

# GradFiles

JUNE 2012

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 2011 provides information on employment rates, starting salaries and other important facts about higher education outcomes. GradFiles 2011 is a summary of the annual Australian Graduate Survey (AGS) run by Graduate Careers Australia (GCA).

## Survey Highlights

- 76.3 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 \$50,000
- 93.7 per cent of graduates expressed broad satisfaction with their courses.



# Graduate employment

If you are leaving secondary school and intending to start a degree, it will be at least three or four years (the typical time it takes to complete a bachelor degree via full-time study) before you will be looking for full-time employment.

While the employment market can change by your graduation time, these figures are still of value in helping you develop an understanding of what happens to people who complete a degree in a field of education that might be of interest to you.

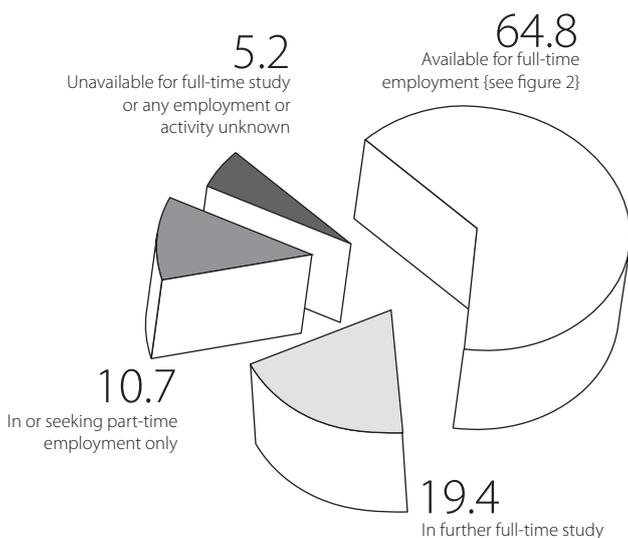
So while current graduate employment levels are very relevant to anyone about to finish a degree, they are also valuable for people who are about to choose a degree to study. It's also important to remember that graduates are less likely to be unemployed in the long-term than non-graduates and that your degree is not just about the first job after study. So if an area of study in which you are interested has employment figures here that seem a little low, keep in mind that your degree will represent longer lasting training that will take you through your entire working life.

The full-time employment rate for new graduates in 2011 showed no notable change on 2010, which suggests a lingering effect from the global financial crisis (GFC). *Figure 1* indicates that in 2011, 64.8 per cent of new bachelor degree graduates were available for full-time employment (that is, they were either in, or were looking for, full-time employment). The remainder went into further full-time study or were in the part-time labour market only.

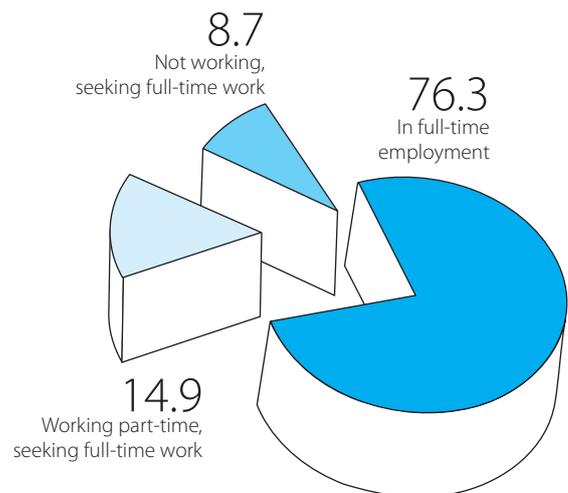
*Figure 2* shows that of those available for full-time employment, over three-quarters (76.3 per cent) found full-time employment within four months of completing their studies. While this was up by just 0.1 per cent on 2010, it was down from 79.2 per cent in 2009, and from the pre-GFC 85.2 per cent in 2008.

While this may seem like a considerable decline, it was mild in comparison to the recession of the early 1990s, when this figure dropped by almost 11 percentage points over the course of one year and more than 20 percentage points over three years. For more detailed information on graduate employment, refer to the related GCA report, GradStats 2011.

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 in the months soon after, and our Beyond Graduation Survey, which looks at what graduates are doing three years after they finish their degrees, shows that unemployment even one year after they finish their studies is very low. 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.



**Figure 1:** Activities of bachelor degree graduates, 2011 (%)



**Figure 2:** Bachelor degree graduates available for full-time employment, 2011 (%)

## Fields of education

Post-study outcomes for graduates can vary considerably according to the field of education studied (see Figure 3). 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 field of education studied.

It's important for prospective students to obtain information regarding higher education from sources 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. Other fields can have similar aspects not seen in these figures.

