

# GradStats

February 2018

## EMPLOYMENT AND SALARY OUTCOMES OF HIGHER EDUCATION GRADUATES FROM 2017

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Graduate Careers Australia's (GCA) annual Australian Graduate Survey (AGS) was a study of the activities of new higher education graduates around four months after the completion of their qualifications. Every year since 1976, new graduates who completed the requirements for awards in the preceding year were surveyed regarding their major activities, including labour market engagement, further full-time study, or their unavailability for work or study.

With the cessation of Federal Government funding, the AGS concluded after the 2015 survey, with the Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT – [www.qilt.edu.au](http://www.qilt.edu.au)) suite of surveys replacing it.

Over the years, *GradStats*<sup>1</sup> has presented a summary of national AGS data concerning the destinations of Australian resident bachelor degree graduates. This edition will endeavour to provide a summary link between the last AGS figures and the first two tranches of related QILT results. Figures for 2016 and 2017 quoted in this publication largely come from the QILT Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS) 2016 and 2017 National Reports (which can be downloaded from [www.qilt.edu.au/about-this-site/graduate-employment](http://www.qilt.edu.au/about-this-site/graduate-employment)).

It must be noted that there are a number of ways in which QILT departs from AGS methods and data analysis, and comparisons of results between the two surveys need to be read with that in mind. The 2017 GOS report notes that

*The 2017 GOS was primarily conducted as a national online survey among 97 higher education institutions [and a] ... total of 120,747 valid survey responses were collected across all study levels, representing a response rate of 39.7 per cent.*

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<sup>1</sup> Previous editions of *GradStats* can be downloaded from [www.graduatecareers.com.au/Research/ResearchReports](http://www.graduatecareers.com.au/Research/ResearchReports)

## Overview

The 2017 GOS report saw a further slight improvement in the short-term employment prospects of new graduates compared with the 2015 AGS and 2016 GOS reports.

- **71.8 per cent were in full-time employment** at the time of the 2017 GOS compared with 70.9 per cent in 2016 (see Fig. 1). This is notably up from 68.1 per cent in the 2014 AGS (see Fig. 2)
- The full-time employment figure for males (see Fig. 1) was 71.2 per cent in 2017 (70.1 per cent in 2016) while for females it was 72.1 per cent (71.5 per cent in 2016).
- **The overall employment rate for undergraduates was 86.5 per cent in 2017.** This refers to graduates who had any employment (whether full or part time – see Fig. 1).
- **Middle- to longer-term employment prospects** for undergraduates remain strong. QILT's follow-up longitudinal GOS (GOS-L) showed that three years after a full-time employment rate of 67.5 per cent in the 2014 AGS, **by 2017 this had grown to 89.3 per cent.** GCA's Beyond Graduation Survey (BGS) showed similar improvements in employment figures three years out.
- **Bachelor degree graduates in the wider Australian workforce** (aged 15-74) had (at the time of the 2017 GOS) an **unemployment rate of just 3.0 per cent** compared with an overall population rate of 5.4 per cent and 8.2 per cent for those with no post-school qualifications (see Fig. 3).
- The **median annual starting salary** for new Australian resident bachelor degree graduates in full-time employment in Australia was **\$60,000 in 2017**, up from \$57,900 in 2016 (see Table 3).
- **Just over one-fifth of respondents** (20.7 per cent, down from 21.8 per cent in 2016), were **undertaking further full-time study** (see Fig. 5).
- **Overall satisfaction with courses** as measured by the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) remains at an elevated level, with **79.4 per cent of graduates** expressing satisfaction with their courses (see Fig. 6).
- Just over half of the **graduates who found full-time employment** in 2014 or 2015 learned of their job first through one of three strategies (see Table 4): **searching advertisements on the internet** (26.9 per cent), **talking to family or friends** (14.2 per cent) and **visiting university or college careers services** (11.7 per cent).
- Overall, **84 per cent of employers were highly satisfied** with the performance of their new recruits.

## Full-time employment

The results of the 2017 GOS show that 71.8 per cent of new bachelor degree graduates seeking full-time employment had found a position by the time of the survey – four months after course completion. This was up slightly from the comparable figure of 70.9 per cent in 2016 and 68.8 per cent in the 2015 AGS (see Figure 1).

The 2017 GOS report notes (p.3) that

*This continues the steady improvement in the full-time employment rate of graduates in recent years from the low point of 68.1 per cent in 2014. This is consistent with a modest improvement in the overall labour market over the period.*

Of those graduates available for full-time employment, similar percentages of males and females (71.2 per cent and 72.1 per cent respectively - see Figures 2 and 3) had found a full-time position by the time of the 2017 survey. The comparative figures from the 2016 GOS were 70.1 and 71.5 per cent.

The GOS reports also calculate an overall employment rate. This refers to the percentage of all employed graduates (full-time plus part-time or casual employment), as a proportion of those available for any employment. In 2017, the overall employment rate for all graduates was 86.5 per cent (84.2 per cent for males and 87.7 per cent for females – see Figure 1).

AGS figures for 2015 are also presented in Figures 1 and 2, but the 2017 GOS report notes that “caution should be used when directly comparing the different series due to changes in survey methodology”.

