# the grad files

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## 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.*

## 2004 Graduates at a Glance:

- Of bachelor degree graduates who were available for full-time employment in 2004, 79.7 per cent (80.1 per cent last year) were in full-time employment within four months of completing their degrees.

- A further 12.9 per cent (12.1 per cent last year) were working on a part-time or casual basis while continuing to seek full-time employment.

- An additional 7.4 per cent (7.8 per cent last year) were not working and still looking for full-time employment at the time of the survey.

- These figures suggest a continued stable level of demand for new graduates after a period of improvement and consolidation between 1999 and 2001. Notably, there has been a small drop in the percentage of those not working while seeking full-time employment.

- Almost one-quarter of respondents, or 23.4 per cent (22.8 per cent last year), were undertaking further full-time study after completing their qualification. Males were more likely than females to have continued in full-time study.

- The median annual starting salary for bachelor degree graduates in their first full-time employment was $38,000 ($37,000 last year). This was 81.6 per cent of average earnings, down slightly from 82.0 per cent last year.

- Males earned a starting salary of $39,000 (up from $38,000 last year) and females earned $38,000 (up from $36,300 last year).

- Overall satisfaction with courses as measured by the *Course Experience Questionnaire* (CEQ) remains at a high level, with 89.4 per cent of graduates expressing broad satisfaction with their courses.

*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. (Tables 1 and 1a)

## Table1: Activities of bachelor degree graduates, by sex, 2002-2004 (%).

|  | 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 | Total cases | Total % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Males** | | | | | | | |
| 2002 | 67.6 | 25.2 | 3.3 | 0.4 | 3.5 | 22,894 | 100 |
| 2003 | 69.1 | 23.5 | 3.4 | 0.4 | 3.6 | 24,923 | 100 |
| 2004 | 68.3 | 24.6 | 3.5 | 0.4 | 3.2 | 24,267 | 100 |
| **Females** | | | | | | | |
| 2002 | 64.1 | 23.4 | 7.6 | 0.8 | 4.1 | 36,389 | 100 |
| 2003 | 65.8 | 22.3 | 7.1 | 0.8 | 4.0 | 39,838 | 100 |
| 2004 | 65.2 | 22.7 | 7.6 | 0.8 | 3.8 | 40,687 | 100 |
| **Persons\*** | | | | | | | |
| 2002 | 65.4 | 24.1 | 6.0 | 0.6 | 3.9 | 59,629 | 100 |
| 2003 | 67.0 | 22.8 | 5.7 | 0.6 | 3.9 | 65,158 | 100 |
| 2004 | 66.4 | 23.4 | 6.1 | 0.6 | 3.5 | 64,965 | 100 |

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

## Table 1a: Breakdown of bachelor degree graduates available for full-time employment, 2002-2004 (%).

|  | 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** | | | | | | |
| 2002 | 81.2 | 9.3 | 9.5 | 18.8 | 100 | 15,477 |
| 2003 | 79.8 | 9.6 | 10.6 | 20.2 | 100 | 17,226 |
| 2004 | 79.8 | 8.9 | 11.4 | 20.2 | 100 | 16,584 |
| **Females** | | | | | | |
| 2002 | 81.3 | 6.4 | 12.3 | 18.7 | 100 | 23,320 |
| 2003 | 80.2 | 6.7 | 13.1 | 19.8 | 100 | 26,192 |
| 2004 | 79.7 | 6.4 | 13.9 | 20.3 | 100 | 26,510 |
| **Persons\*** | | | | | | |
| 2002 | 81.3 | 7.5 | 11.2 | 18.7 | 100 | 39,018 |
| 2003 | 80.1 | 7.8 | 12.1 | 19.9 | 100 | 43,689 |
| 2004 | 79.7 | 7.4 | 12.9 | 20.3 | 100 | 43,102 |

*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.

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 figures as they pursue their studies so that they can make informed course, subject and job search choices.