## Further full-time study

Further full-time study in this context refers to commencing another qualification immediately 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 skills, or to gain entry into professional employment.

In 2011, almost one in every five new bachelor degree graduates (19.4 per cent – see Figures 1 and 3) continued in some type of full-time study immediately after their first degree (similar to the 2010 figure of 19.0 per cent).

## Graduate satisfaction

In all, 93.7% of graduates indicated that they were broadly satisfied with the course they completed. When we refer to broad satisfaction, this means that a graduate did not disagree with the statement "Overall, I was satisfied with the quality of this course".

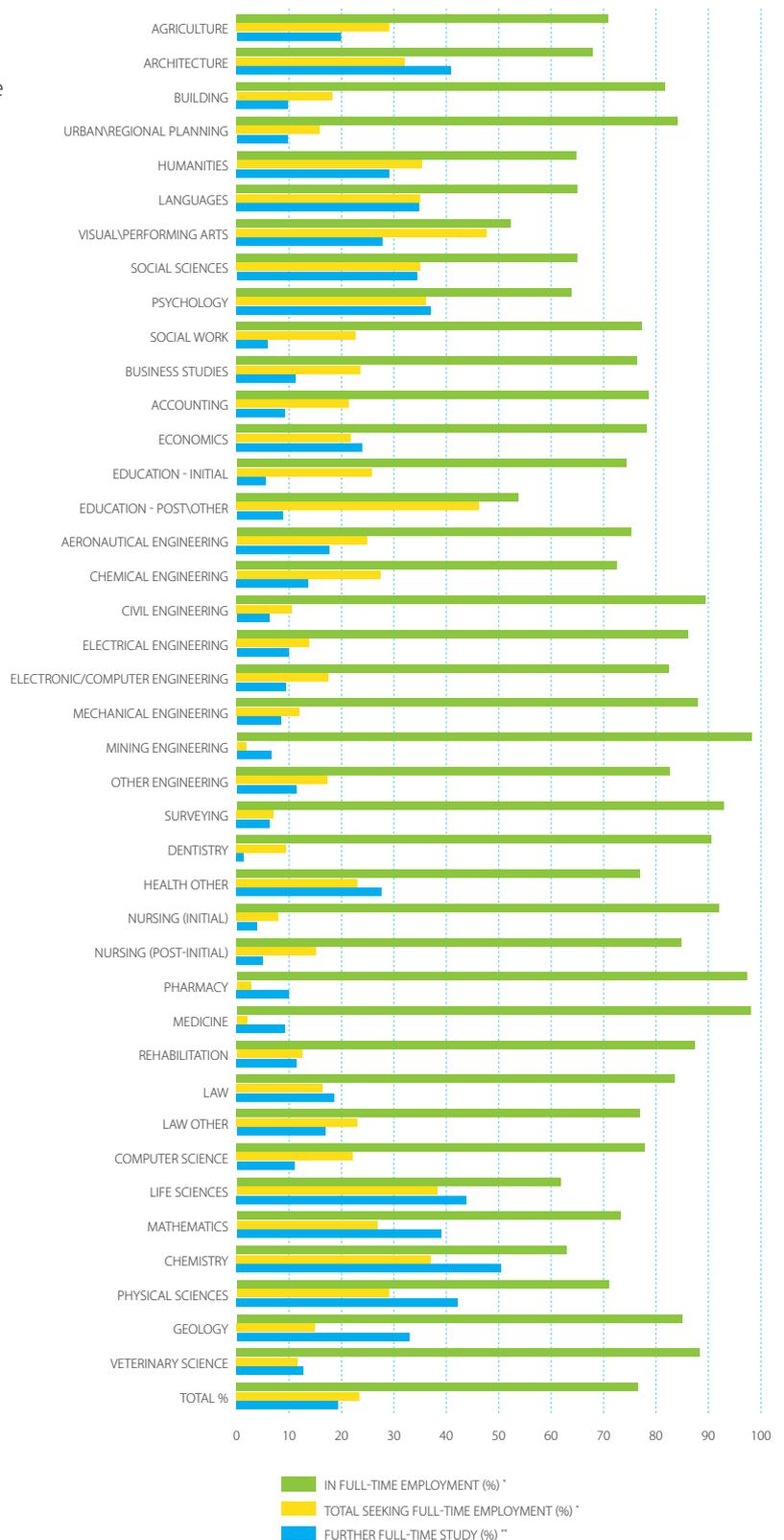


Figure 3: Bachelor degree graduates available for full-time employment or in further full-time study by field of education, 2011 (%)

\*Of those graduates wanting full-time employment.  
\*\*Of all graduates.

