QILT
Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching

ESS
Employer Satisfaction Survey

EMPLOYER VIEWS OF RECENT GRADUATES

2021 Employer Satisfaction Survey

February 2022

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We are also very grateful to the employers who took the time to provide valuable feedback about their experience. The ESS data will be used by institutions for continuous improvement and to assist prospective students to make informed decisions about future study.

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For more information on the conduct and results of the 2021 ESS, see the QILT website: www.qilt.edu.au. The QILT team can be contacted by email at qilt@srcentre.com.au

Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Contents	ii
List of tables	iii
1. Introduction	1
2. Time series	3
3. Broad field of education	5
4. Type of institution and course characteristics	7
5. Demographic and labour market characteristics	9
6. Employer satisfaction by institution	12
7. Skills relevance and utilisation	14
Appendix 1 Methodology	21
Appendix 2 ESS questionnaire	27
Appendix 3 Institutional participation	31

List of tables

Table 1 Employer satisfaction, 2016 to 2021 (%) **3**

Table 2 Employer satisfaction by broad field of education, 2021 (%) **5**

Table 3 Employer satisfaction by type of institution and course characteristics, 2021 (%) **7**

Table 4 Employer satisfaction by demographic characteristics, 2021 (%) **9**

Table 5 Employer satisfaction by labour market characteristics, 2021 (%) **10**

Table 6 Employer satisfaction by institution (universities only), 2019 to 2021 (%) **12**

Table 7 Importance of qualification for current employment, 2021 (%) **14**

Table 8 Importance of qualification for current employment by broad field of education, 2021 (%) **15**

Table 9 Importance of qualification for current employment, by occupation, 2021 (%) **16**

Table 10 Extent to which qualification prepared graduate for current employment, 2021 (%) **16**

Table 11 Extent to which qualification prepared graduate well or very well for current employment, by broad field of education, 2021 (%) **17**

Table 12 Extent to which qualification prepared graduate well or very well for current employment, by occupation, 2021 (%) **18**

Table 13 Main ways that the qualification prepared the graduate for employment, 2021 (%) **19**

Table 14 Main ways that the qualification could have better prepared the graduate for employment, 2021 (%) **19**

Table 15 ESS operational overview, 2019 to 2021 **21**

Table 16 Respondents by broad field of education, 20213 **23**

Table 17 Respondents by type of institution and course characteristics, 2021 **24**

Table 18 Respondents by demographic characteristics, 2021 **24**

Table 19 Respondents by labour market characteristics, 2021 **25**

Table 20 Questionnaire item summary **27**

Table 21 University participation 2019 to 2021 **31**

Table 22 NUHEI participation, 2019 to 2021 **32**

1. Introduction

The 2021 Employer Satisfaction Survey (ESS) measures employer views of the attributes of recent graduates from Australian higher education institutions providing assurance about the quality of Australia's higher education sector. The ESS is included as part of the Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) survey suite. The QILT surveys are independently and centrally administered by the Social Research Centre on behalf of the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment.

The 2021 ESS represents the largest survey of its kind, reporting the views of 3,450 employers about the attributes of recent graduates from Australian higher education institutions including universities and non-university higher education institutions (NUHEIs). The impetus for a national survey of graduate employers is grounded in the Australian Government's desire to improve the range and quality of higher education performance indicators in Australia. Since graduate employment is usually one of the main objectives of completing a higher education qualification, employer views of the readiness of graduates to enter the workplace forms a key component of the quality matrix. Employer views of the technical skills, generic skills and work readiness of recent graduates provide assurance about the quality of Australia's higher education sector. The survey has been conducted annually since 2016.

The ESS has three design features. First, the ESS is the only national survey in Australia that directly links the experiences of graduates to the views of their direct supervisors. Second, the ESS is undertaken on a systematic basis by asking employed graduates who participate in the Graduate Outcome Survey (GOS) to provide contact information for their supervisor who is then invited to complete the ESS. This enables understanding of the limitations and bias associated with the survey methodology. By way of comparison, many other employer surveys are not conducted on a systematic basis and report the perceptions of executives who may have had little or no direct experience with graduates. Third, the ESS is large enough to provide comparisons by broad field of education, employment characteristics, occupation, demographic group, and institution.

A major dilemma in designing employer surveys of graduates lies in constructing robust population and sample frames while seeking to garner a sufficient number of responses. The present survey uses all graduate respondents, domestic and international, to the GOS, which in turn is based on Higher Education Information Management System (HEIMS) data collection, to gather the contact details of direct supervisors. One of the advantages of measuring employer satisfaction on a systematic basis is that it enables understanding of the limitations and bias associated with the survey methodology. One disadvantage of a systematic approach to survey collection is that the ensuing methodology can make it difficult to achieve an adequate number of responses for reporting purposes. In the present survey, this manifests itself through the ongoing reluctance of graduates to pass on contact details of their direct supervisor. Further details of the methodology and pattern of responses and possible bias are presented in Appendix 1.

