



the grad files

A summary of 2003 national graduate destination outcomes

Uni Graduates:

Work, Salaries, Study and Course Satisfaction

The Graduate Careers Council of Australia (GCCA) conducts an annual survey of new graduates shortly after the completion of their studies.

The Graduate Destination Survey looks at how many graduates are in work or are seeking employment, what they are earning, and whether or not they are studying for another qualification. The survey also gathers information as to how satisfied graduates were with particular aspects of their course.

This publication provides information about recently qualified bachelor degree graduates for students who are considering university, their parents, and the secondary school community. A bachelor degree is an entry-level university qualification and is usually the first qualification after secondary school.

Our other Graduate Destination Survey summary, GradStats, gives more details.

2003 Graduates at a Glance:

- Of bachelor degree graduates who wanted full-time employment in 2003, 80.1 per cent had found it within four months of completing their degrees. While the percentage fell slightly from last year, the actual number of graduates in full-time employment rose from 31,715 to 34,999.
- A further 12.1 per cent were working on a part-time or casual basis while continuing to seek full-time employment.
- An additional 7.8 per cent were not working and were still looking for full-time employment at the time of the survey.
- These figures represent a continued levelling-off of employment prospects for new graduates, first seen in 2002, after a period of improvement and consolidation between 1999 and 2001.
- Over 22 per cent of respondents were undertaking further full-time study after completing their bachelor degree.
- The median annual starting salary (i.e. a graduate's salary after graduating and obtaining his or her first full-time job) was \$37,000.
- Males earned a starting salary of \$38,000 and females earned \$36,300.
- Overall satisfaction with university courses as measured by the *Course Experience Questionnaire* (CEQ) remains at a high level, with the broad satisfaction figure coming in at over 89 per cent.

*The word 'median' is used in this publication and is defined as the middle value in a frequency distribution, below and above which lie values with equal total frequencies. It is similar to, but not the same as, an average.

Employment

The following section gives an overview of graduate employment over the last few years.

Table 1: Activities of bachelor degree graduates, by sex, 2001-2003 (%).

	Available for full-time employment (see Table 1a)	In full-time study	In part-time or casual employment, not seeking full-time employment	Not working, seeking part-time or casual employment only	Unavailable for full-time study or full-time employment
Males					
2001	68.8	24.7	3.7	0.3	2.5
2002	67.6	25.2	3.3	0.4	3.5
2003	69.1	23.5	3.4	0.4	3.6
Females					
2001	65.8	22.7	7.5	0.8	3.3
2002	64.1	23.4	7.6	0.8	4.1
2003	65.8	22.3	7.1	0.8	4.0
Persons					
2001	67.0	23.4	6.0	0.6	2.9
2002	65.4	24.1	6.0	0.6	3.9
2003	67.0	22.8	5.7	0.6	3.9

Table 1a: Breakdown of bachelor degree graduates available for full-time employment, 2001-2003 (%).

	In full-time employment	Seeking full-time employment, not working	Seeking full-time employment, working part-time or casual	Total seeking full-time employment
Males				
2001	83.2	8.5	8.3	16.8
2002	81.2	9.3	9.5	18.8
2003	79.8	9.6	10.6	20.2
Females				
2001	82.9	6.1	11.0	17.1
2002	81.3	6.4	12.3	18.7
2003	80.2	6.7	13.1	19.8
Persons				
2001	83.0	7.0	10.0	17.0
2002	81.3	7.5	11.2	18.7
2003	80.1	7.8	12.1	19.9

For people leaving secondary school this year, and starting a degree next year, it will be around three or four years (the average time it takes to complete a degree) before they will be looking for full-time employment. While current graduate employment levels aren't immediately relevant to anyone finishing school now, they are certainly relevant to anyone about to finish university.

However, it's a good idea for all secondary school and university students to keep an eye on graduate employment levels as they pursue their studies to enable them to make informed course, subject and job search choices.

It's also worth remembering that graduates are less likely to be unemployed (for any length of time) than are non-graduates. Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that graduates have an unemployment rate half that of non-graduates.

As the tables above indicate, of bachelor degree graduates who look for full-time work when they finish their degrees, more than eight in every ten have found it within four months (when the survey is completed). Of the remaining graduates, the statistics show that about half were in part-time work while looking for full-time work, and the other half were not working.

Research suggests that these two (out of ten) find full-time work quite quickly, and that in the long term, unemployment is not a great concern for university graduates.

