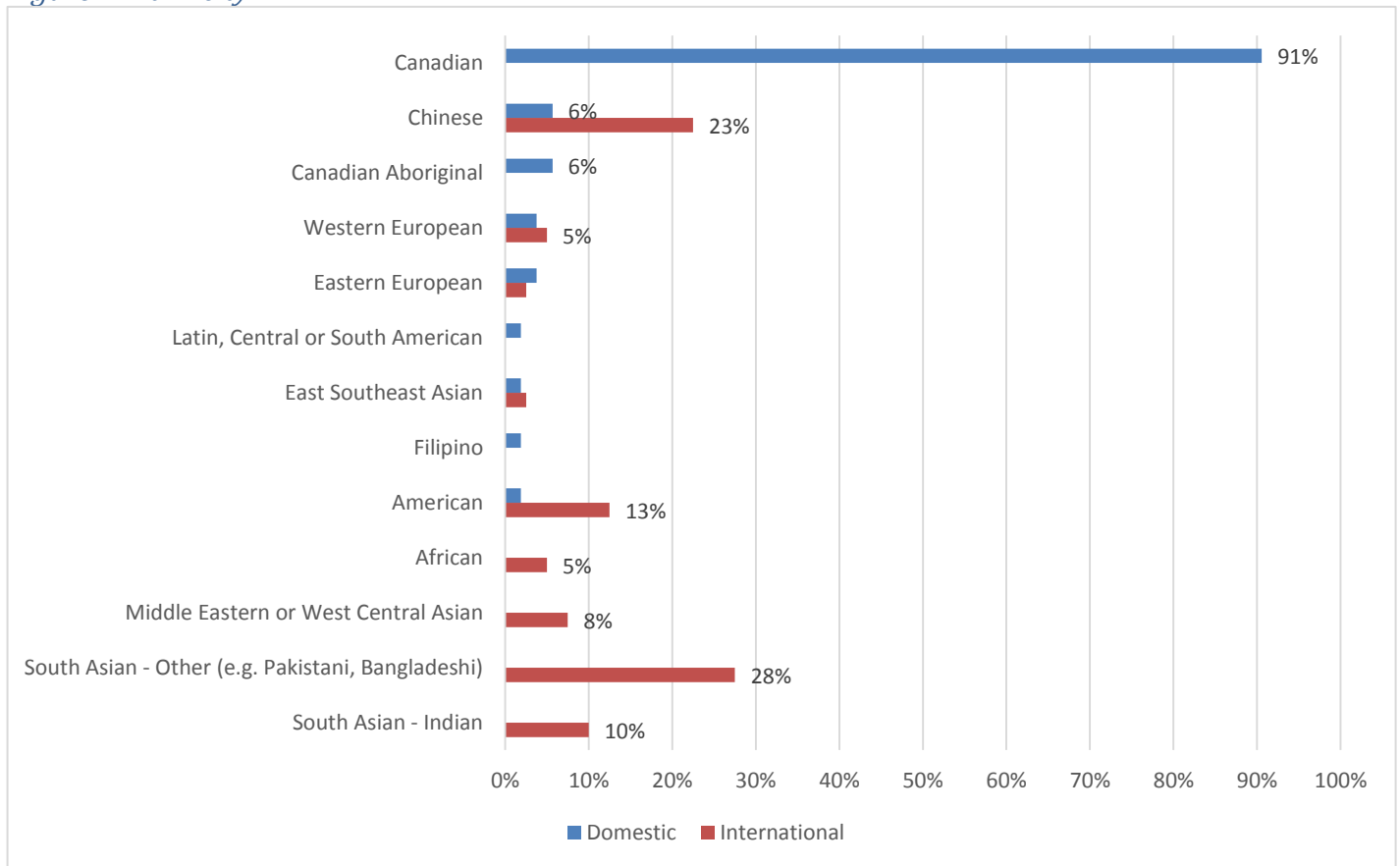
international respondents, 12% said before turning 6, 50% said between the ages of 6 to 10, 39% said 11 to 15, and none said after turning 16.

Students were also asked to report the number of languages they can speak well enough to maintain a conversation. Over half (60%) of domestic respondents said one and 39% said two. Ten percent of international respondents said one, while 59% said two and 23% said three.

### Ethno-Racial Distribution

Nearly all domestic respondents (91%) selected that they identify their ethnicity as Canadian. International respondents most often identified as South Asian – Other (e.g. Pakistani, Bangladeshi) (28%) and Chinese (23%).

Figure 2: Ethnicity



*Note: The Canadian Aboriginal response option contained the following definition: “UBC uses the term Aboriginal in the spirit of its use in section 35(2) of the Canadian Constitution, to refer inclusively to members of First Nations, status and non-status, treaty and non-treaty Indians, Metis, and Inuit peoples in Canada, recognizing in doing so that many people prefer the terms that are specific and traditional to their communities.”*

Of the domestic respondents who noted they were Canadian Aboriginal, the only groups most identified with were First Nations (67%) and Métis (33%).



## Residence

Ninety three percent of domestic student respondents were born in Canada, and 100% of international respondents were born outside of Canada. Most international respondents moved to Canada in the year 2015 (67%).

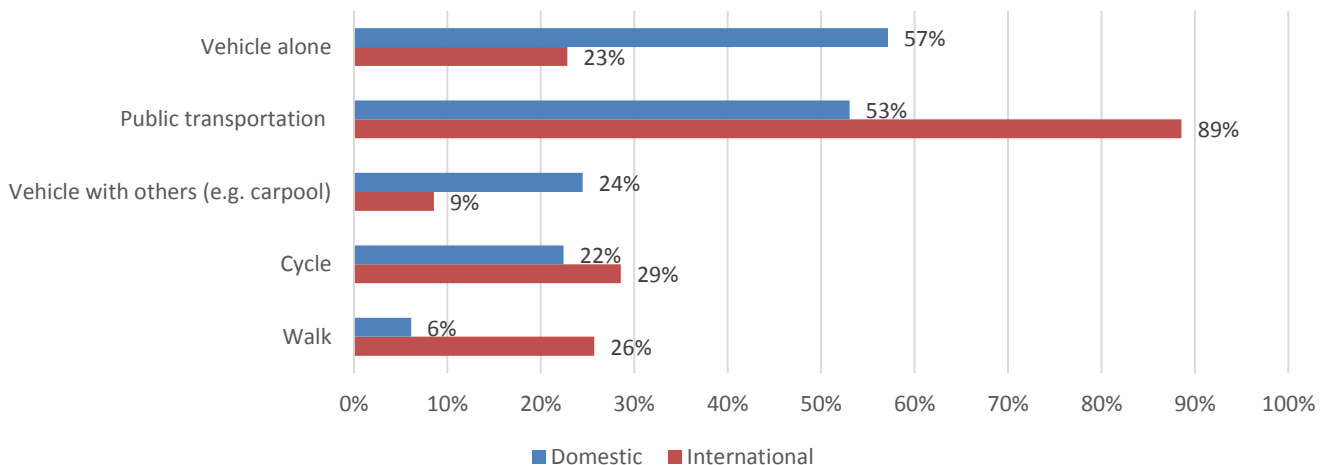
Fifty nine percent of domestic graduate student respondents have lived in the Okanagan region for at least one year, and 55% have lived in another province/territory in Canada for at least one year. Most international respondents (82%) have lived outside of Canada for at least one year.

Respondents were asked to specify whether they will be living on- or off-campus for this coming academic year. Nearly all respondents said they would be living off-campus (93% domestic, 88% international). Domestic respondents residing off-campus indicated varied current housing situations, with 22% living alone, 18% living with their spouse/significant other with children, 16% living with their spouse/significant other without children, and 16% living with friends. Living with people they hadn't met prior to UBC was selected by almost half (49%) of international respondents, and living with friends by 20%.

## Commuting

Students living off-campus were asked to select the modes by which they planned to commute to campus. Public transportation was selected by 89% of international and 53% of domestic respondents. An additional 57% of domestic respondents said they would be driving alone. International respondents often indicated that they would cycle (29%), walk (26%), and/or drive alone (23%).

*Figure 3: Modes of transportation among commuters*



## Marital Status and Children

Sixty two percent of domestic and 70% of international respondents were not married, while 23% of domestic and 30% of international respondents were married. Most respondents did not have any children (89% domestic, 93% international).