Nonetheless, compared with the ESS other employer surveys of Australian higher education graduates are much smaller in scale, lack transparency in methodology and rely on the views of persons who may have had little or no direct contact with graduates. For example, the 2021 QS Graduate Employability Rankings are based on the views of approximately 1,000 Australian employers while the 2020 Times Higher Education Global University Employability Ranking is based on approximately 100 Australian responses.

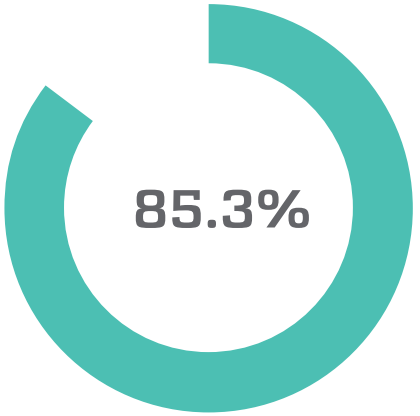
The collection periods for the 2021 ESS were November 2020 to February 2021 and May to July 2021. The collection period therefore took place while there was significant disruption to Australian workplaces as a result of measures imposed to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. Refer to the GOS National Report to see how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the labour market outcomes of graduates.

2. Time series

The 2021 ESS confirms the findings of earlier surveys that supervisors rate their graduates highly. In 2021, overall satisfaction with graduates as rated by direct supervisors was 85.3 per cent. Overall satisfaction reports the proportion of supervisors giving responses 'Very likely to consider' or 'Likely to consider' to the item, 'Based on your experience with this graduate, how likely are you to consider hiring another graduate from the same course and institution, if you had a relevant vacancy?' These results suggest employers are highly satisfied with the overall quality of graduates from Australia's higher education system.

Employers were also requested to report their satisfaction with graduates across five graduate attribute domains or scales. High levels of satisfaction were recorded across these attributes:

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



Overall employer satisfaction with graduates (2021)

Table 1 **Employer satisfaction, 2016 to 2021 (%)**

	Foundation	Adaptive	Collaborative	Technical	Employability	Overall satisfaction
2016	92.0 (91.2, 92.8)	88.4 (87.4, 89.4)	84.6 (83.5, 85.7)	92.2 (91.4, 93.0)	83.8 (82.7, 84.9)	84.3 (83.2, 85.4)
2017	93.4 (92.8, 94.0)	90.1 (89.3, 90.9)	85.9 (85.0, 86.8)	93.3 (92.6, 94.0)	85 (84.1, 85.9)	83.6 (82.7, 84.5)
2018	93.5 (92.9, 94.1)	89.9 (89.2, 90.6)	88.7 (87.9, 89.4)	93.8 (93.3, 94.4)	86.5 (85.7, 87.3)	84.8 (84.0, 85.6)
2019	92.7 (92.0, 93.3)	89.3 (88.5, 90.1)	87.8 (86.9, 88.5)	92.7 (92.0, 93.3)	85.4 (84.5, 86.2)	84.0 (83.1, 84.9)
2020	93.7 (93.0, 94.4)	90.1 (89.2, 91.0)	88.1 (87.1, 89.0)	93.8 (93.1, 94.5)	86.8 (85.8, 87.8)	84.7 (83.6, 85.7)
2021	93.5 (92.8, 94.2)	90.3 (89.4, 91.1)	89.3 (88.3, 90.1)	93.7 (93.0, 94.4)	86.6 (85.6, 87.6)	85.3 (84.3, 86.3)

As shown by Table 1, overall satisfaction and employer satisfaction with the Adaptive and Collaborative skills attributes increased slightly between 2020 and 2021, with results for 2021 higher than all prior years. Employer satisfaction with the Foundation, Technical and Employability skills attributes decreased slightly in 2021, however only by 0.1 to 0.2 percentage points.

Within the limitations of the survey, employer satisfaction can on the whole be said to be stable or slightly improved in 2021 compared with earlier surveys. This is a strong result considering the disruption over the past two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic to both higher education programs and the graduate labour market.

3. Broad field of education

In 2021, employers reported highest overall satisfaction with Engineering and related technologies graduates at 90.4 per cent, this was comparable to 2020 results (90.5 per cent). Supervisors also reported high levels of satisfaction with Health and Architecture and building graduates, with 89.2 per cent and 87.5 per cent respectively. On the other hand, employer satisfaction, while still relatively high, appears lower for Agriculture and environmental studies graduates, 80.8 per cent, Information technology graduates, 81.4 per cent and Creative arts graduates, 81.5 per cent.

