

Uni 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 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 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.

2005 Graduates at a glance:

- Of bachelor degree graduates who were available for full-time employment¹ in 2005, 80.9 per cent (79.7 per cent last year) were in full-time employment within four months of completing their degrees.
 - A further 12.3 per cent (12.9 per cent last year) were working on a part-time or casual basis while continuing to seek full-time employment.
 - An additional 6.9 per cent (7.4 per cent last year) were not working and still looking for full-time employment at the time of the survey.
 - These figures represent an improved level of demand for new graduates after figures levelled out between 2002 and 2004. Further, for two years running there has been a drop in the percentage of those not working while seeking full-time employment.
- Over one-fifth of respondents (22.5 per cent - down from 23.4 per cent last year) were undertaking further full-time study after completing their qualification.
- The median annual starting salary for bachelor degree graduates in their first full-time employment was \$40,000 (\$38,000 last year). This was 81.8 per cent of average earnings, up slightly from 81.6 per cent last year, and down from 82.0 per cent in 2003, and 82.7 per cent in 2002.
- Males earned a starting salary of \$40,000 (up from \$39,000 last year) and females earned \$39,000 (up from \$38,000 last year).
- Overall satisfaction with courses as measured by the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) remains at a high level, with 89.8 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, i.e., below and above the which lie an equal number of values.

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, 2003-05 (%).

	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							
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
2005	69.8	23.6	3.8	0.4	2.4	24,659	100
Females							
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
2005	66.1	21.8	8.0	0.8	3.4	41,056	100
Persons*							
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
2005	67.4	22.5	6.4	0.6	3.1	65,738	100

*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, 2003-05 (%).

	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						
2003	79.8	9.6	10.6	20.2	100	17,226
2004	79.8	8.9	11.4	20.2	100	16,584
2005	81.4	8.2	10.4	18.6	100	17,214
Females						
2003	80.2	6.7	13.1	19.8	100	26,192
2004	79.7	6.4	13.9	20.3	100	26,510
2005	80.5	6.1	13.4	19.5	100	27,121
Persons*						
2003	80.1	7.8	12.1	19.9	100	43,689
2004	79.7	7.4	12.9	20.3	100	43,102
2005	80.9	6.9	12.3	19.1	100	44,347

*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 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 above indicate, of bachelor degree graduates who look for full-time work when they finish their degrees, eight in every 10 (80.9 per cent – see Table 1a) have found it within four months (when the survey is completed). Of the remaining graduates still looking for full-time work, 12.3 per cent were in part-time work while they were looking and the remainder (6.9 per cent) were not working.

Research suggests that these two (out of 10) 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 at the time of the survey (19.5 per cent compared with 18.6 per cent), they were notably less likely than males (6.1 per cent compared with 8.2 per cent) to have been without any work while seeking full-time employment.

Salaries

In 2005, the median annual starting salary for new bachelor degree graduates in their first full-time employment was \$40,000 (up from \$38,000 last year). This was 81.8 per cent of an annual rate of average weekly earnings (\$48,900 at the time).

Overall, starting salaries for male graduates are slightly higher than those for female graduates, but the gap has been closing in recent years.

Continuing a trend, the overall salary for females was 97.5 per cent of males' earnings (97.4 per cent in 2004, 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 the difference is due to different course selection and employment choices (such as type of employer or the hours worked) that males and females make.

Further Study

Further 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.

In 2005, over one in every five new bachelor degree graduates (22.5 per cent – see Table 1) continued in some type of full-time study after their first degree.

Males were slightly more likely than females (23.6 per cent compared with 21.8 per cent) to have undertaken further full-time study.

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.



Graduate Satisfaction

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

their courses. The graph below (Figure 1) shows that satisfaction levels have been consistently high since 1995.

