

2013 Graduate Outlook Survey

A Summary Report for Accounting and Finance employers

Currently in its ninth year, the GOS has become a valuable source of information on graduate recruitment trends across the sector. This report investigates current graduate recruitment practices according to the participating employers belonging to the Accounting and Finance industries. Important content covered in this summary report includes:

- ❖ Graduate intake figures in 2013;
- ❖ Key issues affecting graduate recruitment;
- ❖ Recruitment selection criteria (most desirable);
- ❖ The latest graduate program promotion methods; and
- ❖ Factors influencing graduate attrition and retention.

Of the 500 graduate employers who participated in the 2013 Graduate Outlook Survey (GOS), 49 of them were from Accounting and Finance industries.

What's happening in graduate recruitment?

Overall, 88 per cent of employers from Accounting and Finance industries indicated that they employed graduates in 2013. This represents a 7 percentage point decline when compared to 2012's intake, which was recorded at 95 per cent.

Of Accounting and Finance employers in 2013 (see Figure 1):

- ❖ 12 per cent did not recruit any graduates at all;
- ❖ Just over 60 per cent recruited between 1 and 20 graduates;
- ❖ Just over one quarter (26 per cent) recruited more than 20 graduates.

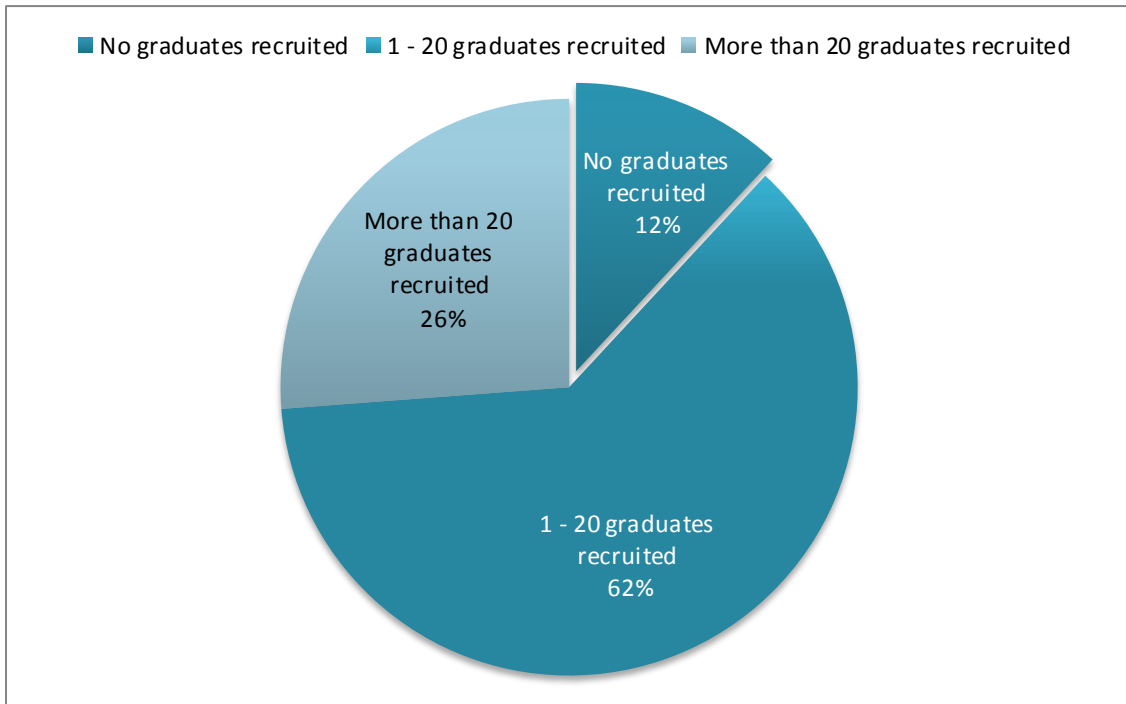


Figure 1: Graduate intake for A/F¹, 2013

Key issues affecting graduate recruitment

We asked Accounting and Finance employers to identify the key issues which affect the total number of graduates they recruit in a given year. Table 1 presents these key issues, ranked according to the top six issues for Accounting and Finance employers, benchmarked against all industry groups.

