

# GradFiles

December 2009

## A Snapshot of Employment Outcomes of Recent Higher Education Graduates

Decisions about higher education are some of the biggest that you will ever have to make. What to study? What type of degree? Is it right for me?

To help you make an informed decision, GradFiles 2009 provides information on employment rates, starting salaries and other important facts about higher education outcomes. GradFiles 2009 is the summary report of the annual Australian Graduate Survey (AGS) run by Graduate Careers Australia (GCA).

### 2009 survey highlights:

- 79.2 per cent of bachelor degree graduates seeking full-time employment were in full-time employment within four months of completing their degrees
- around one-fifth of graduates were undertaking further full-time study after completing their bachelor qualifications
- the median annual starting salary for new Australian resident bachelor degree graduates aged less than 25 and in their first full-time employment in Australia was \$48,000
- graduates' overall satisfaction with their courses remained at a high level, with 88.1 per cent of graduates expressing broad satisfaction with their courses, consistent with previous years.



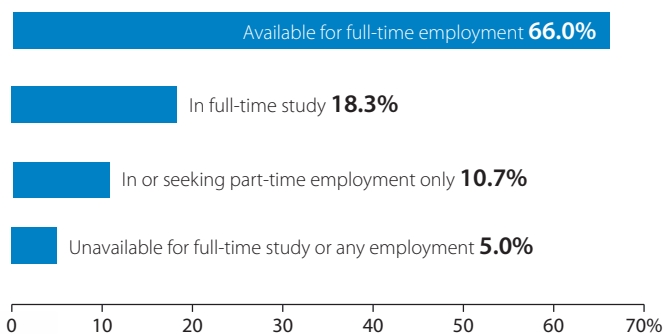
# Graduate employment

For students leaving secondary school and intending to start a degree, it will be around three or four years (the typical time it takes to complete a bachelors degree via full-time study) 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 a degree. The full-time employment rate for new graduates in 2009 showed a decrease on the previous year, which was consistent with the impact of the global financial crisis. For those currently considering enrolling in a higher education qualification, it's worth noting that the the employment market may change substantially by graduation time. It's also worth remembering that graduates are less likely to be unemployed in the long term than non-graduates. Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that bachelor degree graduates have an unemployment rate half that of the general labour force.

Figure 1 indicates that in 2009, 66.0 per cent of graduates were available for full-time employment (that is, those who were either in, or were looking for, full-time employment).

## f1: activities of bachelor degree graduates, 2009

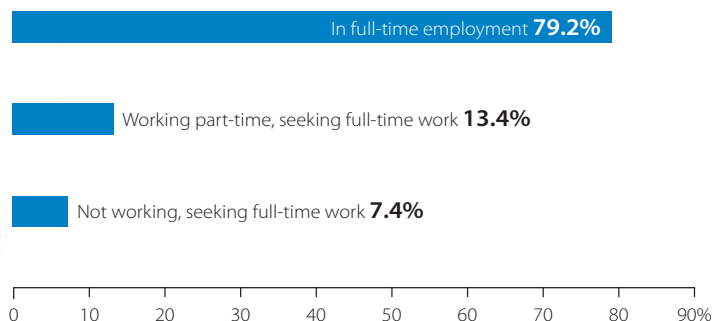


Of those bachelor degree graduates available for full-time employment, almost eight in every ten (79.2 per cent) found full-time employment within four months of completing their studies (see Figure 2 below). This was down by 6.0 percentage points from 85.2 per cent in 2008, as was expected due largely to the global financial crisis.

This, however, was mild in comparison to the recession of the early 1990s, when this figure dropped by 10.9 percentage points over the course of one year and more than 20 percentage points over three years. Current early indications are that the economy has generally improved since the time of the survey early in 2009. For more detailed information on graduate employment, refer to the related GCA report, *GradStats 2009*.

Research by GCA suggests that many of those graduates not in a full-time job at the time of the survey find full-time work soon after. Figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics also show that, in the long term, unemployment rates for graduates are much lower than those in the general labour force.

## f2: bachelor degree graduates available for full-time employment, 2009



# Fields of education

Post-study outcomes for graduates can vary considerably according to the field of education studied. An individual field of education includes courses, specialisations and units of study with the same or similar vocational emphasis. The following information outlines employment and further study outcomes by fields of education studied.

