

Graduates:

Work, Salaries, Study and Course Satisfaction

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

The Australian Graduate Survey (AGS) 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. It will also be helpful for their parents and the secondary school community. A bachelor degree is an initial higher education qualification and is usually the first qualification after secondary school.

Our other Australian Graduate Survey summary, *GradStats* (available for download from graduatecareers.com.au), gives more details.

2008 Graduates at a glance:

- Of bachelor degree graduates who were available for full-time employment¹ in 2008 (see Table 1a);
 - 85.2 per cent were in full-time employment within four months of completing their degrees (up from 84.5 per cent last year);
 - 9.6 per cent were working on a part-time or casual basis while continuing to seek full-time employment (down from 10.5 per cent last year); and
 - 5.2 per cent were not working and still looking for full-time employment at the time of the survey (5.0 per cent last year).
- AGS figures show employment prospects for new graduates fell from a recent high point in 2000, levelled out between 2003 and 2004, and have since shown a continued improvement (see Figure 1). However, these employment figures were gathered in late 2007 and early 2008, and as such precede the current global financial downturn.
- Around one-fifth of respondents (19.6 per cent – down from 20.0 per cent last year), were undertaking further full-time study after completing their bachelor qualifications (see Table 1).
- The median annual starting salary for new Australian resident bachelor degree graduates aged less than 25 and in their first full-time employment in Australia was \$45,000 (\$43,000 in 2007). This was 80.9 per cent of the annual rate of male average weekly earnings (\$55,600 at the time of the AGS), up from 80.1 per cent in 2007 (see Table 3).
- Males earned a starting salary of \$47,000 (up from \$45,000 in 2007) and females earned \$45,000 (up from \$42,000 in 2007).
- Overall satisfaction with courses as measured by the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) remains at a high level, with 88.4 per cent of graduates expressing broad satisfaction with their courses.

¹ This group comprises graduates who have not gone on to further full-time study, and who are either in, or are looking for full-time employment.



Employment

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

Table 1: Activities of bachelor degree graduates, by sex, 2006-08 (%).

	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 any employment	Total %†	Total cases
Males							
2006	68.8	21.2	5.5	0.3	4.3	100	24,904
2007	69.3	21.1	5.1	0.3	4.2	100	24,145
2008	68.6	20.5	5.7	0.3	4.9	100	24,035
Females							
2006	65.0	19.8	10.0	0.6	4.6	100	41,780
2007	65.5	19.3	9.8	0.6	4.8	100	40,876
2008	64.9	19.0	10.1	0.5	5.5	100	40,538
Persons*							
2006	66.4	20.3	8.3	0.5	4.5	100	66,702
2007	66.9	20.0	8.1	0.5	4.5	100	65,110
2008	66.2	19.6	8.4	0.5	5.3	100	64,648

*Total persons might not equal males plus females as some respondents did not identify sex.

† Total % may not add to 100.0 due to rounding.

Table 1a: Breakdown of bachelor degree graduates available for full-time employment, 2006-08 (%).

	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 %†	Total cases
Males						
2006	83.0	6.4	10.6	17.0	100	17,119
2007	85.6	5.8	8.6	14.4	100	16,736
2008	85.5	6.0	8.5	14.5	100	16,490
Females						
2006	81.9	4.9	13.2	18.1	100	27,154
2007	83.9	4.6	11.6	16.1	100	26,733
2008	85.0	4.7	10.3	15.0	100	26,292
Persons*						
2006	82.4	5.5	12.2	17.6	100	44,286
2007	84.5	5.0	10.5	15.5	100	43,549
2008	85.2	5.2	9.6	14.8	100	42,811

*Total persons might not equal males plus females as some respondents did not identify sex.

† Total % may not add to 100.0 due to rounding.

** Percentages based on the group of bachelor degree graduates in full-time employment.

For people leaving secondary school this year, and starting a degree next year (or the year after with a gap year), it will be around three or four years (the average time it takes to complete a degree via full-time study) 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 higher education students to be aware of graduate employment figures as they pursue their studies so that they can make informed decisions about their 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 non-graduates. Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that graduates have an unemployment rate half that of non-graduates.

