

GradStats

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The Graduate
Careers Council of
Australia's
Graduate

Destination Survey (GDS) is a study of the activities of new university graduates around four months after the completion of their qualifications. In the 1999 GDS, new graduates who completed the requirements for their qualifications in the calendar year 1998 were surveyed regarding their major activities, including full-time study, full- or part-time employment, seeking employment, or their unavailability for work or study.

GradStats gives a summary of the destinations of Australian-resident bachelor degree graduates (figures for overseas residents are discussed in the full GDS report). Overall, 65.8 per cent of this group responded to the survey.

1999 Graduates: Work, Study, Salaries and Course Satisfaction — Main Points

- Of bachelor degree graduates who were available for full-time employment in 1999, 80.8 per cent were in full-time employment within four months of completing their degrees in 1998. A further 11.2 per cent were working on a part-time or casual basis while continuing to seek full-time employment.
- Some 8.0 per cent were not working and still looking for full-time employment at the time of the survey.
- These figures represent a continued improvement on the results of the 1998 and 1997 Graduate Destination Surveys. In 1998, 79.6 per cent were in full-time employment, 11.6 per cent were working on a part-time or casual basis while seeking full-time employment, and 8.8 per cent were not working and looking for full-time employment.
- Over twenty-three per cent of respondents were undertaking further full-time study after completing their qualification. Males (24.8 per cent) were slightly more likely than females (23.0 per cent) to have continued in full-time study.
- The median annual starting salary for bachelor degree graduates in their first full-time employment was \$31,000. This was 81.6 per cent of average earnings, up from 80.6 per cent in 1998, and 81.2 per cent in 1997.
- Males earned a starting salary of \$32,500 (up from \$31,000) and females earned \$30,000 (no change).
- Overall satisfaction with courses as measured by the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) remains at a high level, though the percentage of graduates expressing broad satisfaction with courses fell slightly to 89 per cent last year.

The results of the 1999 Graduate Destination Survey (GDS), show that 80.8 per cent of bachelor degree graduates available for full-time employment were in full-time employment within four months of completing their qualifications (see Table 1a). A further 11.2 per cent were working on a part-time or casual basis while continuing to seek full-time employment, while 8.0 per cent were not working and still looking for full-time employment at the time of the survey.

This represents an improvement in employment prospects compared with the 1998 GDS which saw 79.6 per cent in full-time employment, 11.6 per cent working on a part-time or casual basis while continuing to seek full-time employment, and 8.8 per cent not working and looking for full-time employment (see Table 1a).

Graduate employment is now at its highest level since 1990. Figure 1 shows how employment levels have recovered in recent years following the recession of

the early 1990s, though employment remains below the levels experienced in the late 1980s.

Generally, between one fifth and one quarter of respondents elect to continue in further full-time study. In 1999, 23.7 per cent did so, up from 22.0 per cent in 1998 and 21.5 per cent in 1997 (see Table 1). This figure includes those proceeding to honours years and higher degrees.

This increase is consistent with the longer term trend towards more graduates undertaking postgraduate study.

A further 6.6 per cent of respondents were in part-time or casual work and were not seeking full-time employment (6.8 per cent in 1997), while 0.7 per cent were not working and seeking part-time or casual employment only (0.8 per cent in 1998 and 1997).

Of those graduates seeking full-time employment, males (82.0 per cent — see

Table 1: Activities of bachelor degree graduates, by sex, 1997-99 (%).

	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, part-time or casual employment only	Unavailable for full-time study or full-time employment	Total cases	Total %
Males							
1997	70.8	22.6	3.4	0.5	2.6	22,907	100
1998	71.5	22.6	3.3	0.4	2.2	23,784	100
1999	68.1	24.8	3.3	0.5	3.4	23,303	100
Females							
1997	64.9	20.8	9.4	1.0	3.9	36,287	100
1998	64.4	21.7	9.0	1.0	3.8	37,369	100
1999	63.2	23.0	8.6	0.9	4.3	36,584	100
Persons							
1997	67.2	21.5	7.1	0.8	3.4	59,194	100
1998	67.1	22.0	6.8	0.8	3.2	61,192	100
1999	65.1	23.7	6.6	0.7	3.9	59,926	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, 1997-99 (%).