**t1:** breakdown of bachelor degree graduates available for full-time employment, or in further full-time study, by field of education, 2009 (%)

FIELD OF EDUCATION	Of those graduates wanting full-time employment:		Of all graduates:
	In full-time employment (%)	Seeking full-time employment (%)	Further full-time study (%)
Agriculture	77.0	23.0	18.4
Accounting	85.1	14.9	7.1
Aeronautical Engineering	78.4	21.6	11.4
Architecture	75.3	24.7	34.5
Building	83.2	16.8	12.1
Business Studies	76.8	23.2	10.8
Chemical Engineering	82.8	17.2	5.9
Chemistry	77.7	22.3	40.4
Civil Engineering	94.4	5.6	5.5
Computer Science	80.0	20.0	9.6
Dentistry	93.8	6.2	3.0
Economics	77.4	22.6	23.2
Education - Initial	78.1	21.9	5.0
Education - Post/Other	90.5	9.5	38.8
Electrical Engineering	84.5	15.5	10.2
Electronic/Computer Engineering	78.3	21.7	6.2
Geology	77.3	22.7	30.4
Health Other	79.6	20.4	28.9
Humanities	67.3	32.7	27.3
Languages	75.3	24.7	30.2
Law	87.7	12.3	16.0
Law Other	81.9	18.1	13.2
Life Sciences	64.1	35.9	40.1
Mathematics	73.3	26.7	37.4
Mechanical Engineering	86.2	13.8	6.5
Medicine	96.9	3.1	9.4
Mining Engineering	92.3	7.7	2.0
Nursing (Initial)	96.3	3.7	5.2
Nursing (Post-Initial)	97.4	2.6	3.6
Other Engineering	88.9	11.1	8.5
Pharmacy	97.6	2.4	8.2
Physical Sciences	76.1	23.9	41.6
Psychology	71.3	28.7	37.8
Rehabilitation	89.9	10.1	11.4
Social Sciences	65.0	35.0	30.6
Social Work	81.6	18.4	7.8
Surveying	92.0	8.0	2.3
Urban/Regional Planning	88.7	11.3	5.0
Veterinary Science	92.1	7.9	5.7
Visual/Performing Arts	51.6	48.4	26.9
<b>Total %</b>	<b>79.2</b>	<b>20.8</b>	<b>18.3</b>
<b>Total N</b>	<b>33,165</b>	<b>8,713</b>	<b>11,597</b>

It's important for prospective students to obtain information regarding higher education from areas other than these statistics because, while these provide a snapshot of graduate outcomes, they do not tell the full story, nor can they show what will happen in each field of education in the future.

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 immediately after university.

## Further full-time study

Further full-time study involves commencing another qualification after the completion of your initial degree. This can include a postgraduate qualification or it can mean studying for another qualification but not at postgraduate level (for example, an optional honours year at the end of a bachelor degree).

Postgraduate qualifications include awards such as practically-focused postgraduate certificates or diplomas, masters degrees (either by coursework or research) or doctoral degrees.

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 2009, almost one in every five new bachelor degree graduates (18.3 per cent – see Table 1) continued in some type of full-time study after their first degree.