Employer satisfaction was significantly higher for Engineering graduates than for Information technology, Creative arts, Society and culture, and Management and commerce. Employer satisfaction with Health graduates was also significantly higher than for Information technology, Creative arts, Society and culture, Natural and physical sciences, and Management and commerce, as demonstrated by the presentation of confidence intervals in Table 2. This indicates the ESS instrument is capable of discriminating across fields of education.

As shown in Table 2, employer satisfaction with different graduate attributes varies across fields of education. For example, employers of Engineering graduates provided the highest rating of overall satisfaction in 2021, as noted above. Employers of Engineering graduates rated them above average for their Foundation skills (95.5 per cent), Adaptive skills (91.7 per cent), and Technical skills (93.8 per cent) attributes. Similarly, employers are highly satisfied with the specific attributes of Agriculture and environmental studies graduates, rating them higher than average across all attributes, despite comparatively low levels of overall satisfaction. There appears to be more variation in the Collaborative skills attribute (12.7 percentage points), overall satisfaction (9.6 percentage points), and Technical skills attribute (8.0 percentage points) across fields of education. On the other hand, the variation in employer satisfaction in other graduate attributes appears much less ranging by 4 to 6 percentage points across fields of education.

90.4%

employer overall satisfaction with Engineering and Related Technologies graduates - highest

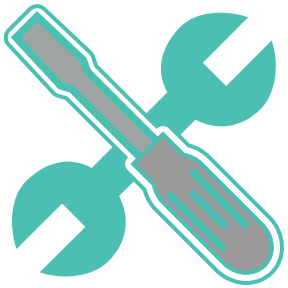


Table 2 **Employer satisfaction by broad field of education, 2021 (%)**

Field of education	Foundation	Adaptive	Collaborative	Technical	Employability	Overall satisfaction
Natural and Physical Sciences	91.6 (88.3, 94.0)	89.7 (86.2, 92.4)	90.9 (87.5, 93.4)	92.0 (88.7, 94.5)	85.9 (81.9, 89.2)	83.6 (79.5, 87.0)
Information Technology	93.5 (90.0, 95.9)	91.0 (87.0, 93.8)	92.7 (89.1, 95.2)	92.4 (88.6, 95.0)	86.9 (82.5, 90.4)	81.4 (76.4, 85.6)
Engineering and Related Technologies	95.5 (92.7, 97.3)	91.7 (88.3, 94.2)	88.8 (85.0, 91.8)	93.8 (90.7, 95.9)	84.9 (80.7, 88.4)	90.4 (86.7, 93.1)
Architecture and Building	95.1 (89.3, 98.0)	91.4 (84.6, 95.4)	97.6 (92.7, 99.5)	95.1 (89.2, 98.0)	85.2 (77.5, 90.6)	87.5 (80.0, 92.5)
Agriculture and Environmental Studies	95.7 (89.4, 98.6)	94.3 (87.6, 97.7)	94.1 (87.3, 97.6)	100.0 (95.3, 100.0)	90.8 (82.9, 95.4)	80.8 (72.1, 87.3)
Health	93.6 (91.8, 95.0)	89.1 (86.9, 90.9)	88.6 (86.4, 90.5)	95.0 (93.3, 96.2)	84.7 (82.2, 86.9)	89.2 (87.0, 91.0)

Field of education	Foundation	Adaptive	Collaborative	Technical	Employability	Overall satisfaction
Education	92.9 (90.7, 94.7)	90.0 (87.4, 92.1)	84.9 (81.9, 87.4)	93.0 (90.8, 94.8)	87.0 (84.1, 89.4)	87.1 (84.2, 89.5)
Management and Commerce	95.0 (93.4, 96.3)	91.1 (89.0, 92.8)	91.6 (89.7, 93.3)	94.2 (92.5, 95.6)	90.3 (88.1, 92.1)	84.5 (82.0, 86.7)
Society and Culture	92.6 (90.7, 94.1)	90.0 (87.9, 91.8)	87.1 (84.8, 89.1)	93.0 (91.1, 94.5)	85.0 (82.5, 87.2)	82.4 (79.8, 84.7)
Creative Arts	91.7 (86.7, 94.9)	90.2 (85.0, 93.7)	94.0 (89.6, 96.7)	92.9 (88.1, 95.9)	88.5 (83.0, 92.4)	81.5 (75.3, 86.4)
All fields	**93.5 (92.8, 94.2)**	**90.3 (89.4, 91.1)**	**89.3 (88.3, 90.1)**	**93.7 (93.0, 94.4)**	**86.6 (85.6, 87.6)**	**85.3 (84.3, 86.3)**

4. Type of institution and course characteristics

Table 3 shows that overall employer satisfaction with graduates from universities (85.0 per cent) is lower than for graduates from NUHEIs (83.3 per cent), however across all other graduate attributes employer satisfaction is higher for university graduates. Employer satisfaction with graduates from universities is significantly higher in terms of their Adaptive skills, as shown by confidence intervals in Table 3.