	In full-time employment	Seeking full-time employment, not working	Seeking full-time employment, part-time or casual	Total seeking full-time employment	Total %†	Total cases	*Had full-time employment before May in final year of study and still with that employer at time of GDS
Males							
1997	80.4	10.3	9.3	19.6	100	16,210	24.3
1998	80.8	9.9	9.3	19.2	100	17,009	22.8
1999	82.0	9.0	9.0	18.0	100	15,860	22.9
Females							
1997	78.3	8.0	13.7	21.7	100	23,549	20.2
1998	78.7	8.1	13.2	21.3	100	24,059	17.5
1999	80.0	7.3	12.7	20.0	100	23,124	16.3
Persons							
1997	79.2	8.9	11.9	20.8	100	39,759	21.9
1998	79.6	8.8	11.6	20.4	100	41,093	19.7
1999	80.8	8.0	11.2	19.2	100	39,003	19.0

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.

Table 1a) were slightly more likely to have found it by the time of the survey than their female colleagues (80.0 per cent).

While females were slightly more likely than males to have been seeking full-time employment (20.0 per cent as opposed to 18.0 per cent), they were less likely than males (7.3 per cent compared with 9.0 per cent) to have been without any work while seeking full-time employment.

Females were far more likely than males (12.7 per cent compared with 9.0 per cent) to have been in part-time or casual employment while seeking a full-time position.

This difference (regularly seen in GDS figures) might be a reflection of females' numerical dominance in fields of study such as teaching and nursing, in which there are strong opportunities for professional part-time employment.

Males (24.8 per cent) were slightly more likely than females (23.0 per cent) to have undertaken further full-time study in 1999 (see Table 1).

Table 1a shows that just under a fifth (19.0 per cent) of those in full-time employment at the time of the survey already had that full-time employment in their final year of study. Some of these respondents might have had that employment for a greater period of their study.

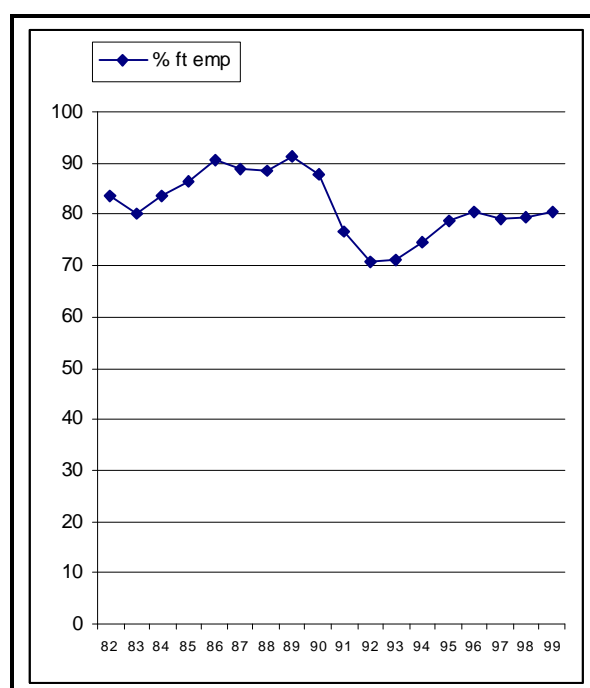


Figure 1: Percentage of bachelor degree graduates in full-time employment of those available for full-time employment, 1982-99.

Table 2: Breakdown of bachelor degree graduates available for full-time employment, by field of study, 1999 (%).

