

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 Australian Graduate Survey (AGS) 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 higher education. It will also be helpful for their parents and the secondary school community. A bachelor degree is an initial higher education qualification and

is usually the first qualification after secondary school.

Our other AGS summary, *GradStats*, gives more details.

2006 Graduates at a glance:

- Of bachelor degree graduates who were available for full-time employment¹ in 2006:
 - 82.4 per cent (80.9 per cent last year) were in full-time employment within four months of completing their degrees;
 - 12.2 per cent (12.3 per cent last year) were working on a part-time or casual basis while continuing to seek full-time employment; and
 - 5.5 per cent (6.9 per cent last year) were not working and still looking for full-time employment at the time of the survey.
- Graduate employment figures for 2005 and 2006 represent a notable improvement in employment prospects for new graduates after figures fell from a high point in 2000 and levelled out between 2003 and 2004. For three years running there has been a drop in the percentage of those not working while seeking full-time employment.
- Over one-fifth of respondents (20.3 per cent – down from 22.5 per cent last year), were undertaking further full-time study after completing their qualifications.
- The median² annual starting salary for bachelor degree graduates in their first full-time employment was \$40,800 (\$40,000 last year). This was 79.7 per cent of average earnings, down slightly from 81.8 per cent last year.
- Males earned a starting salary of \$42,000 (up from \$40,000 last year) and females earned \$40,000 (up from \$39,000 last year).
- Overall satisfaction with courses as measured by the *Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ)* remains at a high level, with 89.6 per cent of graduates expressing broad satisfaction with their courses.

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.

² The median is the middle value in a frequency distribution, below and above which lie an equal number of values. 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.

Table 1: Activities of bachelor degree graduates, by sex, 2004-06 (%).

	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 %†	Total cases
Males							
2004	68.3	24.6	3.5	0.4	3.2	100	24,267
2005	69.8	23.6	3.8	0.4	2.4	100	24,659
2006	68.8	21.2	5.5	0.3	4.3	100	24,904
Females							
2004	65.1	22.7	7.6	0.8	3.8	100	40,687
2005	66.1	21.8	8.0	0.8	3.4	100	41,056
2006	65.0	19.8	10.0	0.6	4.6	100	41,780
Persons*							
2004	66.4	23.4	6.1	0.6	3.5	100	64,965
2005	67.4	22.5	6.4	0.6	3.1	100	65,738
2006	66.4	20.3	8.3	0.5	4.5	100	66,702

*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, 2004-06 (%).

	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						
2004	79.8	8.9	11.4	20.2	100	16,584
2005	81.4	8.2	10.4	18.6	100	17,214
2006	83.0	6.4	10.6	17.0	100	17,119
Females						
2004	79.7	6.4	13.9	20.3	100	26,510
2005	80.5	6.1	13.4	19.5	100	27,121
2006	81.9	4.9	13.2	18.1	100	27,154
Persons*						
2004	79.7	7.4	12.9	20.3	100	43,102
2005	80.9	6.9	12.3	19.1	100	44,347
2006	82.4	5.5	12.2	17.6	100	44,286

*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.

** Base figure is that group in full-time employment.

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 higher education.

However, it's a good idea for all secondary school and higher education 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 here indicate, of bachelor degree graduates who look for full-time work when they finish their degrees, eight in every 10 (82.4 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, 12.2 per cent were in part-time work while they were looking and the remainder (5.5 per cent) were not working.

Research suggests that those graduates not in a full-time job at the time of the survey find full-time work soon after, 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 (18.1 per cent compared with 17.0 per cent), they were notably less likely than males (4.9 per cent compared with 6.4 per cent) to have been without any work while seeking full-time employment.

Salaries

In 2006, the median annual starting salary for new bachelor degree graduates aged less than 25 and in their first full-time employment was \$40,800 (up from \$40,000 last year). This was 79.7 per cent of the relevant annual rate of average weekly earnings (\$51,200 at the time).

Starting salaries for male graduates (\$42,000) are slightly higher than those for female graduates (\$40,000). The overall salary for females was 95.2 per cent of males' earnings. Females earned higher starting salaries than males in a number of areas including optometry (109.6 per cent of males' salaries), pharmacy (104.9 per cent), biological sciences (102.6 per cent) and social work (102.4 per cent). Their earnings were roughly the equivalent of their male colleagues' salaries in physical sciences, dentistry, engineering, art and design, and agricultural science.

Some of the difference in salaries between males and females is due to different course selection and employment choices (such as type of employer or the hours worked) that they make.

Further Full-time Study

Further full-time 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.

Postgraduate qualifications include awards like a graduate or postgraduate certificates or diplomas, 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 2006, over one in every five new bachelor degree graduates (20.3 per cent – see Table 1) continued in some type of full-time study after their first degree.

Males were slightly more likely than females (21.2 per cent compared with 19.8 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

(Figure 1) shows that satisfaction levels have been consistently high since 1995.