Supervisors expressed higher levels of overall satisfaction with graduates who studied internally, 85.8 per cent, in comparison with graduates who studied externally, 83.8 per cent (see Table 3). There has been a trend where supervisors rate satisfaction of internal graduates more highly than external graduates. However, the gap in satisfaction ratings has decreased in 2021, with a difference of only 2.0 percentage points noted, compared to a 7.4 percentage point difference in 2020. Supervisors rated internal graduates significantly higher on Foundation, Collaborative, and Employability skills.

Employers appear less satisfied overall with undergraduates, 84.8 per cent, than with postgraduate coursework graduates, 85.5 per cent, and postgraduate research graduates, 87.6 per cent. Supervisors rated postgraduate coursework graduates slightly lower than undergraduates for most attributes. This difference is significant for Collaborative skills, where employers rated postgraduate coursework graduates at 87.2 per cent compared with 91.4 per cent for undergraduates. This may be attributed to a high proportion of postgraduate coursework graduates studying externally and so not engaging as much in student centred collaborative learning activities. Similarly, employers rated postgraduate coursework graduates lower than postgraduate research graduates for all attributes. Employer satisfaction with postgraduate research graduates is significantly higher in terms of Adaptive skills, compared to graduates at the postgraduate coursework or undergraduate level.

85.8%

employer overall satisfaction - Internal graduates

83.8%

employer overall satisfaction - External graduates

Table 3 **Employer satisfaction by type of institution and course characteristics, 2021 (%)**

	Foundation	Adaptive	Collaborative	Technical	Employability	Overall satisfaction
Type of institution						
University	93.7 (92.9, 94.4)	90.6 (89.7, 91.5)	89.5 (88.6, 90.4)	93.9 (93.1, 94.5)	86.9 (85.8, 87.9)	85.0 (83.9, 86.1)
NUHEI	91.4 (88.1, 93.8)	86.5 (82.6, 89.6)	86.3 (82.5, 89.4)	92.0 (88.7, 94.4)	84.0 (79.9, 87.5)	88.4 (84.8, 91.3)
Mode of attendance						
Internal/Multi Mode	94.1 (93.3, 94.9)	90.4 (89.4, 91.3)	91.4 (90.5, 92.3)	94.2 (93.4, 94.9)	87.5 (86.4, 88.6)	85.8 (84.6, 86.9)
External/Distance	91.4 (89.6, 93.0)	89.8 (87.9, 91.5)	81.9 (79.5, 84.1)	91.9 (90.1, 93.5)	83.6 (81.2, 85.8)	83.8 (81.5, 85.9)

	Foundation	Adaptive	Collaborative	Technical	Employability	Overall satisfaction
Course level						
Undergraduate	93.5 (92.4, 94.5)	89.9 (88.6, 91.1)	91.4 (90.1, 92.5)	94.1 (93.1, 95.1)	86.9 (85.4, 88.2)	84.8 (83.3, 86.2)
Postgraduate coursework	93.0 (91.8, 94.1)	89.8 (88.4, 91.1)	87.2 (85.6, 88.6)	92.7 (91.5, 93.8)	86.0 (84.4, 87.5)	85.5 (83.9, 86.9)
Postgraduate research	96.2 (93.6, 97.7)	95.0 (92.2, 96.8)	87.9 (84.1, 90.9)	96.5 (94.0, 98.0)	88.6 (84.8, 91.6)	87.6 (83.9, 90.6)
Total	**93.5 (92.8, 94.2)**	**90.3 (89.4, 91.1)**	**89.3 (88.3, 90.1)**	**93.7 (93.0, 94.4)**	**86.6 (85.6, 87.6)**	**85.3 (84.3, 86.3)**

5. Demographic and labour market characteristics

Broadly speaking, employers appear equally satisfied with male and female graduates in 2021, with ratings across all attributes differing by less than two percentage points, as shown by Table 4.

Employers rated the skills of younger graduates higher than those of older graduates aged over 30 years across all attributes, with significant differences noted for Foundation, Collaborative, Technical, and Employability skills.