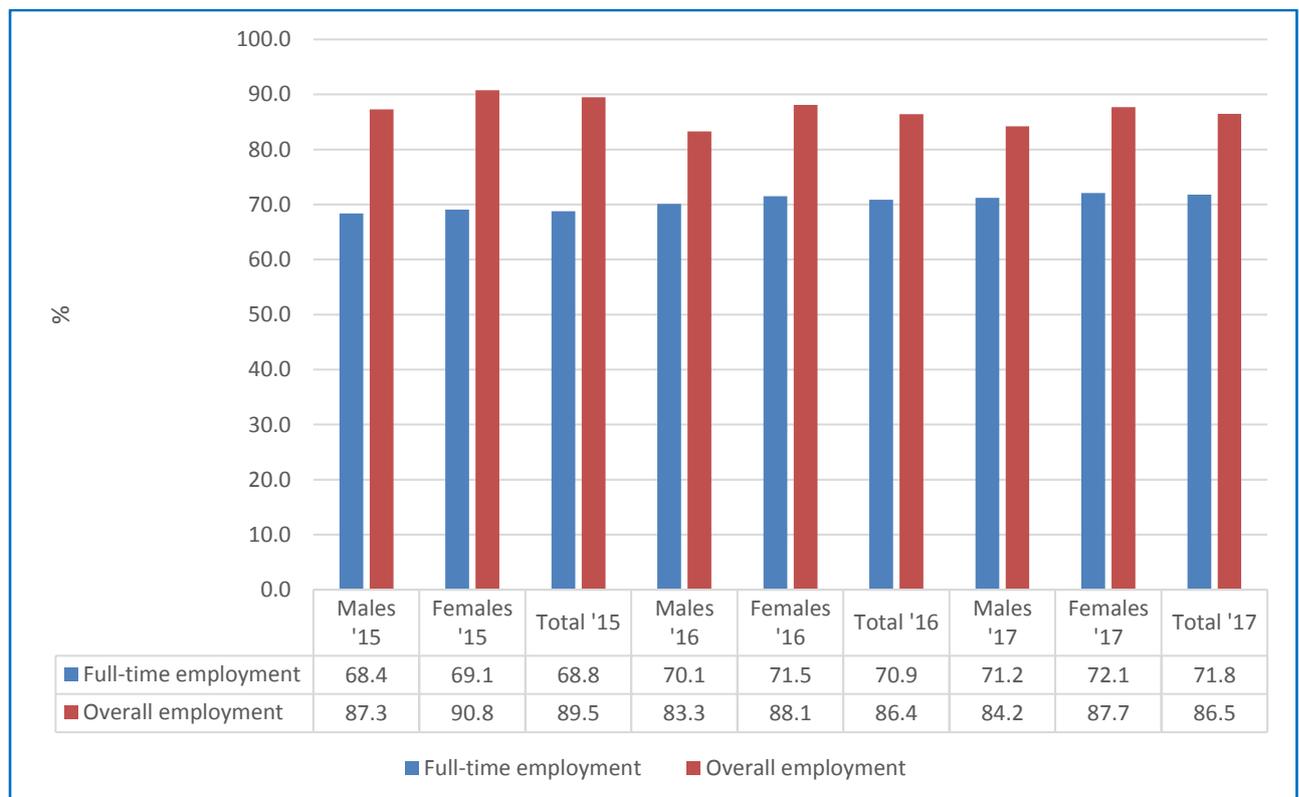


Figure 1: Undergraduates in employment, by sex, 2015-7 (%)

Sources: 2015 Australian Graduate Survey and 2016-17 Graduate Outcomes Survey

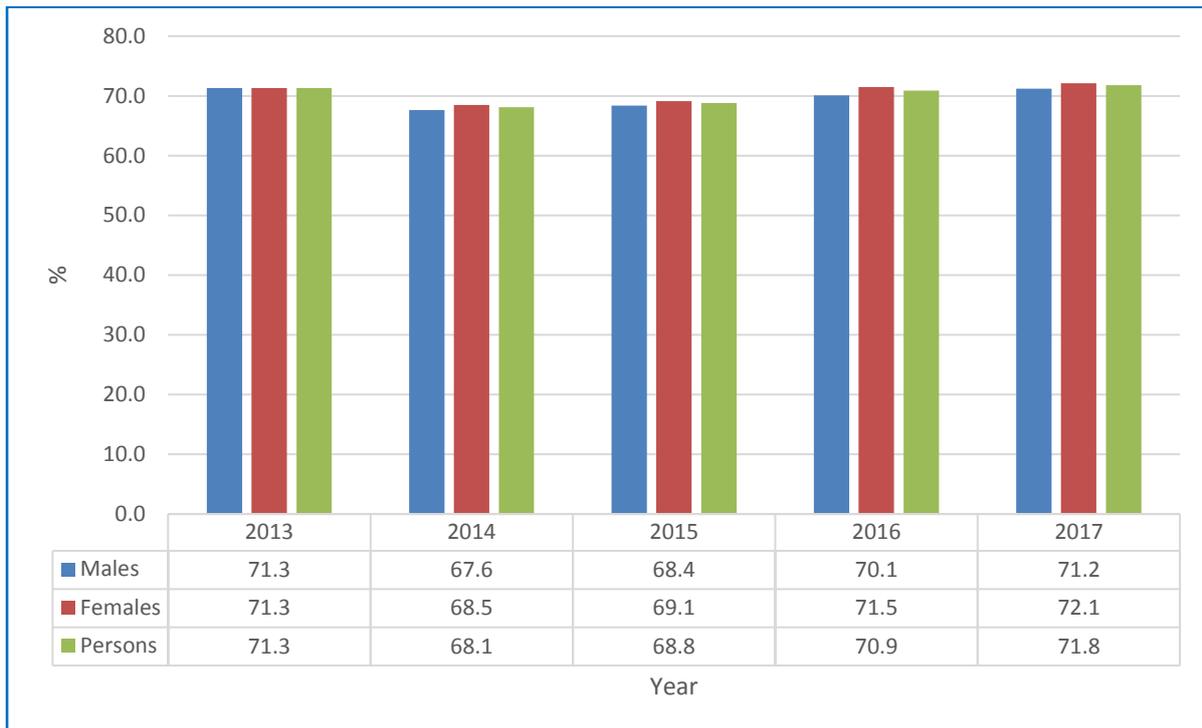


Figure 2: Undergraduates in full-time employment, by sex, 2013-17 (%)

Sources: 2013-15 Australian Graduate Survey and 2016-7 Graduate Outcomes Survey

## Long-term full-time employment prospects

Of additional note regarding the employment prospects of new graduates are longer-term figures, which remain strong.

QILT's 2017 follow-up longitudinal GOS (GOS-L) showed that after a full-time employment rate of 67.5 per cent<sup>2</sup> was found in the 2014 AGS, three years later in 2017 this had grown to 89.3 per cent. GCA's Beyond Graduation Survey (BGS<sup>3</sup>) showed similar improvements in employment figures three years out.

And looking at the wider population, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures for May 2017<sup>4</sup> show that, in the general labour force (aged 15-74), just 3.0 per cent of bachelor degree graduates were unemployed (see Figure 3). The comparative figure for those with a postgraduate degree was 3.6 per cent, and for those with a graduate or postgraduate diploma it was 3.1 per cent.

