



AGS PRE- and POST-POPULATION MODEL OUTLINE

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Introduction

Over the past few years there has been a push for a greater level of standardisation in the Australian Graduate Survey. This includes, amongst other things, a request for an official position on the pre- and post-population of some AGS variables. Pre-population of responses in the Australian Graduate Survey is not a new idea, and has been completed in various ways for different variables for the past few years. However, as with a number of areas of the AGS, there was a lack of consistency across institutions. The area has been investigated by various stakeholder groups over the past 3 years to arrive at the current model, which includes both pre- and post-population as a part of the standard AGS model.

The reasons for inclusion of pre- and post-population in the standard model include the avoidance of respondent frustration caused by 'double-asking' certain factual questions (e.g. age, sex) and a potential increase response rates by having a shorter, less cluttered survey form and a reduction in respondent fatigue.

Following the *AGS New Model Forum* held in Melbourne in August 2008, the decision was made for GCA to move from the existing plan to pre-populate all AGS instruments to a plan that would include the combination of pre- and post-population of a number of variables included in the AGS. It is intended that pre- and post-population should be optional for participating institutions in the 2010 AGS, with pre-population to remain optional for the foreseeable future and post-population to be compulsory for all institutions for 2011.

This change, while keeping in place the positive aspects of the pre-population plan, such as making use of available data and having more accurate data in some variables, also realises the practical limitations of doing this in a decentralised survey model while still aiming to relieve some of the time and operational pressures that presently exist.

While pre-population will involve adding known information to the AGS instrument prior to the graduates receiving the instruments, post-population will involve removing certain questions from the AGS instruments and populating these variables in the final data file with biographic data currently available in student records. It will also allow Survey Managers to make use of their enrolment files, and their later and more complete data from the **Past Course Completions Files** prepared for DEEWR (where their institution does so).

(It is important that this process is not confused with the supply of summary population information to GCA prior to the start of an AGS round. In order to avoid possible confusion we will henceforth refer to this summary population data as the **advance AGS round population summary**. The supply of this summary pre-survey population information will be in cross-tabulation form, and used solely for examining response numbers within certain population sub-sets and will not be used for any pre- or post-population of AGS data.)

The final model outlined in this document, and presented at the 2009 Survey Manager Information Forums has been developed over the past 2 years based on feedback from the sector via a working party of DVC and PVC representatives, consultation with institutional AGS survey managers and representatives, the AGS Survey Reference Group (SRG) and other external experts.

The key aspects of the pre- and post-population of AGS instruments include:

- OPTIONAL pre-population of major fields of education and degree title fields, *and*
 - CEQ majors fields of education in an online instrument
 - Subject to the data meeting data guidelines
 - Option of multiple of single variables to be pre-populated
- Removal of nine questions from the instrument that will be post-populated in the final data file.
- For 2010 AGS, pre- and post-population of the outlined variables will be optional
 - Two versions of the hardcopy instrument will be available – standard (current) and pre-/post-population versions
 - Institutions that have proprietary (i.e. their own) *online* AGS instruments **that can be pre-populated** are able to use pre- and post-population with this online instrument (as outlined later in this document). It is assumed they would also be using pre- and post-population with their corresponding hardcopy AGS instruments.
 - Institutions that have proprietary online instruments **that can NOT be pre-populated** can still use this instrument for the 2010 survey year. This would be used in conjunction with either version of the hardcopy instrument mentioned above.
 - Institutions that do not have proprietary online instruments and use the GCA supported oAGS will not be able to pre-populate using the online instrument. This would be used in conjunction with either version of the hardcopy instrument.
- From 2011, only the version of the AGS hardcopy form supporting pre- and post-population will be available
 - GCA's *new* online AGS instrument should be completed, and will have the ability to pre-populate the appropriate variables. All institutions participating in the AGS will be required to use this GCA online tool, in conjunction with the equivalent GCA hardcopy form.
- Hardcopy forms can be pre-populated

Change to AGS Variables:

In the course of investigating the viability pre- and post-population, all variables from the AGS were evaluated. These initial investigations indicated that variables to be pre- or post-populated should only be those with information that could be 'known' with certainty for *all* graduates. As such, the majority of this investigation was limited to page one of the AGS hardcopy form. (Specifically, the areas on the form titled "Your Qualification(s)" and "About You" on page one of the current AGS form – see Appendix A).

Following feedback from current institutional Survey Managers and through SRG consultation, a number of variables were selected to be pre-populated and a number to be post-populated.

Variables to be pre-populated

QUALNTIT (Title of Award)

This variable corresponds to DEEWR elements 308, and is the first question on the AGS instrument. No issues were raised with the pre-population of this field, timing of supply of this data, or the consistency in format of data.

MAJ1-MAJ4 (Major Fields of Education)

These variables correspond to DEEWR elements 461 and 462, and are based on the second question on the AGS instrument. To date a lot of feedback had been received on the pre-population of these variables highlighting a *number of issues* with their pre-population across all institutions.

These issues include:

- Not all institutions have data available at a usable level
- Not all institutions are able to have the data available in time to use with their graduate contact schedule
- The data is labelled inconsistently across different institutions, including e.g. ASCED labels, ASCED codes etc. This is key as if this question is to be pre-populated on the AGS instrument, it must be pre-populated with information that the graduate themselves will read and understand
- Inconsistent ordering of this information within student records (including sorting alphabetically and numerically by ASCED codes). As the majority of work completed using major field of education data on the AGS uses only the information from the first major field of education listed, if an institution has their pre-population information sorted alphabetically by FOE, it will create a bias in the AGS file towards those fields starting with A.
- One in five institutions have blank records in this data

As a consequence, the pre-population of this variable (and of Title of award) will remain optional on the AGS.