Employers rated graduates from a non-English speaking background more highly than graduates from an English-speaking background in terms of overall satisfaction and all other graduate attributes. Employers rated graduates from a non-English speaking background significantly higher in terms of their Collaborative and Employability skills.

Differences in employer ratings for Indigenous and non-Indigenous graduates should be treated with caution due to the relatively small numbers of responses from employers of Indigenous graduates. This is also the case with employers of graduates with a reported disability.

85.4%

employer overall satisfaction - Female graduates

85.3%

employer overall satisfaction - Male graduates

Table 4 **Employer satisfaction by demographic characteristics, 2021 (%)**

	Foundation	Adaptive	Collaborative	Technical	Employability	Overall satisfaction
Gender						
Male	94.0 (92.8, 95.0)	90.7 (89.3, 91.9)	90.3 (88.9, 91.5)	93.8 (92.7, 94.8)	86.9 (85.3, 88.4)	85.3 (83.6, 86.8)
Female	93.2 (92.2, 94.1)	89.9 (88.7, 91.0)	88.5 (87.3, 89.7)	93.6 (92.6, 94.5)	86.4 (85.0, 87.7)	85.4 (84.0, 86.7)
Age						
30 years or under	94.6 (93.7, 95.4)	90.4 (89.3, 91.5)	91.9 (90.8, 92.8)	94.8 (93.9, 95.6)	88.0 (86.7, 89.1)	85.5 (84.2, 86.8)
Over 30 years	91.8 (90.4, 93.0)	90.1 (88.6, 91.4)	85.1 (83.3, 86.6)	91.9 (90.6, 93.1)	84.6 (82.8, 86.2)	85.0 (83.2, 86.5)
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander						
Indigenous	94.4 (83.9, 98.8)	92.1 (81.3, 97.3)	86.8 (75.0, 93.7)	97.1 (87.3, 100.0)	86.8 (75.0, 93.7)	76.3 (63.3, 85.8)
Non-Indigenous	93.5 (92.8, 94.2)	90.3 (89.4, 91.1)	89.3 (88.4, 90.2)	93.7 (92.9, 94.3)	86.6 (85.6, 87.6)	85.4 (84.4, 86.4)
Main language spoken at home						
English	93.1 (92.3, 93.9)	90.0 (89.0, 90.9)	88.3 (87.2, 89.2)	93.4 (92.6, 94.2)	86.0 (84.9, 87.1)	85.0 (83.9, 86.1)
Language other than English	95.7 (93.9, 97.0)	91.9 (89.6, 93.7)	94.9 (93.0, 96.3)	95.4 (93.5, 96.7)	90.1 (87.6, 92.1)	87.1 (84.3, 89.4)

	Foundation	Adaptive	Collaborative	Technical	Employability	Overall satisfaction
Disability						
Reported disability	94.2 (91.3, 96.2)	86.7 (82.8, 89.8)	88.7 (85.0, 91.6)	92.9 (89.7, 95.1)	85.5 (81.4, 88.8)	84.6 (80.5, 88.0)
No disability	93.5 (92.7, 94.2)	90.6 (89.7, 91.4)	89.3 (88.3, 90.2)	93.8 (93.0, 94.5)	86.7 (85.7, 87.7)	85.4 (84.3, 86.4)
Total	93.5 (92.8, 94.2)	90.3 (89.4, 91.1)	89.3 (88.3, 90.1)	93.7 (93.0, 94.4)	86.6 (85.6, 87.6)	85.3 (84.3, 86.3)

Employers reported highest overall satisfaction with graduates working in Professional occupations, 87.1 per cent in Table 5. While this is consistent with higher education qualifications being more relevant for working in Professional occupations, as shown later when discussing graduate and employer views of skills relevance and utilisation, overall satisfaction with graduates in Professional occupations was rated higher than graduates working in Managerial occupations, 83.4 per cent. Employers rated graduates employed in Managerial occupations significantly higher than graduates employed in Professional occupations in terms of their Adaptive skills.

As shown in Table 5, employers' overall satisfaction with graduates that worked full-time was slightly higher compared to those graduates that worked part-time, 85.6 per cent and 84.8 per cent respectively. Employers rated part-time employed workers higher on all other graduate attributes except Technical skills, with significant differences noted for Collaborative and Employability skills.

Employers' overall satisfaction with graduates who had been working for between three months and one year was higher, 86.5 per cent, than for graduates who had been working for one year or more, 84.0 per cent. Employers rated the Collaborative skills of graduates who had been with their employer less than three months significantly higher than graduates with longer work histories of one year or more.

