

## Media Release

Page 1 of 4

**Embargoed until 11:30 pm, Tuesday 28 July, 2009**

### Graduate employment outcomes strong in 2008, but ...

In early 2008 new bachelor degree graduates experienced the highest percentage in full-time employment in nearly two decades, according to recently released findings from the annual Australian Graduate Survey.

The research, conducted by Graduate Careers Australia (GCA), indicated that 85.2 per cent of Australian bachelor degree graduates found full-time employment within four months of completing their degrees, the highest rate since 1990, when 87.8 per cent of bachelor degree graduates secured full-time employment.

The fields with the highest proportion of graduates in full-time employment were mining engineering (100.0 per cent), pharmacy (97.9 per cent), medicine (97.6 per cent) and civil engineering (97.3 per cent). The fields with the lowest proportion of graduates in full-time employment at the time of the survey were visual and performing arts (66.9 per cent), life sciences (74.6 per cent) and humanities (75.3 per cent).

The median starting salary for bachelor degree graduates in 2008 was \$45,000, up from \$43,000 in 2007.

The fields with the highest median starting salaries were dentistry (\$70,000), optometry (\$60,000), engineering (\$54,000), earth sciences (\$50,000) and medicine (\$50,000). The fields with the lowest median starting salaries were pharmacy (\$34,000), art and design (\$36,700), veterinary science (\$40,000), and humanities (\$40,000).

The strong graduate labour market in early 2008 has not significantly affected the overall proportion of graduates going on to further full-time study with 19.6 per cent of graduates opting to do so. This figure is down slightly from 20.0 per cent in 2007.

Graduate outcomes also varied considerably between the Australian States and Territories:

	ACT	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	All
% of bachelor degree graduates in full-time employment	87.6%	84.0%	85.7%	86.4%	83.0%	87.2%	81.0%	87.1%	<b>85.2%</b>
% of bachelor degree graduates seeking full-time employment, not working	6.0%	5.8%	4.8%	4.6%	5.5%	4.5%	6.9%	4.5%	<b>5.2%</b>
% of bachelor degree graduates seeking full-time employment, working part-time or casual	6.5%	10.1%	9.5%	9.0%	11.5%	8.3%	12.0%	8.4%	<b>9.6%</b>
<b>Total % seeking full-time employment</b>	<b>12.5%</b>	<b>15.9%</b>	<b>14.3%</b>	<b>13.6%</b>	<b>17.0%</b>	<b>12.8%</b>	<b>18.9%</b>	<b>12.9%</b>	<b>14.8%</b>
% of all bachelor degree graduates in further full-time study	20.7%	18.6%	21.0%	17.1%	22.8%	18.9%	30.0%	10.8%	<b>19.6%</b>
Bachelor degree graduate median starting salary (\$,000)	47.5	46.0	45.0	45.0	45.0	47.0	43.4	49.9	<b>45.0</b>

GCA Acting Executive Director, Bruce Guthrie, said that there was a chance that graduate employment prospects reflected in the annual survey may decline in 2009 due to the impact of the economic downturn.

“The next Australian Graduate Survey will likely reflect a downturn, although the extent of this would be difficult to predict at this stage. There are some suggestions that the impact will not be as significant as forecast earlier in the year,” Mr. Guthrie said.

**Embargoed until 11:30 pm, Tuesday 28 July, 2009**

“Other research conducted by GCA indicated that while some companies intend to reduce their graduate intake because of the economic downturn, others plan to recruit a similar number of graduates to last year while others are taking a ‘wait and see’ approach.”

The Australian Graduate Survey is an annual survey of graduates who complete a course of study at an Australian higher education institution. More than 119,000 graduates completed the 2008 survey.

**Further information and comment**

For further information please refer to the attached Media Backgrounder. Copies of the recently released Australian Graduate Surveys reports, *Graduate Destinations 2008* and *Graduate Salaries 2008*, can be downloaded from the GCA website: [www.graduatecareers.com.au](http://www.graduatecareers.com.au). Go to News Room/Media Centre and log-in using ‘media’ (password: ‘media’).

For comment please contact Bruce Guthrie (GCA Research Manager/Acting Executive Director) on (02) 6367 5347 or Graeme Bryant (GCA Senior Research Associate) on (03) 9605 3710 / 0409 079 949.