In addition, a series of guidelines have been developed that any field of education data to be used to pre-populate the AGS form must adhere to. These guidelines require the data to be:

- Labelled in a way a student can easily interpret
- Ordered in a way that does not bias certain fields of education
- Available to be entered onto the AGS instrument by the beginning of the survey round.

Detailed guidelines are available [here](#) from START.

CEQMAJ1 – CEQMAJ2 (CEQ major fields of education)

These variables, although not strictly being pre-populated as major fields of education, have been considered as a part of this larger discussion.

Pre-population of these variables is only endorsed through an online version of the survey. It must feature drop-down lists for CEQMAJ1 and CEQMAJ2 which include major fields of education from Maj1-Maj4, as well as giving the graduate the opportunity to add other fields of education if they feel those that none of those FOE listed in Maj1-Maj4 are appropriate.

Variables to be post-populated and removed from the form

Following sector feedback and SRG consultation, it has been agreed that the following variables will be removed from the AGS instrument (hardcopy and proprietary online surveys where available for 2010, and from all versions for 2011). All variables will be removed from page one of the 2009 form.

LEVEL	– level of award
YEARCOM	– year award commenced
DOUBLE	– double/combined degree indicator
AGE	– respondent age
SEX	– sex of respondent
ATSI	– Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
NESB	– Non-English Speaking Background
BORNAUST	– born in Australia
YEARARRV	– year arrived in Australia

Changes to the Instrument

Pre-population questions

With pre-population of the title of award and major fields of education remaining as option for the foreseeable future, it is important that the question for these variables be worded in a way that allows the instrument to be pre-populated, or to remain blank in order to maintain one standard AGS instrument. That way, institutions that are able to pre-populate these variables can do so, and those institutions that choose not to pre-populate these variables can use the same instrument.

The development of new wording for these variables was completed as part of a broader review of the form taking into account the changes to be made as a result of removing post-population questions. This review included a comprehensive literature review (see Appendix D), consultation with institutional survey managers (both from the SRG and those with experience in pre- and post-population of survey forms), consultation with experts who consulted on the original redevelopment of the AGS form in 2005, and through feedback from a focus group of final year students.

The results of this review suggest that the best approach to introducing pre-population to the AGS form is to add an introductory blurb to the beginning of the form (above the questions for title of award and major fields of education), as follows:

NOTE: *The first two questions **may** have pre-printed responses.
If you **do not agree** with the response, please cross it out and clearly write the correct response in the box provided.*

The updated section of the form can be seen in Appendix E.

Hardcopy survey forms

For the 2010 survey year, GCA will produce two versions of the hardcopy AGS forms. Both versions will be produced in TeleForm and as such be readable via optical scanning, and both will maintain the look of the existing form.

The first version of the hardcopy form will essentially be the existing version, containing all current variables to be completed by the graduates, not allowing for pre-population nor removing any variables for post-population.

The second version of the hardcopy AGS form will be newly developed in TeleForm based on the current form, but will be set up to allow for pre-population of the two variables with the variables to be post-populated removed from the form.

In regards to the latter form, pre-population and post-population of the AGS hardcopy instruments are independently optional for the 2010 AGS. This means that if an institution is able to pre-populate either of the respective variables outlined earlier, or post-populate **all** nine variables to be post-populated, they can do either **or** both on their hardcopy forms for the 2010 survey round. For those institutions unable to pre- and post-populate their survey forms for 2010, they will be able to use the existing AGS survey form.

For institutions who wish to post-populate but have concerns about their timing and/or the logistics of producing a post-population data file, the option exists to use the standard (existing) form for 2010, collecting student responses while still being able to produce a post-population data file. This creates a safety net, effectively allowing for an institution to 'test' their ability to produce post-population information in preparation for the 2011 survey.

For the 2011 survey, it is expected that all institutions who participate in the AGS will at minimum post-populate their hardcopy AGS instrument. Both the hardcopy and online AGS instruments provided by GCA will have the post-population variables removed. All variables marked to be pre-populated or post-populated occur on the front page of the hardcopy AGS survey form. These variables affected have been marked on the mock-up to be found in Appendix B.

As mentioned in an earlier section, the revised survey form was developed after undergoing a review process. Part of this process involved a sector review of the most appropriate use of the new space created on the hardcopy instrument following removal of the post-population variables from page one of the existing form. The overwhelming majority felt the best use of this space would be to reduce the clutter on the form.

Following further consultation, it was identified that page three of the existing AGS hardcopy form was the most cluttered, and that the most appropriate change would be to move the section on “work in your final year of study” from page three of the existing form to page one to fill the newly created space.

The resulting changes to page one and page three of the existing form (including the changes to the wording on the questions on title of award and major field of education) can be seen in Appendix F.

Online

The existing GCA oAGS instrument cannot be pre-populated, nor have questions removed for post-population, without costly major re-programming of the software. At the time of writing (August 2009), a project is under way to develop a new online AGS instrument, which it is hoped will be implemented for the 2011 AGS. This instrument will be able to be pre-populated on the variables noted earlier.