For the total population (with or without non-school qualifications), the unemployment rate was 5.4 per cent and 8.2 per cent for persons with no post-secondary qualifications. Longer-term prospects for those with higher education qualifications remain very positive.

<sup>2</sup> This was re-calculated by QILT for the GOS-L report. The 2014 AGS reported 68.1 per cent, as shown in Figure 2 in this document.

<sup>3</sup> Download the BGS report from: <http://www.graduatecareers.com.au/research/surveys/beyondgraduationsurvey/>

<sup>4</sup> ABS, 2017, *Education and Work, Australia, May 2017*, 6227.0 (Table 10), Canberra.

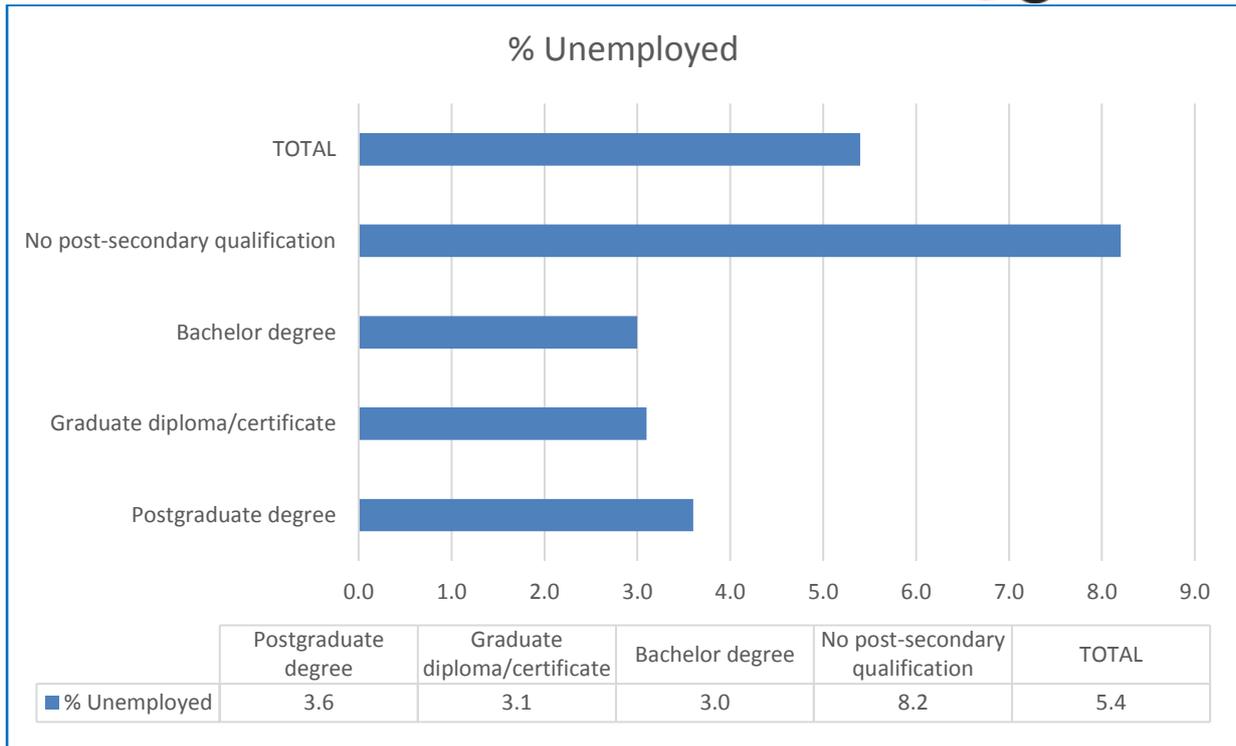


Figure 3: Unemployment rates by level of educational attainment, May 2017, Australian labour force aged 15-74

Source: *Education and Work, Australia, May 2017*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, publication 6227.0, released 6 November 2017 (Table 10)

## Part-time employment

As in the general population, part-time employment is an important option for some new graduates, with females more likely to be in such. The 2017 GOS report notes that 37.9 per cent of all employed new graduates were working on a part-time basis (41.1 per cent for females and 32.2 per cent for males – see Figure 4).

Of those in any employment at the time of the 2017 GOS, 19.7 per cent were working part time and seeking more hours. Females (20.5 per cent) were also more likely than males (18.2 per cent) to be seeking more hours (defined as ‘involuntary’ part-timers in the 2016 GOS report).

A further 14.2 per cent were in part-time work and not seeking additional hours (described as ‘voluntary’ part-timers in the 2016 GOS report). As with ‘involuntary’ part-time work, females were more likely than males to be in ‘voluntary’ part-time employment (16.3 per cent and 10.1 per cent respectively).

While reliable comparisons with the old AGS categories are not possible based on the published data, this ‘voluntary’ category would broadly coincide with the ‘working part-time, not seeking full-time’ AGS category while the ‘involuntary’ group would seem to coincide with those ‘working part-time, and seeking full-time’.

In the 2017 GOS (Table 5 in that report), graduates from the fields of

- creative arts
- communications
- psychology
- tourism, hospitality, personal services,
- humanities, culture and social sciences
- science and mathematics
- health services and support

were more than five percentage points above the overall average of 19.7 per cent of employed graduates in ‘involuntary’ part-time positions and thus seeking more hours.

Table 6 in that report reveals that slightly more than half of ‘involuntary’ part-time employment (52.3 per cent) was based on labour market factors, and this figure was made up largely of 19.6 per cent who had not been able to find a suitable job in their area of expertise and 16.8 per cent who were unable to find a job with a suitable number of hours. The report notes that “recent trends towards increasing rates of part-time work ... reflect at least, in part, the relatively weak state of the labour market over the past decade”.

