

MDHS Student Forum 2026

Report 1: Forum Delivery & Evaluation Report



Executive Summary

The inaugural MDHS Student Forum was held on Tuesday 4 August 2026, bringing together 49 students (including 12 SAC facilitators and 3 SAC Co-Chairs) and 16 staff across eight tables for small-group deliberations on feedback mechanisms, career readiness, and student wellbeing. While the companion Outcome Report sets out what students said on each theme, this report evaluates the Forum itself: whether it was needed, how well it was run, and what should change for future iterations.

The Forum was clearly needed and well received. Of 34 survey respondents (23 students, 11 staff), 94% agreed it was much needed to bring MDHS students together, every respondent agreed it was well-structured and run, and 97% were satisfied overall. Students described feeling heard by the faculty, some for the first time, and SAC members observed that discussion was genuinely solution-focused rather than a venting session.

The lessons for future forums are practical rather than fundamental. Conversations consistently needed more time, some of the people best placed to act on feedback were not in the room, and louder voices could dominate at some tables. Facilitators also held too many roles at once, and a sensitive disclosure at one table showed the need for clear psychological safety processes. SAC members recommend keeping the same format but covering two topics rather than three.

This report draws on the post-event survey, a debrief with SAC members, a written reflection from a SAC Working Group Lead who facilitated on the day, and a review of the notes collected by staff, students and SAC leads.

34

Survey responses

94%

Agreed the forum was
needed

100%

Agreed it was well-run

97%

Satisfied overall

Section 1: Need and Value of the Forum

Purpose

MDHS students have access to a range of formal feedback channels, but these rarely bring students and senior leadership into the same room. The Forum was designed by the SAC as a direct, structured space for students to share their experience with faculty leadership and to generate actionable input for SAC working groups.

Survey results

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	% Agree+
The forum was much needed to bring MDHS students together	21	11	2	0	94%
The themes brought up were highly relevant and beneficial	25	8	1	0	97%
Session 1 (Feedback) topic was relevant, timely and necessary	24	9	1	0	97%
Session 2 (Career Readiness) topic was relevant, timely and necessary	27	5	1	1	94%
Session 3 (Wellbeing) topic was relevant, timely and necessary	27	7	0	0	100%

Q1, Q8, Q12, Q11; n = 34 (23 students, 11 staff).

Key themes

1. There is clear demand for this kind of forum

Agreement that the Forum was needed and that its themes were relevant was near-universal across both students and staff. Respondents asked for more sessions like this, and no respondent disagreed that the Forum was needed to bring MDHS students together.

- I "Thank u, and please bring more of these micro sessions to discuss and support in deciding making for future students."

2. Students felt heard, some for the first time

For several students the Forum was the first time they felt the University was actively listening. SAC members also observed that senior leadership clearly care about the student experience and engaged openly with students throughout the day.

- I "I am a unimelb student for 5 years already and this was my first time feeling and knowing that the uni do care and just the willingness to improve from the faculty did mean a lot to me."

3. The discussion was solution-focused, not a venting session

A key learning for the SAC was that students bring strong, practical ideas, including students who do not sit on committees or hold representative roles. Several ideas, such as a ticket-style feedback portal and a faculty-led career talk series, were raised independently at multiple tables, pointing to a shared student view rather than isolated opinions.

4. Attendees expect the loop to be closed

Having asked students for their input, the Forum created an expectation of follow-through. Several respondents asked directly how attendees would know whether, and when, action is taken as a result of the day.

Section 2: Forum Delivery

Format

The Forum ran as three sequential sessions of around three hours in total, 45 minutes per theme. Each session combined small-table discussion (mixed staff and student composition, led by a SAC facilitator) with a whole-room share back. Discussion was recorded on butchers' paper and post-it notes, in senior leader notes, and in SAC leads' share back notes, and all attendees were invited to complete a post-event survey.

Who attended

34 student participants attended from six MDHS schools and all levels of study, from first-year undergraduates to PhD candidates. Tables were deliberately allocated to mix schools, study levels and domestic and international students: each table seated four to five students from at least three different schools, alongside two staff members and one to two SAC facilitators. In total, 46 students and 16 staff took part across eight tables. 53% of students were domestic, whilst 47% were international.

