

# Perspectives on employability by recent graduates and employers

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Higher education providers are constantly questioned about the adequacy and relevance of what they produce in terms of job and career readiness. There are different and competing pressures from employers who often state reservations about the job-readiness of graduates, from students and graduates, who regard their investment in university as leading to rewarding work, and from governments who may question their investment in degrees or even universities and other providers where employment outcomes are poor. At present, though, demand for graduates seems in inexorable decline as economies such as Australia's face transformation in terms of its place within the world economy. The presentation derives from carefully targeted research carried out for RMIT University by a Canadian-Australian research firm to investigate the kinds of jobs graduates were able to get, whether or not they were satisfied with their experiences and the perceptions of employers as to the job readiness of graduates. A representative sample of 1000 on-shore international and domestic graduates – one year from graduation and three years from graduation – participated in a detailed questionnaire administered by telephone. In addition, 400 employers of recent university graduates from bachelor programs also participated. Other data used included ABS Labour Force and GDS. The study provides novel and interesting perspectives from both graduates and employers as to employability and what they gained from their studies to prepare them for a future in the workforce across a range of dimensions. Employer perceptions of what they want from a graduate differ in key respects from those that graduates think that employers are looking for. There are lessons in this disparity between employer and graduates both for what is taught and what is provided in terms of services contributing to wider student experience and to future employability.