Another statistic worth noting is that while females were almost as likely as males to have been seeking full-time employment (19.8 per cent compared with 20.2 per cent), they were more likely to have some employment (either part-time or casual) while seeking full-time work (13.1 per cent compared with 10.6 per cent).

Salaries

The median annual starting salary for new bachelor degree graduates aged less than 25 and in their first full-time job was \$37,000. This compares favourably with the annual salary of the average Australian worker which was \$45,100.

Overall, starting salaries for male graduates are higher than those for female graduates. In 2003, salaries for females were 95.5 per cent of males' salaries, but some of this difference is due to the different study choices that males and females make.

Further Study

Postgraduate study means doing another qualification after an initial degree. Further study can mean a postgraduate qualification or it can mean another qualification but not at postgraduate level, for example, an honours year at the end of, but within, a bachelor degree. Postgraduate qualifications include awards like a graduate diploma, masters degree or a doctorate, which is also known as a PhD. Further study is usually undertaken to improve

work prospects, to gain a particular type or level of skill, or to gain entry into professional employment.

In 2003, over two in ten new graduates continued in full-time study after their first degree, and this was slightly down on the previous year.

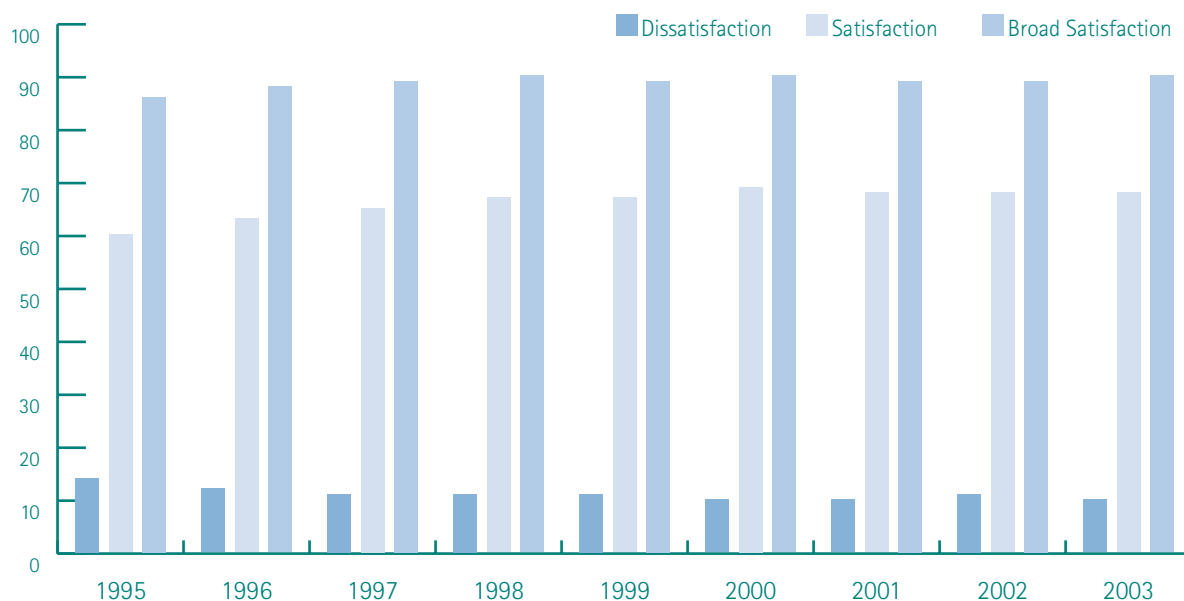
Males were slightly more likely than females (23.5 per cent compared with 22.3 per cent) to have undertaken further full-time study.

Graduate Satisfaction

The *Course Experience Questionnaire* measures bachelor degree graduates' overall satisfaction with their courses.

The graph below shows that satisfaction levels are high, and that dissatisfaction has been low since 1995.

Figure 1: Level of satisfaction with course, bachelor degree graduates, 1995-2003.



Fields of Study

Table 2 sets out some *Graduate Destination Survey* figures for various fields of study. A field of study is defined as a discipline, or an area of knowledge and information. For example, mathematics, law and education are all individual 'fields of study'. The information on fields of study is usually of great interest to people considering university, as they can get a feel for the employment outcomes in the fields that interest them.

