

GradFiles

December 2010

A Snapshot of Employment Outcomes of Recent Higher Education Graduates

Decisions about higher education are some of the biggest that you will ever have to make. What to study? What type of degree? Is it right for me?

To help you make an informed decision, *GradFiles 2010* provides information on employment rates, starting salaries and other important facts about higher education outcomes. *GradFiles 2010* is a summary of the annual Australian Graduate Survey (AGS) run by Graduate Careers Australia (GCA).

2010 survey highlights:

- 76.2 per cent of bachelor degree graduates seeking full-time employment were in full-time employment within four months of completing their degrees
- around one-fifth of graduates were undertaking further full-time study after completing their bachelor qualifications
- 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 \$49,000
- 93.2 per cent of graduates expressed broad satisfaction with their courses.



Graduate employment

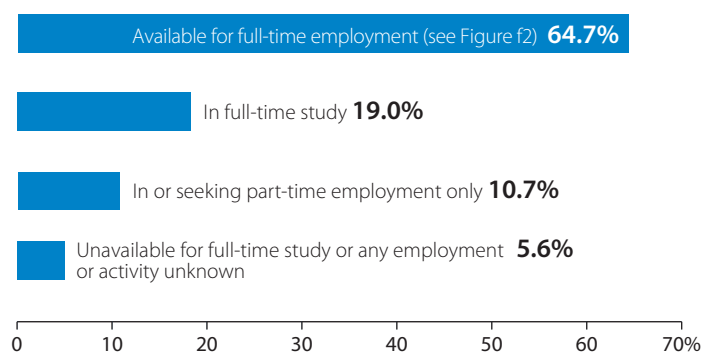
For students leaving secondary school and intending to start a degree, it will be around three or four years (the typical time it takes to complete a bachelor degree via full-time study) before they will be looking for full-time employment.

While current graduate employment levels are very relevant to anyone about to finish a degree, they can also be valuable for people who are about to choose a degree to study. The full-time employment rate for new graduates in 2010 showed a slight decrease on the previous year, which suggests a lingering effect from the global financial crisis. For those currently considering enrolling in a higher education qualification, it's worth noting that the employment market may change substantially by their graduation time. But it's more important to remember that graduates are less likely to be unemployed in the long-term than non-graduates.

Figure f1 indicates that in 2010, 64.7 per cent of graduates were available for full-time employment (that is, those who were either in, or were looking for, full-time employment). The remainder went in to further full-time study or were in the part-time labour market only.



f1: activities of bachelor degree graduates, 2010 (%)

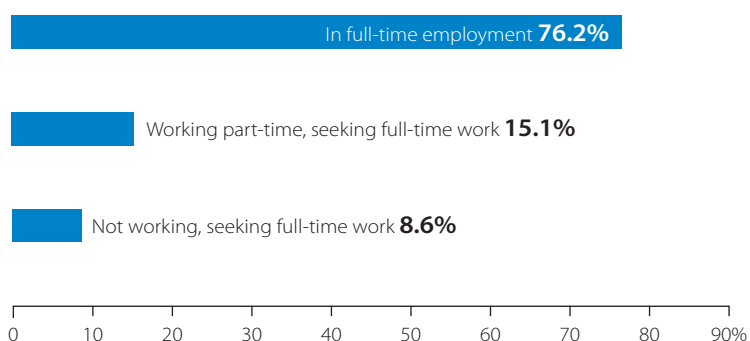


Of those bachelor degree graduates available for full-time employment, over three-quarters (76.2 per cent) found full-time employment within four months of completing their studies (see Figure f2 below). This was down by 3.0 percentage points from 79.2 per cent in 2009, and down 9.0 percentage points from 85.2 per cent in 2008.

While this may seem like a considerable decline, it was mild in comparison to the recession of the early 1990s, when this figure dropped by almost 11 percentage points over the course of one year and more than 20 percentage points over three years. For more detailed information on graduate employment, refer to the related GCA report, GradStats 2010.