	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	*Had full-time employment before May in final year of study and still with that employer at time of GDS
Agriculture	83.5	5.1	11.4	16.5	100	683	17.7
Architecture	81.9	6.8	11.3	18.1	100	459	17.0
Building	88.9	6.6	4.5	11.1	100	288	37.1
Urb & Reg Plann	84.0	7.5	8.5	16.0	100	106	9.0
Humanities	69.0	13.0	18.0	31.0	100	3404	22.1
Languages	68.9	15.0	16.1	31.1	100	434	14.4
Vis/Perf Arts	57.3	16.6	26.1	42.7	100	1188	4.6
Social Sciences	65.1	14.0	20.9	34.9	100	872	23.1
Psychology	68.6	12.0	19.4	31.4	100	1100	18.3
Social Work	74.8	9.5	15.7	25.2	100	535	9.5
Business Studies	80.2	8.0	11.8	19.8	100	4973	24.0
Accounting	88.8	6.7	4.5	11.2	100	3123	26.9
Economics	83.1	8.1	8.8	16.9	100	658	16.3
Education, Initial	81.7	2.8	15.5	18.3	100	3477	14.9
Education, Post/Oth	87.5	3.2	9.3	12.5	100	1429	56.2
Aeronautical Eng	91.3	7.7	1.0	8.7	100	104	4.2
Chemical Eng	82.4	8.3	9.3	17.6	100	204	2.4
Civil Engineering	90.6	6.3	3.0	9.4	100	630	15.4
Electrical Eng	90.2	7.2	2.6	9.8	100	306	22.8
Electron/Comp Eng	84.8	11.8	3.3	15.2	100	422	11.2
Mechanical Eng	78.4	16.0	5.6	21.6	100	514	17.1
Mining Engineering	89.0	8.2	2.7	11.0	100	73	3.1
Other Engineering	84.6	10.5	4.9	15.4	100	428	16.3
Surveying	94.3	1.1	4.5	5.7	100	88	21.7
Dentistry	93.4	0.9	5.7	6.6	100	106	0.0
Health, Other	83.9	5.5	10.6	16.1	100	1277	20.3
Nursing, Initial	93.8	1.5	4.7	6.2	100	2437	5.6
Nursing, Post-initial	95.1	1.2	3.8	4.9	100	690	43.8
Pharmacy	96.8	2.5	0.7	3.2	100	282	0.4
Medicine	99.9	0.0	0.1	0.1	100	727	0.1
Rehabilitation	87.1	4.0	8.9	12.9	100	856	0.9
Law	92.9	3.7	3.4	7.1	100	844	16.3
Law, Other	85.3	7.5	7.2	14.7	100	805	34.9
Computer Science	86.6	8.2	5.3	13.4	100	1800	18.4
Life Sciences	65.5	14.2	20.3	34.5	100	2593	9.2
Mathematics	76.2	17.2	6.6	23.8	100	303	15.6
Chemistry	67.0	20.3	12.8	33.0	100	345	17.3
Physics	65.8	19.2	15.0	34.2	100	120	13.9
Geology	73.3	13.1	13.6	26.7	100	176	10.9
Veterinary Science	95.1	2.1	2.8	4.9	100	144	0.0
Total %	80.8	8.0	11.2	19.2	100	39,003	19.0
Total N	31,513	3,111	4,379	7,490			

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

Table 2 shows breakdowns of bachelor degree graduates available for full-time employment by field of study. It should be noted that labour market factors peculiar to some fields of study can affect the proportions in and seeking employment, especially in a survey such as this, which takes place around four months after the completion of degree requirements.

For example, medical graduates, of whom 99.9 per cent were in full-time employment, always have high proportions in this category due to the requirement that they serve an internship in a public hospital for a period after graduation.

Other fields with high proportions in full-time employment at the time of the survey were pharmacy (96.8 per cent), veterinary science (95.1 per cent), post-initial nursing education (95.1 per cent), surveying (94.3 per cent), initial nursing education (93.8 per cent), dentistry (93.4 per cent), and law (92.9 per cent).

The overall improvement in employment prospects can be seen in most fields of study. Increases in the percentage seeking full-time work were restricted to a small number of fields, including some areas in health and science.

Respondents in visual and performing arts (26.1 per cent), social sciences (20.9 per cent) and life sciences (20.3 per cent), were the most likely to have been working on a part-time or casual basis while seeking full-time employment.

Those from chemistry (20.3 per cent), physics (19.2 per cent), mathematics (17.2 per cent), visual and performing arts (16.6 per cent) and mechanical engineering (16.0 per cent) were the most likely to have been without work while seeking full-time employment.

Post-initial nursing education at bachelor degree level generally covers hospital-trained nurses upgrading their qualifications to degree level. Many graduates were already in their full-time employment while studying (43.8 per cent in 1999 — see Table 2). Respondents from 'education, post/other' (56.2 per cent) were also very likely to have been in full-time employment in their final year of study and still with that employer at the time of the survey. Like post-initial nursing education, 'education, post/other' graduates are generally people in full-time employment and with three-year training who are upgrading their qualifications to four-year degree level.

Graduate Starting Salaries

In 1999, graduate starting salaries as a percentage of average weekly earnings (which were \$38,000) increased to 81.6

Table 3: Annual rate of average weekly earnings (AWE) and median graduate starting salaries (GSS), and relativity, 1977-1999 (\$,000).