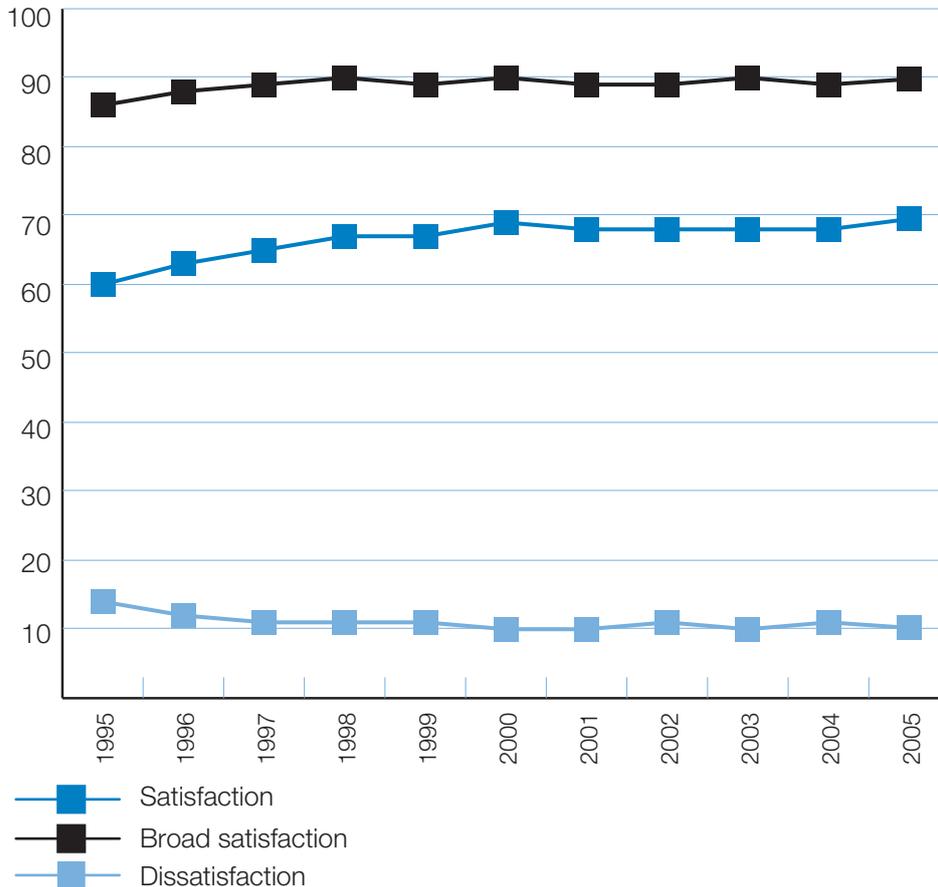


Figure 1: Level of satisfaction with course, bachelor degree graduates, 1995-2005.

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 (ie., 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 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. 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: Breakdown of bachelor degree graduates available for full-time employment, by field of education, 2005 (%).

	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	80.3	6.7	13.0	19.4	37.0
Architecture	86.7	6.5	6.7	29.8	31.5
Building	91.0	4.5	4.5	25.0	35.0
Urban & Regional Planning	91.0	3.0	6.0	20.3	41.0
Humanities	70.7	11.1	18.2	34.4	35.0
Languages	74.9	8.3	16.8	40.2	40.0
Visual & Performing Arts	60.3	13.2	26.5	32.7	32.0
Social Sciences	67.2	11.2	21.5	34.2	38.3
Psychology	70.5	10.8	18.7	44.2	38.5
Social Work	80.2	7.6	12.2	8.1	40.0
Business Studies	81.1	6.9	12.1	15.4	37.0
Accounting	86.9	6.7	6.4	11.1	35.5
Economics	86.1	7.3	6.6	32.1	41.0
Education, Initial	77.9	3.8	18.3	6.4	43.0
Education Post/Other	84.3	3.6	12.0	34.7	39.5
Aeronautical Eng	89.1	5.8	5.1	17.1	45.0
Chemical Eng	83.1	9.6	7.3	18.9	45.7
Civil Engineering	95.7	3.0	1.3	6.3	43.0
Electrical Eng	87.3	8.6	4.0	13.2	45.0
Electron/Comp Eng	78.3	11.7	10.0	14.0	43.0
Mechanical Eng	89.5	4.8	5.8	9.4	44.0
Mining Eng	98.8	1.2	0.0	7.5	63.0
Other Eng	86.9	7.7	5.4	17.7	44.0
Surveying	95.4	2.0	2.6	11.5	40.0
Dentistry	95.0	0.8	4.1	10.2	65.0
Health, Other	81.9	4.3	13.8	26.6	40.0
Nursing, Initial	96.2	1.0	2.8	5.3	38.0
Nursing, Post-initial	94.0	1.3	4.6	4.2	38.0
Pharmacy (pre-reg)	98.7	0.9	0.4	17.7	30.0
Medicine	98.3	0.6	1.1	13.1	48.0
Rehabilitation	90.0	3.1	6.8	13.3	41.2
Law	88.4	6.2	5.4	22.6	41.0
Law, Other	84.6	6.1	9.3	17.4	38.0
Computer Science	73.7	13.6	12.7	17.8	39.9
Life Sciences	71.3	9.9	18.9	46.2	38.0
Mathematics	72.6	14.5	12.9	50.7	42.0
Chemistry	84.7	5.1	10.2	55.3	38.0
Physics	78.9	9.0	12.0	50.9	40.0
Geology	87.4	4.2	8.4	39.2	42.0
Veterinary Science	94.0	3.6	2.4	6.7	37.0
Total %	80.9	6.9	12.3	22.5	40.0
Total N	35,858	3,051	5,438	14,773	