It's important to obtain information regarding tertiary education from areas other than these statistics, as they provide a snapshot of tertiary education but not the whole picture. For example, the reason medical graduates have high employment levels is that they must serve an internship

in a public hospital before they qualify for full professional registration, and therefore automatically have jobs to go to. The reason that architecture and pharmacy graduates have relatively low starting salaries is because they must also complete further training requirements in their first job before they qualify for full professional registration. They go on to higher salaries in subsequent years. These facts are not represented in the figures from the *Graduate Destination Survey*.

Secondary school students should discuss post-secondary education issues with their teachers, careers advisers, parents, friends, and older students, and should also attend university course information days.

Table 2: Employment, further study, starting salaries, 2003.

	In full-time employment %	Seeking full-time employment, not working %	Seeking full-time employment, working part-time or casual %	Further full-time study %	Median starting salary
Agriculture	73.5	10.7	15.8	23.6	\$33,000
Architecture	85.4	6.1	8.6	26.5	\$28,800
Building	83.4	7.4	9.2	19.7	\$32,000
Urban & Regional Planning	93.2	3.4	3.4	11.1	\$40,000
Humanities	67.3	13.1	19.6	33.6	\$32,000
Languages	73.1	10.1	16.8	41.4	\$35,590
Visual/Performing Arts	54.2	15.6	30.2	34.9	\$31,000
Social Sciences	69.3	13.7	17.0	37.2	\$35,000
Psychology	67.3	12.1	20.6	46.6	\$35,000
Social Work	79.5	8.7	11.9	10.0	\$37,200
Business Studies	76.9	8.8	14.3	16.5	\$35,000
Accounting	87.5	7.4	5.1	9.6	\$35,000
Economics	81.8	7.7	10.4	33.4	\$37,400
Education, Initial	82.7	2.7	14.6	7.0	\$39,700
Education Post/Other	75.9	6.9	17.2	13.1	\$39,800
Aeronautical Engineering	83.9	8.1	8.1	18.0	\$40,000
Chemical Engineering	87.6	6.2	6.2	21.8	\$42,250
Civil Engineering	94.3	4.1	1.7	9.2	\$39,000
Electrical Engineering	82.1	12.3	5.6	15.8	\$41,000
Electronic/Computer Engineering	73.5	16.4	10.1	19.5	\$40,000
Mechanical Engineering	87.2	8.0	4.8	13.5	\$40,500
Mining Engineering	94.1	5.9	0.0	10.2	\$52,000
Other Engineering	86.4	7.4	6.2	19.2	\$40,000
Surveying	93.4	4.1	2.5	5.0	\$35,500
Dentistry	94.2	0.6	5.2	2.4	\$55,000
Health, Other	79.7	6.6	13.7	22.6	\$37,000
Nursing, Initial	97.5	0.4	2.1	5.9	\$35,000
Nursing, Post-initial	97.1	0.3	2.5	6.5	\$35,000
Pharmacy (pre-reg)	99.5	0.2	0.2	8.2	\$27,000
Medicine	98.0	1.1	0.9	18.6	\$45,000
Rehabilitation	91.6	2.4	6.0	15.2	\$38,000
Law	88.6	6.6	4.8	22.6	\$39,480
Law, Other	94.6	1.9	3.5	9.0	\$35,000
Computer Science	68.1	16.4	15.6	20.4	\$38,000
Life Sciences	68.6	11.7	19.7	46.3	\$35,000
Mathematics	67.7	17.3	14.9	45.3	\$38,349
Chemistry	75.7	14.1	10.2	46.3	\$37,500
Physics	66.7	20.3	13.0	57.4	\$41,000
Geology	80.1	6.2	13.7	46.0	\$40,000
Veterinary Science	92.5	3.4	4.1	5.6	\$35,000
Total %	80.1	7.8	12.1	22.8	\$37,000
Total Number	34,999	3,414	5,276	14,834	

Occupations

The following section lists the types of full-time work graduates from the various fields of study were doing at the time of the *GDS*. The most common occupations, as reported by the new graduates, are listed after the field of study. The occupations are listed in order of the frequency with which they were mentioned by the graduates,

i.e., if 'counsellor' is mentioned first, then it was mentioned most often by the respondents, and so on.

Don't be put off by the regular occurrence of the occupation 'clerk'. It often represents a trainee position in a field the graduate is interested in, and which can lead to more advanced positions later.

