

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 (GDS) 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 to 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.

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

2001 Graduates At A Glance:

- Of bachelor degree graduates who were available for full-time employment in 2001, 83.0% were in full-time employment within four months of completing their degrees.
- A further 10.0% were working on a part-time or casual basis while continuing to seek full-time employment.
- A smaller group, 7.0% were not working and were still looking for full-time employment.
- The figures from the points above are similar to those from the GDS in 2000 and represent a consolidation of a big improvement in graduate employment figures since the 1999 survey.
- Over 23% of respondents were undertaking further full-time study after completing their bachelor degree.
- In the last two years, graduate employment has reached its highest level since 1990.
- The median* annual starting salary (i.e. a graduate's first salary after graduating and obtaining a full-time job) was \$35,000.
- Overall satisfaction with university courses as measured by the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) remains at a high level compared with previous years, with the broad satisfaction figure coming in at 89%.

Employment

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

TABLE 1: Activities of bachelor degree graduates, by sex, 1999-2001 (%).

	Available for full-time employment (see Table 1a)	In full-time study	In part-time or casual employment, but not seeking full-time employment	Not working, seeking part-time or casual employment only	Unavailable for full-time study or full-time employment	
males	1999	68.1	24.8	3.3	0.5	3.4
	2000	68.0	25.2	3.1	0.3	3.3
	2001	68.8	24.7	3.7	0.3	2.5
females	1999	63.2	23.0	8.6	0.9	4.3
	2000	63.8	23.6	7.7	0.8	4.2
	2001	65.8	22.7	7.5	0.8	3.3
all	1999	65.1	23.7	6.6	0.7	3.9
	2000	65.4	24.2	5.9	0.6	3.9
	2001	67.0	23.4	6.0	0.6	2.9

TABLE 1a: Breakdown of bachelor degree graduates available for full-time employment, 1999-2001 (%).

	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	1999	82.0	9.0	9.0	18.0
	2000	84.5	7.6	7.9	15.5
	2001	83.2	8.3	8.5	16.8
females	1999	80.0	7.3	12.7	20.0
	2000	83.0	6.1	10.9	17.0
	2001	82.9	6.1	11.0	17.1
all	1999	80.8	8.0	11.2	19.2
	2000	83.6	6.7	9.7	16.4
	2001	83.0	7.0	10.0	17.0

For people leaving secondary school and starting a degree, 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 university students to keep an eye on graduate employment levels as they pursue their studies to enable them to make informed course and subject 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 on page 2 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 slightly more likely than males to have been seeking full-time employment (17.1% compared with 16.8%), they were more likely to have some employment (either part-time or casual) while seeking full-time work.

Salaries

The median annual starting salary for new bachelor degree graduates aged less than 25 and in their first full-time position was **\$35,000**. This compares favourably with the annual salary of the average Australian worker which was \$40,800. Overall, starting salaries for male graduates are higher than those for female graduates.

In 2001, salaries for females were 94.4% 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.

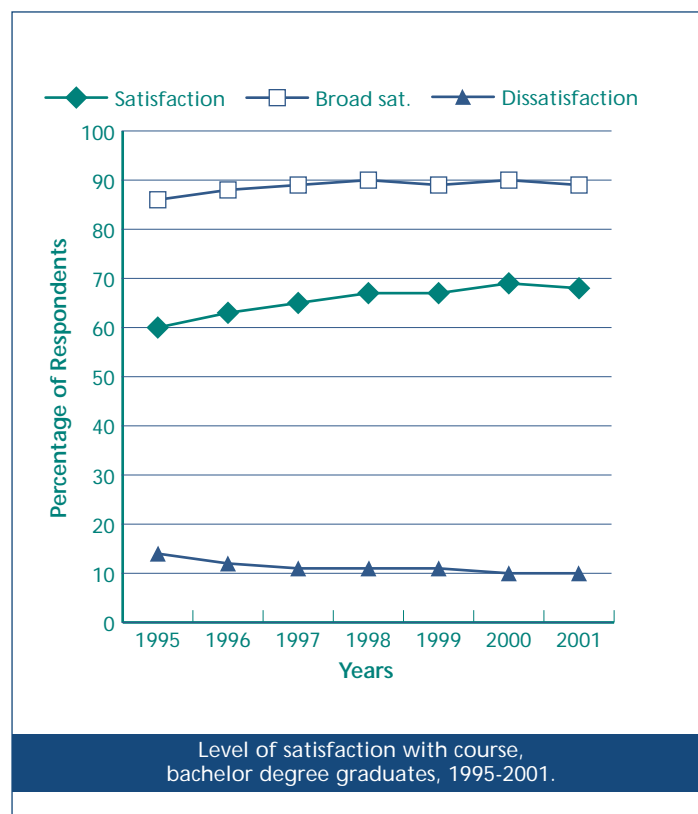
In 2001, a little more than one in five graduates continued full-time study after their first degree, and this was slightly down on the previous year.

Males were slightly more likely than females (24.7% compared with 22.7%) to have undertaken further full-time study in 2001.

Graduate Satisfaction

As said at the beginning, 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 falling over the period 1995-2001.



Fields of Study

Table 2 sets out some GDS 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 may provide a snapshot of a tertiary education but not the whole picture. For example, the reason medical graduates have high initial 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, and cannot be, 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.

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'. This word often represents a trainee position in a field in which the graduate is interested, and which can lead to more advanced positions later.



Table 2: Employment, further study and starting salaries, 2001.