87.1%

employer overall satisfaction - Professional occupations

Table 5 **Employer satisfaction by labour market characteristics, 2021 (%)**

	Foundation	Adaptive	Collaborative	Technical	Employability	Overall satisfaction
Occupation						
Managers	94.1 (90.9, 96.3)	94.0 (90.8, 96.2)	86.6 (82.4, 90.0)	93.0 (89.5, 95.4)	88.5 (84.4, 91.6)	83.4 (78.9, 87.1)
Professionals	93.6 (92.6, 94.4)	89.6 (88.5, 90.7)	87.6 (86.3, 88.7)	93.3 (92.3, 94.2)	85.3 (83.9, 86.5)	87.1 (85.8, 88.2)
Technicians and trades workers	92.9 (88.1, 95.9)	94.4 (89.9, 97.1)	93.7 (89.0, 96.5)	95.1 (90.6, 97.6)	88.5 (82.8, 92.5)	81.3 (74.8, 86.4)
Community and personal service workers	95.2 (92.4, 97.0)	91.7 (88.4, 94.2)	94.6 (91.7, 96.5)	94.6 (91.6, 96.6)	90.2 (86.6, 92.9)	83.7 (79.5, 87.2)
Clerical and administrative workers	94.2 (91.6, 96.1)	91.2 (88.1, 93.5)	91.6 (88.6, 93.9)	96.1 (93.8, 97.6)	87.2 (83.6, 90.0)	86.5 (82.9, 89.4)
Other workers	90.9 (87.6, 93.3)	87.9 (84.2, 90.8)	94.6 (92.0, 96.5)	93.5 (90.4, 95.6)	91.1 (87.9, 93.6)	77.2 (72.9, 81.0)
Employment status						
Full-time	93.3 (92.4, 94.2)	89.9 (88.8, 90.9)	87.5 (86.3, 88.6)	93.7 (92.8, 94.5)	85.6 (84.3, 86.8)	85.6 (84.3, 86.7)
Part-time	93.9 (92.5, 95.0)	91.1 (89.5, 92.5)	93.1 (91.6, 94.2)	93.6 (92.2, 94.8)	89.0 (87.3, 90.5)	84.8 (82.9, 86.6)

	Foundation	Adaptive	Collaborative	Technical	Employability	Overall satisfaction
Duration of job with current employer						
Less than 3 months	94.3 (91.8, 96.1)	88.7 (85.5, 91.3)	91.7 (88.8, 93.9)	93.4 (90.7, 95.4)	85.2 (81.6, 88.2)	85.8 (82.3, 88.7)
3 months to < 1 year	93.7 (92.6, 94.7)	89.5 (88.1, 90.8)	90.9 (89.5, 92.0)	93.9 (92.8, 94.9)	86.8 (85.2, 88.2)	86.5 (85.0, 88.0)
1 year or more	93.2 (92.0, 94.2)	91.3 (90.0, 92.4)	87.3 (85.8, 88.6)	93.6 (92.4, 94.5)	86.8 (85.3, 88.1)	84.0 (82.4, 85.5)
Total	**93.5 (92.8, 94.2)**	**90.3 (89.4, 91.1)**	**89.3 (88.3, 90.1)**	**93.7 (93.0, 94.4)**	**86.6 (85.6, 87.6)**	**85.3 (84.3, 86.3)**

6. Employer satisfaction by institution

This report combines results from the 2019, 2020 and 2021 Employer Satisfaction Surveys to publish results for Table A and B universities at institution level as shown in Table 6. This is consistent with the approach utilised on the QILT website where results are pooled across surveys to increase the number of responses, and confidence intervals are published to improve the robustness and validity of the data. The number of employer responses in the 2019 to 2021 surveys across institutions is shown in Appendix 3. There are over 10,711 employer responses across universities, ranging from over 816 responses for The University of Melbourne down to 38 responses for University of Divinity. The QILT reports and website do not publish results where there are fewer than 25 survey responses. For this reason, results for individual NUHEIs are not shown since for most NUHEIs the number of employer responses is too small.

Employer satisfaction is broadly similar across most of Australia's Table A and B universities, with consistently high levels of satisfaction. Nonetheless, Table 6 demonstrates the ESS has the capacity to discriminate between universities, with overall satisfaction ranging from 76.8 per cent to 91.7 per cent. Employer satisfaction was rated highest for graduates from University of Wollongong and the Australian Catholic University, at 91.7 per cent and 89.3 per cent respectively. Other universities rated highly by employers include Charles Darwin University and Victoria University, reporting 88.8 per cent and 88.4 per cent overall satisfaction by employers respectively. Note, however, the small number of responses for most universities means there are wide confidence intervals associated with these estimates. For the majority of universities, the confidence intervals overlap so caution should be used when determining if employer satisfaction is higher at one institution than another institution.

Employer satisfaction was rated highest for graduates from the University of Wollongong and the Australian Catholic University.