The top three key issues that currently affect the total number of graduates recruited each year, according to Accounting and Finance employers were:

1. Economic conditions
2. Quality, experience and skill of graduate
3. Budgetary constraints

Table 1: Key issues currently affecting total number of graduates recruited, 2013 (Rank)

Key issues that currently affect the total number of graduates recruited each year	2013	ALL
Economic Conditions	1	1
Quality, experience and skill of graduate	2	3
Budgetary Constraints	3	2
Staff Turnover	4	5
Headcount	5	6
Ability to provide internal support (mentoring capacity/ongoing employment)	6	4

¹ Accounting and Finance

How do you select graduates?

Accounting and Finance employers were asked to rate which three selection criteria (aside from relevant qualifications) they considered to be *most* important when evaluating applicants. These are presented in Table 2, ranked from most (1) to least (10) nominated and benchmarked against all industry groups.

The top three most important selection criteria for Accounting and Finance employers in 2013 were:

1. Interpersonal and communication skills (written and oral)
2. Critical reasoning & analytical skills / Problem solving / Lateral thinking / Technical skills
3. Passion/ Knowledge of industry/ Drive/ Commitment/ Attitude

There is little divergence between Accounting and Finance employers' selection criteria rankings and those of all industry groups. In line with all industry groups, the three least nominated selection criterions were 'teamwork skills', 'activities' and 'leadership skills'.

Overall, 'leadership skills' was ranked last by Accounting and Finance employers; potentially viewing this as a skill that can be fostered within an organisation once a graduate begins in a program.

Table 2: Most important selection criteria when recruiting graduates, 2013 (Rank)

Selection Criteria	2013	All
Interpersonal and communication skills (written and oral)	1	1
Critical reasoning and analytical skills (etc.)	2	3
Passion/Knowledge of industry (etc.)	3	2
Cultural alignment / Values fit	4	6
Calibre of academic results	5	4
Emotional intelligence	6	7
Work experience	7	5
Teamwork skills	8	8
Activities	9	9
Leadership skills	10	10

Popular methods to promote your graduate program

When Accounting and Finance employers were asked about the methods used to promote their 2013 graduate program (see Figure 2), the vast majority of employers, indicated that they promoted their graduate program through:

1. Their organisation's website (91.7 per cent)
2. Social media websites (66.7 per cent)

3. Graduate Recruitment directories - online (63.9 per cent).

The use of traditional newspaper advertising was ranked quite low (13.9 per cent) in comparison to other types of promotion methods used.