As the tables above indicate, of bachelor degree graduates who look for full-time work when they finish their degrees, almost eight in every ten (79.7 per cent) have found it within four months (when the survey is completed). Of the remaining graduates, the statistics show

that about two-thirds were in part-time work while they were looking for full-time work, and the remainder 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.

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.

Another statistic worth noting is that while females were as likely as males to have been seeking full-time employment at the time of the survey (20.3 per cent compared with 20.2 per cent), they were notably less likely than males (6.4 per cent compared with 8.9 per cent) to have been without any work while seeking full-time employment.

# Salaries

In 2004, the median annual starting salary for new bachelor degree graduates in their first full-time employment was $38,000 (up from $37,000 last year). This was 81.6 per cent of an annual rate of average weekly earnings ($46,600 at the time), and down markedly from 85.8 per cent in 2001.

Overall, starting salaries for male graduates are slightly higher than those for female

graduates. The starting salary for females was 97.4 per cent of males' earnings (95.5 per cent in 2003, 94.6 per cent in 2002, 94.4 per cent in 2001, and 92.3 per cent in 2000 and 1999). Some of this disparity is due to the different study choices that males and females make, however the salary figure for female graduates seems to be moving towards that for males.

# 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 part of, a bachelor degree.

Postgraduate qualifications include awards like a graduate or postgraduate diploma, 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 2004, almost one in every four new bachelor degree graduates continued in full-time study after their first degree.

Males were slightly more likely than females (24.6 per cent compared with 22.7 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, 1995-2004.*



Legend: Satisfaction, Broad Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction

# Fields of Education

Table 2 sets out some GDS 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 university, 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 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.

Architecture and pharmacy graduates have relatively low starting salaries 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: Bachelor degree graduates, employment, further study and starting salaries, 2004 (%)*

| | 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 ($,000) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Agriculture | 75.3 | 9.2 | 15.5 | 21.2 | 35.0 |
| Architecture** | 90.9 | 4.1 | 5.0 | 26.9 | 31.3 |
| Building | 89.3 | 3.9 | 6.8 | 22.6 | 35.0 |
| Urb & Reg Planning | 92.3 | 4.5 | 3.2 | 14.6 | 40.0 |
| Humanities | 67.0 | 12.3 | 20.8 | 34.1 | 33.0 |
| Languages | 71.7 | 9.8 | 18.5 | 42.7 | 36.0 |
| Vis/Perf Arts | 56.0 | 15.1 | 28.9 | 34.9 | 32.0 |
| Social Sciences | 68.5 | 13.2 | 18.3 | 34.7 | 35.3 |
| Psychology | 70.3 | 9.3 | 20.4 | 45.1 | 37.0 |
| Social Work | 77.9 | 7.0 | 15.0 | 9.4 | 37.7 |
| Business Studies | 80.1 | 7.3 | 12.6 | 16.4 | 35.0 |
| Accounting | 87.1 | 7.5 | 5.4 | 9.4 | 35.0 |
| Economics | 85.1 | 6.1 | 8.8 | 25.0 | 38.7 |
| Education, Initial | 79.6 | 3.1 | 17.3 | 7.4 | 40.0 |
| Education Post/Oth | 91.1 | 1.3 | 7.6 | 15.6 | 40.0 |
| Aeronautical Eng | 76.3 | 13.6 | 10.2 | 16.0 | 42.0 |
| Chemical Eng | 84.2 | 10.8 | 5.0 | 28.0 | 44.5 |
| Civil Engineering | 96.5 | 2.5 | 1.0 | 10.0 | 40.0 |
| Electrical Eng | 80.7 | 11.3 | 8.0 | 19.8 | 42.0 |
| Electron/Comp Eng | 77.7 | 13.4 | 8.9 | 25.9 | 41.0 |
| Mechanical Eng | 85.4 | 8.1 | 6.5 | 11.7 | 42.5 |
| Mining Engineering | 96.6 | 3.4 | 0.0 | 10.1 | 57.0 |
| Other Engineering | 85.8 | 8.2 | 6.1 | 18.0 | 40.1 |
| Surveying | 93.0 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 9.8 | 37.5 |
| Dentistry | 97.0 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 2.7 | 60.0 |
| Health, Other | 79.3 | 6.3 | 14.4 | 29.1 | 38.7 |
| Nursing, Initial | 95.9 | 0.6 | 3.5 | 6.2 | 37.0 |
| Nursing, Post-initial | 95.9 | 0.7 | 3.3 | 7.4 | 37.2 |
| Pharmacy** | 99.1 | 0.0 | 0.9 | 15.3 | 29.0 |
| Medicine | 98.3 | 0.3 | 1.5 | 11.4 | 45.3 |
| Rehabilitation | 91.0 | 2.1 | 6.8 | 15.5 | 40.0 |
| Law | 87.4 | 5.8 | 6.8 | 21.6 | 40.0 |
| Law, Other | 85.6 | 6.2 | 8.1 | 20.3 | 33.5 |
| Computer Science | 70.5 | 14.9 | 14.6 | 22.6 | 38.0 |
| Life Sciences | 69.0 | 10.8 | 20.2 | 47.3 | 36.0 |
| Mathematics | 64.4 | 18.2 | 17.3 | 45.3 | 40.0 |
| Chemistry | 78.7 | 10.1 | 11.1 | 50.6 | 37.0 |
| Physics | 69.0 | 10.1 | 20.9 | 54.7 | 38.0 |
| Geology | 79.3 | 12.9 | 7.9 | 43.7 | 40.0 |
| Veterinary Science | 98.0 | 0.0 | 2.0 | 8.1 | 36.0 |
| **Total %** | **79.7** | **7.4** | **12.9** | **23.4** | **38.0** |
| **Total Number** | **34,360** | **3,172** | **5,570** | **15,212** | **14,026** |