## Salary information

In the 2011 AGS, the median annual starting salary for new bachelor degree graduates aged less than 25 and in their first full-time employment in Australia was \$50,000 (up from \$49,000 last year). This was 20.2 per cent higher than the median annual earnings for all Australians aged 20–24 as at August 2010 which was \$41,600\*.

At an overall level, the median starting salary for male graduates (\$52,000) was slightly higher than that for female graduates (\$50,000). Some of the salary differences between males and females can be due to differences in course selection and employment choices between the sexes.

In the overall Australian working population, those with a bachelor degree earned a median annual salary of \$57,700 in 2009 (\$68,700 for males and \$50,600 for females)\*\*.

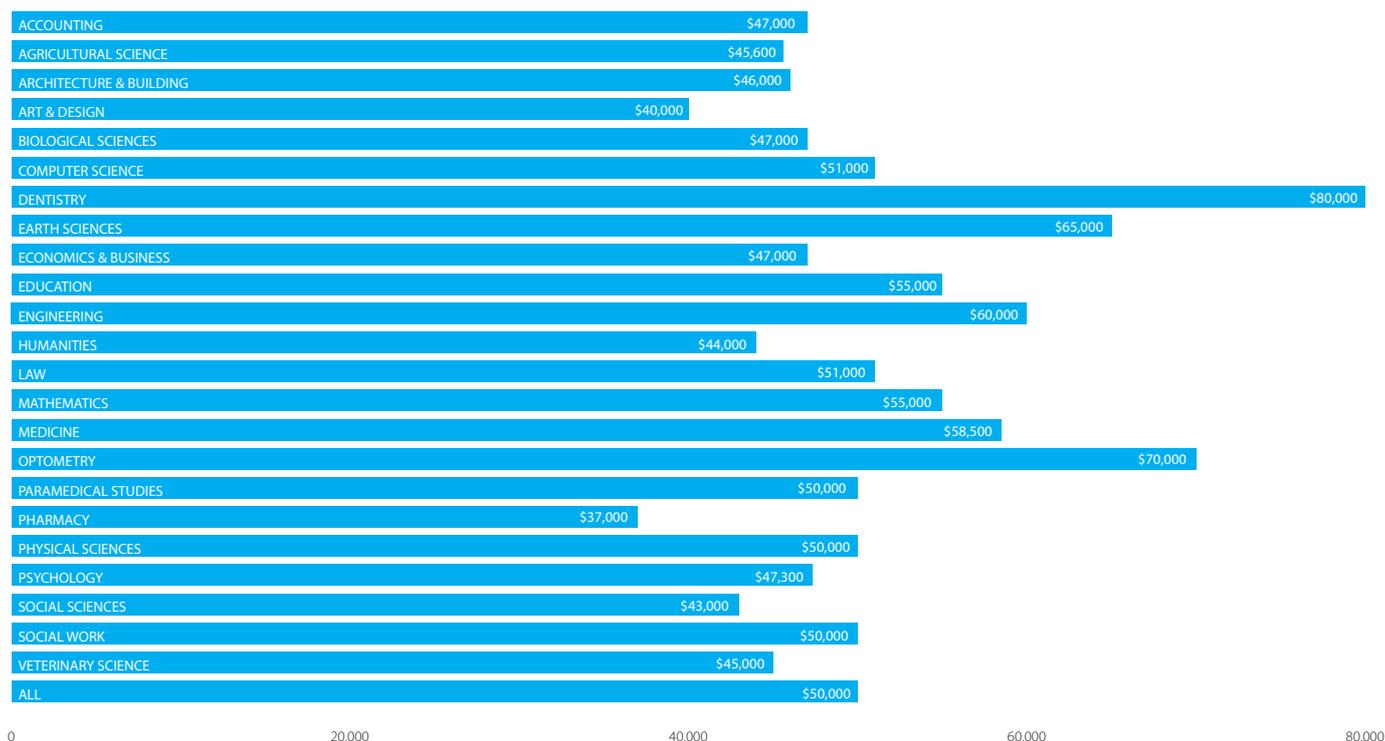


Figure 4: Median starting salaries of bachelor degree graduates in first full-time employment and aged less than 25, 2011 (\$,000)

\* Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership, August 2010 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 6310.0, April 2011)

\*\* Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership, August 2009 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 6310.0, April 2010)

## 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 typically include personal growth, a fulfilling career with stronger employment prospects and higher earnings potential than non-graduates.

Make an appointment to meet with the career 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 or contact us

**Graduate Careers Australia** | +61 3 9605 3700  
[research@graduatecareers.edu.au](mailto:research@graduatecareers.edu.au)  
[www.graduatecareers.com.au](http://www.graduatecareers.com.au)

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 higher education graduates; the Beyond Graduation Survey – a follow-up to the AGS three and five years after course completion; and the Graduate Outlook Survey, a study of the recruitment 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).