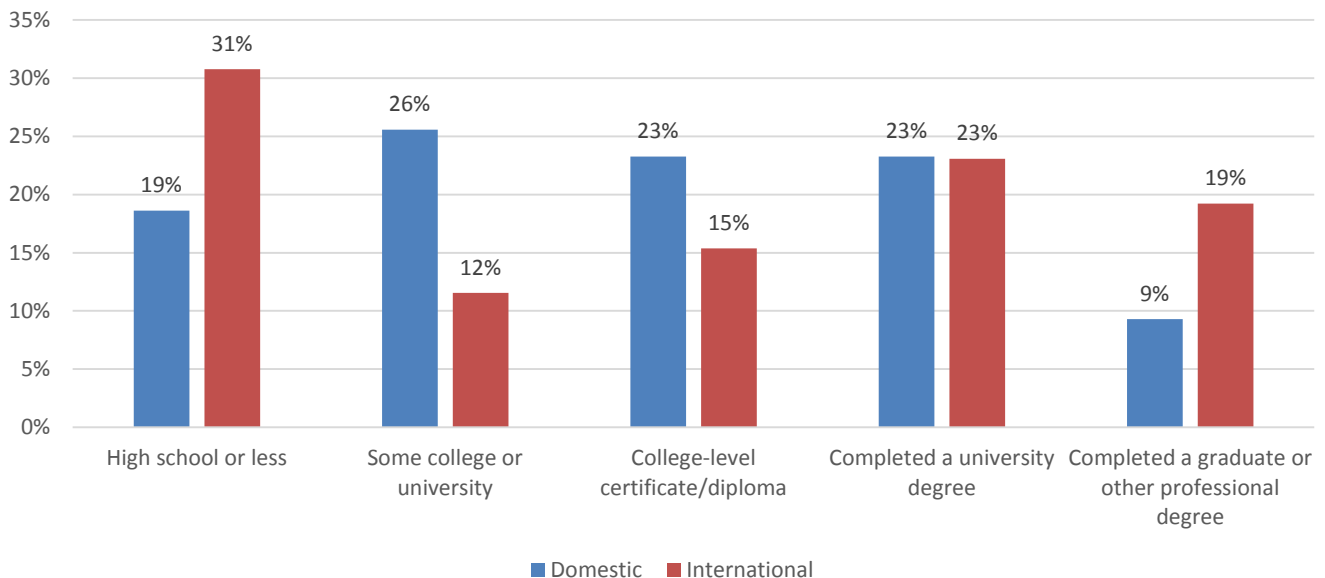
## Education of Parents/Guardians

Thirty one percent of international respondents' mothers/guardians had obtained a high school level of education or less, while 19% of domestic respondents' mothers/guardians had done so. Nearly a



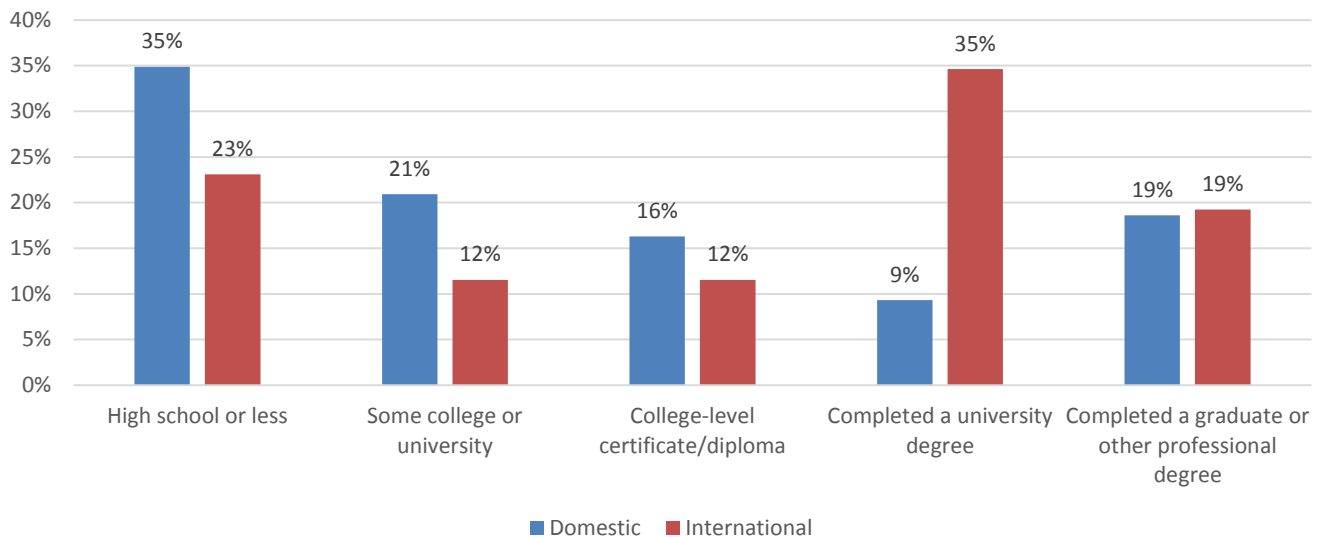
quarter of domestic respondents indicated their mother/guardian had some college or university education (26%), a college-level certificate/diploma (23%) or a university degree (23%). More international respondents' mothers/guardians had completed a graduate or professional degree (19%) than domestic respondents. A further 23% of international respondents selected that their mother/guardian had completed a university degree.

*Figure 4a: Highest education attained by mother/guardian*



Over half of domestic respondents' fathers/guardians had some college or university education or less (35% high school or less and 21% some college or university). Over one third of international graduate student respondents noted their father had obtained a university degree (35%), while 23% said their father had completed high school or less.



*Figure 4b: Highest education attained by father/guardian*

### Academic Status and Achievement

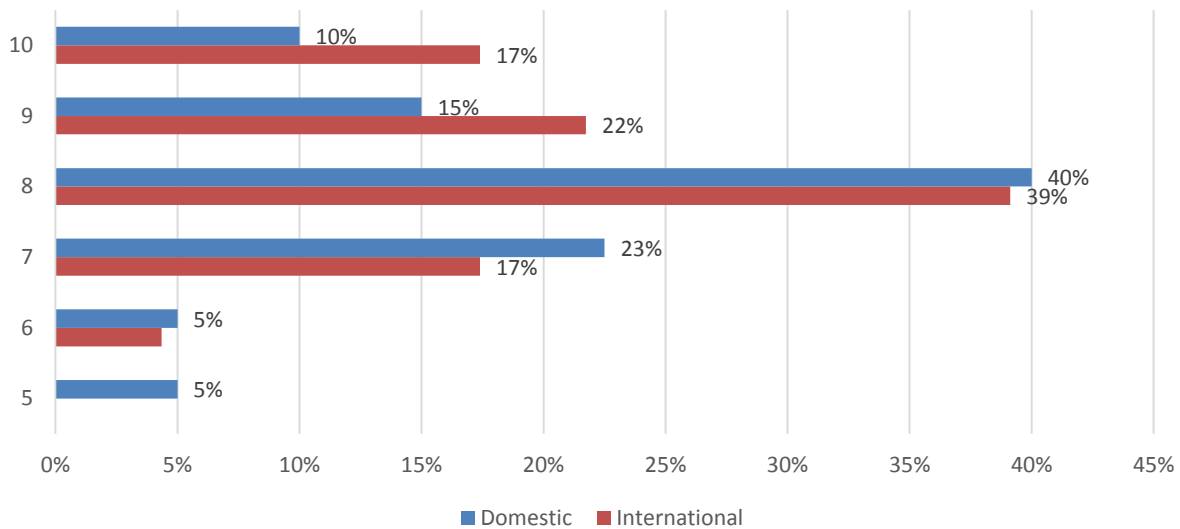
Domestic student respondents most commonly stated they were enrolled in a research (thesis-based) Master's program (42%) or a professional (course-based/major project) Master's program (43%). Most often, international respondents said they were enrolled in a research (thesis-based) Master's program (50%) or a Doctorate program (30%). Most student respondents had not completed a previous graduate program (81% domestic, 65% international). Of the student respondents who had completed a previous graduate program, most domestic respondents did so in Canada outside British Columbia, while most international respondents did so outside of Canada. Both international and domestic respondents who had finished a previous graduate degree did so within the same discipline as their current graduate program (70% domestic, 79% international). The most frequently indicated year during which respondents received their Bachelor's degree was 2015 (30% domestic, 23% international), meaning a fairly large proportion of graduate student respondents went directly from their Bachelor's program into their Master's program.

### Health

Students were asked to rate their overall health on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being very poor and 10 being excellent. The largest proportion of international (40%) and domestic respondents (40%) rated their health as an 8 out of 10. For international respondents, the next most frequently occurring rating was a 9 out of 10, with 22% selecting this rating. The second greatest proportion of domestic student respondents rated their health as a 7 out of 10 (23%).



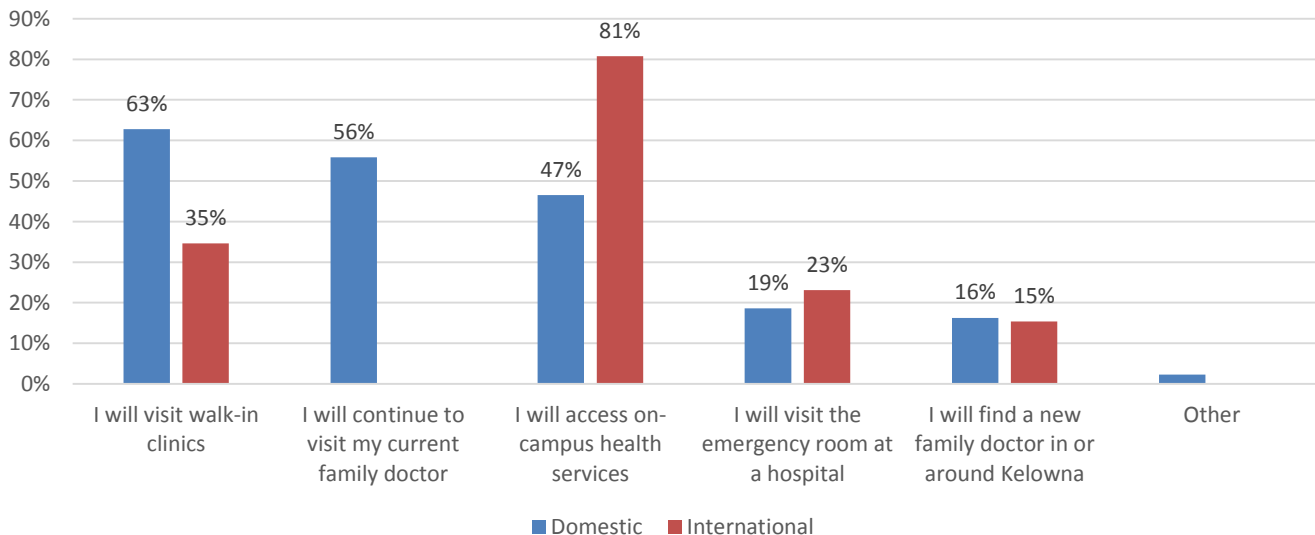
Figure 5: Ratings of overall health



Note: Only one domestic respondent rated their health as a 1 (very poor) and, thus, was excluded from the above graph. No international nor domestic student respondents selected 2 through 4.