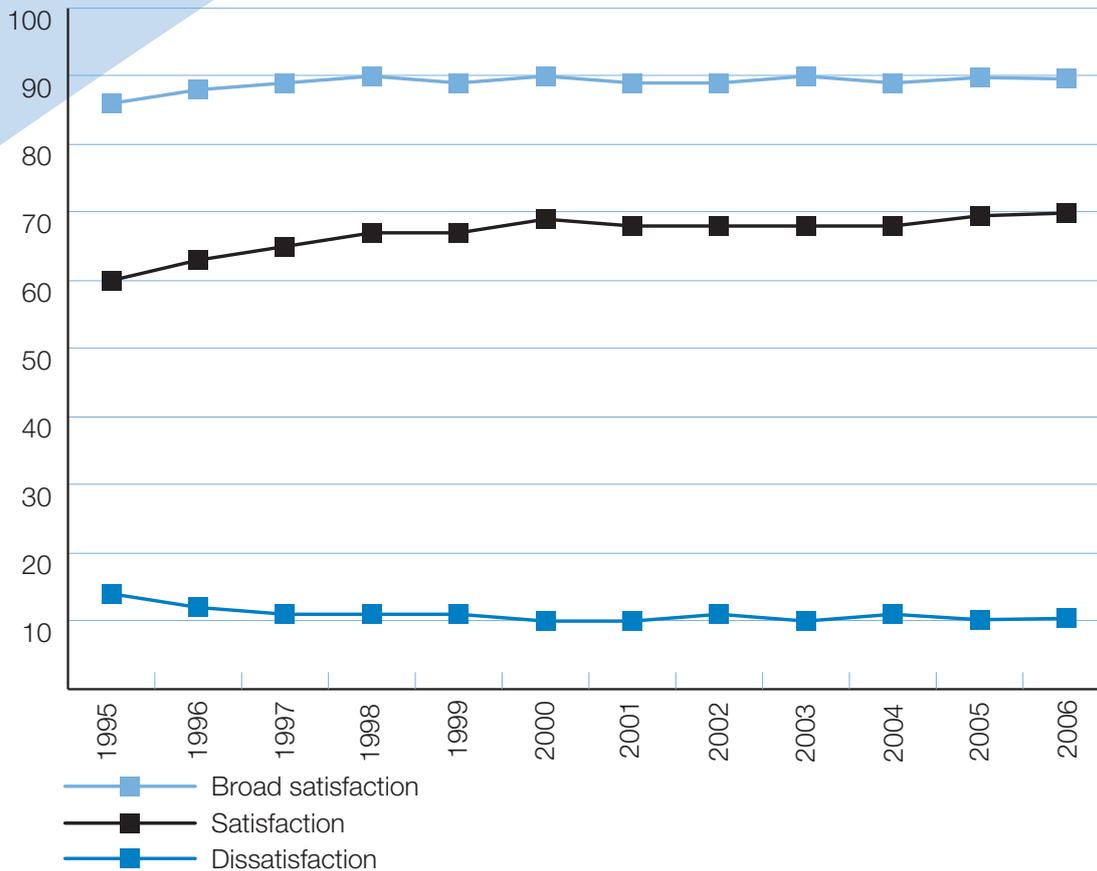


Figure 1: Level of satisfaction with course, bachelor degree graduates, 1995-2006.

Fields of Education

Table 2 sets out some AGS 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 higher education, 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 higher 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, but these facts are not represented in the figures from the AGS.

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 and career information days.

Table 2: Breakdown of bachelor degree graduates available for full-time employment, by field of education, 2006 (%).

