

# Media Release: New Postgraduate Study

Graduate Careers Australia

NO EMBARGO -- IMMEDIATE RELEASE -- Tuesday, 25 September 2007

## Postgraduates: Higher Earnings, More Jobs

The latest Australian Graduate Survey (AGS) figures from Graduate Careers Australia (GCA) show the typical (median) annual salary for a new postgraduate climbed to \$60,000 in 2006, up by \$1,900 from 2005.

This was \$18,000 more than the median salary of bachelor degree graduates in 2006 (\$42,000), although it should be noted that as a group, postgraduates are older and have more work experience.

In addition to a salary increase, the AGS also found a higher proportion of postgraduates were in full-time employment in 2006, than in 2005.

These findings and others are part of GCA's latest annual report on postgraduates' activities after course completion, *Postgraduate Destinations 2006*.

This newly released GCA report is based on over **28,500 responses from postgraduates**, including those with graduate and postgraduate certificates and diplomas, coursework masters degrees, research masters degrees, professional doctorates and PhDs.

### Key points: Employment

Key points noted in the *Postgraduate Destinations 2006* report include:

- Of those available for full-time employment, **89.9 per cent of postgraduate respondents were working full-time** at the time of the survey (this is up by 1.1 percentage points on the 2005 figure). Postgraduates were far more likely to have been in full-time employment than bachelor degree graduates (82.4 per cent). While bachelor degree outcomes are an interesting point of reference, it is worth noting that postgraduates are, as a group, older and more experienced and would be expected to have higher employment figures.

- Employment figures for various levels of postgraduate award can differ markedly, with coursework degrees such as certificates, diplomas and masters degrees often being favoured by those already in employment or those active in the labour market. Research degrees such as PhDs and research masters qualifications are often favoured by those furthering a research interest developed in their undergraduate years.

Of those with PhDs and research masters qualifications available for full-time employment, 87.6 per cent were in a **full-time job**. For coursework masters graduates, the figure was 89.4 per cent and for those with graduate and postgraduate certificates and diplomas it was 90.9 per cent.

- At a broader level, the most recently published unemployment figures looking at the Australian population<sup>1</sup> as a whole (collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in May 2006) show that just 2.2 per cent of those with a postgraduate degree<sup>2</sup>, 2.4 per cent of those with a graduate diploma or graduate certificate and 2.4 per cent of bachelor degree graduates were unemployed. Of those who had not completed any post-secondary education, 7.3 per cent were unemployed, while the same figure for the population as a whole was 5.0 per cent.

### Key points: Salaries and Further Study

- The **median salary for postgraduates** responding to the 2006 AGS was \$1,900 greater than for the previous year.
- The **median salary** for graduates with graduate diploma/certificate awards was \$55,000 (up from \$54,000 in 2005). For graduates with coursework masters awards, this figure was \$65,000 (up from \$63,000 in 2005) and for graduates from research masters/PhD awards it was \$60,700 (up from \$59,000 in 2005). The relatively lower salary earned by research masters/PhD graduates compared with coursework masters graduates is indicative of the different career stages the two groups are at, with the latter being more likely to have worked while studying on a part-time basis and have more employment experience.
- Across all levels of postgraduate qualification, male graduates are paid between \$3,000 and \$10,000 **more than female graduates**. Disparities in salaries between males and females at this level of aggregation can reflect differences in terms of field of education and level of award, type of work, occupation and amount of work experience.

---

<sup>1</sup> People aged 15-64.

<sup>2</sup> Masters degrees or doctorates.

- Research masters and PhD graduates in their **first full-time employment** earned, on average, 8.0 per cent less than all research masters and PhD graduates in full-time employment. The corresponding statistics for coursework masters graduates and those with a graduate or postgraduate diploma or certificate are 23.1 per cent and 14.5 per cent less respectively.
- In contrast to bachelor degree graduates, of whom around one in five (20.3 per cent) continued in **further full-time study**, a much smaller proportion (6.5 per cent) of postgraduates continued in further full-time studies. This is unsurprising given that postgraduates have refined their career options, and most have (for now) a reduced need for further formal education.

Ms Cindy Tilbrook, Executive Director of GCA, said, “As the number of bachelor degree graduates in Australia grows, some are undertaking postgraduate study in order to fine-tune their initial qualification or to differentiate themselves in a competitive labour market. Others go into further study to develop their careers with a current employer or as part of a career change process”.

Because of these different motivations, there is no ‘best postgraduate course’ for those interested in further education. Those interested in postgraduate study need to choose a course and institution based on many factors, such as

- the field of education or research offered (particularly important for research degrees),
- the flexibility of delivery (important for part-time students in particular),
- the level of award offered, and
- the cost of study.

Postgraduate study can represent a notable investment for students, and those considering this need to research and understand their options. Detailed figures from GCA are available in GradsOnline, GCA’s searchable graduate destination database, at [www.gradsonline.com.au](http://www.gradsonline.com.au), and many institutions have course and careers advisers who can also assist the decision-making process.

GCA has also released the *Postgraduate Research Experience, 2006* report which collates data concerning the higher education experiences of postgraduates as they worked towards their awards.

---

*For further information, please contact Cindy Tilbrook, GCA Executive Director, on (03) 8344 9333 or 0438 988 772 or Bruce Guthrie, GCA Research Manager, on (02) 6367 5347.*