Most domestic student respondents planned to use walk-in clinics (63%), visit their current family doctor (56%), and/or access on campus services (47%) when in need of health care services. International student respondents selected that they would use on-campus health services most often (81%). Another 35% said they would visit walk in clinics, and 23% said they would utilize the emergency room at a hospital.

Figure 6: Expected access to health care services



## CHOOSING UBC AND A SUPERVISOR

### Choosing UBC

UBC’s Okanagan campus was the first choice for 81% of domestic and 73% of international respondents. Of those respondents for whom it was not their first choice, 79% of domestic and 73% of international respondents rated UBC’s Okanagan campus as their second choice.

For those respondents who did not rank UBC Okanagan as their first choice of post-secondary institution, UBC Vancouver was most often identified as their first choice

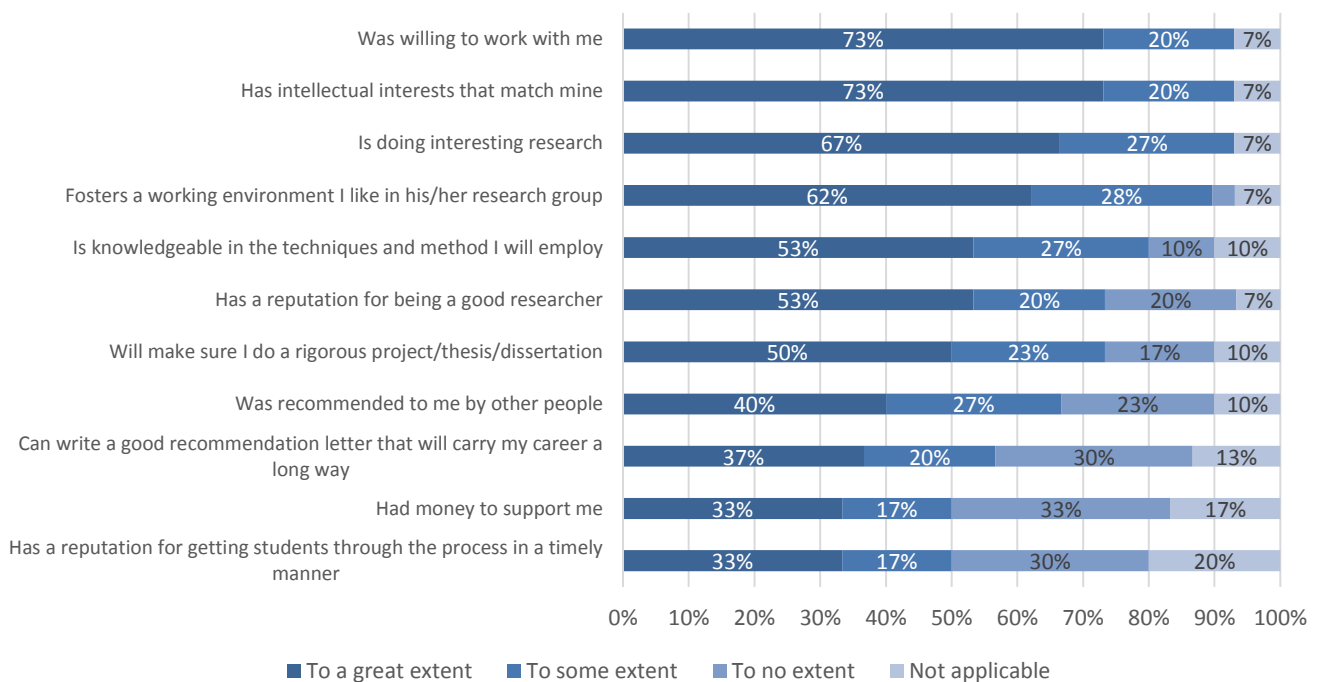
The majority of international respondents said they were enrolled in a thesis- or dissertation-based program (83%), compared to only 59% of domestic respondents.

### Choosing a Supervisor

Students choose to work with a particular faculty member as their supervisor for a variety of reasons. Respondents identifying they were in thesis- or dissertation-based programs were asked to rate the extent to which several aspects influenced their choice of supervisor.

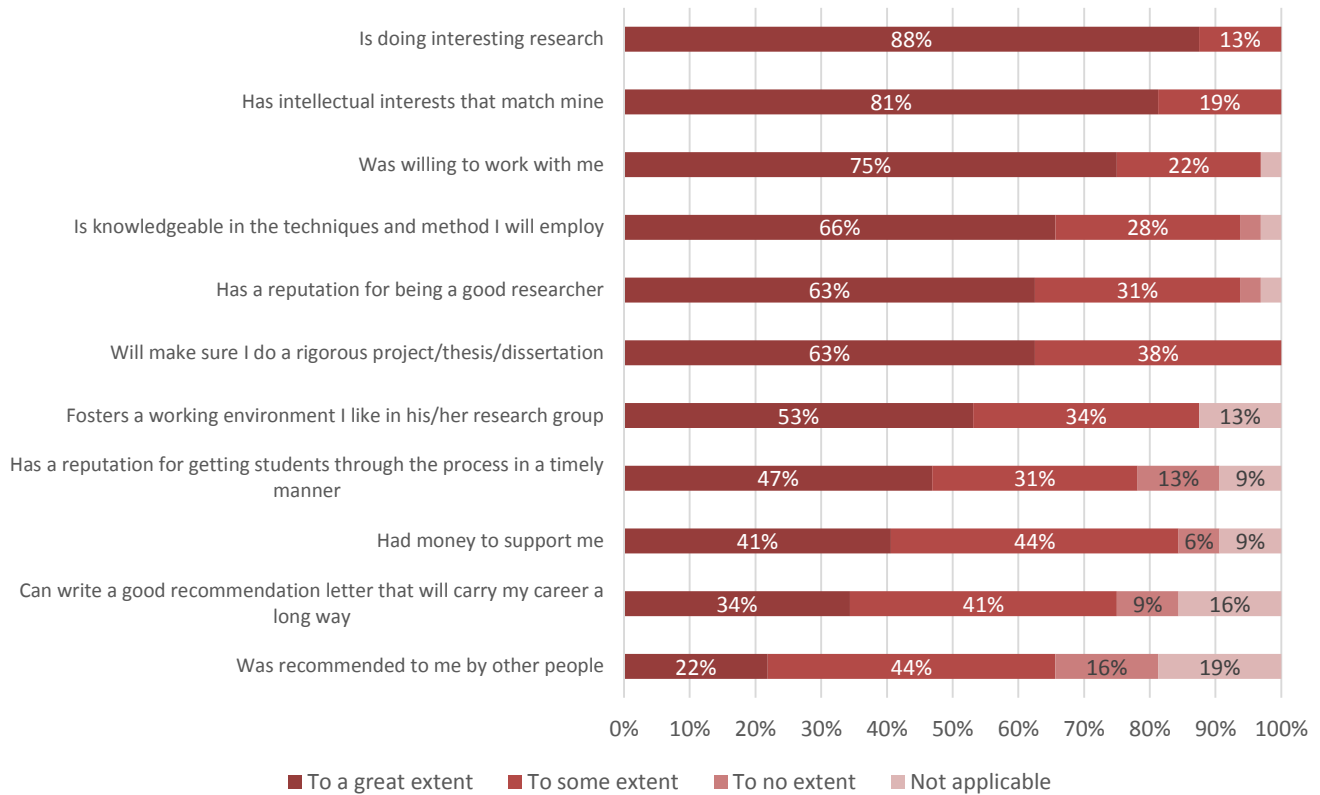
Domestic respondents most commonly chose that their supervisor was willing to work with them (73%), has intellectual interests that match theirs (73%), and is doing interesting research (67%) as factors that influenced their decision to a great extent. The least influential factors among domestic respondents were whether the supervisor has money to support them, has a reputation for getting students through the process in a timely manner, and could write a good recommendation letter.

Figure 7a: Influencing factors when choosing a supervisor (domestic)



Like domestic respondents, international respondents selected the most influential factors in choosing a supervisor to be that the supervisor is doing interesting research, has intellectual interests matching theirs, and was willing to work with them. These options were rated as being influential to a great extent 88%, 81%, and 75% of the time, respectively. The least influential factors were recommendations by other people (22% said to a great extent) and ability to write a good recommendation letter (34% cited to a great extent).

Figure 7b: Influencing factors when choosing a supervisor (international)



## ACADEMIC CONCERNS AND BARRIERS TO ACADEMIC SUCCESS

### Academic Concerns

In general, international respondents had higher levels of concerns with commitments and customary practices related to graduate studies than domestic respondents.

Both domestic and international respondents were most concerned with customary practices regarding publication (29% of domestic and 64% of international respondents stated they were either very concerned or concerned) and commitments regarding the funding of their graduate studies (45% of domestic and 66% of international respondents were very concerned or concerned). Seventy percent of domestic respondents were not at all concerned with the amount of time to be spent with their supervisor, making this the aspect they were least concerned with. Customary practices involving biosafety, human subjects, animal care, etc. were the least worrisome for international respondents, with 44% being not at all concerned.