	In full-time employment	Seeking full-time employment, not working	Seeking full-time employment, working part-time or casual	Total seeking full-time employment	Further full-time study (%)	Median starting salary (\$,000)
Agriculture	75.9	7.9	16.2	24.1	17.8	38.7
Architecture	89.6	3.8	6.6	10.4	27.4	35.0
Building	92.9	3.6	3.6	7.1	18.9	40.0
Urban & Regional Planning	90.4	4.0	5.6	9.6	7.0	44.0
Humanities	72.3	8.6	19.1	27.7	32.8	36.0
Languages	72.3	10.9	16.7	27.7	39.3	40.0
Visual & Performing Arts	62.2	12.0	25.7	37.8	30.4	33.2
Social Sciences	70.3	7.5	22.2	29.7	34.7	37.5
Psychology	72.1	8.1	19.8	27.9	41.4	40.0
Social Work	81.1	5.3	13.6	18.9	6.9	42.0
Business Studies	82.9	5.9	11.1	17.1	12.2	39.0
Accounting	85.9	5.9	8.2	14.1	9.8	37.0
Economics	87.1	3.8	9.0	12.9	25.6	42.0
Education, Initial	79.1	2.9	18.0	20.9	4.3	43.4
Education, Post/Other	88.2	2.6	9.2	11.8	27.3	44.5
Aeronautical Eng	88.4	6.4	5.2	11.6	11.0	47.0
Chemical Eng	83.2	6.6	10.2	16.8	15.9	49.9
Civil Engineering	95.4	2.3	2.3	4.6	5.4	45.4
Electrical Eng	92.0	3.4	4.6	8.0	13.8	47.5
Electron/Comp Eng	86.4	7.4	6.2	13.6	10.6	45.0
Mechanical Eng	89.9	5.7	4.5	10.1	8.9	48.0
Mining Eng	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.6	64.5
Other Eng	92.5	3.6	3.8	7.5	13.3	47.0
Surveying	93.1	1.7	5.2	6.9	9.6	42.0
Dentistry	97.3	0.7	2.0	2.7	5.3	68.0
Health, Other	83.0	4.6	12.4	17.0	25.9	40.8
Nursing, Initial	96.7	0.7	2.6	3.3	4.5	40.0
Nursing, Post-initial	97.3	0.4	2.4	2.7	3.6	40.0
Pharmacy (pre-reg)	99.4	0.2	0.4	0.6	12.1	32.0
Medicine	98.2	0.8	1.0	1.8	8.5	47.0
Rehabilitation	92.0	2.0	5.9	8.0	13.8	42.6
Law	90.2	4.0	5.8	9.8	18.6	42.0
Law, Other	84.6	3.3	12.1	15.4	16.5	39.6
Computer Science	78.8	8.8	12.4	21.2	13.0	42.0
Life Sciences	74.2	7.7	18.1	25.8	42.6	40.0
Mathematics	85.7	6.2	8.1	14.3	36.9	42.5
Chemistry	83.7	7.1	9.2	16.3	53.7	40.0
Physics	73.3	13.6	13.1	26.7	50.1	41.0
Geology	87.7	6.5	5.8	12.3	34.1	49.0
Veterinary Science	94.7	0.6	4.7	5.3	3.8	38.0
Total %	82.4	5.5	12.2	17.6	20.3	40.8
Total N	36,470	2,425	5,391	7,816	13,527	13,862

† Total % may not add to 100.0 due to rounding.

* Based on bachelor degree graduates aged less than 25 and in their first full-time employment.



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 AGS. 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. So, if 'counsellor' is mentioned first, then it was mentioned most often by the survey 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; manual worker; other professional or associate professional; farmer; trades; business or computing professional; scientific officer; manager

Architecture: architect; building technical officer; building or engineering professional; designer; other professional or associate professional; business or computing professional

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

Urban and Regional Planning: urban and regional planner; business or computing professional

Humanities: clerk; business or computing professional; social or associated professional; journalist or author; public relations; manager; teacher

Languages: clerk; teacher; business or computing professional; social or associated professional

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

Social Science: clerk; business, computing or associate professional; social welfare professional; teacher

Psychology: clerk; business or computing professional; welfare or counselling; other associate professional; teacher; psychologist

Social Work: social worker; welfare or counselling; other associate professional; clerk; manager

Business Studies: clerk; other associate professional; business or computing professional; manager; marketing; accounting; other professional

Accounting: accountant; clerk; other associate professional; business or computing professional; manager

Economics: business or computing professional; clerk; other associate professional; manager; economist; accountant; other social professional

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

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

Aeronautical Engineering: engineer or engineering technical officer; air transport professional

Chemical Engineering: engineering professional; science or other professional

Civil Engineering: civil engineer; other engineer or related; manager; other professional or associate professional

Electrical Engineering: electrical engineer; other engineer and related; computing professional; engineering technical officer

Electronic/Computer Engineering: computing professional; electrical engineer; other engineer; other professional or associate professional

Mechanical Engineering: mechanical engineer; other engineer; engineering and other associate professional

Mining Engineering: mining engineer; other engineer and related professionals

Other Engineering: engineering professional; mechanical engineer; civil engineer; electrical engineer; computing professional; science professional; engineering associate professional

Surveying: surveyor; engineering, computing or building professional

Dentistry: dentist

Health Sciences: medical imaging professional; other associate professional; clerk; health, science and other professional; medical or scientific technical officer; podiatrist; dietitian; optometrist; health professional

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; business or computing professional; clerk; accountant; manager

Law (other): police; clerk or law clerk; lawyer; business or computing professional, accountant

Computing: computer professional; business and associated professional; clerk; manager

Life Sciences: clerk; medical, science or health professional; other associate professional; teacher; environmental or life scientist; business or computing professional;

Mathematics: clerk; other professional or associate professional; mathematician, statistician or actuary; business or computing professional; teacher; business and organisations analyst

Chemistry: chemist (not pharmacist); medical or scientific associate professional; science, business or computing professional; clerk; teacher

Physical Science: engineering, science and other professional; geologist or geophysicist; science associate professional; clerk; computing professional; environmental or life scientist

Geology: geologist or geophysicist; environmental or life scientist; clerk

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 higher 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.goingtouni.gov.au, university web sites and *GradsOnline* at www.gradsonline.com.au

More information:

School principals, teachers, careers advisers, students, and parents can purchase the reports *Graduate Destinations, 2005*, *Graduate Salaries 2005*, *Graduate Course Experience, 2005* and *Grads, Jobs and Dollars 2005*, currently available from Graduate Careers Australia (GCA).

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

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

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



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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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