Study level	Students	%	School	Students	%
Undergraduate	10	29%	School of Biomedical Sciences	14	41%
Honours	1	3%	Population and Global Health	7	21%
Masters / graduate coursework	18	53%	Health Sciences	6	18%
Doctor of Medicine	1	3%	Melbourne Medical School	4	12%
PhD	4	12%	Melbourne Dental School	2	6%
			Psychological Sciences	1	3%

Students by course

Course	Study level	Students	%
Bachelor of Biomedicine	Undergraduate	9	26%
Bachelor of Science	Undergraduate	1	3%
Bachelor of Biomedicine (Honours)	Honours	1	3%
Master of Public Health	Masters	5	15%
Graduate Certificate in Public Health	Masters	1	3%
Master of Biomedical Science	Masters	4	12%
Doctor of Dental Surgery	Masters	2	6%
Master of Clinical Audiology	Masters	2	6%
Master of Nursing Science	Masters	2	6%
Master of Speech Pathology	Masters	1	3%
Doctor of Optometry	Masters	1	3%
Doctor of Medicine	MD	1	3%
Doctor of Philosophy	PhD	4	12%
Total		34	100%

Overall and facilitator ratings

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	% Agree+
The forum was well-structured and run	30	4	0	0	100%
The composition of members in the room was suitable and necessary	21	10	2	1	91%
On the whole, satisfied with the forum	25	8	1	0	97%
Facilitator was confident with the program material	20	12	2	0	94%
Facilitator paced the session well	18	13	1	2	91%
Facilitator was approachable and friendly	23	9	1	1	94%
On the whole, satisfied with facilitator	21	12	1	0	97%

Session-by-session comparison (% agree or strongly agree)

Statement	S1: Feedback	S2: Career Readiness	S3: Wellbeing
Session was well-structured and run	100%	91%	97%
Facilitator facilitated the session well	88%	94%	100%
Composition of table members was appropriate	91%	91%	94%
On the whole, satisfied with this session	94%	91%	100%

Key themes

1. The structure was strongly endorsed

Every respondent agreed the Forum was well-structured and run, and SAC members agreed the three themes were the right ones. Facilitators were rated highly, with pacing the only item to attract more than one disagreement.

2. Wellbeing was the best-received session; Career Readiness the weakest

Despite coming last in the program, the Wellbeing session recorded no disagreement on overall satisfaction. Career Readiness scored lowest on structure and satisfaction. SAC and facilitator feedback suggests this reflects who was in the room: career experiences differ widely by degree, and staff from courses with accredited placements (e.g. Doctor of Physiotherapy) tended to see the topic as less relevant to their programs.

3. Facilitation strengthened across the day

Facilitation scored lowest in the first session (88%) and highest in the last (100%). This is consistent with facilitators receiving the program worksheet on the day and becoming more familiar with it as the Forum progressed.

4. Logistics were largely positive

28 of 34 respondents (82%) agreed they were satisfied with the logistics of the day; the remaining six selected "Other" and left constructive comments rather than disagreeing.

5. The note-taking system could be streamlined

SAC Co-Chairs and members were not convinced the note-taking approach was the most effective. Input was captured through five overlapping channels: facilitator notes, staff notes, butchers paper, open-text survey questions and transcribed share back notes. This was overwhelming for participants and facilitators alike, and it was difficult to get everyone writing on the butcher's paper, with many participants taking their own notes instead. The share back was valuable, but time was limited, and feedback suggested the loudest voices tended to dominate, an effect likely amplified by time pressure. Transcribing the notes afterwards also placed a large burden on the student leadership team. SAC members suggested reserving five minutes at the end of each session for every participant to record their own thoughts, so that all voices are heard and notes can be collected in a single, consistent format.

Participant feedback on delivery

What worked well	What could be improved
- Mixed staff/student tables gave students direct access to senior leaders - Strong spread of students across six schools and every level of study - Tables deliberately mixed by school, study level and domestic/international status - The three themes were relevant and well-chosen - Whole-room shareback surfaced recurring ideas across tables - Catering and food were praised	- Discussions ran out of time and were cut off at share back - Venue was difficult for some attendees to find - Timing clashed with a core second-year subject class - Discussion questions could be more concrete and in-depth - Note taking processes could be streamlined - Firmer time-checks needed so discussions could finish

Participant quotes

- | *"Should be longer!"*
- | *"Venue difficult to find for some. Great catering, thank you."*
- | *"Overlapped with a core second year subject class, maybe reschedule."*

Section 3: Lessons for Future Forums

Overview

The SAC debrief, facilitator reflection and survey comments pointed to a consistent set of improvements which will aid in the continual improvement of the forum.

Key themes

1. Conversations needed more time

Pace was the most consistent concern across every source. Conversation quality was high, but several table discussions were cut off mid-way when groups moved to share back. Breaks were short and infrequent, and facilitators were actively facilitating and taking notes for most of the three hours. SAC consensus is to keep the same structure but cover two topics rather than three, freeing time for deeper discussion without lengthening the event.

