

Media Release: Postgraduate Employment

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Embargoed until 11:30 pm, Tuesday 21 September, 2010

New Postgraduates: Employment Down but Salaries Up

The Global Financial Crisis caused some problems for new postgraduates seeking full-time employment in 2009 but also saw salaries for those in employment grow by 5.5 per cent, according to recently released findings from the Australian Graduate Survey.

The research, conducted by Graduate Careers Australia, revealed that around 87 per cent of postgraduates were in full-time employment four months after the completion of their studies, down from around 90 per cent in 2008.

This full-time postgraduate employment rate was also the lowest recorded for the past decade.

GCA Acting Executive Director, Mr Bruce Guthrie, explained that these figures reflected the state of the economy at the time of the survey and had to be viewed in perspective.

“Although full-time postgraduate employment rates were down in 2009 compared with 2008, they remained much higher than those for either bachelor degree graduates or for individuals in the overall Australian labour force,” Mr Guthrie said.

The research also found that, in spite of the financial crisis, the median salary for postgraduates grew by 5.5 per cent between 2008 and 2009, reaching \$68,600 at an overall level.

Postgraduates going into their first full-time employment typically earned substantially less than full-time employed postgraduates overall. The largest such difference was observed for coursework masters degree graduates, with \$18,000 separating the median salaries of those with and without previous full-time work experience.

“This shows that employers are still willing to pay a premium for relevant experience, even when an employee has postgraduate qualifications,” Mr Guthrie said.

The research also revealed that fewer female postgraduates received employer-sponsored benefits while studying, such as financial support and time off for study, than male postgraduates.

“It is not clear from the data why this would be the case,” Mr Guthrie noted. “It could possibly be that female postgraduates are less assertive than their male counterparts when it comes to asking their employers for study leave or financial assistance.”

Other notable findings from the research were that a large majority of full-time employed postgraduates were working in professional or managerial roles (over 80 per cent), while research masters/PhD graduates were the group most likely to be employed overseas (8.6 per cent compared with 2.3 per cent of postgraduate diploma/certificate graduates and 4.4 per cent of coursework masters graduates).

The Australian Graduate Survey is an annual survey of graduates from Australian higher education institutions. More than 122,000 individuals responded to the 2009 survey, of whom more than 47,000 were postgraduates.

Further information and comment

For further information please refer to the attached Media Backgrounder. Copies of the recently released Australian Graduate Survey report, *Postgraduate Destinations 2009*, can be downloaded from the GCA website: www.graduatecareers.com.au. Go to News Room/Media Centre and log-in using 'media' (password: 'media').

For comment please contact Bruce Guthrie (GCA Research Manager/Acting Executive Director) on (02) 6367 5347.

Media Backgrounder: Postgraduate Employment

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A new report examining the employment and study outcomes of recent postgraduates was released by Graduate Careers Australia (GCA) today. The report, *Postgraduate Destinations 2009*, is based on the annual Australian Graduate Survey (AGS) of new graduates from Australian institutions of higher education. Graduates are surveyed approximately four months after they complete their course of study. In 2009, responses from more than 122,000 higher education graduates, including more than 47,000 postgraduates, were collected and analysed for this report. This Media Backgrounder provides a summary of some of the key findings from this report.

Overall, postgraduate responses to the 2009 GDS reflected the state of the economy at the time of the survey, with the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) seeing employment figures fall slightly compared with the 2008 data. It is important to note that the 2008 GDS data were collected prior to the effects of the global financial crisis reaching the Australian economy while the 2009 data were collected during a period when recruiters seemed uncertain about which direction the economy would take.

At the time of the 2009 GDS:

- More than three-quarters of postgraduates surveyed (76.2 per cent) were available for full-time employment (this means either in, or seeking, a full-time position), down from 77.3 per cent in 2008 (see Table 9.1).
- The vast majority of those available for full-time employment were in a full-time position at the time of the survey (87.4 per cent). This is a fall of 2.5 percentage points since 2008 (see Table 9.1a).
- In 2009, 12.6 per cent of postgraduates available for full-time employment were still seeking a full-time position at the time of the survey. This group consisted of 7.3 per cent working on a part-time basis while seeking a full-time position and 5.3 per cent not working and still seeking full-time employment. This figure was 10.1 per cent in 2008 (see Table 9.1a).

Postgraduate Salaries

- The overall median salary for all postgraduates was \$68,600, an increase of \$3,600 from the 2008 figure of \$65,000 (see Table 24). The median salary for:
 - postgraduate diploma/certificate graduates was \$64,500 (up \$4,500 from 2008)
 - coursework masters graduates was \$72,000 (up \$2,000 from 2008)
 - research masters/PhD graduates was \$69,000 (up \$4,000 from 2008)
 - bachelor degree graduates was \$50,000 (up \$3,500 from 2008).
- The median annual salary for postgraduates in their first full-time employment (see Table 25):
 - was \$54,500 for postgraduate diploma/certificate graduates (up \$4,500 from 2008)
 - was \$54,000 for coursework masters graduates (up \$4,000 from 2008)
 - was \$63,000 for research masters/PhD graduates (up \$2,000 from 2008)
 - in comparison, bachelor degree graduates earned \$48,000 (up \$3,000 from 2008).

- Across the three postgraduate award levels, males reported higher median annual salaries than females (see Table 24):
 - Male postgraduates at the postgraduate diploma/certificate level reported a median salary \$14,000 higher than female postgraduates (\$74,000 vs. \$60,000).
 - Male postgraduates at the coursework masters level reported a median salary \$13,000 higher than female postgraduates (\$80,000 vs. \$67,000).
 - Male postgraduates at the research masters/PhD level reported a median salary \$3,000 higher than female postgraduates (\$70,000 vs. \$67,000).

Across the three postgraduate award levels, there were notable differences in median salaries between postgraduates in their first full-time employment compared with all postgraduates at that level (see Table 25):

- Postgraduate diploma/certificate graduates in their first full-time employment earned a median salary \$9,900 less than other postgraduates at that award level (\$54,500 vs. \$64,400).
- Coursework masters graduates in their first full-time employment earned a median salary \$18,000 less than other postgraduates at that award level (\$54,000 vs. \$72,000).
- Research masters/PhD graduates in their first full-time employment earned a median salary \$6,000 less than other postgraduates at that award level (\$63,000 vs. \$69,000).

Postgraduate Employment Outcomes

- Of the postgraduates available for full-time employment in 2009, 87.4 per cent were in full-time employment at the time of the AGS, approximately four months after completing their studies. This represents a 2.5 percentage point fall from 89.9 per cent in 2009 (see Table 9.1a).
 - Of postgraduate diploma/certificate graduates available for full-time employment, 89.1 per cent had secured a full-time position by the time of the AGS (down from 91.7 per cent in 2008 – see Table 9.2a).
 - Of coursework masters graduates available for full-time employment, 86.1 per cent had secured a full-time position by the time of the AGS (down from 88.7 per cent in 2008 – see Table 9.3a).
 - Of research masters/PhD graduates available for full-time employment, 85.5 per cent had secured a full-time position by the time of the AGS (87.8 per cent in 2008 – see Table 9.4a).

Further information and comment

For comment please contact Bruce Guthrie (GCA Research Manager/Acting Executive Director) on (02) 6367 5347.