This does mean that there will **not** be an online AGS instrument supported by GCA that allows pre- and post-population available for use with the 2010 AGS. Therefore, for 2010:

- Institutions that have proprietary *online* AGS instruments **that can be pre-populated** are able to use pre- and post-population with this online instrument. It is assumed they would also be using pre- and post-population with their hardcopy instruments.
- Institutions that have proprietary online instruments **that can NOT be pre-populated** can still use this instrument for the 2010 survey year. This instrument would still need to be a copy of the current AGS instrument (no questions removed or updated) and would be used in conjunction with either the new or current version of the hardcopy instrument.
- Institutions that do not have proprietary online instruments and use the GCA supported oAGS will not be able to pre-populate using the online instrument. This would be used in conjunction with either the new or current version of the hardcopy instrument.

For the 2011 survey year:

- GCA’s *new* online AGS instrument should be completed, and will have the ability to have the appropriate variables pre-populated. All institutions participating in this survey will be required to use this online tool, in conjunction with an equivalent hardcopy form.

Mechanics of pre-population on a hardcopy form

The variables marked for pre-population on the *hardcopy* AGS form are QUALNTIT and MAJ1-MAJ4. (Note that pre-population of an online instrument will be discussed in greater detail in the documents developed for the new GCA online AGS).

There are a number of issues to be considered in developing a standard model that can be used to physically pre-populate a hardcopy AGS form across all institutions. Along with issues of privacy, turnaround times and scanning requirements, practical issues such as the most efficient way to physically get the population information onto the survey form need to be considered.

In developing a standard model, GCA has consulted with institutions that currently don't, once did, or currently do pre-populate their surveys, commercial printing houses and commercial mailing houses.

Based on the primary requirement that the selected model is practical for all participating institutions, the most suitable approach involves adding an extra step to the existing hardcopy form production process and overprinting the pre-population information onto a pre-printed AGS form.

This overprinting approach is able to be achieved by professional printing organisations, as well as within institutions themselves where privacy concerns are an issue.

Although more efficient options may be available for individual institutions utilising their own system, the above process has a generic simple foundation which means that all institutions should have the ability to pre-populate their AGS forms. This also means that institutions which are not pre-populating their AGS forms will not be required to change their printing processes.

Although this represents a reasonably straightforward approach, variations would exist within this model across institutions according to whether or not they elect to pre-populate variables on their AGS hardcopy instrument and, for those who do elect to pre-populate, how best to do this whilst adhering to their institutional privacy policies. For example:

1. For institutions that **can** and elect to submit a pre-population data file (not to be confused with the **Advance AGS round population summary**):
 - An institution would order their AGS forms as normal (including enough for follow-ups)
 - They would concurrently submit a full pre-population data file to GCA
 - Their full volume of forms would be printed
 - The population information would be overprinted onto the required number of hardcopy forms and these forms be delivered to the institution
 - The remaining forms (for follow-up) would remain at the printers
 - When follow-up forms are required, the institution would submit a follow-up pre-population file and this information be overprinted onto the required number of forms, and these delivered to the institution
 - This process is then repeated again if required for subsequent follow-ups.

2. For institutions that **cannot** submit a pre-population data file (not to be confused with the **Advance AGS round population summary**):
 - An institution would order their AGS forms as normal (including enough for follow-ups)
 - Their full volume of forms would be printed and all forms delivered to the institution
 - Using mail merge, the institution overprints their pre-population information on the required number of forms (care needs to be exercised when overprinting at an institution as misaligned overprinting can have implications on the accuracy of optical scanning)
 - When follow-up forms are required, the institution would overprint on the required number of forms
 - This process is then repeated again if required.
 - The template for overprinting can be found on the START website

3. For institutions that choose **not to pre-populate** their hardcopy AGS forms:
 - An institution would order their AGS forms as normal (including enough for follow-ups)
 - Their full volume of forms would be printed and all forms delivered to the institution

It is expected that institutions will submit a data file containing the required case-level pre-population information to GCA for checking (this data file should not be confused with the **advance AGS round population summary**). This case-level pre-population data file would contain:

- A student ID number.
 - Ideally this ID would be in the format of the GCAID, which would then be printed into the relevant area of the hardcopy form. This ID would then theoretically remain with all forms printed for that graduate
 - If another style of ID number is supplied, this number would be entered into the Other1 box on the back of the form, and a standard GCAID number issued to that respondent.
- Major Field of Education (MAJ1 – MAJ4) information (where applicable)
 - This information must adhere to the guidelines for pre-population of Major Fields of Education – *available [here](#) on START*
- Title of Award (QUALNTIT) information (where applicable)
 - Format as for DEEWR Element 308.
- Any institutional information to be printed onto Other 1-4 (where applicable)

Initial discussions with two printers regarding this process have indicated that is it possible, not prohibitively expensive and, provided the data supplied is clean, should have minimal to no errors. The expected turn-around time for follow-up mail-out form pre-population and delivery ranged from 3 to 10 working days subject to population size and delivery location.

At present, a number of institutions do pre-populate areas of their hardcopy forms, either as part of their initial print run or by using an over-printing method. If an institution feels that their currently employed method of physically pre-populating their forms (either through their printing process or via over-printing) is a more efficient method than the one outlined above we encourage them to use their existing methods. GCA also encourages institutions to investigate ways to over-print pre-population information using printing facilities available at their institution, as this may result in time- and cost-savings. This is something we would like to hear about, so please contact us with the details of your in-house pre-population solutions so we can share them with other institutions.

Mechanics of post-population

A number of variables have been selected for post-population (outlined earlier). These variables will be removed from the revised version of the AGS hardcopy form (and the new online version in 2011), which means the graduate completing that AGS form will not actually see the question relating to these variables.

The data instead will be mined from **Enrolment Files** and **Past Course Completions Files** prepared for DEEWR, and added to the final AGS data file once the AGS data has been processed.