	AWE	GSS	GSS % AWE
1977	9.6	9.6	100.0
1979	11.3	10.9	96.5
1980	12.5	11.8	94.4
1981	14.1	13.2	93.6
1982	16.5	14.9	90.3
1983	17.8	15.9	89.3
1984	19.6	17.2	87.8
1985	20.5	18.2	88.8
1986	22.1	19.8	89.6
1987	23.3	20.9	89.7
1988	24.9	23.0	92.4
1989	26.8	24.0	89.6
1990	28.7	24.9	86.8
1991	30.0	25.3	84.3
1992	31.1	25.7	82.6
1993	31.8	25.5	80.2
1994	32.5	26.0	80.0
1995	33.9	27.0	79.6
1996	34.8	28.0	80.5
1997	35.7	29.0	81.2
1998	37.2	30.0	80.6
1999	38.0	31.0	81.6

Table 4: Median starting salaries of bachelor degree graduates in first full-time employment and aged less than 25, 1999 (\$,000). Numbers in cells are shown below related salary figures.

	Aust. Govt	State Govt	Total Govt	Prof. Pract.	Ind./ Com.	Sch- ools	Tert. Ed.	Total Ed.	TOTAL	Males	Fe- males
Humanities	31.0	30.5	30.2	27.5	27.0	34.0	30.9	32.9	28.0	30.0	28.0
	61	50	128	49	514	58	28	86	835	160	675
Psychology	31.9	31.1	31.3	*	28.0	32.0	*	32.0	28.5	29.0	28.4
	34	30	69	*	205	11	*	17	320	42	278
Social Work	*	33.0	33.0	*	29.0	*	*	*	31.7	32.7	31.5
	*	95	105	*	41	*	*	*	162	8	154
Oth. Soc. Sci.	30.8	30.0	30.0	24.0	26.0	32.0	*	32.0	28.0	29.2	28.0
	25	63	98	15	133	15	*	19	288	54	234
Accounting	29.2	30.0	30.0	28.0	30.0	*	*	*	29.0	29.0	29.0
	40	41	89	567	462	*	*	*	1149	530	619
Economics, Bus.	31.0	30.2	31.0	27.0	30.0	*	30.8	30.8	30.0	30.3	29.5
	95	80	193	117	1444	*	14	20	1828	755	1073
Law	31.0	30.0	31.0	29.0	37.0	*	*	*	30.0	31.0	30.0
	35	44	79	290	57	*	*	*	428	164	264
Education	*	32.6	32.0	*	27.2	33.0	*	33.0	33.0	33.0	32.7
	*	21	33	*	56	1314	*	1319	1442	214	1228
Physical Sci.	34.7	32.0	34.0	*	32.0	*	*	*	33.0	33.7	31.7
	22	11	35	*	103	*	*	*	161	73	88
Biological Sci.	30.2	31.1	31.2	28.6	29.0	34.6	32.0	33.7	30.0	30.0	30.0
	53	140	230	32	405	17	67	84	795	244	551
Mathematics	34.5	*	34.0	*	34.0	*	*	*	34.0	35.5	33.0
	18	*	26	*	85	*	*	*	122	54	68
Computer Sci.	35.9	33.9	35.0	35.5	35.0	*	34.5	35.0	35.0	35.0	35.0
	26	41	72	10	512	*	14	21	633	466	167
Agricultural Sci.	*	30	30.0	*	28.0	*	*	*	29.0	29.0	28.2
	*	59	73	*	129	*	*	*	215	121	94
Earth Sciences	*	*	32.4	30.5	37.0	*	*	*	35.0	33.0	37.0
	*	*	10	10	69	*	*	*	91	62	29
Veterinary Sci.	*	*	*	32.0	*	*	*	*	32.5	32.7	32.0
	*	*	*	69	*	*	*	*	75	24	51
Engineering	38.5	35.0	36.0	34.0	36.5	*	*	*	35.1	35.0	36.0
	72	95	193	244	667	*	*	*	1124	891	233
Arch. & Bldg	*	30.0	32.6	25.0	28.0	*	*	*	28.0	28.0	27.0
	*	12	44	99	111	*	*	*	256	144	112
Medicine	*	43.0	43.0	*	43.5	*	*	*	43.0	45.0	42.0
	*	243	250	*	14	*	*	*	268	138	130
Paramedical St.	32.0	31.0	31.0	30.2	30.0	32.5		32.0	30.8	32.0	30.0
	67	1217	1307	16	520	14		20	1934	286	1648
Dentistry	*	41.0	41.0	46.5	*	*	*	*	42.3	48.0	42.0
	*	24	26	15	*	*	*	*	42	11	31
Pharmacy	*	25.0	25.0	*	23.0	*	*	*	24.0	24.0	24.8
	*	54	58	*	143	*	*	*	206	81	125
Optometry	*	*	*	*	40.0	*	*	*	40.0	42.2	39.2
	*	*	*	*	47	*	*	*	50	24	26
Art & Design	*	*	32.9		26.0	32.0	*	32.0	26.0	27.6	26.0
	*	*	12		184	27	*	29	257	64	193
All Fields	32.0	32.0	32.0	30.0	30.0	33.0	32.0	33.0	31.0	32.5	30.0
	590	2342	3131	1570	5907	1476	175	1651	12681	4610	8071
Males	34.2	34.0	34.0	30.0	32.5	33.6	33.4	33.6	32.5	32.5	
	250	589	924	770	2549	219	54	273	4610	4610	
Females	31.0	31.0	31.0	29.0	29.4	33.0	31.8	33.0	30.0		30.0
	340	1753	2207	800	3358	1257	121	1378	8071		8071