Figure 8a: Level of concern with aspects related to graduate program (domestic)

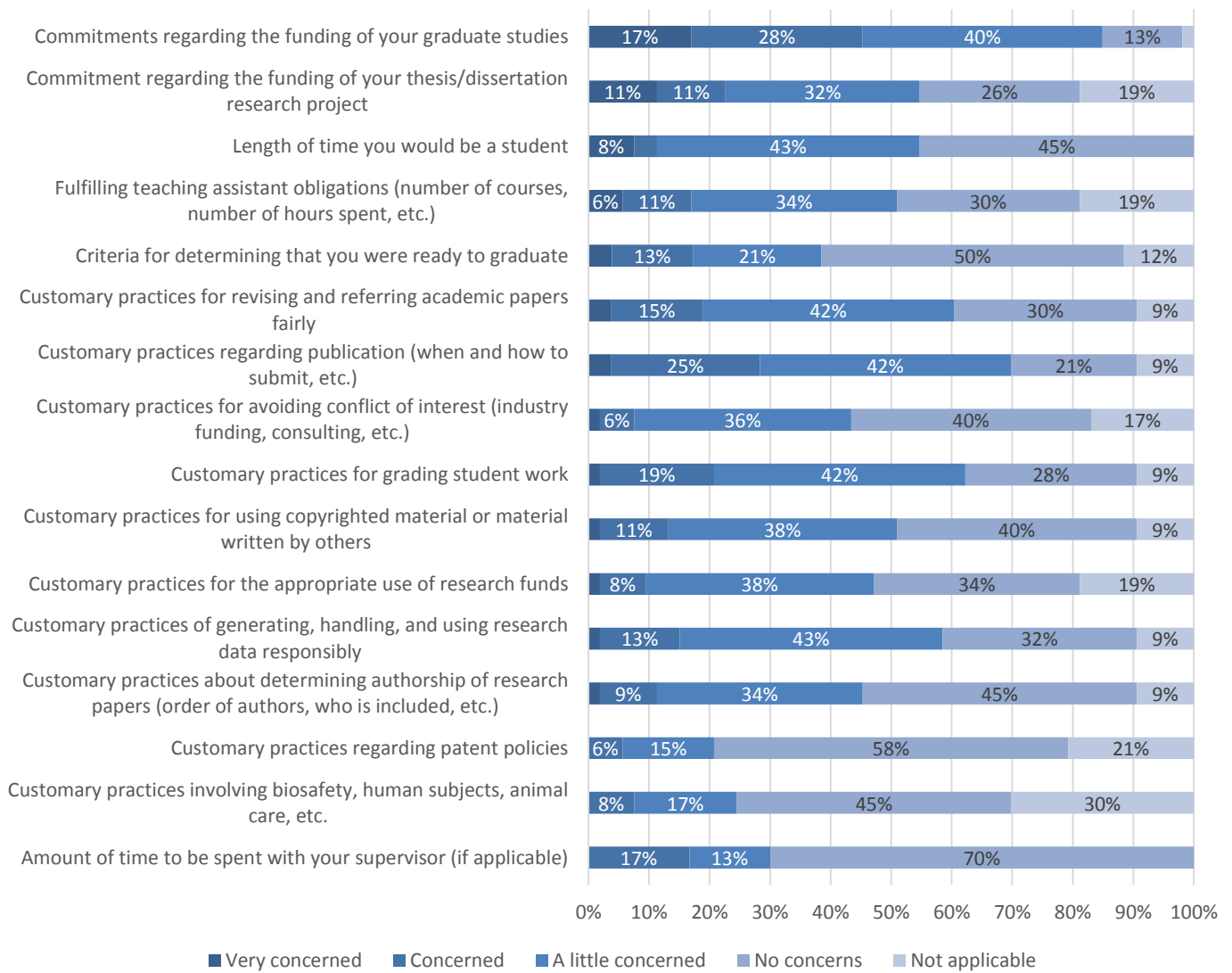
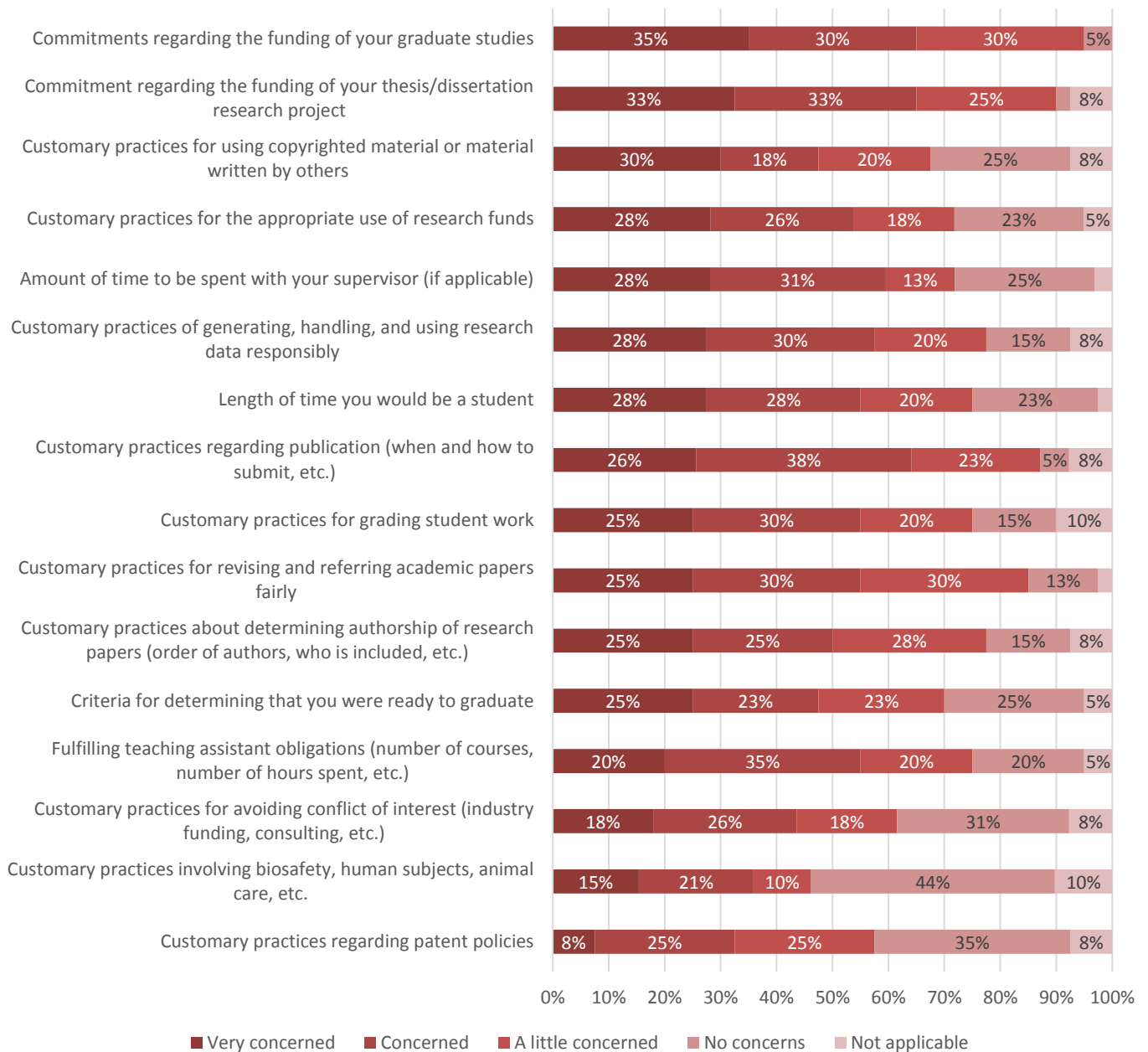




Figure 8b: Level of concern with aspects related to graduate program (international)



### Barriers to Academic Success

Work/financial commitments were identified as the top obstacle to academic progress by both international and domestic respondents, with 21% of domestic and 28% of international respondents rating this as a major obstacle. Excluding immigration laws or regulations, domestic respondents least frequently selected availability of faculty as a barrier to their academic success (62% saying it was not an obstacle). International respondents stated program structure or requirements were not an obstacle to academic success 67% of the time.



Figure 9a: Obstacles to academic progress (domestic)