- | *"Several of our session discussions were cut off midway when moving on to groups sharing feedback."*

2. The right people were not always in the room

Much of the feedback was directly applicable to subject and course coordinators, who were not present. Senior leaders were engaged but did not always have a clear avenue to act on subject-level issues, and staff naturally gravitated towards feedback relevant to their own courses. Future forums need to have a greater balance between senior leadership and people with direct contact with the topic areas being interrogated.

- | *"People not in the room often have better ideas on these areas."*
- | *"The faculty is large and the issues raised have different connotations at different levels or areas of the Faculty. Sometimes solutions can be fitted to faculty level but often more bespoke solutions are required."*

3. Not every voice was captured

Some discussions were dominated by one or two voices. Several staff members took their notes with them, and some staff and UMSU/GSA representatives kept personal notes rather than using the butcher's paper, so parts of the discussion were not recorded. The per-topic open-text questions in the post-event survey were mostly left blank or answered "N/A". SAC members recommend five minutes at the end of each session for every participant to write down their own thoughts, collected on the day, so that quieter participants are heard equally.

- | *"Yes, plenty, but will follow up by email and further discussion to do better justice to thoughts and student input."*

4. Facilitators held too many roles at once

SAC facilitators were simultaneously facilitating, timekeeping and note-taking, and Working Group Leads also prepared and delivered presentations. Facilitators did not see the worksheet until the day, which meant checking notes frequently while facilitating, and the pace of the day led to significant fatigue.

- | *"This fast pace, coupled with short infrequent breaks, was draining."*

5. Psychological safety needs a clear process

Because the Forum asks students to draw on lived experience, sensitive disclosures are likely. At one table, a participant shared a highly distressing personal and community experience and then disengaged from discussion. The facilitator found it difficult to offer support: the room was crowded and fast-paced, they were managing several roles, staff attending as observers did not step in, and no process had been agreed in advance. Participants should be able to share openly and leave the Forum in a safe headspace, without facilitators or other students carrying that burden alone.

- I *"It is vital that students and staff can participate in this event in a psychologically safe manner, particularly over the course of several hours."*

6. Discussion prompts could be sharper

Some respondents felt discussion occasionally stayed abstract, or that prompts focused too narrowly on individual services. More concrete, open-ended prompts would help tables move quickly from experiences to solutions.

- I *"Increase depth of discussion questions to dissipate abstract discussion."*

7. UMSU and GSA involvement should be formalised

UMSU and GSA representatives contributed valuable insights but at times steered discussion towards their own activities. As major student bodies with their own feedback mechanisms, they are important partners and would be better engaged through a dedicated, formal role.

Recommendations

Short-term recommendations

- Keep the same structure but cover two topics rather than three
- SAC Co-Chairs announce the halfway point and a five-minute warning in each session, and extend breaks between sessions
- Allocate five minutes at the end of each session for every participant to write down their own thoughts, and collect these on the day
- Instruct all staff to leave notes with SAC organisers, with the option to photograph them or return them later (e.g. MDHS Student Hub)
- Refine discussion prompts to be more concrete and open-ended
- Share all program materials, including worksheets, with facilitators before the day
- Replace generic "anything to add" survey questions with topic-specific prompts for solutions, separate from

Longer-term recommendations

- Invite subject and course coordinators and topic-relevant staff alongside senior leaders, with a clear pathway for acting on subject-level feedback
- Agree a process for sensitive disclosures, including escalation to Co-Chairs and a post-forum facilitator debrief
- Provide mental health training for facilitators and, where possible, a wellbeing professional on site for the duration of the Forum
- Introduce a facilitator rotation or additional scribes so no one holds facilitating, timekeeping and note-taking alone
- Formalise UMSU and GSA involvement, e.g. a dedicated Q&A slot and a separate meeting with SAC leads before the Forum
- Report back to attendees on actions taken, and establish the Forum as a recurring event

logistics feedback, and add a facilitator survey

- Check timing against core class timetables and improve venue signage

Closing

The inaugural MDHS Student Forum achieved what it set out to do: students and staff rated it as needed, well-structured and highly relevant, and the discussion was constructive and solution-focused. With more time for discussion, the right people in the room, better ways to capture every voice and proper support for facilitators and participants, the SAC is confident the Forum can become a valued, recurring part of the MDHS student experience. Thank you to all students, staff, SAC Co-Chairs, Working Group Leads and facilitators who made the day possible.