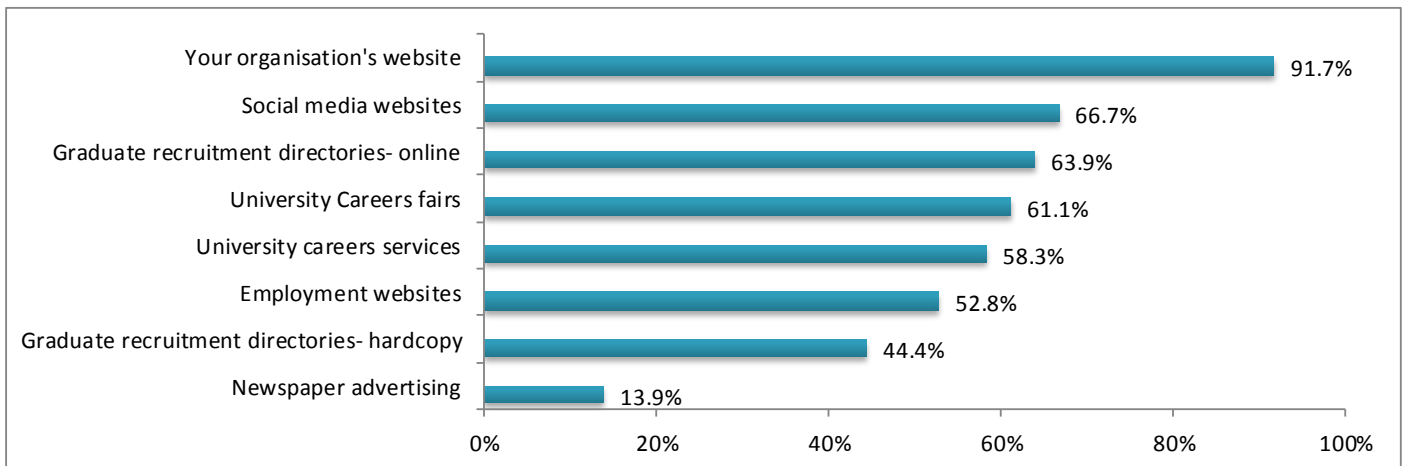


Figure 2: Methods used to promote graduate program, 2013

Why graduates leave an employer

Employers were asked to identify the factors that they believe contribute to a graduate's decision to change employers. Employers were presented with a list of ten key factors that may affect graduate attrition and were asked to rate each on a five-point importance scale (i.e. not at all important, not very important, somewhat important, quite important, very important). These are listed in Figure 3, in order of the proportion of employers who rated them as being either *quite* or *very* important.

The top factors to contribute to a graduate's decision to change employers in 2013, according to employers from Accounting and Finance industries were:

1. Relationship with direct manager/supervisor (90.6 per cent)
2. Desire for greater professional development (84.8 per cent)
3. Seeking greater opportunities for advancement, and organisational culture (both 78.8 per cent).

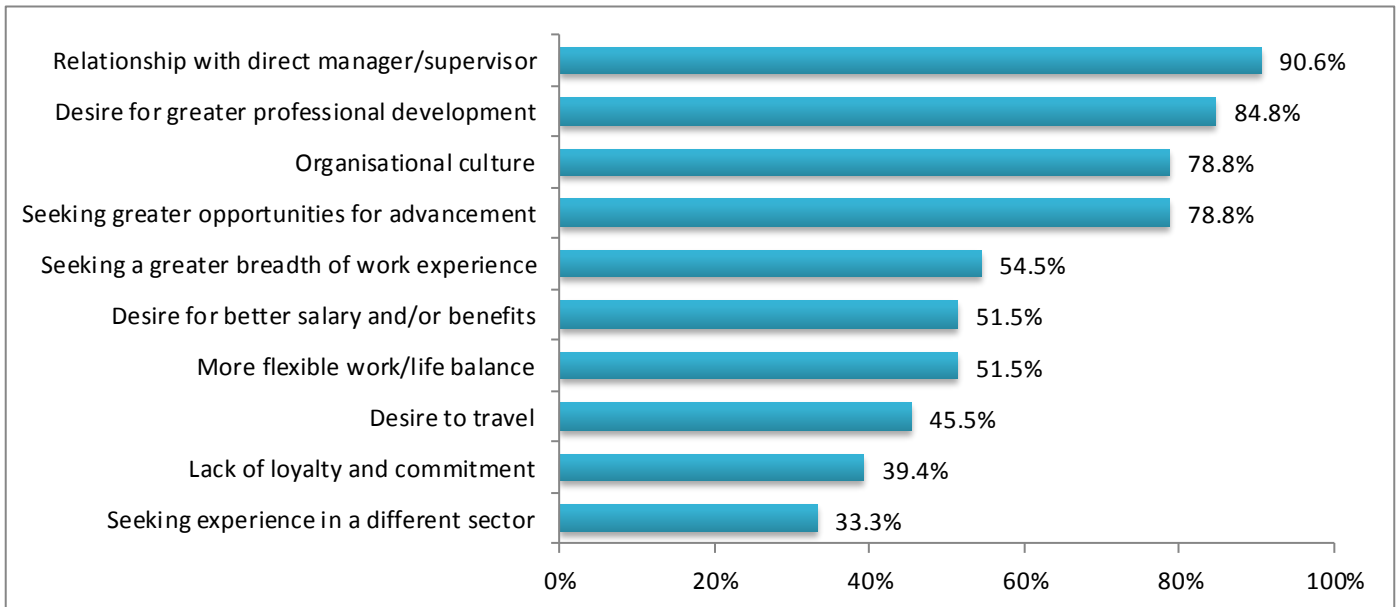


Figure 3: Quite/very important factors in graduate attrition, 2013

Those factors that were least important to graduate attrition with fewer than 50 per cent of Accounting and Finance employers indicating they were an issue were ‘desire to travel,’ ‘lack of loyalty and commitment’, and ‘seeking experience in a different sector.’

It is encouraging for employers that graduate attrition seems to be primarily influenced by factors largely within the control of the organisation, at least according to Accounting and Finance employers surveyed as part of the 2013 GOS.