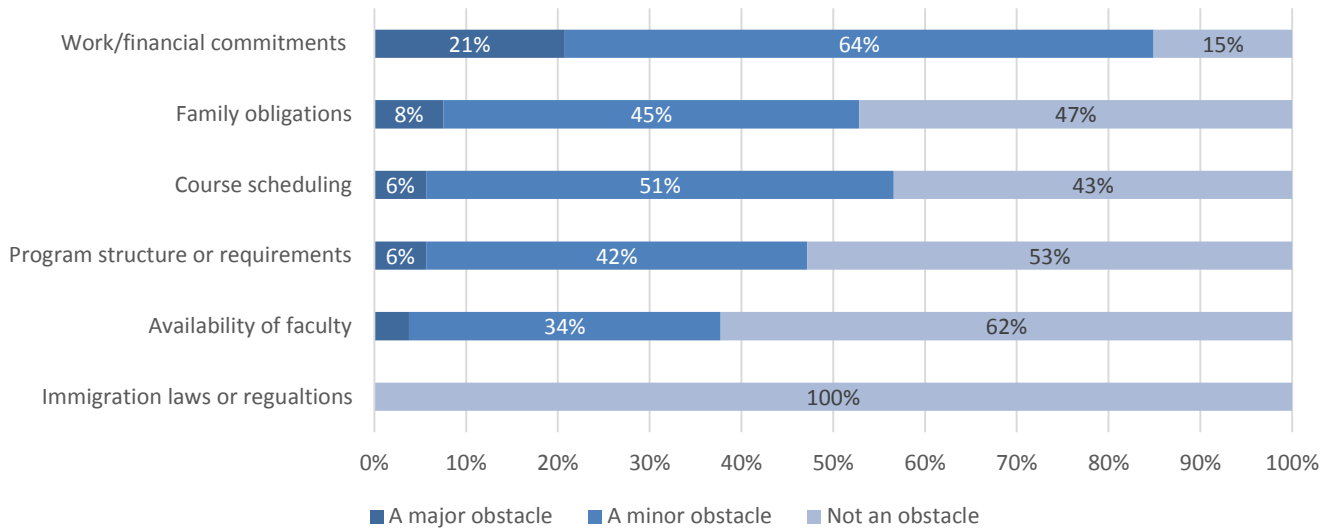
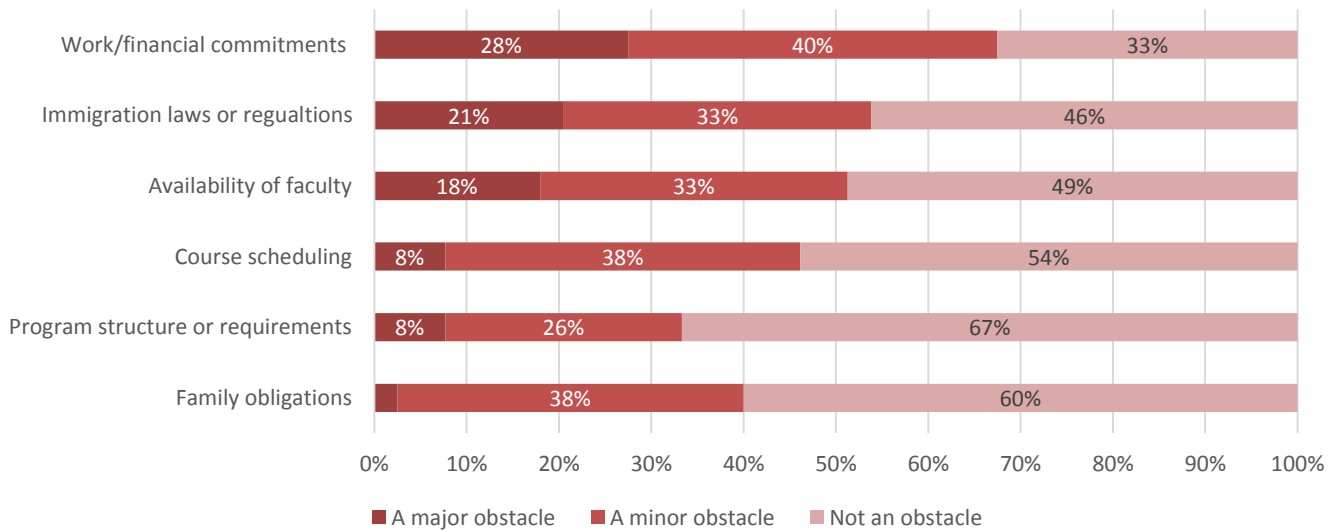


Figure 9b: Obstacles to academic progress (international)



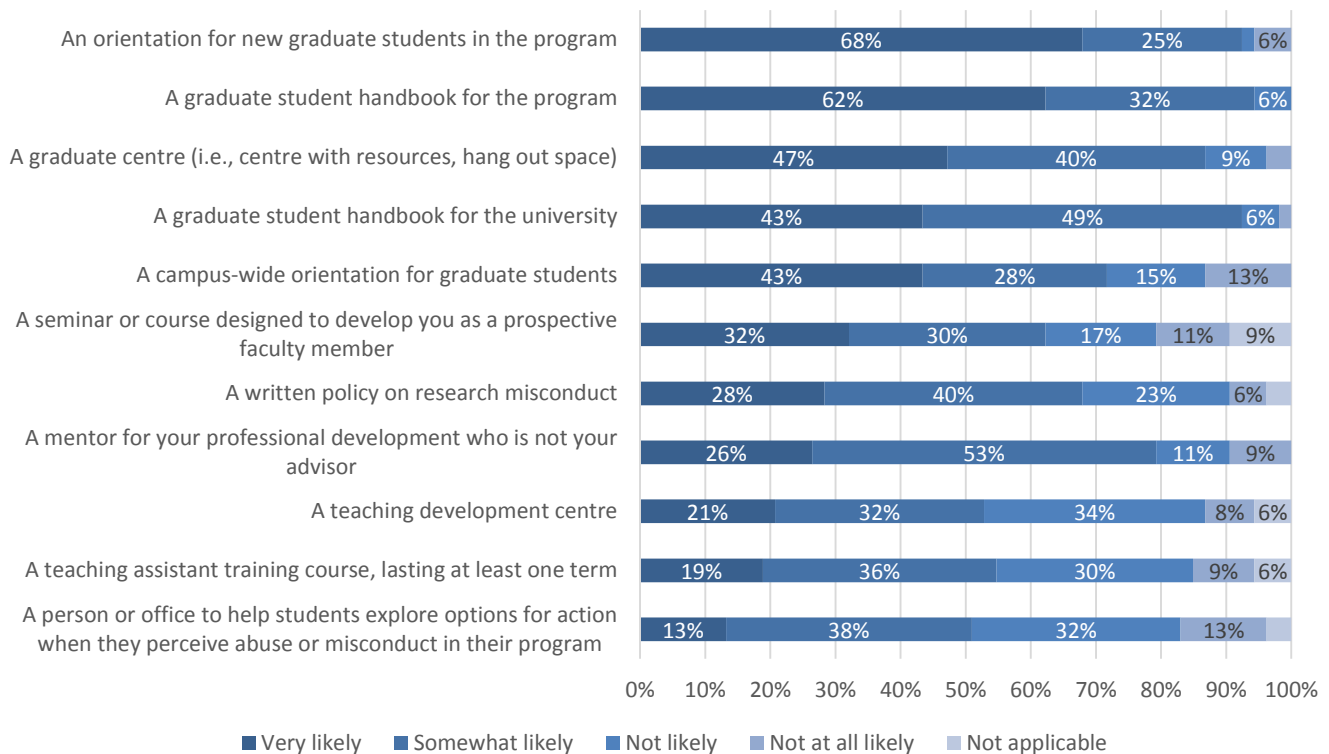
## OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

### Likelihood of Participation in Activities

The observed trends demonstrated that, overall, international respondents were keener to participate in opportunities for graduate students than domestic respondents. When asked how likely they would be to participate in a variety of activities, larger proportions of international compared to domestic respondents said they would be very likely to participate across all items.

Domestic respondents indicated they would be most likely to participate in an orientation for new graduate students in the program (68% selected very likely) and a graduate student handbook for the program (62% said very likely).

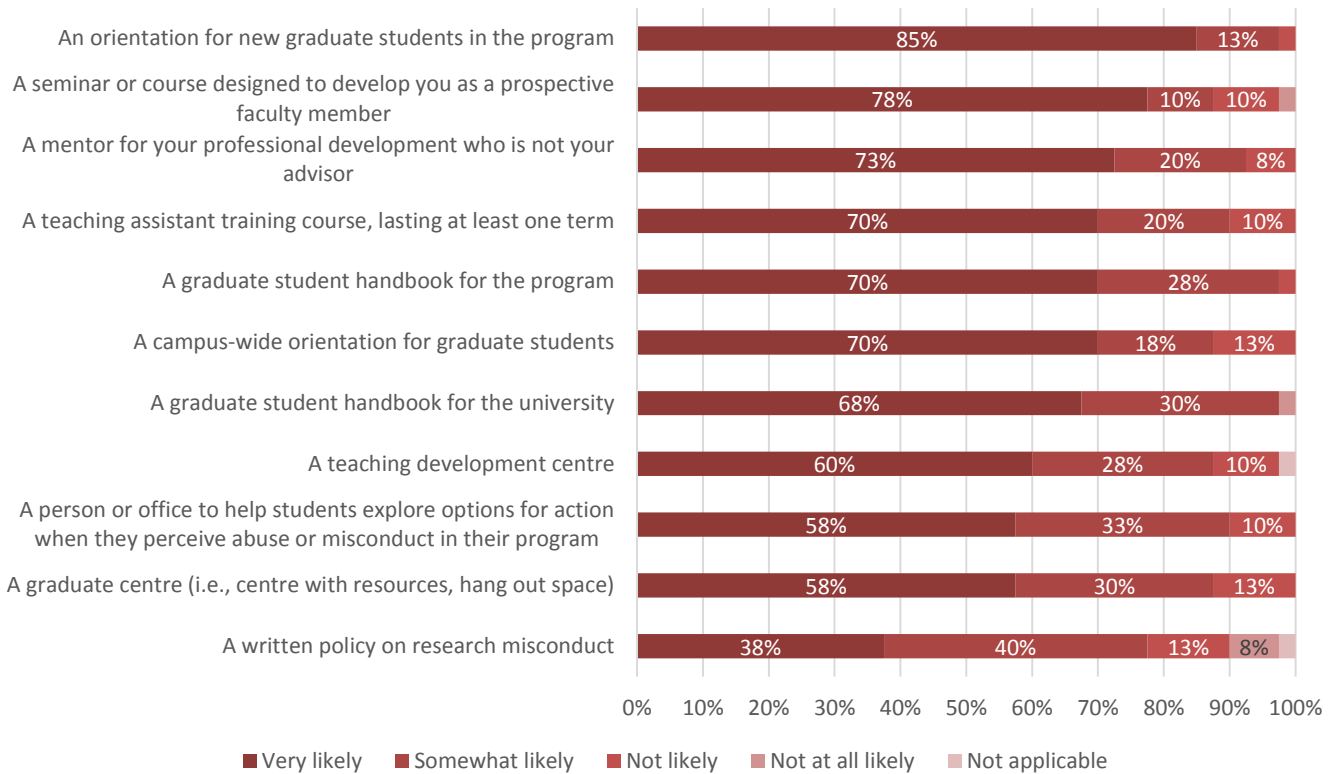
Figure 10a: Likelihood of participation in various opportunities (domestic)



With the exception of a written policy on research misconduct, 50% or more of international respondents stated they would be very likely to participate in all the listed opportunities. The most frequently indicated items as very likely to partake in were an orientation for new graduate students in the program (85%) and a seminar or course to develop them as a prospective faculty member (78%).