- Institutions which return:
 - A data file to GCA will need to add the PCCF data to this file
 - Or submit their PCCF data in a separate file at the same time
 - Survey forms to GCA will need to return their post-population data file to GCA with their forms.

Survey Managers will need to produce a post-population data file consisting of data for the relevant variables, which will occur once per AGS survey year, towards the end of the April round. Those Survey Managers who return an AGS data file to GCA will simply add their post-population data to their AGS response data in the correct locations and submit this completed AGS data file, or submit their completed AGS data file, and a post-population data file. Survey Managers who return survey forms for GCA processing will return their post-population data file to GCA with their survey forms for GCA to complete their data file.

In order for there to be consistency between institutions in the format of this post-population information, UniSA have developed a concordance document (see Appendix C) that outlines requirements for converting DEEWR elements to AGS variables.

Australian Graduate Survey

GDS & CEQ

your feedback is confidential

- please mark responses LIKE THIS: - use BLOCK LETTERS
- mark only ONE BOX, unless instructed - use a DARK pen

your qualification(s)

What is the FULL TITLE of the qualification(s) you completed in 2008 at your institution? (Please include combined/double degrees.)

For example: BACHELOR OF COMMERCE, DIPLOMA OF EDUCATION, BACHELOR OF ARTS / BACHELOR OF LAWS

What were the major fields of education in your qualification(s)?

For example: ACCOUNTING, PSYCHOLOGY, GENERAL NURSING, INFORMATION SYSTEMS

What was the level of your highest qualification listed above?

- bachelor degree (honours or graduate entry)
- bachelor degree (honours)
- bachelor degree @graduate entry
- graduate certificate
- graduate/postgraduate diploma
- graduate qualifying or preliminary
- master degree by coursework
- doctorate by coursework
- associate degree
- advanced diploma or diploma
- other award course

In what year did you commence your qualification(s) listed above?

Did you complete your qualification(s) as part of a combined/double degree?

- yes
- no

Were you mainly enrolled full time or part time?

- full time
- part time

What was your main mode of study?

- internal (on-campus)
- external (distance)
- mixed mode (internal and external)

For the qualification(s) you have just completed, were you wholly or mainly:

- a HECS student and deferred some or all of the HECS debt
- a HECS student and paid all of the HECS upfront
- an international fee-paying student
- an Australian fee-paying student

Did you receive any credit or advanced standing towards your qualification(s)?

- yes
- no

about you

What was your age in years on 30 April 2009?

What is your sex?

- female
- male

Were you in Australia on 30 April 2009?

- yes
- no

Would you describe yourself as having a disability?

- yes
- no

Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?

- no
- yes, Aboriginal
- yes, Torres Strait Islander
- yes, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

What is the main language spoken in your home?

- English
- other

Were you born in Australia?

- yes
- no

If you were born overseas, in what year did you first arrive in Australia?

Are you a citizen or permanent resident of Australia?

- yes
- no

If yes, what is your home postcode?

If no, what is your country of permanent residence?

What was the full title of your highest previous educational qualification?

For example: BACHELOR OF COMMERCE, DIPLOMA OF EDUCATION, SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE

What is the level of this highest previous qualification?

- no previous qualification
- completed secondary education
- undergraduate diploma
- bachelor (pass or honours)
- postgraduate degree or diploma
- other

Variables to be pre-populated

Variables to be post-populated

Australian Graduate Survey GDS & CEQ



your feedback is confidential

- please mark responses LIKE THIS: - use BLOCK LETTERS
- mark only ONE BOX, unless instructed - use a DARK pen

your qualification(s)

What is the FULL TITLE of the qualification(s) you completed in 2008 at your institution? (Please include combined/double degrees.)

For example: BACHELOR OF COMMERCE, DIPLOMA OF EDUCATION, BACHELOR OF ARTS / BACHELOR OF LAWS

What were the major fields of education in your qualification(s)?

For example: ACCOUNTING, PSYCHOLOGY, GENERAL NURSING, INFORMATION SYSTEMS

What was the level of your highest qualification listed above?

- bachelor degree (non honours or graduate entry)
- bachelor degree (honours)
- bachelor degree (graduate entry)
- graduate certificate
- graduate/postgraduate diploma
- graduate qualifying or preliminary
- master degree by coursework
- doctorate by coursework
- associate degree
- advanced diploma or diploma
- other award course

In what year did you commence your qualification(s) listed above?

Did you complete your qualification(s) as part of a combined/double degree?

- yes no

Were you mainly enrolled full time or part time?

- full time part time

What was your main mode of study?

- internal (on-campus)
- external (distance)
- mixed mode (internal and external)

For the qualification(s) you have just completed, were you wholly or mainly:

- a HECS student and deferred some or all of the HECS debt
- a HECS student and paid all of the HECS upfront
- an international fee-paying student
- an Australian fee-paying student

Did you receive any credit or advanced standing towards your qualification(s)?

- yes no

about you

What was your age in years on 30 April 2009?

What is your sex?

- female male

Were you in Australia on 30 April 2009?

- yes no

Would you describe yourself as having a disability?

- yes no

Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?

- no
- yes, Aboriginal
- yes, Torres Strait Islander
- yes, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

What is the main language spoken in your home?

- English other

Were you born in Australia?

- yes no

If you were born overseas, in what year did you first arrive in Australia?

Are you a citizen or permanent resident of Australia?

- yes no

If yes, what is your home postcode?

If no, what is your country of permanent residence?

What was the full title of your highest previous educational qualification?

For example: BACHELOR OF COMMERCE, DIPLOMA OF EDUCATION, SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE

What is the level of this highest previous qualification?