How to retain your graduates

To better understand what employers are doing to encourage graduates to remain in their organisation, Accounting and Finance employers were asked to rate (based on their own experiences) the effectiveness of ten common graduate retention strategies on a five-point effectiveness scale (i.e. not at all effective, not very effective, somewhat effective, quite effective, very effective).

These strategies are presented in Figure 4, in terms of the proportion of employers from Accounting and Finance who considered them as being either *quite* or *very* effective.

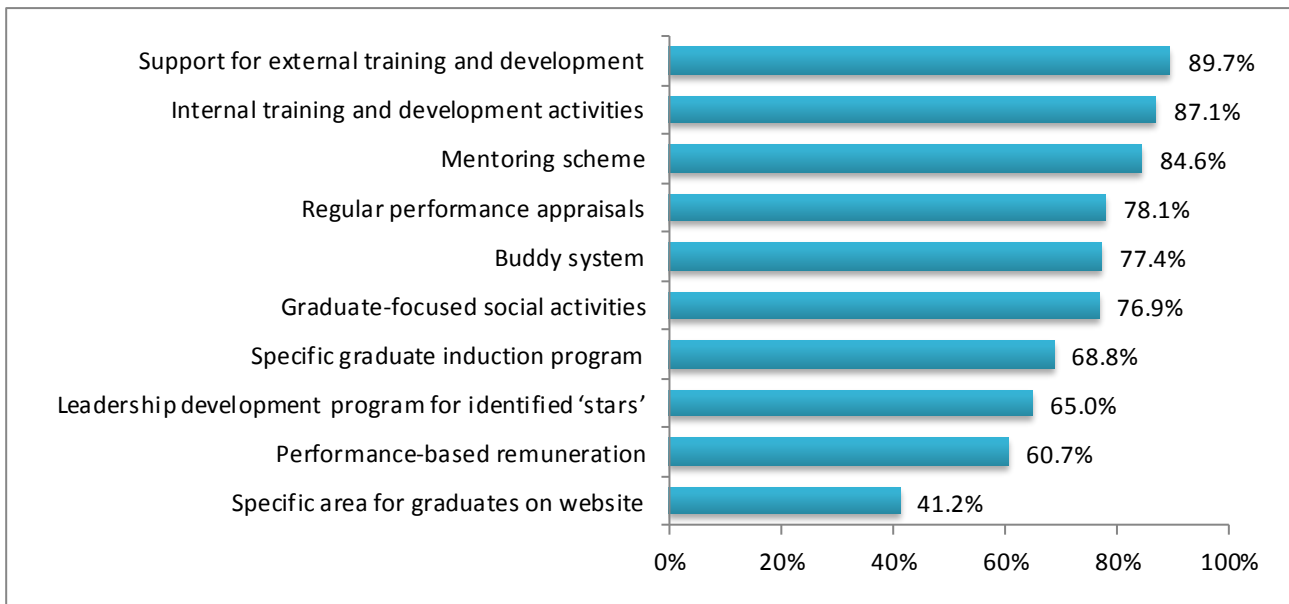


Figure 4: Quite/very effective graduate retention strategies, 2013 (Rank)

The three most effective retention strategies according to Accounting and Finance employers in 2013 were:

1. Support for external training development (89.7 per cent)
2. Internal training and development activities (87.1 per cent)
3. Mentoring scheme (84.6 per cent)

Professional training and development opportunities can further a graduate's knowledge and skill-set. Employers using these as retention strategies may also view this as a way to foster a longer-term commitment from a graduate.

All industry groups ranked 'mentoring schemes' in second place whereas Accounting and Finance employers placed less emphasis on this retention strategy ranking it in third place.

Further Information

The Graduate Outlook Survey is one of a number of graduate outcomes surveys conducted annually by Graduate Careers Australia (GCA). For access to full report, [click here](#).

GCA produce a number of free reports on graduate outcomes data each year, as well as offer tailored reporting and data solutions on graduate recruitment practices and trends within Australasia.

GCA is a not-for-profit organisation whose research work is largely Federal Government funded. We also produce a number of careers resources for students and graduates, including *Graduate Opportunities*. For more information about the valuable work we do, please contact the GCA research team on (03) 9605 3700 or research@graduatecareers.com.au, or visit our website at www.graduatecareers.com.au.