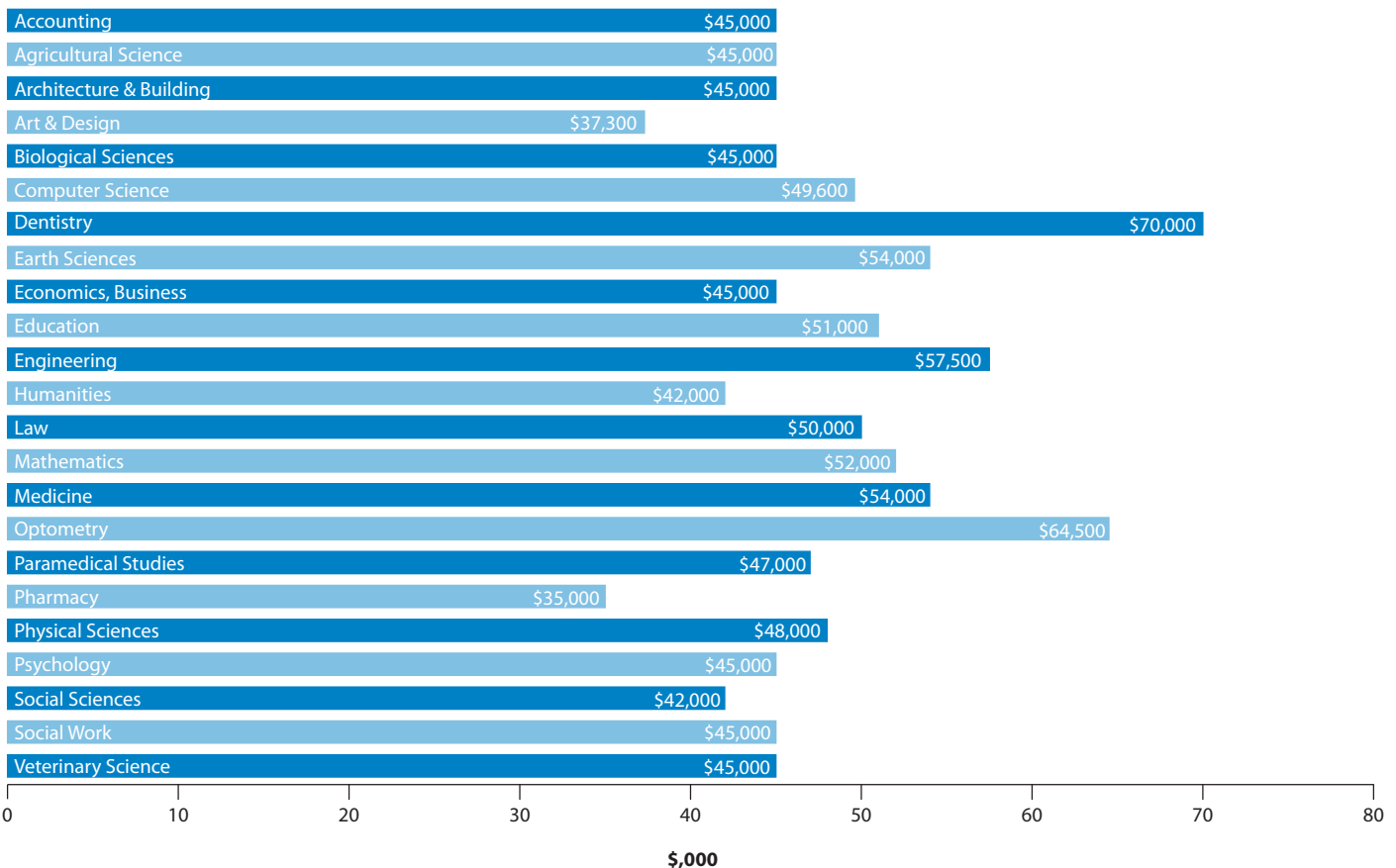
# Salary information

In 2009, the median annual starting salary for new bachelor degree graduates aged less than 25 and in their first full-time employment in Australia was \$48,000 (up from \$45,000 last year). This was 23.1 per cent higher than the median annual earnings for all Australians aged 20 – 24 (\$39,000)\*.

At an overall level, the median starting salary for male graduates (\$50,000) was slightly higher than that for female graduates (\$47,000). Some of the salary differences between males and females are due to different course selection and employment choices between the sexes.

\* Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership, August 2008 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, April 2009)

## f3: median starting salaries of bachelor degree graduates in first full-time employment in Australia and aged less than 25, 2009



## Need more information?

Entering a university or college usually requires much thought and research. The choices you make about 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.

GCA conducts a number of national surveys in the graduate area. These include the Australian Graduate Survey (AGS), a national survey of the experiences and outcomes of university graduates; Beyond Graduation Survey – a follow-up to the AGS three years after course completion; University & Beyond, a survey of the expectations and perceptions of higher education students; and the Graduate Outlook Survey, a study of experiences and plans of graduate employers in Australia and New Zealand.

More detailed information on graduate outcomes can be found in GCA publications at [www.graduatecareers.com.au](http://www.graduatecareers.com.au)

Make an appointment to meet with the guidance counsellor at your school, discuss your options with university careers advisers and search the web - university websites, [www.deewr.gov.au](http://www.deewr.gov.au), and [www.graduatecareers.com.au](http://www.graduatecareers.com.au) are good starting points.

**You can also visit our online database at [www.gradsonline.com.au](http://www.gradsonline.com.au) or contact Graduate Careers Australia on \*61 3 9605 3700 or email [research@graduatecareers.com.au](mailto:research@graduatecareers.com.au).**