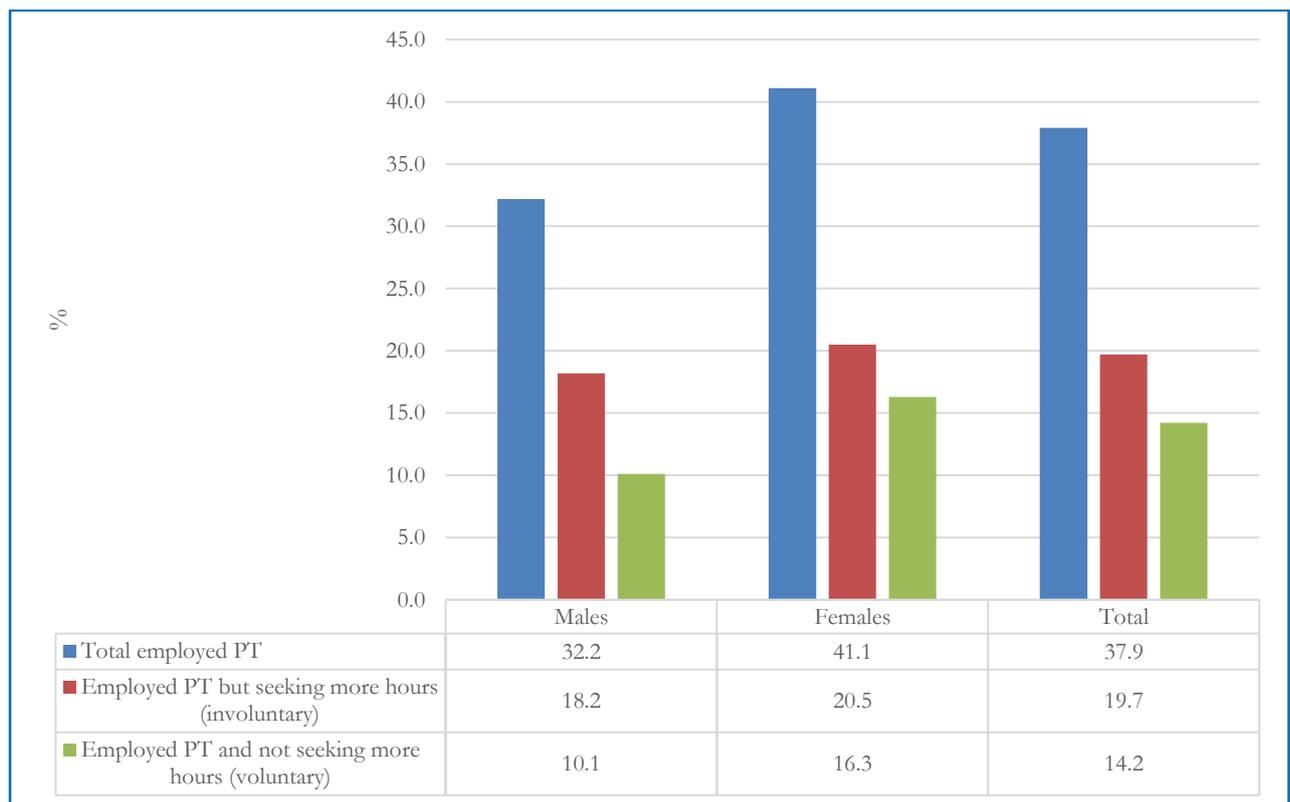


Figure 4: Undergraduates in part-time employment, by sex, 2017 (%)

Source: 2017 Graduate Outcomes Survey

## Further full-time study

The proportion of graduates continuing in further full-time study in 2017 was 20.7 per cent, down slightly from 21.8 per cent in 2016 (see Figure 5). Historically, between one-fifth and one-quarter of respondents elect to continue in further full-time study<sup>5</sup> with the figures generally falling when labour market prospects are stronger. This relationship between further full-time study and full-time employment figures will be of interest.

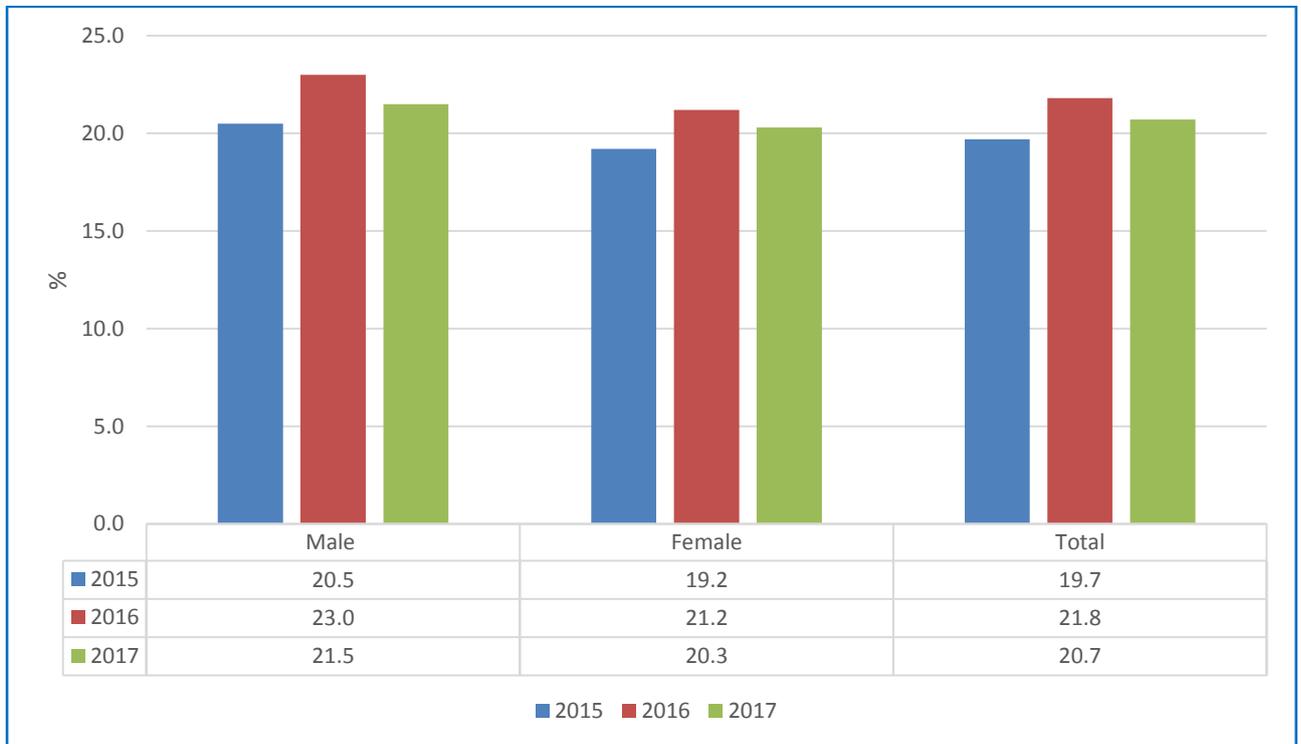


Figure 5: Undergraduates going into further full-time study, by sex, 2015-16 (%)

Sources: 2015 Australian Graduate Survey and 2016-17 Graduate Outcomes Survey

<sup>5</sup> See related discussion in *Graduate Destinations* reports available from [www.graduatecareers.com.au/Research/ResearchReports/GraduateDestinations](http://www.graduatecareers.com.au/Research/ResearchReports/GraduateDestinations)

## Employment and equity groups

As with the AGS, the GOS examines employment outcomes for graduates from various sub-groups and equity groups (see Table 1).