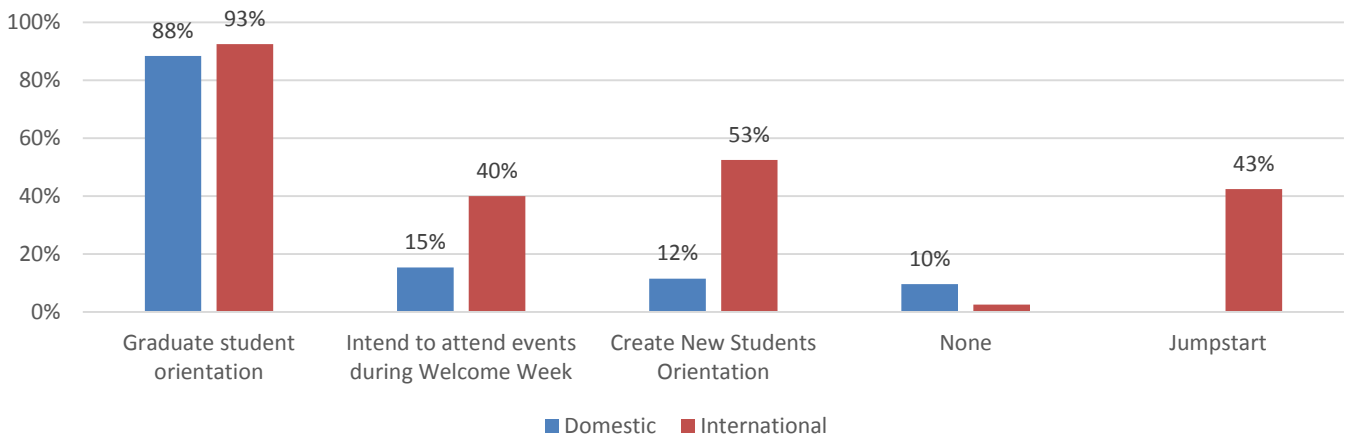
Figure 10b: Likelihood of participation in various opportunities (international)



### Orientation Events

Students were asked which orientation events they see themselves participating in. The majority of respondents stated they saw themselves partaking in the graduate student orientation (88% domestic, 93% international). Fifty three percent of international respondents selected the Create New Students Orientation. Overall, international respondents saw themselves participating in more orientation events than domestic respondents.

Figure 11: Participation in orientation events

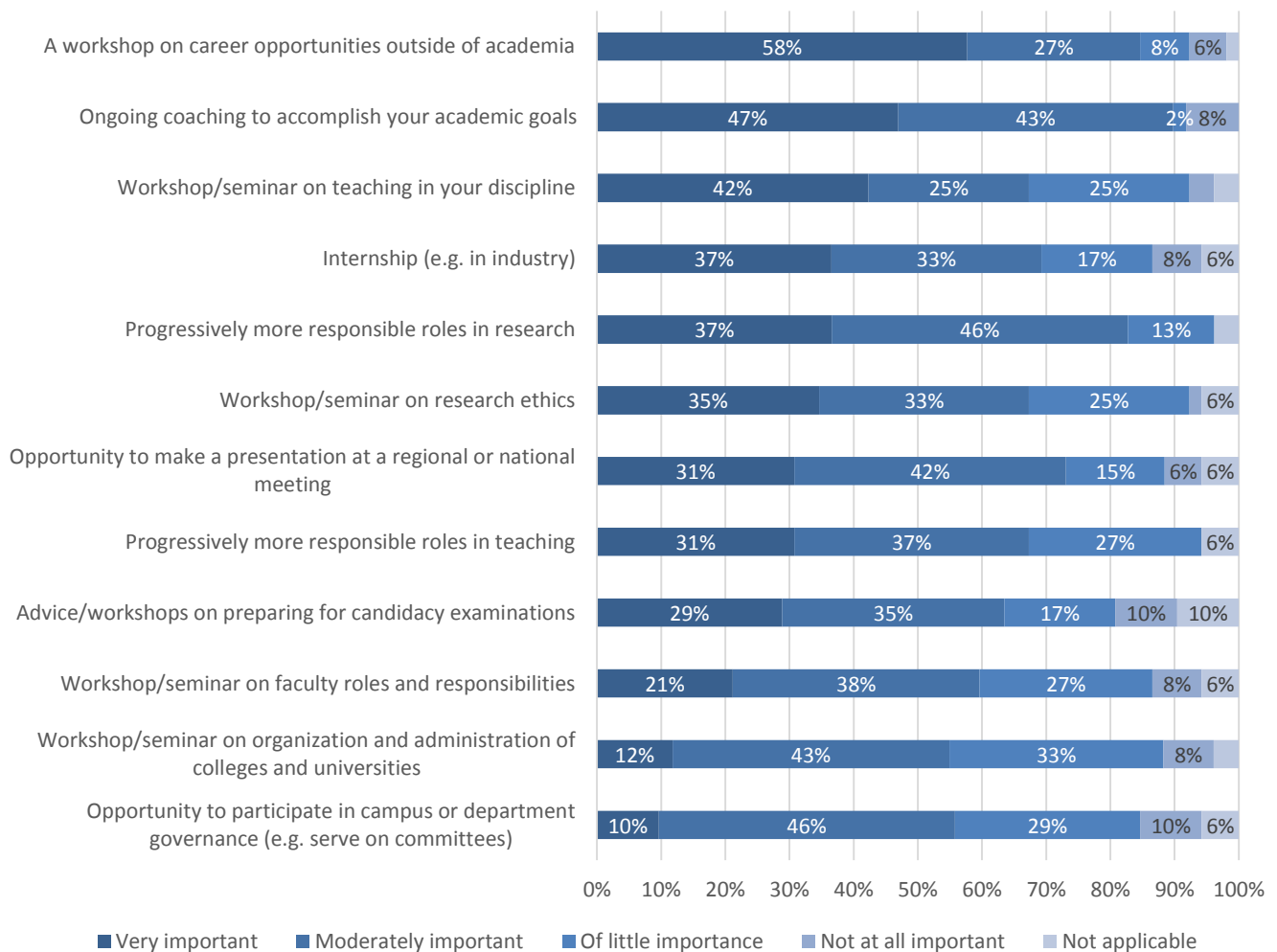


### Perceived Importance of Offering Opportunities

In consistency with international respondents’ tendency to express more interest than domestic respondents in participation in a variety of opportunities related to graduate studies, international respondents also ranked all the listed opportunities as very important to their graduate program experience more often than domestic respondents.

A workshop on career opportunities outside of academia was most frequently rated as very important (58%) by domestic respondents. As well, 47% noted they felt that ongoing coaching to accomplish their academic goals is very important. Of least importance was a workshop/seminar on the organization and administration of colleges and universities, with 41% of domestic respondents selecting of little importance or not at all important for this item.

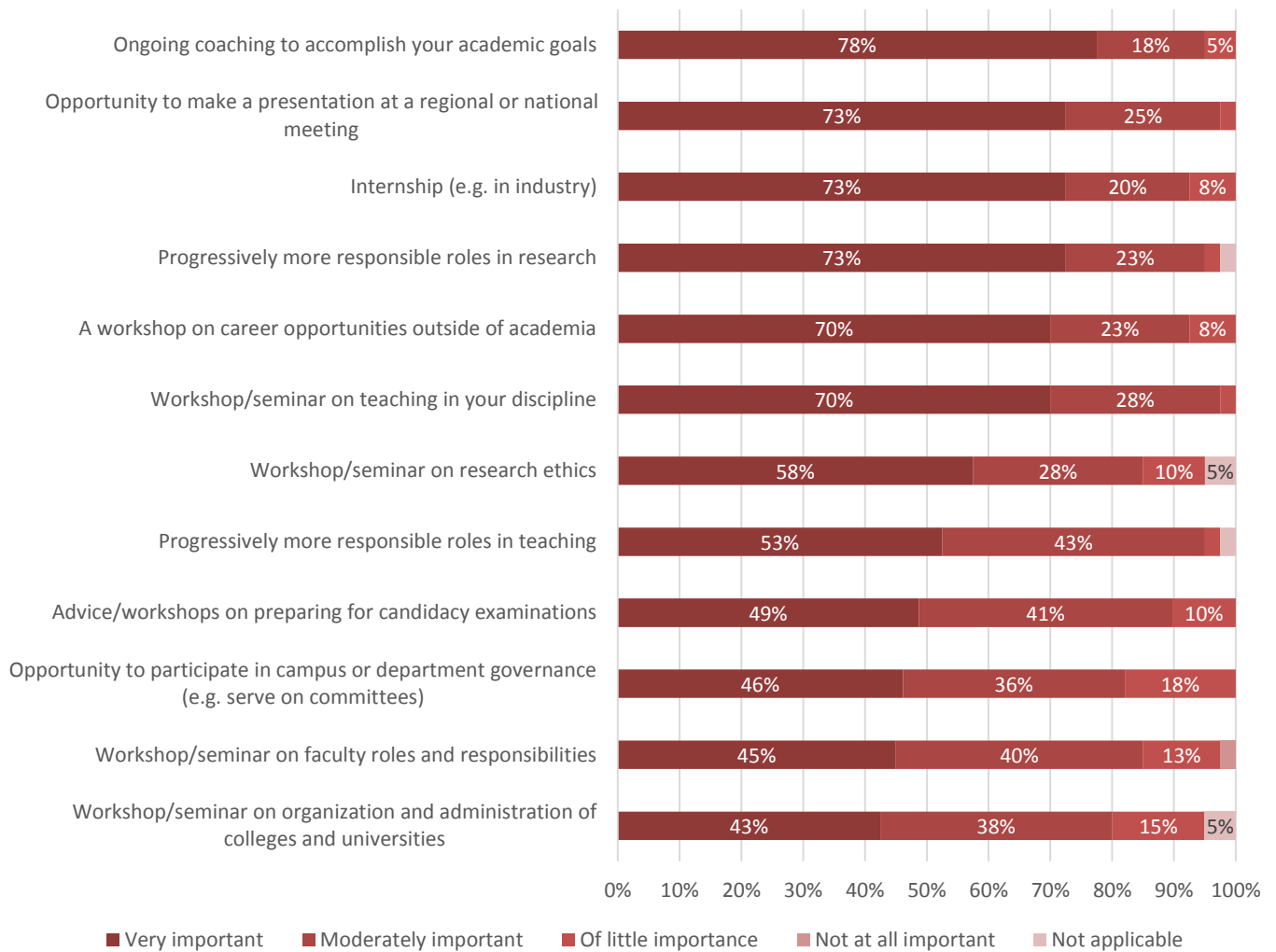
Figure 12a: Importance of opportunities for graduate program experience (domestic)