- no previous qualification
- completed secondary education
- undergraduate diploma
- bachelor (pass or honours)
- postgraduate degree or diploma
- other

AGS post population of data using DEEWR files

Background

Under subsection 19-70(1) of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*, higher education providers are required to provide statistical and other information to DEEWR. The [HEIMSHelp](#) website provides the specific requirements for 2008, 2009 and 2010.

Two files may be useful in post population of the AGS:

- Student enrolments file (for the survey year)
- Past Course Completions file (for the survey year).

Refer to the [DEEWR](#) website for information on the submission of these files. Note that PeopleSoft universities use 'program' instead of 'course' to refer to the degree that the student has undertaken.

AGS data that can be populated from DEEWR

Table 1 provides a summary of the AGS variables and the corresponding DEEWR data elements that can be populated post survey. Appendix 1 provides a summary of the mapping of codes from DEEWR to AGS variables.

Table 1: DEEWR data elements for AGS post population

AGS variable	Source from DEEWR student enrolments	Source from DEEWR past course completions file	DEEWR Meta data	Instructions (see Appendix 1 for mapping of codes)
LEVEL		E310	A code which indicates the type of higher education course/program	Match on course code
YEARCOM	E328		The year and month in which the student commenced the course/program	Extract year (4 digit)
DOUBLE		E455	A code which indicates if a course of study is a combined course of study	Match on course code
AGE	E314		YYYYMMDD The date of birth of the person	Calculate from date of birth
SEX	E315		The gender of the person. Male, Female, or Unknown	
ATSI	E316		A code which identifies whether or not the student identifies herself or himself as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent	
NESB	E348		A code indicating the main language spoken at the person's permanent home residence.	
BORNAUST	E346		The country in which the person was born	
YEARARRV	E347		The year in which the person first arrived in Australia.	

AGS data that will not be populated from DEEWR

Feedback from institutional Survey Managers has highlighted some inconsistencies, missing data or problems in populating some AGS variables from DEEWR files. The following variables will remain on the AGS survey form to be completed by graduates:

HECSFEE – HECS fee status

CREDIT – advanced standing indicator

DISAB – disability (student record information may be inaccurate or out of date)

PERMRES – Australian permanent residency (timing of response is critical)

MODE – mode of study (PS file only has in relation to last enrolment year)

ATTEND – attendance type (PS file only has in relation to last enrolment year).

Appendix 1: DEEWR codes mapped to AGS codes

Sex		Combined or Double Degree				ATSI Status			NESB Status			Country of Birth			Year of arrival in Australia		
DEEWR Code	DEEWR Label (E315)	AGS Code	DEEWR Code	DEEWR Label (E455)	AGS Code	DEEWR Code	DEEWR Label (E316)	AGS Code	DEEWR Code	DEEWR Label (E348)	AGS Code	DEEWR Code	DEEWR Label (E346)	AGS Code	DEEWR Code	DEEWR Label (E347)	AGS Code
M	Male	1	1	Yes	1	2	Non-indigenous - neither Aboriginal nor Torres Strait Islander origin	1	1	Student speaks only English at permanent home residence	1	1100	Student was born in Australia		0	Student never arrived in Australia	
F	Female	2	0	No	2	3	Of Aboriginal origin but not Torres Strait Islander	2	1000 to 9998	Main language other than English spoken at permanent home residence	2	1200 to 9998	Overseas country code from countries classification for student who was born outside Australia	2	1	Student born in Australia	
U	No information	3				4	Of Torres Strait Islander origin but not Aboriginal	3	9999	No information		9999	No information		1900 to current year	Year is which student arrived in Australia	YYYY as per DEEWR value
						5	Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin	4							9999	No information	
						9	No information										

Level of Award		
DEEWR Code	DEEWR Label (E310)	AGS Code
1	Higher Doctorate	8
2	Doctorate by research	8
3	Master's by research	6
4	Master's by coursework	7
5	Postgraduate Qualifying or Preliminary (for Master's, Doctorate or Higher Doctorate)	12
6	Graduate Diploma/ Postgraduate Diploma (pass or honours) involving new academic, professional or vocational area	4
7	Graduate Diploma/ Postgraduate Diploma (pass or honours) extending skills and knowledge in a professional area previously studied	4
8	Bachelor's Graduate Entry	5
9	Bachelor's Honours	2
10	Bachelor's Pass	1
11	Graduate Certificate	3
12	Doctorate by coursework	13
13	Associate degree	10
20	Advanced Diploma (AQF terminology)/Diploma (pre-AQF terminology)	9
21	Diploma (AQF terminology)/ Associate Diploma (pre-AQF terminology)	9
22	Other undergraduate award course	11
30	Enabling course	11
41	Cross-provider program for undergraduate courses at home Higher Education Provider	11
42	Cross Provider program for postgraduate courses at home Higher Education Provider	11
50	Non-award course (including Bridging for overseas trained professionals)	11
60	Open learning undergraduate studies	11
61	Open learning postgraduate studies	11

Survey Design: Best Practice

This paper presents a synthesis of relevant literature regarding best practice in the design of hardcopy survey forms. A range of academic and professional literature has been consulted. While this reference list is by no means exhaustive, it does represent a consensus of professional opinion regarding good practices in hardcopy survey form design and layout.

Designing survey items

A number of guidelines regarding the development and ordering of effective survey items can be found in the research methodology body of literature (*cf.* Aaker, Kumar & Day 1998; Bradburn, Sudman & Wansink 2004; Dillman 2000; Knowles 1975; Sudman & Bradburn 1982; Zikmund 2003).