As the tables here indicate, of bachelor degree graduates who look for full-time work when they finish their degrees, more than eight in every ten (85.2 per cent – see Table 1a) have found it within four months (when the survey is conducted). Of the remaining graduates still looking for full-time work, 9.6 per cent were in part-time work while they were looking and the remainder (5.2 per cent) were not working.

Research suggests that those graduates not in a full-time job at the time of the survey find full-time work soon after and that, in the long term, unemployment is not a great concern for university graduates.

Another statistic worth noting is that, while females were slightly more likely than males to have been seeking full-time employment at the time of the survey (15.0 per cent compared with 14.5 per cent), they were less likely than males (4.7 per cent compared with 6.0 per cent) to have been without any work while seeking full-time employment.

Salaries

In 2008, the median annual starting salary for new bachelor degree graduates aged less than 25 and in their first full-time employment in Australia was \$45,000 (up from \$43,000 last year). This was 80.9 per cent of the annual rate of male average weekly earnings (\$55,600 at the time of the AGS).

Starting salaries for male graduates (\$47,000) were slightly higher than those for female graduates (\$45,000). The overall salary for females was 95.7 per cent of males' earnings.

Females earned notably higher starting salaries than males in earth sciences (122.4 per cent of males' salaries) and social work (105.6 per cent) and slightly more in engineering (101.9 per cent). Their earnings were equivalent to their male colleagues' salaries in accounting.

However, females earned markedly less than males in the fields of optometry (88.2 per cent), dentistry (92.0 per cent) architecture and building (88.9 per cent of males' earnings), art and design (87.8 per cent) and economics and business (91.1 per cent).

Some of the difference in salaries between males and females is due to different course selection and employment choices that they make (such as type of employer or the hours worked).

Further Full-time Study

Further full-time study means doing another qualification after an initial degree. This can include a postgraduate qualification or it can mean studying for another qualification but not at postgraduate level, for example, an honours year at the end of, but part of, a bachelor degree.

Postgraduate qualifications include awards like graduate or postgraduate certificates or diplomas, a masters degree or a doctorate, which is also known as a PhD (or Doctor of Philosophy). Further study is usually undertaken to improve work prospects, to gain a particular type or level of training or skill, or to gain entry into professional employment.

In 2008, almost one in every five new bachelor degree graduates (19.6 per cent – see Table 1) continued in some type of full-time study after their first degree.

Males were slightly more likely than females (20.5 per cent compared with 19.0 per cent) to have undertaken further full-time study.



Graduate Satisfaction

The Course Experience Questionnaire measures bachelor degree graduates' overall satisfaction with

their courses. Figure 1 shows that satisfaction levels have been consistently high since 1995.