Research by GCA suggests that many of those graduates not in a full-time job at the time of the survey find full-time work soon after. Figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics also show that, in the long term, unemployment rates for graduates are much lower than those in the general labour force.

f2: bachelor degree graduates available for full-time employment, 2010 (%)



Fields of education

Post-study outcomes for graduates can vary considerably according to the field of education studied. An individual field of education includes courses, specialisations and units of study with the same or similar vocational emphasis. The following information outlines employment and further study outcomes by fields of education studied.

t1: bachelor degree graduates available for full-time employment or in further full-time study by field of education, 2010 (%)

FIELD OF EDUCATION	Of those graduates wanting full-time employment:		Of all graduates:
	In full-time employment (%)	Total seeking full-time employment (%)	Further full-time study (%)
Agriculture	69.3	30.7	21.6
Accounting	79.1	20.9	8.1
Aeronautical Engineering	73.9	26.1	8.3
Architecture	75.8	24.2	41.8
Building	84.3	15.7	11.6
Business Studies	75.1	24.9	12.1
Chemical Engineering	67.7	32.3	8.3
Chemistry	68.8	31.3	52.9
Civil Engineering	92.5	7.5	7.0
Computer Science	73.3	26.7	10.8
Dentistry	93.6	6.4	4.4
Economics	72.9	27.1	23.8
Education - Initial	74.8	25.2	4.8
Education - Post/Other	83.3	16.7	41.0
Electrical Engineering	76.9	23.1	10.8
Electronic/Computer Engineering	76.9	23.1	5.6
Geology	72.9	27.1	37.5
Health Other	74.4	25.6	29.5
Humanities	66.0	34.0	28.8
Languages	66.8	33.2	35.0
Law	82.1	17.9	20.2
Law Other	77.3	22.7	16.4
Life Sciences	61.0	39.0	40.1
Mathematics	66.8	33.2	40.7
Mechanical Engineering	80.5	19.5	8.5
Medicine	97.3	2.7	9.2
Mining Engineering	90.5	9.5	5.2
Nursing (Initial)	92.9	7.1	4.3
Nursing (Post-Initial)	89.9	10.1	2.4
Other Engineering	84.9	15.1	9.7
Pharmacy	97.7	2.3	8.0
Physical Sciences	76.9	23.1	43.1
Psychology	65.7	34.3	37.5
Rehabilitation	88.8	11.2	11.8
Social Sciences	63.2	36.8	32.3
Social Work	77.7	22.3	6.2
Surveying	93.1	6.9	3.4
Urban/Regional Planning	81.8	18.2	7.9
Veterinary Science	90.7	9.3	8.1
Visual/Performing Arts	53.3	46.7	27.1
Total %	76.2	23.8	19.0
Total N	32,084	9,997	12,360

It's important for prospective students to obtain information regarding higher education from sources other than these statistics because, while these provide a snapshot of graduate outcomes, they do not tell the full story, nor can they show what will happen in each field of education in the future.

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 immediately after university. Other fields can have similar aspects relating to entry to employment not seen in these figures.

Further full-time study

Further full-time study, in this context, involves commencing another qualification after the completion of your initial degree. This can include a postgraduate qualification or it can mean studying for another qualification but not at postgraduate level (for example, an optional honours year at the end of a bachelor degree).

Postgraduate qualifications include awards such as practically-focused postgraduate certificates or diplomas, masters degrees (either by coursework or research) or doctoral degrees.

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 2010, almost one in every five new bachelor degree graduates (19.0 per cent – see Table t1) continued in some type of full-time study after their first degree (similar to the 18.3 per cent in 2009).