Agricultural Science – agricultural or environmental scientist; clerk; manual worker; business professional; manager; scientific officer; farmer; other professional

Architecture – architect; building technical officer; designer; manager; clerk

Building – manager; designer; clerk; other building or engineering professional; quantity surveyor; building technical officer; business professional

Urban and Regional Planning – urban and regional planner; other building, engineering or science professional; manager, clerk

Humanities – clerk; manager; business professional; other professional; journalist; teacher; visual or performing artist; public relations

Languages – clerk; teacher; business professional; manager; other professional

Visual and Performing Arts – clerk; designer or illustrator; teacher; manager; visual or performing artist (other); business or other professional; musician or composer; actor or dancer

Social Science – clerk; welfare or counselling; business or other professional; manager; teacher; science or health professional

Psychology – clerk; welfare or counselling; business professional; manager; psychologist; teacher; other professional; health or science professional

Social Work – social worker; welfare or counselling; manager; clerk

Business Studies – clerk; manager; business professional; accounting; marketing; personnel; other professional or para-professional; computing professional

Accounting – accountant; clerk; business and other professional; manager; computing professional

Economics – business professional; clerk; manager; other professional; economist; accountant

Education (initial teacher training) – primary teacher; secondary teacher; other teacher; pre-primary teacher; clerk; manager

Education (post-initial teacher training) – secondary teacher; primary teacher; other teacher; pre-primary teacher; manager; business or other professional

Aeronautical Engineering – engineer; manager; air transport professional; other professional

Chemical Engineering – chemical engineer; other engineer; mechanical engineer; science professional

Civil Engineering – civil engineer; other engineer; manager; engineering technical officer; business professional

Electrical Engineering – electrical engineer; other engineer; manager; computing professional; engineering technical officer; business professional

Electronic/Computer Engineering – computing professional; electrical engineer; other engineer; business professional; manager; engineering technical officer

Mechanical Engineering – mechanical engineer; other engineer; manager; business professional; engineering technical officer

Mining Engineering – mining engineer; other engineer and related

Other Engineering – engineering professional; mining engineer; civil engineer; manager; science professional; computing professional

Surveying – surveyor; other science engineering or building professional; other professional

Dentistry – dentist

Health Sciences – medical imaging professional; para-professional; clerk; science and other professional; medical or scientific technical officer; manager; health professional; optometrist; dietitian; podiatrist; nurse; teacher; medical records administrator

Nursing – nurse

Pharmacy – pharmacist

Medicine – medical practitioner

Rehabilitation Studies – physiotherapist; occupational therapist; speech pathologist; other health or science professional

Law – lawyer; legal clerk; business or other professional; manager; accountant

Law (other) – police; lawyer; legal clerk; manager; business or other professional

Computing – computer professional; business professional; clerk; manager

Biological and Life Sciences – medical or science officer; clerk; manager; business or other professional; environmental or life scientist; health professional; teacher; other scientific or engineering professional

Mathematics – business professional; clerk; mathematician or statistician; computing professional; teacher; manager; other science or engineering professional; organisations analyst; other professional; actuary

Chemistry – chemist (not pharmacist); medical or scientific technical officer; engineering professional; other scientific or business professional; clerk

Physical Science – engineering, science and other professional; geologist; scientific or engineering professional; clerk

Geology and Earth Sciences – geologist or geophysicist; clerk; environmental scientist; medical or scientific professional; other professional

Veterinary Science – veterinarian

The Last Word

Entering a university or college usually requires much thought and research on behalf of the secondary school student. The choices you make about your university education shouldn't be taken lightly but the rewards are immense and include personal growth, a fulfilling career with strong employment prospects and high earnings potential.

Consult careers references at your school, university careers advisers, and investigate student websites, especially www.detya.gov.au and *GradsOnline* at www.gradlink.edu.au.

More information: School principals, teachers, careers advisers, students, and parents can purchase the reports *Graduate Destination Survey 2002*, *Graduate Starting Salaries 2002*, and the *Course Experience Questionnaire 2002* from the *Graduate Careers Council of Australia (GCCA)*.

Ph. 03 8344 9333, Fax. 03 9347 7298, Email: gradlink@gcca.unimelb.edu.au, or write to GCCA, PO Box 28, Parkville, VIC, 3052

For further information on graduate employment, graduate destination statistics, and the GCCA, visit the *GradsOnline* website at www.gradlink.edu.au.

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