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, ie., if 'counsellor' is mentioned most often by the respondents, and so on.

Don't be put off by the regular occurrence of the occupation 'clerk'. 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.

Agricultural Science:

agricultural or environmental scientist; clerk; manager; business professional; manual worker; scientific officer; farmer; trades; other professional or para-professional

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

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

Urban and Regional Planning: urban and regional planner; manager; clerk; business or other professional

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

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

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

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

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

Social Work: social worker; welfare or counselling; clerk; manager; health or business professional

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; manager; accountant; economist; other professional

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

Education (post-initial teacher training): teacher; business professional; clerk; manager; other professional

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

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

Civil Engineering: civil engineer; other engineer; manager; engineering technical officer; business, science or building professional

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

Electronic/Computer Engineering:

computing professional; electrical engineer; business professional; other engineer; clerk; manager; engineering technical officer

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

Mining Engineering: mining engineer; other engineer and related professionals

Other Engineering: engineering professional; mechanical engineer; civil engineer; computing professional; business professional; engineering technical officer; manager; electrical engineer; mining engineer; science professional

Surveying: surveyor; science, engineering or building professional

Dentistry: dentist

Health Sciences: medical imaging professional; clerk; health, science and other professional; medical or scientific technical officer; optometrist; manager; podiatrist; health professional; dietitian; medical practitioner; nurse, medical records administrator; teacher, occupational therapist

Nursing: nurse

Pharmacy: pharmacist

Medicine: medical practitioner; health professional

Rehabilitation Studies: physiotherapist; occupational therapist; speech pathologist; other health or science professional

Law: lawyer; legal clerk; manager; business or other professional; 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; medical or science officer; manager; health professional; environmental or life scientist; business or other professional; teacher; other scientific or engineering professional

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

Geology and Earth Sciences: geologist or geophysicist; environmental scientist; manager; clerk; 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, investigate university websites and, especially, visit www.dest.gov.au and GradsOnline at www.graduatecareers.com.au.

More information:

School principals, teachers, careers advisers, students, and parents can purchase the reports Graduate Destinations, 2004, Graduate Starting Salaries 2004, and Graduate Course Experience, 2004 currently available from Graduate Careers Australia (GCA).

Phone: (03) 8344 9333 Facsimile: (03) 9347 7298
Email: surveyhelp@graduatecareers.com.au
Post: GCA, PO Box 28, Parkville, VIC, 3052

For further information on graduate employment, graduate destination statistics, and GCA, visit the GradsOnline website at www.graduatecareers.com.au

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



all you need to know
about where
graduates go

salaries
employment rates
occupations

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Helping you find your way into the workplace

Graduate Careers Australia is an organisation that provides quality careers education products to students and graduates. These include a popular website designed to help students look and apply for work, as well as publications and videos covering many aspects of employment and career exploration.

Graduate Careers Australia website

The Graduate Careers Australia website is an easy-to-use, central source of information about graduate careers, which can help students and graduates to:

- search for a graduate position
- investigate work in different industries
- find vacation work
- write a winning job application and resume
- get in touch with university careers services
- explore options for further study
- research graduate starting salaries and employment rates (through gradsonline)

Graduate Careers Australia products

Graduate Careers Australia products include the employer directory *Graduate Opportunities*, the self-assessment guide *Your Career And You*, industry career information booklets, the Graduate Destination Survey reports and videos such as *Getting The Job* and *Out in Front With an Arts Degree*. Many Graduate Careers Australia products are available to students free of charge from Careers Services on campus, or by visiting our website at www.graduatecareers.com.au

For further information contact the Graduate Careers Australia helpdesk on:
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