International respondents most often felt that ongoing coaching to achieve their academic goals (78%) was very important. The least important opportunity identified for international respondents was participating in campus or department governance (18% said of little importance).



Figure 12b: Importance of opportunities for graduate program experience (international)



### Recreation

Most student respondents were aware of the opportunities for recreation/fitness/athletics on UBC Okanagan’s campus (67% of domestic and 55% of international respondents said they were aware). Over half of respondents (51% domestic, 55% international) said they valued such opportunities to a great extent, while 43% of domestic and 40% of international respondents did so to some extent.



## TIME COMMITMENTS

### Communication with Supervisor

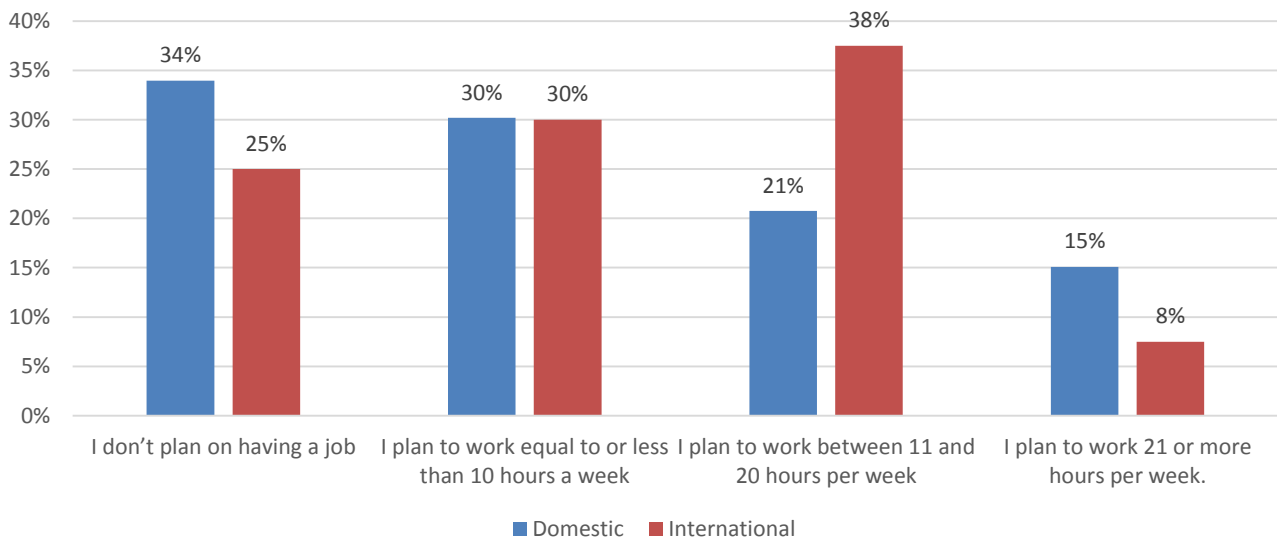
Generally, student respondents planned to communicate with their supervisors on a regular basis. Specifically, 55% of domestic and 73% of international respondents planned to communicate with their supervisor about their ongoing research and results four or more times per month. In terms of communicating with supervisors regarding the writing of their dissertation draft, 49% of domestic respondents planned to do so one to three times per month, while 55% of international respondents selected four or more times per month.

### Employment

Thirty eight percent of international respondents planned to work for pay outside of appointments that are part of their funding package (e.g. research and teaching assistantships) between 11 and 20 hours per week. Just over a third of domestic respondents did not plan to have a job.

Of those respondents planning to work, most international respondents planned to work on campus (90%), while most domestic respondents planned to do so off campus.

Figure 13: Planned employment

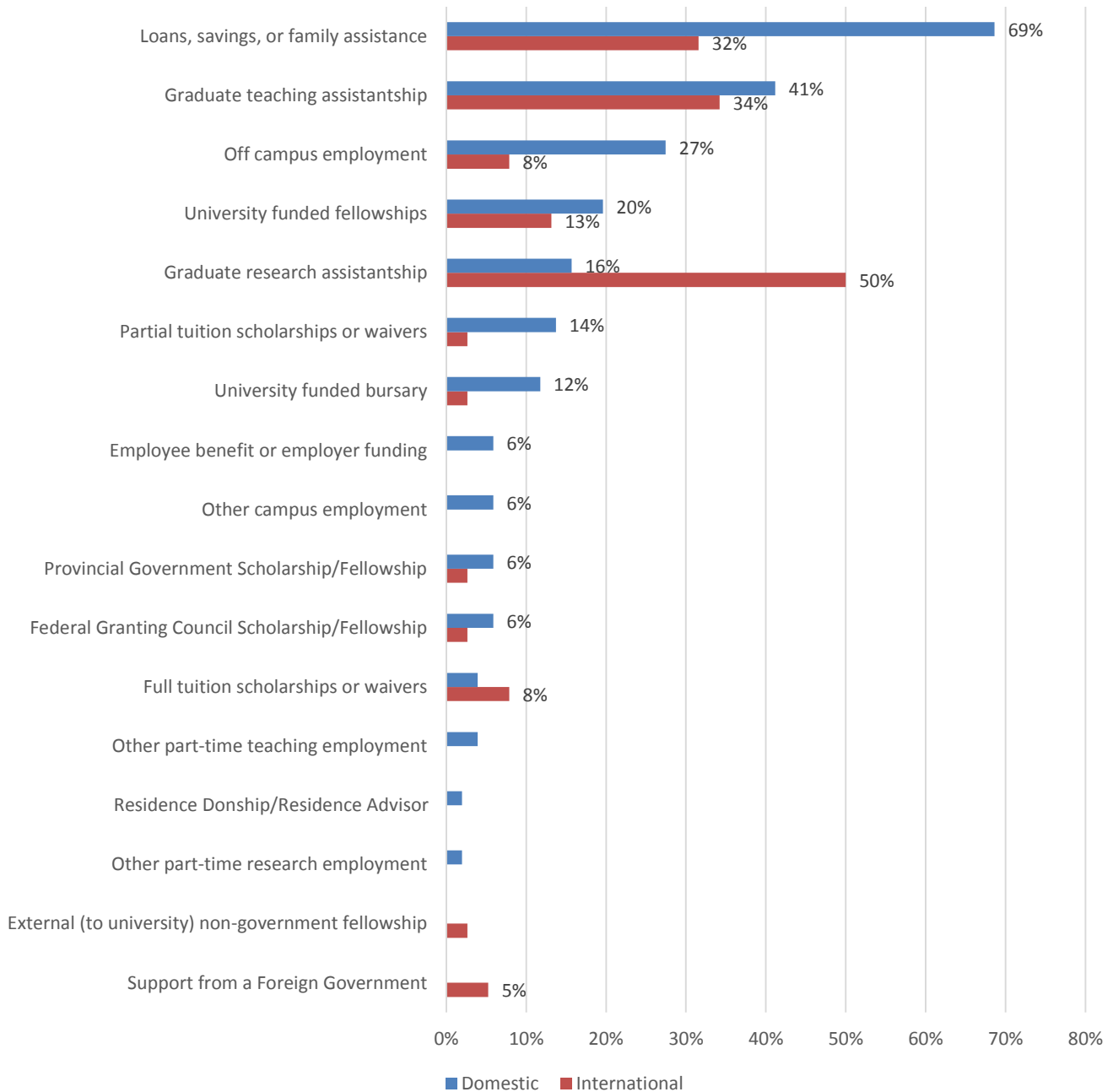


## FINANCIAL SUPPORT

### Financing Graduate Studies

Most domestic respondents selected loans, savings, or family assistance (69%) as a form of support they will receive while enrolled in their graduate studies. An additional 41% indicated they would be doing a graduate teaching assistantship. Half of international respondents were taking on graduate research assistantships to support their graduate studies enrollment.

Figure 14: Supporting enrollment in graduate studies





### Debt

Most respondents indicated that they had not accumulated any undergraduate educational debt (54% domestic, 85% international). The largest proportion of respondents noted they would not have to repay any graduate educational debt (35% domestic, 56% international). Sixty three percent of domestic and 38% of international respondents said they would owe between \$1 and \$39,999 in graduate educational debt.