Table 6 **Employer satisfaction by institution (universities only), 2019 to 2021 (%)**

University	Foundation	Adaptive	Collaborative	Technical	Employability	Overall satisfaction
Australian Catholic University	93.8 (90.9, 95.7)	88.3 (84.8, 91.1)	91.3 (88.1, 93.7)	93.4 (90.5, 95.4)	86.9 (83.3, 89.9)	89.3 (85.9, 91.9)
Bond University	90.6 (81.6, 95.6)	84.6 (74.5, 91.3)	88.7 (79.3, 94.3)	96.2 (88.7, 99.2)	90.2 (80.9, 95.4)	84.6 (74.5, 91.3)
Central Queensland University	95.9 (92.7, 97.7)	91.2 (87.2, 94.0)	90.6 (86.5, 93.6)	96.8 (93.9, 98.5)	86.4 (81.8, 90.0)	88.2 (83.8, 91.5)
Charles Darwin University	94.8 (89.5, 97.6)	92.5 (86.5, 96.0)	91.8 (85.8, 95.4)	93.5 (87.8, 96.8)	88.2 (81.5, 92.7)	88.8 (82.0, 93.3)
Charles Sturt University	92.2 (89.2, 94.4)	91.1 (87.9, 93.5)	85.0 (81.2, 88.1)	94.1 (91.3, 96.0)	86.4 (82.7, 89.4)	80.6 (76.6, 84.1)
Curtin University	93.4 (90.6, 95.5)	88.5 (85.1, 91.3)	89.3 (86.0, 92.0)	93.4 (90.5, 95.4)	85.5 (81.7, 88.7)	88.1 (84.6, 90.8)
Deakin University	94.3 (92.3, 95.8)	89.9 (87.4, 91.9)	89.6 (87.1, 91.6)	93.5 (91.4, 95.1)	87.4 (84.7, 89.7)	82.9 (80.0, 85.5)
Edith Cowan University	93.2 (89.5, 95.7)	93.7 (90.0, 96.1)	90.5 (86.4, 93.5)	95.0 (91.5, 97.1)	88.0 (83.5, 91.5)	86.8 (82.3, 90.3)
Federation University Australia	92.6 (87.6, 95.8)	86.7 (80.7, 91.0)	90.2 (84.9, 93.9)	90.8 (85.5, 94.4)	89.1 (83.4, 93.0)	83.8 (77.4, 88.6)
Flinders University	94.7 (91.0, 97.0)	92.2 (88.0, 95.0)	87.5 (82.7, 91.2)	95.8 (92.3, 97.8)	84.1 (78.9, 88.3)	86.7 (81.8, 90.5)