* There were no, or fewer than ten, cases in cells marked with an asterisk.

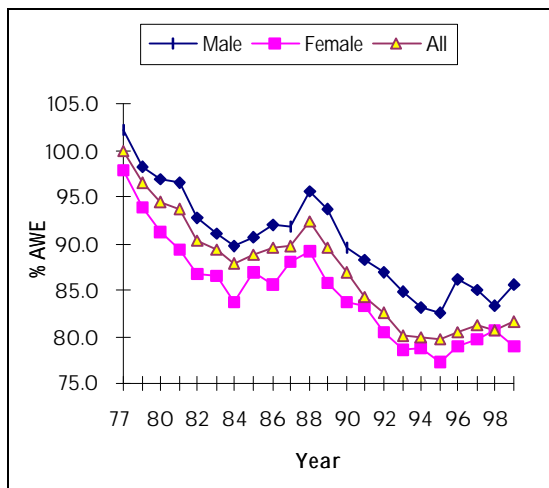


Figure 2: Male, female and all graduates' median starting salaries relative to the annual rate of average weekly earnings, 1977-1999.

per cent, the highest level recorded since 1992. This is up from 80.6 per cent in 1998, 81.2 per cent in 1997 and 80.5 per cent in 1996. Nevertheless, graduate starting salaries as a percentage of average weekly earnings still remain well below levels experienced during the 1980s (see Table 3 and Figure 2).

The median annual starting salary for new bachelor degree graduates aged less than 25 and in their first full-time position was \$31,000 at the time of the 1999 GDS (see Table 3).

New male graduates earned 86.5 per cent of average earnings, up markedly from 83.3 per cent in 1998 and 84.0 per cent in 1997. Salaries for females fell slightly, to 78.9 per cent from 80.6 per cent in 1998 (up from 79.8 per cent in 1997). These figures represent a change of the pattern set over the last few years (see Figure 2).

In dollar terms, the starting salary for all graduates again rose by \$1,000 (or 3.3 per cent) while that for males rose by \$1,500 (4.8 per cent). Overall, starting salaries for female graduates did not change between 1998 and 1999.

The largest rise was for physical sciences and medicine where the median salary

rose from \$30,000 to \$33,000 and from \$40,000 to \$43,000 respectively. There were above average rises also in law, biological sciences, mathematics, computer science and optometry.

For many fields of study there was negligible difference between salaries for males and females. While there was a handful of fields in which females earned higher salaries than their male counterparts, only in earth sciences was the difference marked (\$4,000, or 12.1 per cent) On the other hand, males earned markedly more than females in the field of dentistry (\$6,000, or 14.3 per cent).

The overall salary for females was 92.3 per cent of males' earnings, down from 96.8 per cent in 1998 and 95.0 per cent in 1997. Differences in starting salaries between males and females can be partly explained in terms of the differing enrolment profiles of male and female students.