- Items should be as succinct as possible
- Simple, conversational language should be used
- Spelling and grammar must be accurate
- Leading questions (which imply certain answers) and loaded questions (which suggest a socially desirable answer or are emotionally charged) should be avoided
- Items should be as specific as possible (e.g. avoid terms such as *often*, *occasionally*, *frequently* etc. as these terms may have different meanings to different respondents)
- Double-barrelled questions (those which address two issues at once) should be avoided
- All reasonable response alternatives should be included
- The timeframe of the question should be based on how salient or memorable the topic is
- Easy, non-threatening questions should be placed at the beginning of the questionnaire to encourage participation, while sensitive or objectionable questions should go towards the end
- Items should be grouped by topic and placed in a logical order so that the respondent can focus, organise their thoughts and respond accordingly.

Respondent instructions

When a questionnaire is to be completed unsupervised (e.g. mail/online survey instruments), a covering letter and instructions are required (Brace 2008; StatPac 2009). Although some sources suggest that a covering letter may be printed on the front page of the survey instrument (e.g. Brace 2008), the extended introductory text which used to occupy half of the first page of the AGS survey instrument was removed because feedback from graduates suggested that it was rarely read and gave the form a text heavy appearance which increased the form's response burden (GCA 2006).

Clear and concise instructions are critical in terms of collecting accurate data (Iarossi 2006; StatPac 2009). The instructions must be clearly distinguishable from the questions being asked. An effective way of eliminating confusion between instructions and question text is to use different fonts or formats for the instructions and questions (Bourque & Fielder 1995). General information about how the questions should be answered (e.g. "please mark only ONE BOX, unless instructed") should be placed at the beginning of the questionnaire, while specific instructions pertaining to individual questions should be placed as close as possible to the particular question (Sudman & Bradburn 1982).

Data entry instructions/coding marks

Data entry instructions and coding marks which are printed on the survey form for the benefit of data entry personnel should be kept as unobtrusive as possible. Coding marks need not be included on questionnaires which are to be scanned and coded using an Optical Mark Reader (OMR) (Brace 2008; McCormack & Hill 1997). Eliminating these coding marks helps to remove some of the visual clutter from the page, which enhances the attractiveness and readability of the survey form.

Printing numeric coding marks on a survey form may suggest a hierarchy of responses to survey respondents, which can introduce bias in to the survey results (Brace 2008). This can be negated by removing numerical coding marks from the survey form altogether.

Instrument design and layout

A well-formatted survey instrument makes it easier for respondents to read and complete (Bradburn, Sudman & Wansink 2004). It may also reduce measurement error as respondents will be more likely to follow the flow of the survey and less likely to misread or overlook questions (Dillman 2000). Thus, respondents' needs should be the guiding priority when designing a survey instrument (Bradburn, Sudman & Wansink 2004).

Crowding questions together to save space is ultimately uneconomical if it compromises data accuracy (Iarossi 2006). For longer questionnaires, a less cramped layout with more "white space" looks easier to complete, which generally results in higher response rates and fewer respondent errors (Aaker, Kumar & Day 1998; Sudman & Bradburn 1982).

Individual items should also be equally spaced throughout the questionnaire have sufficient blank space between them to ensure that respondents can easily tell where one question ends and another begins so that they can address each question fully (Gray et al. 2007). Additionally, sufficient space should also be provided for open-response questions because respondents typically interpret the amount of space provided as an implicit indicator of the amount of detail required in a response. In cases where a relatively short open-ended response is required, it is recommended that lines are provided on which respondents may write their response (Layne & Thompson 1981; Sudman & Bradburn 1982; Trice & Dolan 1985).

There are a range of other layout considerations which need to be addressed when designing a questionnaire (cf. Bourque & Fielder 1995; Brace 2008; Dillman 1978; Sudman & Bradburn 1982):

- Printing should be of good quality, with printing on one side of the page unable to be seen from the other side through the paper
- Using different colours can increase the questionnaire if used sparingly (although the colours used on the AGS forms are dictated by the requirements of the optical scanning process)
- There should be a good contrast between print and paper, particularly to enhance the readability of the survey form for the visually impaired. Bourque and Fielder (1995) suggested that, when in doubt, use black print on a white background
- The front page of the questionnaire should include the title of the survey (which should ideally convey the purpose of the survey in an interesting yet neutral manner), the identity of the organisation carrying out the survey and *brief* instructions to the respondent.

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Existing pre-population questions

your qualification(s)

What is the FULL TITLE of the qualification(s) you completed in 2008 at your institution? (Please include combined/double degrees.)

For example: BACHELOR OF COMMERCE, DIPLOMA OF EDUCATION, BACHELOR OF ARTS / BACHELOR OF LAWS

What were the major fields of education in your qualification(s)?

For example: ACCOUNTING, PSYCHOLOGY, GENERAL NURSING, INFORMATION SYSTEMS

New pre-population questions

your qualification(s)

NOTE: The first two questions may have pre-printed responses. If you do not agree with the response, please cross it out and clearly write the correct response in the box provided.

What is the FULL TITLE of the qualification(s) you completed in 2008 at your institution? (Please include combined/double degrees.)

For example: BACHELOR OF COMMERCE, DIPLOMA OF EDUCATION, BACHELOR OF ARTS / BACHELOR OF LAWS

What were the major fields of education in your qualification(s)?