As a general rule, some caution is required when comparing results for such groups as they can be affected by other variables not taken into account here. For example, the 2017 GOS report shows that those who had studied externally were notably more likely to have been in full-time employment at the time of the survey (80.3 per cent) than those who had studied mainly internally (70.5 per cent). However, external students are often also studying part-time and can have full-time employment while enrolled and this gives them an artificial ‘advantage’ in terms of such unadjusted employment figures.

The relatively positive employment figures for indigenous graduates (77.5 per cent) compared with 71.7 per cent for non-indigenous graduates should be interpreted with a little caution because a rather small number of respondents (980) are involved; however, the response numbers were representative of the survey sample and it is worth noting that most editions of *GradStats* have observed similar figures over the years.

The figures in Table 1 indicate that graduates from a non-English speaking background (53.9 per cent) were taking longer to find full-time employment compared with graduates from an English-speaking background (72.3 per cent), as were those who identified as having a disability (61.5 per cent cf. 72.4 per cent).

Older graduates (over 30) were also more likely to be in full-time employment (74.0 per cent) than their younger colleagues (71.3 per cent).

	Full-time employment (%)			Overall employment (%)		
	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017
<b>Age</b>						
30 years or under	68.1	70.5	71.3	89.8	86.4	86.5
Over 30 years	72.6	73.2	74.0	88.1	86.1	86.3
<b>Indigenous status</b>						
Indigenous	80.6	74.5	77.5	90.6	86.0	88.8
Non-Indigenous	68.8	70.9	71.7	89.5	86.4	86.4
<b>Home language</b>						
English	70.3	71.5	72.3	90.7	86.8	86.9
Language other than English	60.6	55.0	53.9	83.0	73.6	71.6
<b>Disability</b>						
Reported disability	56.2	60.9	61.5	77.5	79.5	78.7
No disability	69.2	71.5	72.4	89.9	86.8	86.9
<b>Mode of study</b>						
Internal and mixed mode	67.5	69.7	70.5	89.2	85.8	86.0
External	81.9	81.0	80.3	92.2	91.0	90.2
<b>Socio-economic status</b>						
High	NA	72.2	73.6	NA	87.3	87.3
Medium	NA	70.1	71.1	NA	86.6	86.7
Low	NA	69.4	70.3	NA	84.7	85.0
<b>Location</b>						
Metro	67.8	69.3	70.6	NA	86.0	86.0
Regional/Remote	72.0	75.2	75.5	NA	88.3	88.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>68.8</b>	<b>70.9</b>	<b>71.8</b>	<b>89.5</b>	<b>86.4</b>	<b>86.5</b>
<i>Sources: 2015 Australian Graduate Survey and 2016-17 Graduate Outcomes Survey</i>						

## Employment by study area

The 2017 GOS report (Table 3 in that report, Table 2 in this document) shows the full-time and overall employment figures for each of 21 QILT-based fields of study with 2015 AGS figures adapted into the QILT fields. Fields which achieved a full-time employment rate of 80 per cent or better in 2017 included

- medicine
- pharmacy
- dentistry
- rehabilitation
- teacher education, and
- veterinary science

Most of these fields were also strong in the 2015 and 2016 figures. However, teacher education showed a notable improvement, moving from 71.7 per cent full-time employment in 2015 to 81.7 per cent in 2017. The fields of creative arts and science and mathematics returned full-time employment figures lower than 60 per cent in 2017.

There are important factors to note regarding these figures. Creative arts graduates often find themselves in unrelated part-time employment while practising their art or craft on a part-time basis. Simply put, there are few available full-time positions for new creative arts graduates in their fields and sometimes a degree of entrepreneurship and what some might define as self-employment, is required in terms of establishing their own careers.

Moreover, it is worth noting that the graduates of some fields of study can often take longer to find full-time employment than those from other fields, and this slower labour market uptake of such graduates reflects more the state of the labour market, and not necessarily the quality of the graduates or their study choices. Further, not all employment reported by graduates will necessarily be in the area in which the graduate trained, as opportunities in relevant occupations can be limited and it might be the case that some prefer to work on a part-time basis, or not at all, while seeking relevant employment.

Additionally, within the field of study aggregations used in Table 2, there can be notable variation in terms of the proportions in and seeking full-time employment at the more detailed field of education level. For example, while the proportion of agriculture and environmental studies graduates in full-time work was relatively low in 2017, closer examination of the detailed fields that make up the overall group can show marked differences in outcomes. In previous AGS reports, it was shown that while employment figures for the aggregated field were low, the figures for some component fields such as agricultural science and agribusiness were very strong.

In terms of overall employment (full-time and part-time figures combined), all fields achieved 80 per cent or higher. The fields of

- medicine
- pharmacy
- rehabilitation
- dentistry
- teacher education, and
- nursing

all demonstrated strong employment prospects with over 90 per cent overall employment.

Table 2: Undergraduate employment outcomes by field of study, 2015-2017 (%) \*\*

Study area	Full-time employment			Total employment		
	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017
Agriculture and environmental studies	58.1	59.8	66.3	84.0	84.2	84.2
Architecture and built environment	75.4	75.2	75.2	89.3	85.8	87.2
Business and management	72.7	75.5	76.5	90.1	87.1	87.2
Communications	53.1	60.7	60.6	85.4	83.0	84.6
Computing and information systems	67.0	72.5	73.3	83.2	82.5	82.1
Creative arts	47.0	55.0	53.2	85.4	81.4	80.0
Dentistry	86.9	82.3	86.8	95.6	94.1	95.7
Engineering	73.9	76.4	79.4	85.7	83.9	86.5
Health services and support	67.9	70.9	72.7	91.9	90.1	89.9
Humanities, culture and social sciences	59.3	61.8	62.2	86.6	83.5	83.6
Law and paralegal studies	73.0	72.6	74.8	89.8	84.3	85.3
Medicine	96.3	98.2	95.9	98.7	97.4	95.9
Nursing	78.7	82.5	79.3	95.1	93.3	91.7
Pharmacy	95.6	96.3	95.2	97.6	96.0	95.8
Psychology	55.4	60.8	60.3	86.4	85.0	84.8
Rehabilitation	87.4	84.0	85.7	96.1	95.2	95.8
Science and mathematics	49.5	61.0	59.0	82.1	81.5	80.6
Social work	71.2	66.7	70.9	87.7	85.5	86.1
Teacher education	71.7	80.3	81.7	94.4	94.3	93.0
Tourism, hospitality, personal services, sport and recreation	57.8	68.1	62.9	92.4	92.5	86.8
Veterinary science	84.9	89.8	81.4	93.0	89.4	87.5
<b>All study areas*</b>	<b>68.8</b>	<b>70.9</b>	<b>71.8</b>	<b>89.5</b>	<b>86.4</b>	<b>86.5</b>
*For 2016, where a graduate completes combined degrees across two study areas, their outcomes are included in both study areas. 'All study areas' figures count each graduate once only.						
** 2015 figures from the 2015 Australian Graduate Survey, 2016-17 figures from the 2016-17 Graduate Outcomes Survey						

## Graduate earnings

The advent of the QILT suite of surveys saw a change to the way in which graduate earnings are reported. The AGS used, as a basic measure, ‘graduate starting salaries’, which represented the median annual earnings of domestic graduates aged less than 25 and in their first full-time employment in Australia.

Thus, GCA's overall graduate starting salary figure in 2015 was \$54,000, and the re-defined 2016 and 2017 QILT starting salary figures used in GOS were \$57,900 and \$60,000 respectively (see Table 3). To avoid confusion, further discussion in this document will focus on the QILT definition.

Study area	Males (\$,000)			Females (\$,000)			Total (\$,000)		
	2015*	2016	2017	2015*	2016	2017	2015*	2016	2017
Agriculture and environmental studies	50.0	57.0	57.4	48.0	53.5	55.0	49.0	55.0	55.8
Architecture and built environment	50.0	59.0	60.0	45.0	50.0	52.2	45.0	55.0	56.4
Business and management	50.0	57.0	58.0	49.5	53.0	55.0	50.0	55.0	55.2
Communications	47.0	48.0	50.0	45.0	48.0	50.0	45.0	48.0	50.0
Computing and Information Systems	53.0	59.5	60.0	57.0	60.0	58.0	55.0	60.0	59.9
Creative arts	42.0	50.0	49.6	40.0	47.0	47.2	40.0	48.0	48.0
Dentistry		84.0	94.6	76.5	82.8	75.1	80.0	83.5	78.3
Engineering	60.0	62.6	63.5	63.0	62.3	65.0	60.0	62.6	64.0
Health services and support	55.0	64.0	62.6	56.0	58.2	60.5	56.0	59.5	61.3
Humanities, culture and social sciences	52.0	57.4	59.6	50.0	54.8	55.1	50.0	55.0	47.0
Law and paralegal studies	55.5	63.0	63.0	55.0	57.4	58.0	55.0	60.0	60.0
Medicine	65.0	70.0	70.0	64.0	68.2	70.0	65.0	69.2	70.3
Nursing	55.5	60.5	62.0	53.0	58.4	60.0	53.0	58.4	60.0
Pharmacy	40.5	43.8	45.9	42.0	43.6	43.8	42.0	43.8	44.2
Psychology	51.5	54.0	60.0	50.0	54.8	56.6	50.0	54.8	57.6
Rehabilitation	59.0	60.7	62.6	58.0	59.0	60.5	59.0	60.0	61.5
Science and mathematics	54.0	60.0	59.2	51.0	54.0	56.9	52.0	55.2	57.5
Social work		60.5	63.2	55.5	60.0	62.5	55.5	60.0	62.6
Teacher education	61.0	63.6	65.0	60.3	62.6	63.4	61.0	62.9	63.5
Tourism, hospitality, personal services, sport and recreation			55.0		51.4	51.8	40.0	52.2	52.2
Veterinary science				49.5	50.0	50.6	50.0	50.0	51.6
<b>All study areas**</b>	<b>55.0</b>	<b>60.0</b>	<b>60.1</b>	<b>53.0</b>	<b>56.4</b>	<b>59.0</b>	<b>54.0</b>	<b>57.9</b>	<b>60.0</b>
GCA 2015 figures reflecting QILT definition <sup>^</sup>	58.0			54.0			55.0		
<i>*Graduates aged less than 25 and in first full-time employment.</i>									
<i>**For 2016 and 2017, where a graduate completes combined degrees across two study areas, their outcomes are included in both study areas. ‘All study areas’ figures count each graduate once only</i>									
<i>~ 2015 figures from the 2015 Australian Graduate Survey, 2016-17 figures from the 2016-17 Graduate Outcomes Survey. Blank cells indicate no or insufficient data for use.</i>									
<i><sup>^</sup> Taken from GCA spreadsheets (Tables J1, J3 and J4) distributed to Australian university careers services.</i>									

In 2017, new male graduates earned a median salary of \$60,100, while new female graduates earned \$59,000. So, in dollar terms, the overall 2017 median graduate salary rose by \$2,100 (or 3.6 per cent) from \$57,900. The change for males was just \$100 (0.2 per cent) and \$2,600 for females (4.6 per cent). In 2017 the median female salary was 98.2 per cent of the male salary (94.0 per cent in 2016).

Over the years, GCA research has suggested that overall differences in median salaries earned by males and females can be partly explained in terms of the differing enrolment profiles of male and female students. An analysis undertaken by GCA in 2014<sup>6</sup> suggested that much of the earnings gap between new male and female graduates was determined by field of education choices often made prior to university enrolment.

The analysis suggested that when the field of education, personal, enrolment and occupational characteristics of male and female graduates were taken into account, males' overall starting salaries were 4.4 per cent higher than those for females. It highlighted the overall wage gap favouring males as being due, in part, to an over-representation of males in fields of education that typically had higher starting salaries, such as engineering. Alternatively, females outnumbered males when it came to humanities, which was ranked at the lower end of the salary distribution.

While the analysis recognised that some of the wage gap might be explained by 'like for like' inequalities in some workplaces (that is, females doing identical work to males but being paid less), it might also be further explained if additional or more detailed information not captured within the GDS had been available.

The 2017 GOS report (Table 28 in that report, Table 3 in this document) shows median full-time salary figures for each of 21 QILT-based fields of study with 2015 AGS figures adapted into the QILT fields.

At \$78,300, the median salary for dentistry was the highest for this group of aggregated study areas. Following well behind (in the \$60,000-\$70,300 band) were medicine, engineering, teacher education, social work, rehabilitation, health services and support, law and paralegal studies, and nursing.

Study areas with lower levels of earnings (under \$50,000) were creative arts and pharmacy.

It should be noted that graduates in a number of fields must meet additional training requirements in order to gain professional registration, and this period can sometimes result in relatively low starting salaries. As an example, some pharmacy graduates in this survey are 'pre-registration' and hence earn relatively low salaries (\$44,200 in 2017) due to the further on-the-job training requirements they must meet for professional registration.

The longitudinal (2014-2017) GOS report (GOS-L) shows that by 2017, earnings for the cohort that responded to the 2014 AGS grew from \$56,000 to \$68,700, or by 22.7 per cent.

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<sup>6</sup> See Lindsay, E., *An analysis of the gender wage gap in the Australian graduate labour market, 2013*, which can be downloaded from <http://www.graduatecareers.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/GCA%20Gender%20Wage%20Gap%20Paper%20-%202013%20GDS%20-%2017%20June%202014%20FINAL.pdf>

Usefully, the GOS reports break salaries down by various groups (Table 27 in the 2017 report). In sum,

- graduates aged over 30 earned more than their younger colleagues (\$66,800 *cf.* \$58,200). It should be remembered that the older group would benefit from greater work experience and being better established in the work force, so a difference is to be expected.
- indigenous graduates (\$62,600) earned more than non-indigenous graduates (\$60,000).
- graduates who spoke a language other than English at home (\$56,400) earned less than their English-speaking colleagues (\$60,000).
- a disability or lack of a disability made no difference in earnings (both \$60,000).
- graduates who studied externally (\$66,000) earned more than those who studied internally or via mixed mode (\$58,700). Again, it should be remembered that external studiers have more opportunity to be employed while studying and developing careers and work experience, giving them an earnings advantage.
- Based on socio-economic status (SES), there were no notable differences in salaries between those ranked low, medium or high<sup>7</sup>.
- Location (metro or regional/remote) made only a minor difference in earnings (\$59,600 *cf.* \$60,000 respectively).

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<sup>7</sup> The 2017 GOS report notes that SES was (p. 13) “derived from geocoded measures based on the location of where students are ‘from’, that is, their permanent home address at the commencement of study”.

## Graduate course satisfaction

The Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) has been in use since 1993 and is an instrument developed to measure graduates' satisfaction with aspects of their study experiences. In the CEQ, which is administered approximately four months after course completion, respondents are asked to rate the extent to which they agree or disagree with 13 core items constituting two rating scales (good teaching and generic skills development) and a single-item overall satisfaction indicator.

The changes in survey and analysis methods in the move from the AGS to QILT might have brought about a change in CEQ responses (which can often be the case in such psychometric instruments). As a result, comparisons between 2015 AGS-CEQ and 2016 QILT-CEQ results will be of somewhat limited value.

The satisfaction figures represent the percentage of respondents answering '4' or '5' on a five-point scale (with the fifth point indicating highest satisfaction). In 2017, 63.0 per cent expressed satisfaction with the standard of teaching in their course (unchanged from 2016), 81.5 per cent were satisfied with the development of their generic skills (down slightly from 82.1 per cent in 2016) and 79.4 per cent were, overall, satisfied with their course (down slightly from 80.6 per cent in 2016, see Figure 6).

While slight drops were recorded for the latter two measures, it is unlikely that they represent a real statistical fall in graduates' views.

However, a figure of 63.0 per cent satisfaction with teaching, while appearing anomalous compared with the overall satisfaction indicator, must be of concern. While the equivalent figure from the 2015 AGS-CEQ was 68.0 per cent, and the difference of five percentage points could be an indication of the change in method and analysis, having fewer than two-thirds of 2017 respondents expressing satisfaction with what is obviously a core aspect of graduates' university experience might be seen as needing further exploration, even if it just to understand the relationship between views on good teaching and overall satisfaction.

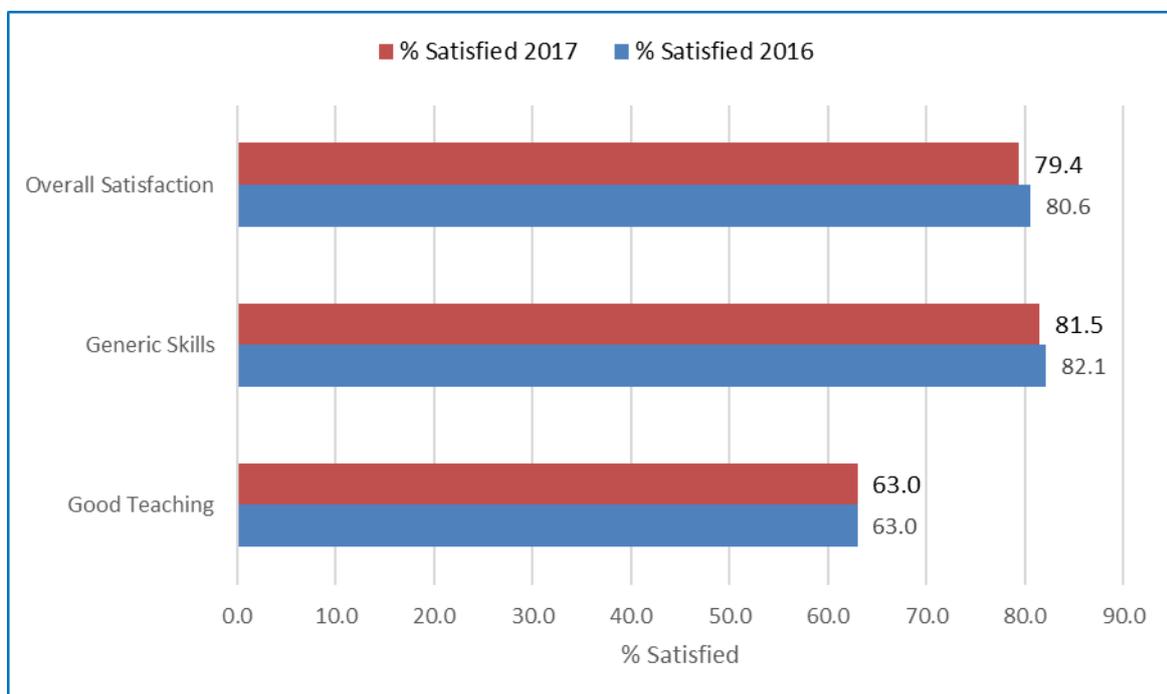


Figure 6: Undergraduates' satisfaction with aspects of their study, 2016-17 (%)

Source: 2016-17 Graduate Outcomes Survey

## Job search strategies

The 2016 and 2017 GOS reports gathered, but did not report on, data regarding how employed graduates conducted their job search strategy or how they first found the job they reported in the survey. As such, related figures from the 2015 AGS can be usefully discussed here, as the results don't change markedly from one year to the next.

The 2015 AGS<sup>8</sup> report noted that of those full-time employed graduates who had commenced their job in 2014 or 2015, over a quarter (26.9 per cent) first found their position via an advertisement on the internet (see Table 4). While this figure reflects the importance of scouring online vacancies in today's job market, it is notable that around three-quarters of graduates in full-time employment did not first find their employment via this method.

Demonstrating the diversity in how graduates found their full-time jobs, Table 4 suggests employment seekers need to cast their nets widely, as these results clearly indicate that there are many effective ways to find a full-time position.

However, of the 12 job search methods identified in Table 4, just over half of the graduates in full-time work learned of their current employment first through one of three strategies: searching advertisements on the internet (26.9 per cent), talking to family or friends (14.2 per cent) and visiting university or college careers services (11.7 per cent). This suggests these are key strategies around which graduates should base their overall job search, while not ignoring other strategies.

	Total Cases	%
Advertisement on the internet	5,513	26.9
Family or friends	2,915	14.2
University or college careers service	2,393	11.7
Other	1,895	9.3
Approached employer directly	1,742	8.5
Approached by an employer	1,483	7.2
Work contacts or networks	1,459	7.1
Other university or college source (such as faculties or lecturers)	1,010	4.9
Careers fair or information session	826	4.0
Employment agency	531	2.6
Advertisement in a newspaper or other print media	378	1.8
Via résumé posted on the internet	313	1.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,458</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<sup>8</sup> Previous AGS reports can be downloaded from: [www.graduatecareers.com.au/Research/ResearchReports](http://www.graduatecareers.com.au/Research/ResearchReports)

## Employer satisfaction

Part of the QILT suite of surveys is an Employer Satisfaction Survey (ESS). It is positive for Australian higher education that the ESS results indicate that 84 per cent of employers are highly satisfied with their new graduate recruits.

Overall, employers reported

- 93 per cent satisfaction with foundation skills – general literacy, numeracy and communication skills and the ability to investigate and integrate knowledge.
- 90 per cent satisfaction with adaptive skills – the ability to adapt and apply skills/knowledge and work independently.
- 86 per cent satisfaction with collaborative skills – teamwork and interpersonal skills.
- 93 per cent satisfaction with technical skills – application of professional and technical knowledge and standards.
- 85 per cent satisfaction with employability skills – the ability to perform and innovate in the workplace.

As in 2016, employers seemed to be more satisfied with graduates with vocational degrees (Engineering, Health, Architecture and Building, and Education graduates, all between 85 and 90 per cent rounded) than they were with graduates with generalist degrees (the report cites the highly aggregated fields of Agriculture, Environmental and related studies, Management and Commerce (both with 80 per cent satisfaction) and Creative Arts, Natural and Physical Sciences, and Society and Culture (all with 81 per cent)). It's worth noting that these generalist aggregations could be hiding a great deal of diverse detail, as suggested previously regarding employment figures.

Further, these generalist graduates were not rated markedly lower by their supervisors than were vocationally qualified graduates, and it could be argued that the skill sets expected of the vocational graduates are more easily identified and assessed than those of the generalists.

Of additional note, 85 per cent of supervisors expressed satisfaction with their female graduate recruits compared with 82 per cent satisfaction with males.

On a methodological note, critics of the ESS have pointed to low response rates and the potential for bias in graduates' decisions to give QILT their supervisors' contact details to allow them to be included in the survey. These issues are addressed in the 2017 report (p. 5) and regarding the latter issue, the report notes

*Graduates who did not provide supervisor contact details rated their foundation skills at 82 per cent. While still high, this was lower than for graduates who supplied their supervisor contact details, 88 per cent, and the supervisor satisfaction rating of foundation skills of 93 per cent. It would appear graduates who were more positive about the skills they had acquired would be more comfortable having their supervisor participate in the ESS. This is expected to lead to upward bias in reported levels of employer satisfaction in the 2017 ESS.*

In the absence of more robust measures of employer satisfaction with new graduates, users of the ESS data need to keep these issues in mind.

**For further information on ...**

Beyond Graduation reports:

<http://www.graduatecareers.com.au/research/surveys/beyondgraduationsurvey/>

GCA: [www.graduatecareers.com.au](http://www.graduatecareers.com.au)

GradStats and AGS reports: [www.graduatecareers.com.au/Research/ResearchReports](http://www.graduatecareers.com.au/Research/ResearchReports)

Graduate Opportunities: [www.graduateopportunities.com/](http://www.graduateopportunities.com/)

QILT: [www.qilt.edu.au](http://www.qilt.edu.au)

QILT reports: [www.qilt.edu.au/about-this-site/graduate-employment](http://www.qilt.edu.au/about-this-site/graduate-employment)