† Total % may not add to 100.0 due to rounding. * Base figure is group in full-time employment.
** pre-registration

# 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 GDS. 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, 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; manager; manual worker; scientific officer; business professional; farmer; other professional

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

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

**Urban and Regional Planning:** urban and regional planner; manager; other building, other professional; clerk

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

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

**Visual and Performing Arts:** clerk; designer or illustrator; teacher; manager; business or other professional; visual or performing artist (other); manual worker; film/radio/TV/stage worker; photographer; musician or composer

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

**Psychology:** clerk; welfare or counselling; business professional; manager; 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; other professional or para-professional; computing professional

**Accounting:** accountant; clerk; business and other professional; manager; computing professional

**Economics:** business professional; clerk; other professional; manager; economist; accountant

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

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

**Aeronautical Engineering:** manager; engineer or engineering technical officer; business or other professional; air transport professional

**Chemical Engineering:** chemical engineer; other engineer; business, science or other professional; mechanical engineer; manager

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

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

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

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

**Mining Engineering:** mining engineer; other engineer and related

**Other Engineering:** engineering professional; mechanical engineer; manager; mining engineer; computing professional; civil engineer; science professional; clerk

**Surveying:** surveyor; science, engineering or building professional; business professional

Dentistry: dentist

**Health Sciences:** medical imaging professional; para-professional; clerk; science and other professional; manager; medical or scientific technical officer; dietitian; optometrist; health professional; podiatrist; medical practitioner; teacher; nurse

**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; engineering or other professional

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

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

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

**Physical Science:** engineering, science and other professional; scientific or engineering professional; clerk; manager; business professional; geologist

**Geology and Earth Sciences:** geologist or geophysicist; clerk; manager; environmental scientist; engineering or building professional; medical or scientific 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, talk to university careers advisers, and investigate student websites, especially www.dest.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 2003, Graduate Starting Salaries 2003,* and the *Course Experience Questionnaire 2003* from the *Graduate Careers Council of Australia* (GCCA).

Ph. 03 8344 9333, Fax. 03 9347 7298, Email: info@gradlink.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.

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

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