For example: ACCOUNTING, PSYCHOLOGY, GENERAL NURSING, INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Current page one – AGS Hardcopy form

Australian Graduate Survey
GDS & CEQ



your feedback is confidential

- please mark responses LIKE THIS: • use BLOCK LETTERS
- mark only ONE BOX, unless instructed • use a DARK pen

your qualification(s)

What is the FULL TITLE of the qualification(s) you completed in 2008 at your institution? (Please include combined/double degrees.)

For example: BACHELOR OF COMMERCE, DIPLOMA OF EDUCATION, BACHELOR OF ARTS / BACHELOR OF LAWS

What were the major fields of education in your qualification(s)?

For example: ACCOUNTING, PSYCHOLOGY, GENERAL NURSING, INFORMATION SYSTEMS

What was the level of your highest qualification listed above?

- bachelor degree (not honours or graduate entry)
- bachelor degree (honours)
- bachelor degree (graduate entry)
- graduate certificate
- graduate/postgraduate diploma
- graduate qualifying or preliminary
- master degree by coursework
- doctorate by coursework
- associate degree
- advanced diploma or diploma
- other award course

In what year did you commence your qualification(s) listed above?

Did you complete your qualification(s) as part of a combined/double degree?

- yes
- no

Were you mainly enrolled full time or part time?

- full time
- part time

What was your main mode of study?

- internal (on-campus)
- external (distance)
- mixed mode (internal and external)

For the qualification(s) you have just completed, were you wholly or mainly:

- a HECS student and deferred some or all of the HECS debt
- a HECS student and paid all of the HECS upfront
- an international fee-paying student
- an Australian fee-paying student

Did you receive any credit or advanced standing towards your qualification(s)?

- yes
- no

about you

What was your age in years on 30 April 2009?

What is your sex?

- female
- male

Were you in Australia on 30 April 2009?

- yes
- no

Would you describe yourself as having a disability?

- yes
- no

Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?

- no
- yes, Aboriginal
- yes, Torres Strait Islander
- yes, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

What is the main language spoken in your home?

- English
- other

Were you born in Australia?

- yes
- no

If you were born overseas, in what year did you first arrive in Australia?

Are you a citizen or permanent resident of Australia?

- yes
- no

If yes, what is your home postcode?

If no, what is your country of permanent residence?

What was the full title of your highest previous educational qualification?

For example: BACHELOR OF COMMERCE, DIPLOMA OF EDUCATION, SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE

What is the level of this highest previous qualification?

- no previous qualification
- completed secondary education
- undergraduate diploma
- bachelor (pass or honours)
- postgraduate degree or diploma
- other

Australian Graduate Survey

GDS & CEQ



your feedback is confidential

- please mark responses LIKE THIS: - use BLOCK LETTERS
- mark only ONE BOX, unless instructed - use a DARK pen

your qualification(s)

NOTE: The first two questions may have pre-printed responses. If you do not agree with the response, please cross it out and clearly write the correct response in the box provided.

What is the FULL TITLE of the qualification(s) you completed in 2008 at your Institution? (Please include combined/double degrees.)

For example: BACHELOR OF COMMERCE, DIPLOMA OF EDUCATION, BACHELOR OF ARTS / BACHELOR OF LAWS

What were the major fields of education in your qualification(s)?

For example: ACCOUNTING, PSYCHOLOGY, GENERAL NURSING, INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Were you mainly enrolled full time or part time?

- full time part time

What was your main mode of study?

- internal (on-campus)
 external (distance)
 mixed mode (internal and external)

For the qualification(s) you have just completed, were you wholly or mainly:

- a HECS student and deferred some or all of the HECS debt
 a HECS student and paid all of the HECS upfront
 an international fee-paying student
 an Australian fee-paying student

Did you receive any credit or advanced standing towards your qualification(s)?

- yes no

about you

Were you in Australia on 30 April 2009?

- yes no

Are you a citizen or permanent resident of Australia?

- yes no

If yes, what is your home postcode?

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If no, what is your country of permanent residence?

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Would you describe yourself as having a disability?

- yes no

What was the full title of your highest previous educational qualification?

For example: BACHELOR OF COMMERCE, DIPLOMA OF EDUCATION, SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE

What is the level of this highest previous qualification?

- no previous qualification
 completed secondary education
 undergraduate diploma
 bachelor (pass or honours)
 postgraduate degree or diploma
 other

work in your final year of study

Did you do any kind of paid work during your final year of study in 2008? (this includes paid course related work)

- yes no
- Go to the next section, 'your highest previous educational qualification'.

What was your main type of work (including permanent, contract, casual and self-employment)?

- full-time work (i.e. working 35 hours a week or more)
 part-time work (i.e. working fewer than 35 hours a week)

Did your primary employer give you time off work for your study?

- never sometimes often

Did your primary employer support your study financially?

- not at all somewhat a great deal

Were you still with that employer on 30 April 2009?

- yes no

work in your final year of study
 Did you do any kind of **paid** work during your **final year** of study in 2008? (this includes paid course related work)
 yes no *Go to the next section, 'your paid work status on 30 April 2009'.*

What was your main type of work (including permanent, contract, casual and self-employment)?
 full-time work (i.e. working 35 hours a week or more)
 part-time work (i.e. working fewer than 35 hours a week)

Did your primary employer give you time off work for your study?
 never sometimes often

Did your primary employer support your study financially?
 not at all somewhat a great deal

Were you still with that employer on 30 April 2009?
 yes no

your paid work status on 30 April 2009
 What was your position regarding paid work (including permanent, contract, casual and self-employment) on 30 April 2009?
 SELECT THE RESPONSE WHICH BEST DESCRIBES YOUR POSITION
 in full-time work, or had accepted an offer of full-time work (i.e. working 35 hours a week or more)
 in part-time work, or had accepted an offer of part-time work (i.e. working fewer than 35 hours a week)
 not working

Were you seeking work on 30 April 2009 (even if you were already working)?
 yes no

If seeking work, what kind of work were you seeking?
 IMPORTANT: MARK BOTH IF BOTH APPLY.
 full-time work part-time work

your main paid work on 30 April 2009
 Please go to the next section 'your study status...' (on the next page) if you were not working on 30 April 2009.
 Your main paid work is the employment in which you were working the most hours on 30 April 2009.

