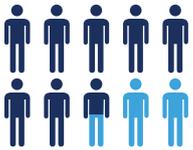


# Higher Education Employability

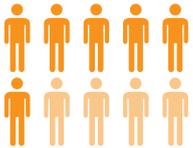
Quick Facts from our Research (2014 – 2016)

Research on graduate employability (conducted in 2014; final report published in 2015) and on postgraduate student experience (conducted in 2015 & 2016; final report published in 2017) were strategic priority research projects funded by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching. The graduate employability project had 852 research participants (students, graduates, staff and employers) across Australia using survey, interview and focus groups methodologies. The postgraduate student experience project had 366 research participants (319 postgraduate students and 47 staff from 26 Australian universities) using student engagement breakfast, interview and focus group methodologies. A National Symposium was hosted to disseminate outcomes and engage impact from each project, with 150 registrants from 21 Australian universities for the first and 120 registrants from 29 universities for the second.



over  
**74%**

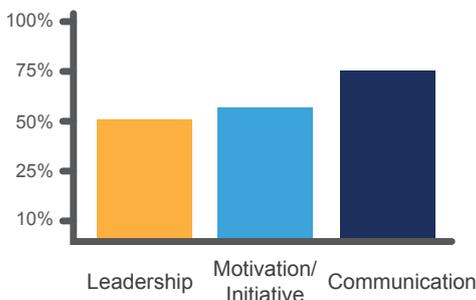
Among 705 survey respondents across Australia (442 students, 102 graduates, 108 university staff and 53 employers) the majority of students, graduates and employers (74, 74 and 87 per cent respectively) think that work experience and internships are the most effective solution towards improving graduate outcomes.



whilst  
**60%**

60 per cent of university staff (mostly academics) believe that they do not have the time or resources to make them happen.

Among this same group of survey respondents, the majority of students and graduates (53 per cent of each group) indicated a belief that part time work is an effective employability strategy, whereas the majority of university staff and employers (65 and 60 per cent respectively) indicated the importance of extracurricular activities as enhancing employability.

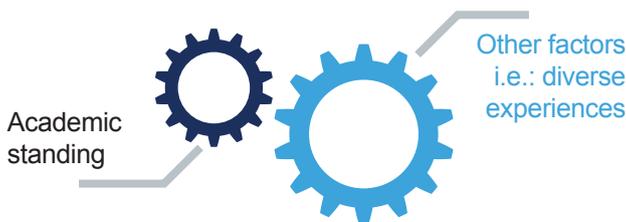


Twenty interviewed employers (across diverse disciplines) were asked to identify desirable attributes and characteristics of graduate recruits and successful employees.

The top three responses were **communication (75 per cent), motivation / initiative (55 per cent) and leadership (50 per cent).**

Only 14 per cent (7 people) who expressed an opinion (51 people) among interviewed postgraduate students and university staff (82 people across Australia) are optimistic that postgraduates will secure related careers upon graduation. 51 per cent are pessimistic and the others neutral.

Furthermore, 61 per cent (of the 71 people who expressed an opinion) believe that Australian universities need to improve postgraduate employability supports. The majority of recommendations to enhance employability (37 per cent) related to the provision of work opportunities whilst studying (embedded in curriculum and/or supported work experience and internships).



Only one of seventeen interviewed employers said that only graduates with outstanding grade point averages are recruited. The other employers all stated that a satisfactory standing is necessary to inspire confidence that the applicant has suitable intelligence, literacy and commitment. However, beyond this level, other factors, such as a well-rounded perspective based on diverse experiences are more influential.



Australian Government



Office for Learning & Teaching

Supported by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching.

## Implications for Higher Education Learning & Teaching



Universities intending to enhance graduate employability would be well-placed to allocate resources to work experience and internships for both undergraduates and postgraduates.



Work that students do as part of their learning experience (including assessment) might be designed to mirror the types of work that graduates will be engaged in through their careers.



Graduate attributes of communication, motivation/initiative and leadership remain important to employers and might be fostered through student learning activities and assessment.



Universities might consider strategically balancing appropriate supports for undergraduate and postgraduate students.



Universities are encouraged to align their roles, expectations and strategies as employers and as educators to support the transition of PhD students into academic careers.



Employability education for students might include the importance of extracurricular activities as part of the full student experience. Activities such as sport, music, clubs and student societies appear to develop graduates as well-rounded and distinctive. Universities are encouraged to monitor the balance of academic expectations in the full student experience so that students have time to engage in activities beyond study. Furthermore, while threshold grades matter as indicators of academic outcomes, students might be informed that study should not be pursued to the extent that no other extra-curricular activities are pursued.



Research indicates that the future of higher education will be personalised learning whereby each student (undergraduate and postgraduate) is supported to discover and develop his/her career goals prior to enrolment and is mentored throughout the degree and beyond graduation to navigate full and bespoke student learning experiences that include both academic and other experiential elements.