Figure 15a: Undergraduate educational debt

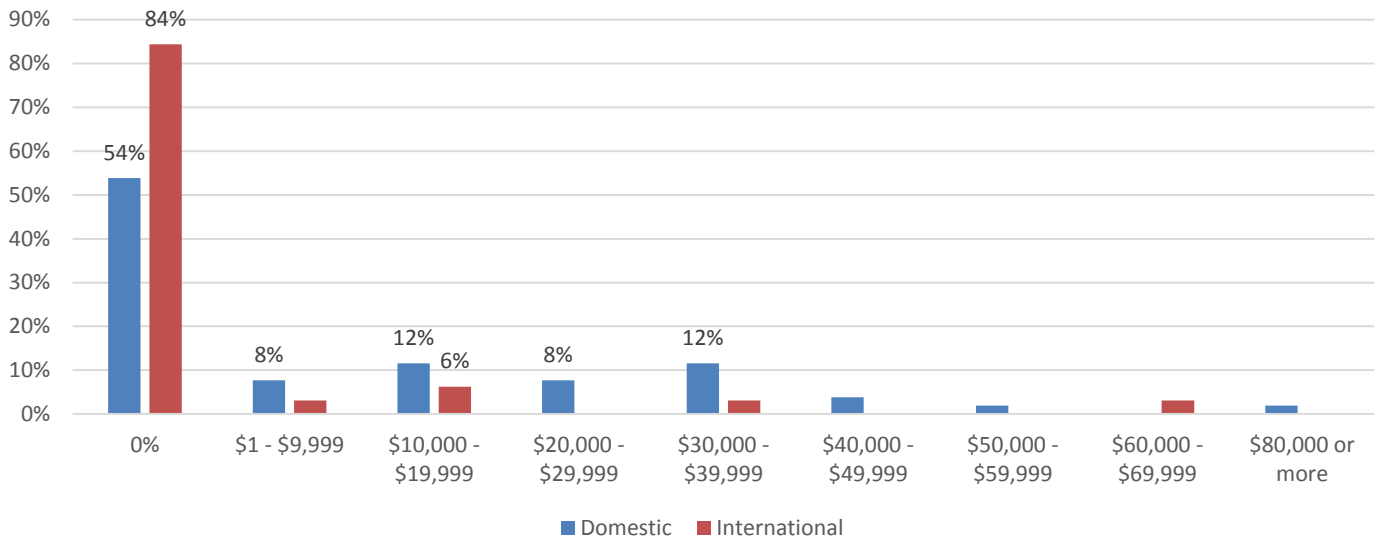
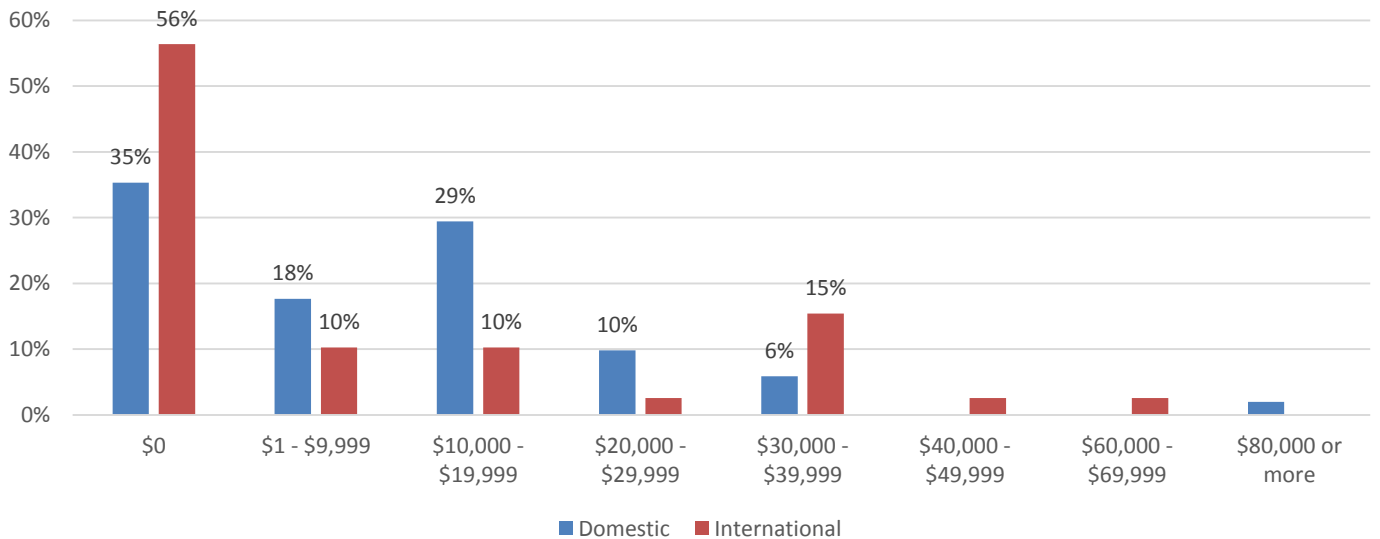


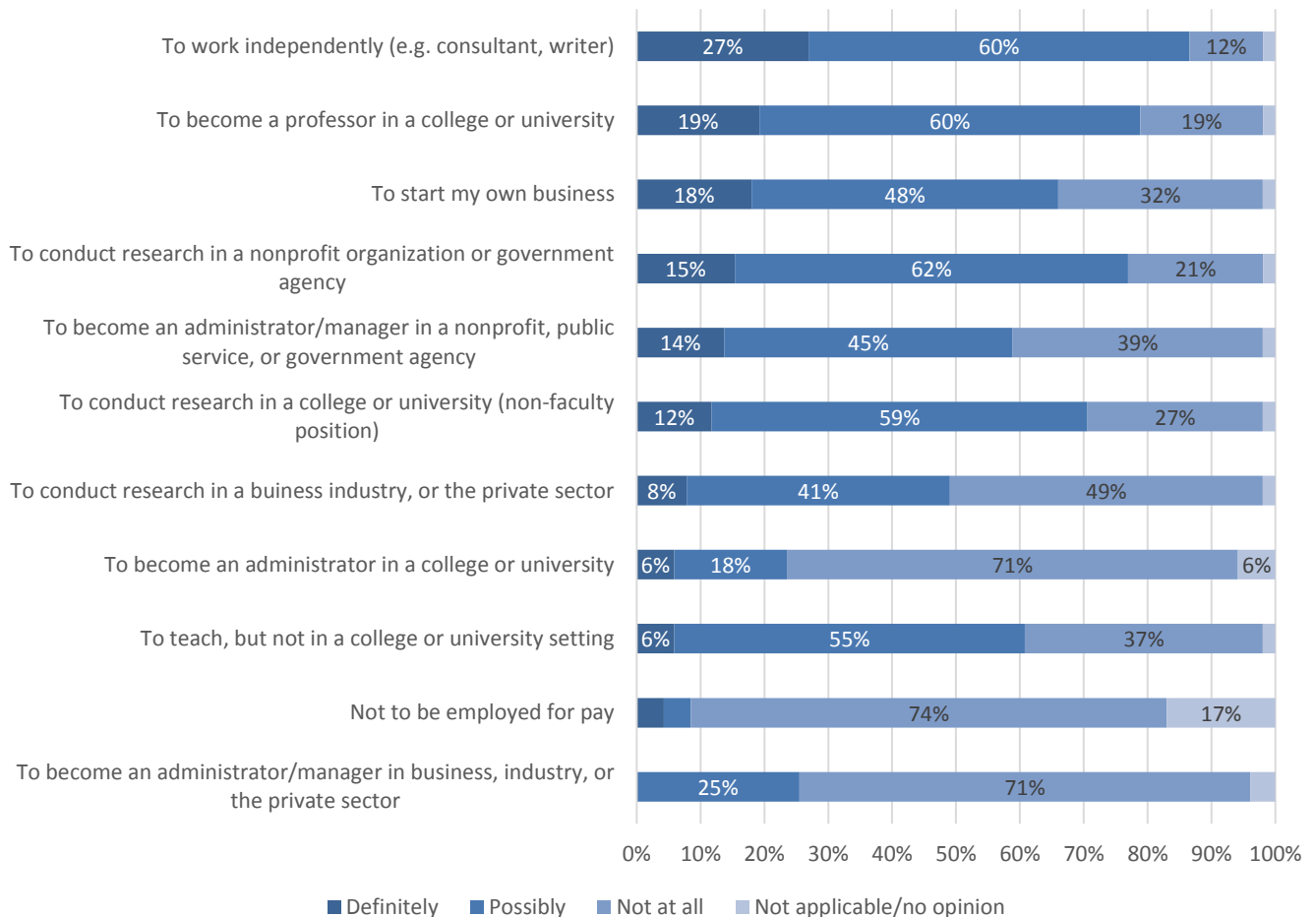
Figure 15b: Graduate educational debt



## CAREER PLANS

Working independently (e.g. as a consultant or writer) was the most desired future career option for domestic respondents, with 27% indicating they would definitely be interested in this career path. The next most common option was becoming a professor in a college or university (19% said definitely). Other than not being employed for pay, becoming an administrator/manager in business, industry, or private sector and an administrator in college or university were the least desirable options (71% apiece citing they would not at all be interested).

Figure 16a: Desire for various career options (domestic)



Forty eight percent of international respondents were definitely interested in becoming a professor in a college or university. The next most frequently indicated career option international respondents would definitely be interested in was conducting research in a college or university (30%). Not including the option of not being employed for pay, the least desired career option for international respondents was to become an administrator in college or university (48% said not at all).



Figure 16b: Desire for various career options (international)