	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	79.5	7.7	12.8	20.2	\$30,000
Architecture	83.3	7.1	9.6	25.2	\$26,000
Building	85.2	9.0	5.9	17.1	\$32,000
Urban & Regional Planning	87.1	6.1	6.8	16.1	\$34,000
Humanities	74.1	9.9	15.9	36.7	\$31,650
Languages	77.8	9.3	12.9	40.2	\$34,000
Vis/Perf Arts	60.1	16.2	23.7	33.2	\$30,000
Social Sciences	70.8	11.0	18.2	30.5	\$32,041
Psychology	70.4	10.9	18.7	44.1	\$33,000
Social Work	83.5	4.7	11.8	5.5	\$35,100
Business Studies	82.7	7.3	10.0	14.6	\$32,000
Accounting	93.4	4.7	1.9	10.5	\$33,532
Economics	86.1	6.2	7.7	28.2	\$35,000
Education, Initial	84.2	3.2	12.6	8.8	\$36,000
Education, Post/Other	85.2	3.0	11.8	8.0	\$36,500
Aeronautical Eng	77.3	9.1	13.6	14.5	\$40,500
Chemical Eng	84.3	9.0	6.7	17.1	\$40,000
Civil Engineering	92.4	3.9	3.7	8.9	\$36,663
Electrical Eng	91.4	6.3	2.3	17.3	\$40,500
Electron/Comp Eng	89.1	8.7	2.2	15.0	\$40,500
Mechanical Eng	85.9	9.2	4.9	11.2	\$39,000
Mining Engineering	85.9	11.8	2.4	13.0	\$47,100
Other Engineering	80.4	10.4	9.2	19.2	\$40,000
Surveying	85.7	9.8	4.5	4.9	\$33,571
Dentistry	94.2	0.7	5.0	8.1	\$46,450
Health Sciences, Other	84.3	4.7	10.9	27.8	\$34,000
Nursing, Initial	96.3	1.1	2.6	6.5	\$32,000
Nursing, Post-initial	94.6	0.6	4.8	3.1	\$32,000
Pharmacy	99.6	0.4	0.0	8.0	\$25,000
Medicine	100.0	0.0	0.0	4.2	\$45,000
Rehabilitation	90.0	2.3	7.7	8.3	\$36,000
Law	95.8	2.0	2.2	21.3	\$36,000
Law, Related	91.2	3.7	5.1	22.6	\$35,000
Computer Science	81.0	12.4	6.7	14.7	\$40,000
Life Sciences	70.2	12.9	16.8	46.5	\$33,000
Mathematics	80.6	11.1	8.3	42.0	\$37,000
Chemistry	77.3	13.2	9.5	53.3	\$35,000
Physics	77.8	12.0	10.2	57.8	\$35,000
Geology	75.0	12.8	12.2	46.9	\$36,900
Veterinary Science	92.4	6.9	0.7	3.2	\$34,000
Total %	83.0	7.0	10.0	23.4	\$35,000
Total Respondents	32,208	2,701	3,885		

Agricultural Science: agricultural or environmental scientist; clerk; business professional; manager; scientific officer; farmer; para-professional; manual worker

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

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

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

Humanities: clerk; manager; business professional; other professional; teacher; journalist; public relations; other para-professional

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

Visual and Performing Arts: designer or illustrator; clerk; teacher; manager; visual or performing artist (other); business or other professional; film, radio, TV, and stage; musician or composer; photographer; actor or dancer

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

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

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

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

Accounting: accountant; business professional; clerk; manager

Economics: business professional; clerk; manager; accounting; other professional; economist

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

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

Aeronautical Engineering: manager; engineer; business or other professional

Chemical Engineering: chemical engineer; other engineer; mechanical engineer; science professional; engineering technical officer; manager; clerk

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

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

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

Mechanical Engineering: mechanical engineer; other engineer; manager; business professional; engineering technical officer; computing professional; clerk

Mining Engineering: mining engineer; other engineer and related

Other Engineering: engineer; manager; business professional; engineering technical officer; computing professional; clerk

Surveying: surveyor; engineering technical officer; other science engineering or building professional; business professional; manager

Dentistry: dentist

Health Sciences: medical imaging professional; para-professional; clerk; health professional; medical or scientific technical officer; manager; podiatrist; optometrist; science professional; nurse; chiropractor/osteopath; dietitian; 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; clerk

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

Computing: computer professional; business professional; manager; clerk

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

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

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

Physical Science: scientific or engineering professional; business professional; computing professional; manager; clerk

Geology and Earth Sciences: geologist or geophysicist; clerk; medical or scientific technical officer; manager; environmental scientist; business professional; other scientific or engineering 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 earning 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 2000*, *Graduate Starting Salaries 2000*, and the *Course Experience Questionnaire 2000* from the Graduate Careers Council of Australia (GCCA).

Ph. 03 9349 4300,
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 *Gradlink* website at **www.gradlink.edu.au.**

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all you need to know
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The GCCA

The Graduate Careers Council of Australia (GCCA) is the national authority responsible for reporting on the transition of Australian graduates into the workforce. We also produce quality careers education products and services, including publications, videos and a website, under the *gradlink* brand.

Gradlink products

gradlink products include the official employer directory *Graduate Opportunities*, the self-assessment guide *Your Career And You*, the *Graduate Destination Survey* and *Graduate Starting Salaries* reports, career information booklets, and videos such as *Getting The Job* and *Out In Front With An Arts Degree*.

Gradlink

The *gradlink* website is an easy-to-use, central source of information about graduate careers, which can help you:

- write a winning job application and resume;
- get in touch with your university's careers service;
- search for a graduate position;
- investigate work in different industries;
- explore your options for further study;
- find vacation work;

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