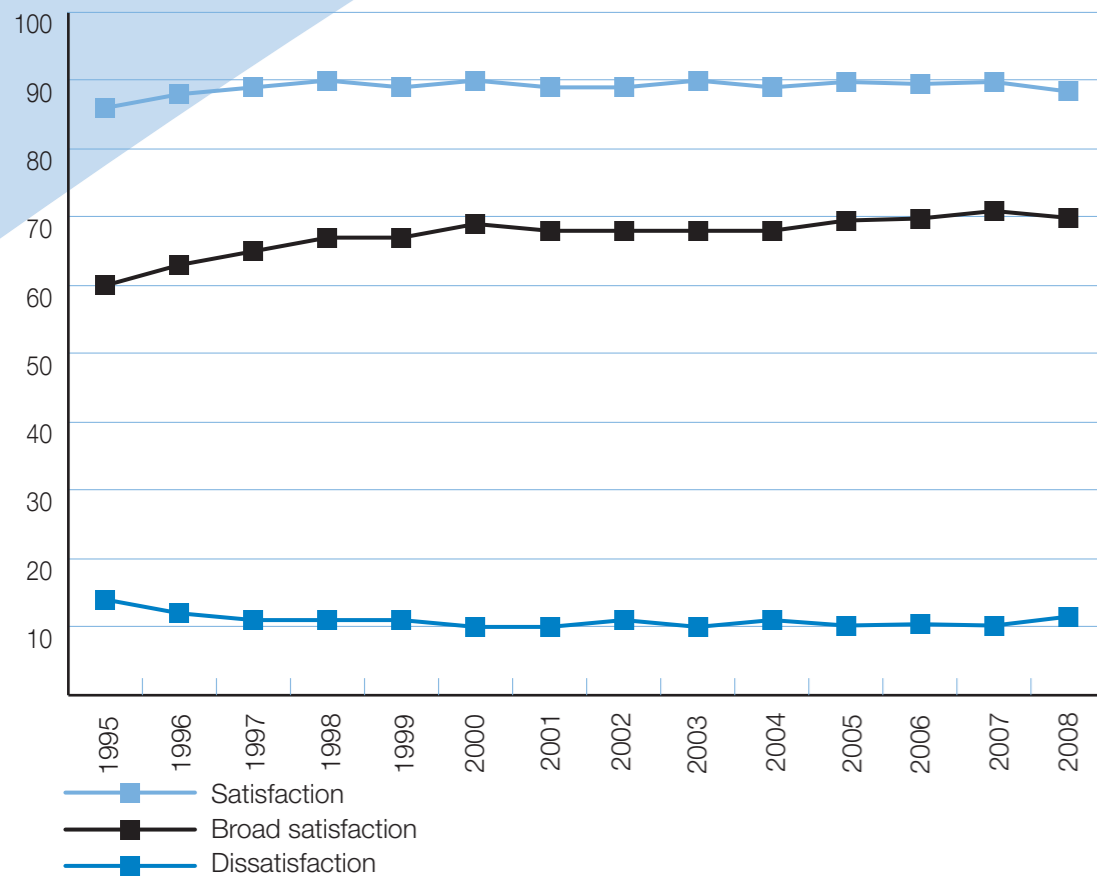


Figure 1: Levels of satisfaction with course, bachelor degree graduates, 1995-2008 (preliminary).

Fields of Education

Table 2 sets out some AGS figures for various fields of education. A field of education is defined as a discipline, or an area of knowledge and information. An individual field of education includes courses, specialisations and units of study with the same or similar vocational emphasis. For example, mathematics, law and education (i.e., teacher training) are all individual fields of education.

The information we gather on fields of education is usually of great interest to people considering higher education, as they can get a feel for the employment outcomes in the fields that interest them.

It's important for intending students to obtain information regarding tertiary education from areas other than these statistics, as the latter provide a snapshot of higher education outcomes but not the whole picture. For example, the reason medical graduates have high employment levels (see Table 2) 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 immediately after university.

Architecture and pharmacy graduates can have relatively low starting salaries because they must also complete further training requirements in their first professional job before they qualify for full professional registration. They go on to much higher salaries in subsequent years, but these facts are not represented in the figures from the Australian Graduate Survey.

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

Table 2: Breakdown of bachelor degree graduates available for full-time employment, in further full-time study and the median starting salaries of those in full-time employment, by field of education, 2008 (%).

