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## Uni degrees pay off in workforce, for men more than women

Men are more likely than women to gain highly-paid, full-time work after completing university, according to a recent study conducted into university outcomes.

The Graduate Pathways Survey, conducted by ACER for the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, canvassed more than 9,000 bachelor degree graduates five years into their careers.

The survey has found that most bachelor degree graduates are in employment five years after completing their studies.

Around 90 per cent of graduates are employed within five years of completion. Three quarters of graduates are in full-time work. Undertaking paid work during study appeared to have a positive influence on vocational outcomes.

The survey identified significant differences in employment outcomes for women and men. Men were more likely than women to be participating in the workforce after five years, with 84 per cent of males in full-time work compared with 69 per cent of females.

Graduates earn significantly more on average than workers without formal qualifications. The salary for the middle fifty per cent of graduates five years after graduation ranged from \$47,726 to \$78,000. The median graduate salary five years after graduation is \$60,000, comparing favourably with the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimate of average earnings of \$46,332 for all workers in Australia.

Males earn around \$7,800 more per year than females in the fifth year after graduation, according to the survey report.

The survey also shows that graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds have similar employment outcomes to the general university population.

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While existing research has shown that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to participate in higher education, the Graduate Pathways Survey shows that Indigenous graduates, graduates from regional and remote areas, graduates from families whose parents had worked in 'non-professional' occupations, and graduates who were the first in the family to attend university all had comparable employment levels as other graduates.

Overall, the survey concludes that bachelor graduates from Australian universities have sound employment participation rates, low unemployment, high work satisfaction, and salaries that increase substantially and are much higher than the national average.

"The Graduate Pathways Survey provides major new insights into bachelor degree study in Australia. We've learned more about the factors that enable students to engage and succeed, and about what graduates achieve in the years after university completion," says Dr Hamish Coates, ACER Principal Research Fellow and lead author of the survey report.

"These results advance our understanding about the skills graduates develop and how these convert into professional practice, as well as what makes for high-quality university education," he says.

Releasing the report, the Deputy Prime Minister and Federal Education Minister Julia Gillard issued a statement that, "This research affirms the need to increase participation of under-represented groups in higher education, particularly students from Indigenous, remote, regional and low-socio-economic backgrounds.... With greater equity in the higher education system, Australia will gain the knowledge and skills needed to compete with the successful economies of the world."

The full report, 2008 Graduate Pathways Survey: Graduates' education and employment outcomes five years after completion of a bachelor degree at an Australian university, is available from the DEEWR website.

For more about the Graduate Pathways Survey, visit <http://www.acer.edu.au/tests/gps>

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## A national curriculum needs national teaching standards

ACER's Dr Lawrence Ingvarson argues in a recent paper that because curriculum standards go hand in hand with standards for teaching, a partnership between these two areas would be of great benefit to Australian education. Two significant developments in this area have recently taken place: the creation of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and the National Partnership on Quality Teaching (NPQT).

The success of each of these developments depends on the success of the other. For example, national curriculum statements will have important implications for what teachers should know and be able to do. However, successful implementation of a national curriculum will depend fundamentally on the willingness and capacity of teachers to meet those standards.

The implementation of a national curriculum would benefit from a strong partnership with a national body for professional standards and certification, according to Dr Ingvarson. This body could work with teachers' professional associations as they develop and refine their standards. The process would need to be conducted alongside unions, governments and other employers, as they seek to build rewards for professional certification into their enterprise bargaining agreements and conditions for career progression. This new agency could work alongside ACARA to develop teaching standards in each of the specialist fields of teaching, and to provide a certification system for all teachers and school leaders who believe that they have met those standards. It would need to provide a credible assessment and certification system, ensuring it is responsive to, but independent from all stakeholders.

Since we are moving to a national curriculum, it makes sense to move to a national system for the certification of teachers who are able to teach the various components of that curriculum. It seems appropriate to ensure that teaching standards reflect what is unique about, for example, what accomplished English, history, mathematics and science teachers know and do. It makes little sense to have distinct curricula for these subjects but generic standards for those who teach these subjects.

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Ingvarson says it would not make sense economically or professionally for employers in every state, territory and sector to develop their own certification system. It is time to ask the profession to develop its own national system for defining high quality teaching of the curriculum, promoting development toward the related standards and providing certification to those who reach them – and to demonstrate that this system is a rigorous indicator of teachers who can make the aspirations of the national curriculum a reality in their classrooms.

*National curriculum and national professional teaching standards: Potentially a powerful partnership* by ACER's Dr Lawrence Ingvarson is No. 184 in the Seminar Series of the Centre for Strategic Education. The report is available at <[www.cse.edu.au](http://www.cse.edu.au)>.

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## ACER UPDATE

### Masters awarded Australian College of Educators' Medal

ACER CEO Professor Geoff Masters has been awarded the 2009 Australian College of Educators' Medal. The College awards this medal annually in recognition of sustained contributions to Australian education by an outstanding educator. The College recognised Professor Masters as an international authority on educational measurement and student assessment; noting that he has made a distinctive contribution to education through his leadership of ACER and his active involvement nationally and internationally on many task forces and expert working groups. Professor Masters's response to the award citation can be read on the [Australian College of Educators website](#)

### ACER establishes Ken Rowe Fund

Following the tragic death of Dr Ken Rowe in the Victorian bushfires on 7 February 2009, ACER has established the Ken Rowe Fund to commemorate Ken's significant contribution to ACER and to education nationally and internationally. Funds received will be used to support two activities which were close to Ken's heart. They will provide support for research training in quantitative methods (for example, through a scholarship managed by ACER for attendance at ACSPRI courses) and practical support to schools, kindergartens and early childhood centres in the Marysville area. Details of how to donate to the fund are available on [ACER's website](#).

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Australian Council for Educational Research  
Private Bag 55, Camberwell, Victoria Australia 3124  
Tel: + 61 3 9277 5555  
Fax: + 61 3 9277 5500  
Web: [www.acer.edu.au](http://www.acer.edu.au)