## Media Backgrounder

Page 3 of 4

**Embargoed until 11:30 pm, Tuesday 28 July, 2009**

### Employment Rates

The following table presents the top and bottom five fields of education in terms of finding full-time employment after the completion of a degree. This table covers bachelor degree graduates who were available for full-time employment (i.e. in or looking for full-time employment) at the time of the Australian Graduate Survey (see Table 4 in *Graduate Destinations 2008*):

	% in full-time employment	% seeking full-time employment, not working	% seeking full-time employment, working part-time or casual	Total % seeking full-time employment	TOTAL number
<b>Top 5 Fields</b>					
Mining Engineering	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	70
Pharmacy	97.9	0.6	1.5	2.1	472
Medicine	97.6	1.3	1.1	2.4	901
Civil Engineering	97.3	0.7	2.0	2.7	562
Nursing, Initial	96.7	2.3	1.0	3.3	2,971
<b>Bottom 5 fields</b>					
Physical Sciences	77.1	10.5	12.4	22.9	153
Languages	77.0	14.8	8.2	23.0	574
Humanities	75.3	15.8	8.9	24.7	3,725
Life Sciences	74.6	17.8	7.6	25.4	2,188
Visual/Performing Arts	66.9	22.6	10.5	33.1	1,324
<b>Total</b>	<b>85.2</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>14.8</b>	<b>42,811</b>

Graduate employment rates fell from the previous high point of 83.6 per cent in 2000, levelled out at 79.7 per cent in 2004 and have exhibited upward movement to reach 85.2 per cent in 2009. The current graduate labour market is currently being surveyed, with preliminary results available in December 2009.

### Further Full-Time Study

Generally, between one-fifth and one-quarter of respondents elect to continue in further full-time study. Further study is often undertaken to improve a graduate's employment opportunities, to add professional qualifications to a generalist degree or for the purpose of professional registration.

The proportion of bachelor degree graduates undertaking further full-time study has decreased slightly over the past few years, from 20.6 per cent in 2006 to 19.6 per cent in 2008 (see Table 2 in *Graduate Destinations 2008*).

### Graduate Starting Salaries

The median annual starting salary for new Australian resident bachelor degree graduates aged less than 25 years and in their first full-time employment in Australia was \$45,000, which represents an increase of 4.7 per cent on the previous year (\$43,000). This was slightly ahead of the annual rate of inflation between 2007 and 2008 (4.4 per cent) (see 'Graduate starting salaries and average weekly earnings' in *Graduate Salaries 2008*).

**Embargoed until 11:30 pm, Tuesday 28 July, 2009**

On average, male graduates could expect to earn more than their female counterparts, with males earning a median starting salary of \$47,000 compared with \$45,000 for females. GCA Acting Executive Director, Bruce Guthrie, explained that while there was still a gender wage gap for Australian higher education graduates, this gap has been declining over time. "Back in 1999 male graduates earned a median salary 8.3 per cent higher than female graduates, and this gap has decreased to 4.4 per cent in 2008," Mr Guthrie said.

Overall, bachelor degree graduates employed in regional areas earned a median salary of \$46,000, \$1,000 more than graduates employed in capital cities (\$45,000). The following table presents the top five fields of education where graduates earned a higher median salary based on their location (see Table 10 in *Graduate Salaries 2008*):

	Capital	Regional	Difference
<b>Top 5 fields - higher salaries in capital cities</b>			
Law	\$48,000	\$39,500	\$8,500
Accounting	\$45,000	\$38,300	\$6,800
Economics, Business	\$43,500	\$39,600	\$3,900
Mathematics	\$48,500	\$47,000	\$1,500
Humanities	\$40,000	\$39,000	\$1,000
<b>Top 5 fields - higher salaries in regional areas</b>			
Dentistry	\$60,000	\$75,000	\$15,000
Optometry	\$56,000	\$69,000	\$13,000
Earth Sciences	\$48,000	\$60,000	\$12,000
Architecture & Building	\$42,000	\$50,000	\$8,000
Medicine	\$50,000	\$54,000	\$4,000

The following table presents the top and bottom five fields of education in terms of median starting salary for new Australian resident bachelor degree graduates aged less than 25 and in their first full-time employment in Australia (\$,000) (see Table 1 in *Graduate Destinations 2008*):

Top 5 fields – median starting salaries		Bottom 5 fields – median starting salaries	
Dentistry	\$70,000	Social Sciences	\$42,000
Optometry	\$60,000	Humanities	\$40,000
Engineering	\$54,000	Veterinary Science	\$40,000
Earth Sciences	\$50,000	Art & Design	\$36,700
Medicine	\$50,000	Pharmacy	\$34,000

## General Information about the Australian Graduate Survey

*Graduate Destinations 2008* and *Graduate Salaries 2008*, are based on the annual Australian Graduate Survey (AGS) of new graduates from Australian institutions of higher education. Graduates are surveyed approximately four months after they complete their course of study. In 2008, responses from more than 119,000 graduates were collected and analysed for these new reports.

### Further information and comment

For comment please contact Bruce Guthrie (GCA Research Manager/Acting Executive Director) on (02) 6367 5347 or Graeme Bryant (GCA Senior Research Associate) on (03) 9605 3710 / 0409 079 949.