	Available for full-time employment				Further full-time study (%)	* Median starting salary (\$,000)
	In full-time employment	Seeking full-time employment, not working	Seeking full-time employment, working part-time or casual	Total seeking full-time employment		
Agriculture	82.2	5.9	11.9	17.8	15.6	42.9
Architecture	92.2	3.6	4.3	7.8	28.5	39.0
Building	91.6	4.0	4.4	8.4	16.7	44.0
Urban/Regional Planning	93.3	2.4	4.3	6.7	10.5	49.9
Humanities	75.3	8.9	15.8	24.7	29.1	40.0
Languages	77.0	8.2	14.8	23.0	34.9	43.7
Visual/Performing Arts	66.9	10.5	22.6	33.1	31.4	36.8
Social Sciences	77.2	8.9	13.8	22.8	31.5	43.0
Psychology	77.3	8.0	14.8	22.7	39.5	43.5
Social Work	86.4	4.4	9.2	13.6	7.3	45.0
Business Studies	84.8	5.7	9.5	15.2	10.3	42.0
Accounting	88.6	5.7	5.7	11.4	8.1	44.0
Economics	87.4	5.9	6.7	12.6	24.9	49.0
Education - Initial	82.9	2.8	14.3	17.1	5.1	47.0
Education - Post/Other	77.5	2.5	20.0	22.5	29.9	50.0
Aeronautical Engineering	89.5	7.0	3.5	10.5	10.1	52.0
Chemical Engineering	90.6	7.3	2.1	9.4	9.2	60.0
Civil Engineering	97.3	2.0	0.7	2.7	3.7	54.0
Electrical Engineering	91.9	4.9	3.2	8.1	9.1	55.0
Electronic/Computer Engineering	89.1	6.0	4.8	10.9	8.4	51.4
Mechanical Engineering	93.9	2.6	3.5	6.1	7.7	54.0
Mining Engineering	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.3	78.0
Other Engineering	92.4	3.5	4.1	7.6	10.5	52.0
Surveying	94.2	3.3	2.5	5.8	3.0	45.0
Dentistry	93.2	3.4	3.4	6.8	3.9	74.0
Health Other	87.4	4.3	8.4	12.6	28.8	45.0
Nursing (Initial)	96.7	1.0	2.3	3.3	3.8	44.3
Nursing (Post-Initial)	96.1	0.9	3.0	3.9	3.1	45.7
Pharmacy	97.9	1.5	0.6	2.1	7.3	34.0
Medicine	97.6	1.1	1.3	2.4	11.4	50.0
Rehabilitation	93.8	2.0	4.2	6.2	14.7	47.0
Law	91.0	4.6	4.4	9.0	20.0	47.0
Law Other	88.6	4.2	7.2	11.4	14.5	45.5
Computer Science	84.2	8.0	7.8	15.8	11.4	46.5
Life Sciences	74.6	7.6	17.8	25.4	44.2	44.0
Mathematics	85.5	6.5	8.0	14.5	38.5	48.3
Chemistry	79.6	7.5	12.9	20.4	54.9	45.8
Physical Sciences	77.1	12.4	10.5	22.9	55.0	50.0
Geology	90.4	4.3	5.3	9.6	32.6	60.0
Veterinary Science	91.8	4.7	3.5	8.2	5.1	40.0
Total %	85.2	5.2	9.6	14.8	19.6	\$45,000
Total N	36,481	2,226	4,104	6,330	12,644	

† Total % may not add to 100.0 due to rounding.

* Based on bachelor degree graduates aged less than 25 and in their first full-time employment in Australia.



Occupations

The following section lists the types of full-time work graduates from the various fields of education were doing at the time of the AGS. The most common occupations, as reported by the new graduates, are listed after the field of education. The occupations

are listed in order of the frequency with which they were mentioned by the graduates. So, if 'counsellor' is mentioned first, then it was mentioned most often by the survey respondents, and so on.

Don't be put off by the regular occurrence of the occupation 'clerical & administrative worker'. It can often represent a trainee position in a field in which the graduate is interested, and which can lead to more advanced positions later. Australian Graduate Survey figures show that about two-thirds of new graduates find professional employment,

with an additional group – usually a little smaller than 10 per cent – in managerial or technical positions.

Additionally, occasionally anomalous occupations could be related to a second major field of education or an earlier award completed by the graduate.

Agricultural Science: science professional; clerical & administrative worker; business, information, marketing professional; manager & administrator; farm, forestry and garden workers; environmental scientist; agricultural, medical & science technicians

Architecture: design & architecture professional; building & engineering technicians; architects & landscape architects; clerical & administrative worker; architectural, building & surveying technicians

Building: design & architecture professional; clerical & administrative worker; manager & administrator; engineering professional; building & engineering technicians; architectural, building & surveying technicians

Urban and Regional Planning: design & architecture professional; urban & regional planners; business, information, marketing professional; science professional; engineering professional

Humanities: clerical & administrative worker; business, information, marketing professional; arts and media professional; manager & administrator; community & personal service workers; sales worker; education professional; social professional

Languages: clerical & administrative worker; business, information, marketing professional; education professional; manager & administrator; community & personal service workers; sales worker; social professional

Visual and Performing Arts: design & architecture professional; clerical & administrative worker; education professional; arts & media professional; sales worker; manager & administrator; business, information, marketing professional; community & personal service workers; trades; graphic & web designers, & illustrators

Social Science: business, information, marketing professional; clerical & administrative worker; community & personal service workers; manager & administrator; social & welfare professional; education professional; sales worker; design & architecture professional

Psychology: business, information, marketing professional; clerical & administrative worker; social & welfare professional; community & personal service workers; manager & administrator; education professional; sales worker; health professional; psychologist