What was your employer's business name in full?

What was your employer's main business?
 For example: FINANCIAL SERVICES, EDUCATION, HEALTH

Both within Australia and overseas, approximately how many people are employed in this organisation?
 1 to 19 (small business) 100 or more (large business)
 20 to 99 (medium business) don't know

Were you working in Australia?
 yes no

If yes, in what postcode was your employment based?

If no, in what country was your employment based?

In what sector were you wholly or mainly employed?
 public/government not for profit
 private

Were you self-employed?
 yes no

What was the full title of your occupation?
 For example: SECONDARY TEACHER, GENERAL NURSE, ACCOUNTANT, SOFTWARE ENGINEER, RESEARCH ANALYST

In what month and year did you start this job?
 For example, write 'March 2009' as '03/2009'.
 /

What were the main tasks or duties in your job?
 Describe as fully as possible. For example: ENGINEERING DESIGN FOR BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION, TEACHING PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN, AUDITING AS A MEMBER OF AN AUDIT TEAM

How many hours per week on average were you working in your main job?

Which one of the following best describes the type of employment in your main paid work?
 permanent or open-ended contract
 fixed-term contract more than 12 months
 fixed-term contract up to 12 months
 temporary or casual

What was your gross (pre-tax) annual salary in Australian dollars on 30 April 2009?
 IMPORTANT: ESTIMATE IF NECESSARY. WRITE A YEARLY FIGURE.
 AUSTRALIAN DOLLARS \$, . 00

How important are the following to your employment in your main paid job?

	Formal requirement	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	Don't know
Qualification you have just completed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Major fields of education you studied	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other skills and knowledge acquired during your course	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If your job was full-time, was this your first full-time job of any sort (other than vacation jobs)?
 yes no

How did you first find out about this job?
 IMPORTANT: MARK ONLY ONE RESPONSE.
 university or college careers service
 careers fair or information session
 other university or college source (such as faculties or lecturers)
 advertisement in a newspaper or other print media
 advertisement on the internet
 via resumé posted on the internet
 family or friends
 approached employer directly
 approached by an employer
 employment agency
 work contacts or networks
 other, please specify:



your paid work status on 30 April 2009

What was your position regarding paid work (including permanent, contract, casual and self-employment) on 30 April 2009?

SELECT THE RESPONSE WHICH BEST DESCRIBES YOUR POSITION

in full-time work, or had accepted an offer of full-time work (i.e. working 35 hours a week or more)

in part-time work, or had accepted an offer of part-time work (i.e. working fewer than 35 hours a week)

not working

Were you seeking work on 30 April 2009 (even if you were already working)?

yes no

If seeking work, what kind of work were you seeking?

IMPORTANT: MARK BOTH IF BOTH APPLY.

full-time work part-time work

your main paid work on 30 April 2009

Please go to the next section 'your study status...' (on the next page) if you were not working on 30 April 2009.

Your main paid work is the employment in which you were working the most hours on 30 April 2009.

What was your employer's business name in full?

What was your employer's main business?
For example: FINANCIAL SERVICES, EDUCATION, HEALTH

Both within Australia and overseas, approximately how many people are employed in this organisation?

1 to 19 (small business) 100 or more (large business)

20 to 99 (medium business) don't know

Were you working in Australia?

yes no

If yes, in what postcode was your employment based?

If no, in what country was your employment based?

In what sector were you wholly or mainly employed?

public/government not for profit

private

Were you self-employed?

yes no

What was the full title of your occupation?
For example: SECONDARY TEACHER, GENERAL NURSE, ACCOUNTANT, SOFTWARE ENGINEER, RESEARCH ANALYST

In what month and year did you start this job?
For example, write March 2009 as 03/2009.

What were the main tasks or duties in your job?
Describe as fully as possible. For example: ENGINEERING DESIGN FOR BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION, TEACHING PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN, AUDITING AS A MEMBER OF AN AUDIT TEAM

How many hours per week on average were you working in your main job?

Which one of the following best describes the type of employment in your main paid work?

permanent or open-ended contract

fixed-term contract more than 12 months

fixed-term contract up to 12 months

temporary or casual

What was your gross (pre-tax) annual salary in Australian dollars on 30 April 2009?
IMPORTANT: ESTIMATE IF NECESSARY. WRITE A YEARLY FIGURE.

AUSTRALIAN DOLLARS \$ _____ .00

How important are the following to your employment in your main paid job?

	Formal requirement	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	Don't know
Qualification you have just completed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Major fields of education you studied	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other skills and knowledge acquired during your course	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If your job was full-time, was this your first full-time job of any sort (other than vacation jobs)?

yes no

How did you first find out about this job?
IMPORTANT: MARK ONLY ONE RESPONSE.

university or college careers service

careers fair or information session

other university or college source (such as faculties or lecturers)

advertisement in a newspaper or other print media

advertisement on the internet

via résumé posted on the internet

family or friends

approached employer directly

approached by an employer

employment agency

work contacts or networks

other, please specify:

