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MEDIA RELEASE

Nearly one in three graduates feel ‘overqualified’

Just under 30% of recent graduates who are working full-time say they are not ‘fully utilising their skills and education’ in their job, according to data released today.

Australia’s annual Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS) heard from more than 120,000 graduates from 136 higher education institutions, including all 42 Australian universities.¹

As well as higher ‘perceived overqualification’ rates, the GOS reported a decline in those with undergraduate degrees working full-time in professional or managerial jobs.

Dr Angela Baker of the Social Research Centre, which conducts the GOS for the Australian Government Department of Education, said the reasons graduates feel overqualified are complex.

“Most commonly, graduates tell us they feel overqualified for the roles available to them. In many cases, these are entry-level positions that don’t fully utilise their skills, roles taken while changing careers, or jobs outside their field because they haven’t yet been able to secure work aligned with their qualifications.”

For example, one graduate wrote: “I am currently finding relatively little value from my doctoral degree on the open job market, as I’m considered ‘overqualified’ for entry-level positions, but insufficiently experienced for more senior ones.”

But Dr Baker said there was also a proportion of graduates who say they are satisfied in their current roles, even if they may be overqualified. “Others are working in roles below their qualification level for personal reasons, such as undertaking further study,” she added.

Further full-time study rates increased for all types of graduates in 2025. There has also been a steady increase in the proportion of those finishing their undergraduate degree and moving into a certificate-level or an advanced diploma course – doubling since 2021 to reach 10.0% of all undergraduates going on to full-time study.

“While we can’t be certain, this may be driven by graduates aiming to differentiate themselves in a competitive entry-level job market, and by the increased provision of fee-free TAFE courses since 2023,” Dr Baker said.

¹ Graduates are invited to take the survey four to six months after completing their course and are asked questions about their employment (and/or further study), occupation and salary. They are also asked to rate their satisfaction with their course, how well it prepared them and whether they believe they are using their skills and qualifications.

Course satisfaction among those with undergraduate degrees has been steadily declining since 2020. “Some techniques taught seem outdated or simply not required in the workforce,” said one graduate.

Employed graduates also tended to rate their experience better than those who were unemployed.

About the 2025 GOS

The GOS is completed each year by graduates of Australian higher education institutions approximately four to six months after they finish their studies. The GOS National reports on domestic graduates, with international graduates reported separately in the GOS International Report.

The GOS is one of four surveys that make up the Quality Indicators for Teaching and Learning (QILT) suite, conducted by the Social Research Centre and funded by the Australian Government Department of Education.

Key findings

- Full-time employment rates in 2025 for recent graduates were 75.4% (undergraduate degree), 88.3% (postgraduate coursework degree) and 84.0% (postgraduate research degree).
- Graduate wages are still growing, but slowed down in 2025, consistent with broader trends in the Australian labour market. Median salaries were \$77,000 (undergraduate degree), \$104,700 (postgraduate coursework degree), and \$109,100 (postgraduate research degree).
- Females have higher full-time and overall employment rates, but lower median salaries.
- Domestic undergraduates from non-English speaking backgrounds have lower employment outcomes and median salaries than domestic undergraduates from English speaking backgrounds – even within the same study areas.
- The proportion of those with an undergraduate degree who are employed full-time in a professional or managerial job shortly after course completion continues to fall – down from 72.3% in 2016 to 67.3% in 2025.
- The rate of further full-time study has increased for all types of graduates. The rate of postgraduate coursework graduates going on to complete further full-time study is the highest since the survey started, at 8.2%.
- Just under 30% of all graduates employed full-time report feeling ‘overqualified’. This has been steady over recent years, except for among postgraduate research graduates – who have been steadily reporting greater levels of perceived overqualification. This group is also now more than twice as likely as undergraduates to report ‘no suitable jobs in my area of expertise’ as the reason. This indicates a possible mismatch between these highly specialised areas and industry demands.
- Undergraduates’ overall satisfaction with their completed course has continued to decline from a peak of 80.6% in 2020 to 74.9% in 2025 – the lowest since the GOS started in 2016.
- Among international graduates who recently completed an undergraduate degree, just over half (50.8%) were in full-time employment. By contrast, three-quarters (75.4%) of recent domestic undergraduates who were available for full-time work reported that they were working full-time. This difference of 24.6 percentage points, up from 21.7 percentage points in 2024, was one

indication that the gap in outcomes between international and domestic undergraduates had widened.

Media contact and further information

For further information, interviews, or media enquiries, please contact:

Anne Gerritsen
Communications Manager
Social Research Centre

E: anne.gerritsen@srcentre.com.au
M: 0403 017 762
srcentre.com.au or qilt.edu.au

The full 2025 GOS report and additional materials are available on the QILT website:
[https://qilt.edu.au/surveys/graduate-outcomes-survey-\(gos\)](https://qilt.edu.au/surveys/graduate-outcomes-survey-(gos))

About the Social Research Centre

The Social Research Centre is a leading Australian provider of social research and evaluation services, with deep expertise in education research. We work with government, education providers and institutions to deliver high quality research that informs education policy, improves learning experiences, and supports better outcomes for students and educators.

Changes to survey instrument in 2025

In 2025, the survey instrument was refined to identify and exclude 'passive job seekers' to improve alignment with ABS metrics. As such 2025 labour force participation and overall employment rates are not directly comparable with results from prior years.