Social Work: social & welfare professional; social worker; community & personal service workers; clerical & administrative worker; manager & administrator; welfare worker

Business Studies: clerical & administrative worker; manager & administrator; business, information, marketing professional; sales, marketing & public relations professionals; information & organisation professionals; human resource & training professionals; sales worker; accountant, auditor

Accounting: accountant, auditor; business, information, marketing professional; clerical & administrative worker; manager & administrator; information & organisation professionals

Economics: business, information, marketing professional; clerical & administrative worker; manager & administrator; accountant, auditor; economist; sales worker

Education (initial teacher training): education professional; primary school teacher; secondary school teacher; community & personal service workers; manager & administrator

Education (post-initial teacher training): education professional; manager & administrator; community & personal service workers; clerical & administrative worker

Aeronautical Engineering: engineering professional; air transport professional; trades; information & communication technology professional; manager & administrator

Chemical Engineering: engineering professional; chemical & materials engineers; science professional; business, information, marketing professional

Civil Engineering: engineering professional; civil engineering professionals; manager & administrator; building & engineering technicians

Electrical Engineering: engineering professional; electrical engineers; information & communication technology professionals; business, information, marketing professional; manager & administrator

Electronic/Computer Engineering: information & communication technology professionals; engineering professional; business, information, marketing professional; manager & administrator; information & communication technology & telecommunications technicians; information & communication technology professional

Mechanical Engineering: engineering professional; industrial, mechanical & production engineers; manager & administrator; building & engineering technicians; business, information, marketing professional

Mining Engineering: engineering professional; mining engineers

Other Engineering: engineering professionals; information & communication technology professionals; manager & administrator; science professional

Surveying: design & architecture professional; information & communication technology professionals; cartographers & surveyors; engineering professional; science professional; building & engineering technicians

Dentistry: dental practitioners

Health Sciences: health professional; community & personal service workers; science professional; clerical & administrative worker; business, information, marketing professional

Nursing: nurse

Pharmacy: pharmacists

Medicine: medical practitioners; health professional; science professional

Rehabilitation Studies: health professional; physiotherapists; occupational therapists; speech professionals & audiologists; social professional; clerical & administrative worker; community & personal service workers;

Law: court & legal clerks; legal professionals; business, information, marketing professional; manager & administrator

Law (other): community & personal service workers; police; clerical & administrative worker; business, information, marketing professional; legal professionals; manager & administrator

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, talk to university careers advisers, and investigate student websites, especially www.dest.gov.au, university web sites, and www.graduatecareers.com.au.

More information:

School principals, teachers, careers advisers, students, and parents can purchase the reports *Graduate Destinations, 2008*, *Graduate Salaries 2008*, *Graduate Course Experience, 2008* and *Grads, Jobs and Dollars 2005*, currently available from Graduate Careers Australia (GCA).

Computing: information & communication technology professionals; business, information, marketing professional; clerical & administrative worker; information & communication technology & telecommunications technicians; manager & administrator

Biological and Life Sciences: science professional; clerical & administrative worker; agricultural, medical & science technicians; health professional; community & personal service workers; education professional; business, information, marketing professional; manager & administrator; sales worker

Mathematics: business, information, marketing professional; education professional; clerical & administrative worker; information & communication technology professionals; engineering professional; science professional; actuaries; mathematicians & statisticians

Chemistry: science professional; agricultural, medical & science technicians; education professional; clerical & administrative worker; chemists, & food & wine scientists; business, information, marketing professional; manager & administrator; sales worker

Physical Science: science professional; business, information, marketing professional; transport professional; engineering professional; clerical & administrative worker; information & communication technology professionals; agricultural, medical & science technicians; manager & administrator

Geology: science professional; geologists & geophysicists; clerical & administrative worker; business, information, marketing professional; sales workers

Veterinary Science: veterinarians

Phone (03) 9605 3700, Fax (03) 9670 5752, Email: surveyhelp@graduatecareers.com.au, or write to GCA, PO Box 12103, A'Beckett Street, VIC 8006.

For further information on the Australian Graduate Survey, graduate employment, graduate destination statistics, and GCA, visit www.graduatecareers.com.au

Information on around 400 occupations is available in Job Outlook on-line at www.jobsearch.gov.au/joboutlook.



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