Salary information

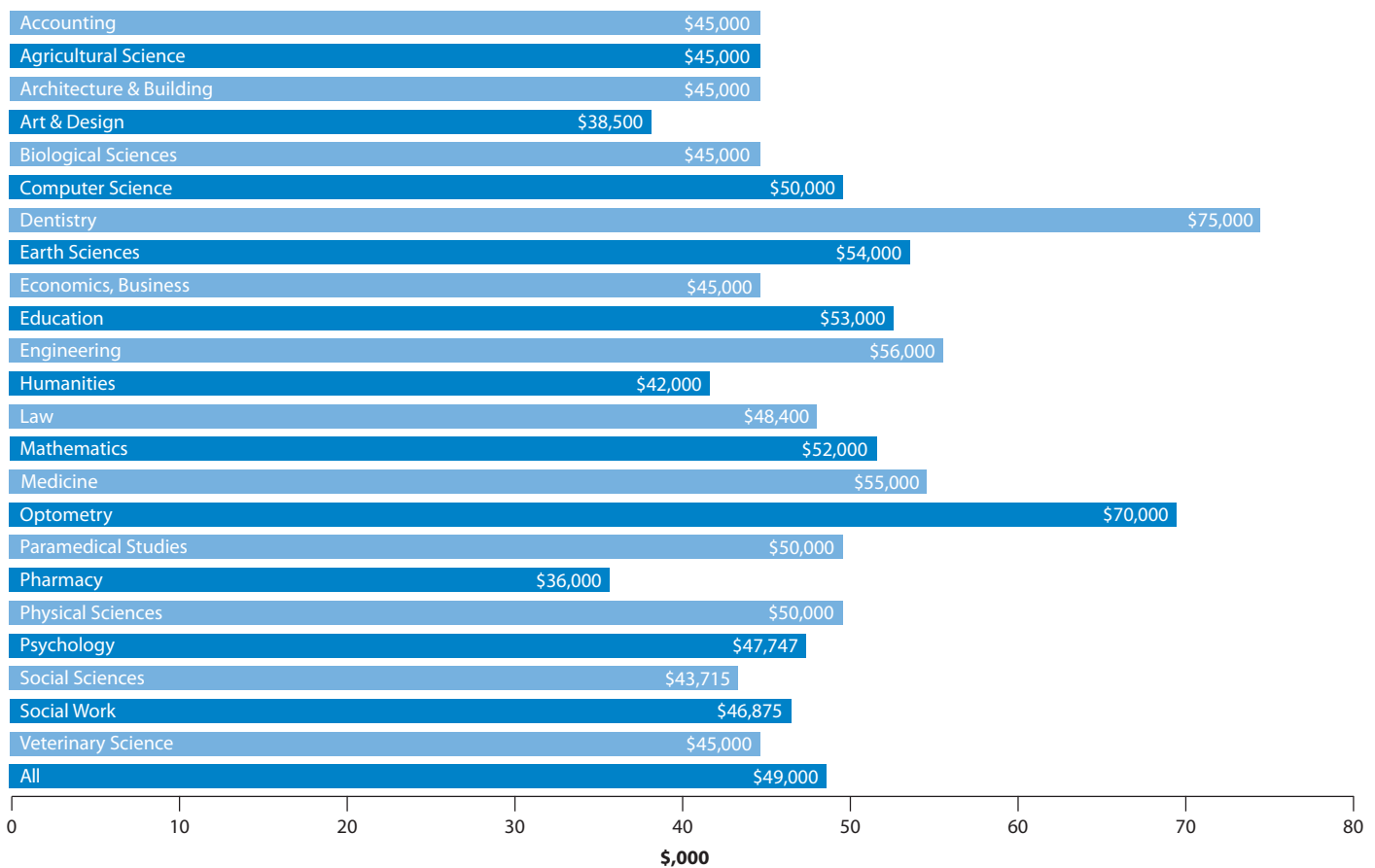
In 2010, the median annual starting salary for new bachelor degree graduates aged less than 25 and in their first full-time employment in Australia was \$49,000 (up from \$48,000 last year). This was 25.6 per cent higher than the median annual earnings for all Australians aged 20-24 in 2009 (\$39,000)*.

At an overall level, the median starting salary for male graduates (\$50,000) was slightly higher than that for female graduates (\$48,000). Some of the salary differences between males and females are due to different course selection and employment choices between the sexes.

In the overall Australian working population, those with a bachelor degree earned a median annual salary of \$57,700 (\$68,700 for males and \$50,600 for females)*.

* Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership, August 2009 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, May 2010)

f3: median starting salaries of bachelor degree graduates in first full-time employment and aged less than 25, 2010 (\$,000)



Need more information?

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

GCA conducts a number of national surveys in the graduate area. These include the Australian Graduate Survey (AGS), a national survey of the experiences and outcomes of higher education graduates; Beyond Graduation Survey – a follow-up to the AGS three and five years after course completion; University & Beyond, a survey of the expectations and perceptions of higher education students; and the Graduate Outlook Survey, a study of experiences and plans of graduate employers in Australia and New Zealand. More detailed information on graduate outcomes can be found in GCA publications at www.graduatecareers.com.au.

Make an appointment to meet with the career guidance counsellor at your school, discuss your options with university careers advisers and search the web - university websites, www.deewr.gov.au, and www.graduatecareers.com.au are good starting points.

You can also visit our online database at www.gradsonline.com.au or contact Graduate Careers Australia on +61 3 9605 3700 or email research@graduatecareers.com.au.