Males tend to have enrolled in the more highly paying fields of study while females tended to come from the middle and lower paying fields. An examination of the top six ranked fields in terms of starting salaries (listed in Table 4; medicine, dentistry, optometry, engineering, computer sciences and earth sciences) shows that they account for 25.7 per cent of male respondents but only 7.1 per cent of females.

Most fields of study have shown a high degree of consistency over the years covered by GDS data. When ranked in terms of starting salaries, medicine, dentistry, optometry, engineering, computer science and earth science have maintained a high ranking throughout that period (see Table 5).

Table 5: Fields of study ranked according to level of starting salary, 1995-99.

	95	96	97	98	99
Medicine	2	=1	2	2	1
Dentistry	1	=1	1	1	2
Optometry	3	=2	3	3	3
Engineering	4	3	5	=4	4
Computer Sci.	6	=4	6	5	=5
Earth Sci.	5	=2	4	=4	=5
Mathematics	10	=4	7	8	6
Education	8	6	=8	7	=7
Physical Sci.	=7	5	9	=10	=7
Vet. Sci.	=7	=4	=8	6	8
Social Work	9	7	=8	9	9
Paramedical	=12	8	=10	=10	10
Econ., Bus.	=12	=10	=10	11	=11
Law	=14	11	=10	=13	=11
Biological Sci.	=12	9	=10	=13	=11
Accounting	=12	=10	=10	=13	=12
Agric. Sci	11	=12	11	=13	=12
Psychology	=12	=10	=10	12	13
Humanities	=14	13	12	14	=14
Oth. Soc. Sci.	13	=12	=13	=13	=14
Arch. & Bldg	=14	=12	=13	15	=14
Art & Design	15	14	14	16	15
Pharmacy	16	15	15	17	16

Other fields of study such as law, architecture and pharmacy always have a relatively low rank, and this is due to the further training requirements these graduates must meet for professional registration during their first employment.

There was \$19,000 difference between the top and bottom ranked fields compared with \$20,000 in 1998 and \$24,000 in 1997. This contraction in salary levels is worthy of further study in the national report. The middle rankings were not so widely separated. For example there was only \$5,500 difference between the sixth and 13th ranked fields.

Graduate Satisfaction

As measured by the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ), bachelor degree graduates' overall satisfaction with their courses has been slowly rising since 1995. However, broad satisfaction, though remaining at a high level, fell marginally to 89 per cent last year. Dissatisfaction has been falling over the period 1995 to 1999.

The satisfaction figure represents the percentage of respondents answering '4' or '5' on a 5 point scale. Persons responding to the 5th point indicated they strongly agreed they were satisfied with their course. The broad satisfaction figure represents the percentage of respondents answering '3', '4' and '5' on the 5 point scale.

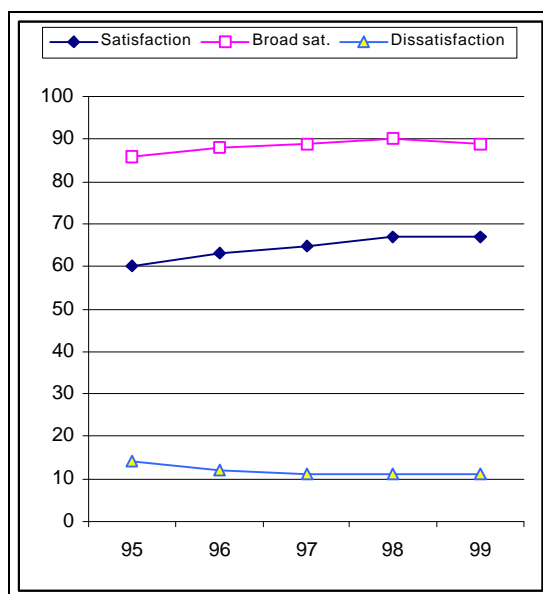


Figure 5: Level of satisfaction with course, bachelor degree graduates, 1995-99 (preliminary).

Further details about graduate destinations, starting salaries and the CEQ can be found in the forthcoming reports *Graduate Destination Survey 1999*, and *Graduate Starting Salaries, 1999*, and *Course Experience Questionnaire, 1999*. To order copies, please call the GCCA on (03) 9344 9333, fax (03) 9347 7298, or write to GCCA, PO Box 28, Parkville, 3052.

For further information on graduate employment, graduate destination statistics and the GCCA, visit the *Gradlink* website at <http://www.gradlink.edu.au>.