University	Foundation	Adaptive	Collaborative	Technical	Employability	Overall satisfaction
Griffith University	88.8 (85.6, 91.4)	86.3 (82.8, 89.1)	83.7 (80.0, 86.8)	91.0 (88.0, 93.3)	82.6 (78.9, 85.9)	80.8 (76.9, 84.2)
James Cook University	90.3 (85.9, 93.4)	86.7 (81.9, 90.4)	88.5 (83.9, 91.9)	93.4 (89.4, 96.0)	84.2 (79.1, 88.3)	82.0 (76.6, 86.3)
La Trobe University	94.9 (92.6, 96.6)	92.5 (89.8, 94.6)	89.3 (86.3, 91.8)	95.1 (92.7, 96.8)	86.2 (82.8, 89.1)	87.8 (84.5, 90.4)
Macquarie University	93.4 (90.2, 95.6)	91.9 (88.4, 94.4)	88.4 (84.6, 91.4)	91.8 (88.4, 94.4)	88.8 (85.0, 91.8)	83.3 (78.9, 87.0)
Monash University	94.5 (92.7, 95.9)	91.1 (89.0, 92.9)	90.0 (87.8, 91.8)	94.0 (92.1, 95.4)	89.0 (86.7, 91.0)	86.9 (84.5, 89.1)
Murdoch University	91.4 (85.7, 95.1)	90.0 (83.9, 94.0)	87.5 (81.1, 92.0)	94.9 (89.8, 97.7)	88.5 (82.0, 93.0)	77.9 (70.5, 83.9)
Queensland University of Technology	94.2 (91.6, 96.1)	90.4 (87.3, 92.8)	87.9 (84.6, 90.7)	93.5 (90.7, 95.5)	85.7 (82.0, 88.7)	86.3 (82.7, 89.2)
RMIT University	92.7 (90.3, 94.5)	88.1 (85.2, 90.4)	88.9 (86.1, 91.2)	91.6 (89.0, 93.6)	84.6 (81.5, 87.3)	84.1 (80.9, 86.8)
Southern Cross University	94.4 (90.2, 96.9)	91.0 (86.3, 94.3)	88.4 (83.3, 92.1)	93.0 (88.6, 95.9)	87.7 (82.4, 91.5)	85.3 (79.7, 89.6)
Swinburne University of Technology	92.8 (89.3, 95.2)	91.3 (87.6, 94.0)	88.3 (84.2, 91.4)	94.9 (91.8, 96.9)	88.5 (84.4, 91.6)	86.5 (82.2, 89.8)
The Australian National University	92.2 (88.0, 95.0)	91.3 (86.9, 94.4)	87.0 (81.9, 90.8)	93.2 (89.1, 95.8)	82.7 (77.1, 87.1)	81.4 (76.0, 85.9)
The University of Adelaide	94.7 (91.6, 96.7)	90.0 (86.2, 92.9)	90.4 (86.6, 93.1)	94.5 (91.3, 96.6)	86.3 (82.0, 89.7)	81.9 (77.3, 85.7)
The University of Melbourne	94.6 (93.1, 95.8)	89.4 (87.4, 91.1)	87.0 (84.9, 88.9)	93.2 (91.5, 94.6)	84.7 (82.4, 86.8)	84.9 (82.6, 86.8)
The University of Notre Dame Australia	91.2 (85.3, 94.9)	93.0 (87.4, 96.3)	84.2 (77.2, 89.3)	89.8 (83.5, 93.9)	82.8 (75.7, 88.2)	84.7 (77.7, 89.8)
The University of Queensland	95.9 (94.0, 97.2)	89.5 (86.9, 91.7)	91.3 (88.9, 93.2)	94.7 (92.7, 96.2)	85.9 (82.9, 88.4)	83.5 (80.5, 86.1)
The University of South Australia	93.1 (90.2, 95.2)	89.6 (86.2, 92.2)	91.8 (88.7, 94.1)	94.0 (91.2, 96.0)	90.4 (87.0, 92.9)	84.8 (81.0, 88.0)
The University of Sydney	94.8 (92.4, 96.5)	91.5 (88.7, 93.7)	89.0 (85.9, 91.5)	95.0 (92.7, 96.7)	87.2 (83.8, 89.9)	86.1 (82.8, 88.9)
The University of Western Australia	94.0 (88.7, 97.0)	92.9 (87.3, 96.3)	88.0 (81.5, 92.5)	96.0 (91.1, 98.4)	86.0 (79.3, 90.8)	76.8 (69.0, 83.2)
Torrens University	89.4 (83.3, 93.5)	86.3 (79.7, 91.0)	90.3 (84.3, 94.2)	90.2 (84.2, 94.2)	84.8 (78.1, 89.7)	79.0 (71.5, 84.9)
University of Canberra	93.3 (89.1, 96.1)	87.9 (82.8, 91.7)	89.5 (84.7, 93.0)	91.9 (87.3, 94.9)	85.0 (79.5, 89.3)	82.0 (76.3, 86.6)
University of Divinity	94.1 (83.0, 98.7)	94.4 (83.9, 98.8)	91.7 (80.4, 97.1)	86.1 (73.8, 93.4)	91.2 (79.4, 96.9)	88.2 (75.8, 95.0)
University of New England	90.6 (86.9, 93.3)	88.0 (84.1, 91.1)	85.0 (80.8, 88.5)	93.1 (89.8, 95.4)	82.1 (77.5, 85.9)	81.5 (76.9, 85.3)
University of New South Wales	93.5 (90.3, 95.7)	90.4 (86.8, 93.1)	86.5 (82.5, 89.7)	95.5 (92.7, 97.3)	85.4 (81.3, 88.8)	84.6 (80.3, 88.0)
University of Newcastle	95.0 (92.0, 96.9)	92.5 (89.2, 94.9)	90.4 (86.7, 93.1)	95.4 (92.5, 97.2)	86.5 (82.4, 89.8)	86.1 (82.0, 89.4)
University of Southern Queensland	91.5 (88.0, 94.1)	89.7 (86.0, 92.6)	84.2 (79.9, 87.7)	92.2 (88.8, 94.7)	84.0 (79.6, 87.6)	84.8 (80.5, 88.3)
University of Tasmania	91.4 (89.0, 93.3)	89.1 (86.5, 91.2)	85.8 (83.0, 88.3)	90.6 (88.1, 92.6)	84.1 (81.1, 86.7)	81.7 (78.6, 84.5)
University of Technology Sydney	94.1 (91.4, 96.0)	92.5 (89.6, 94.6)	91.5 (88.5, 93.8)	95.7 (93.3, 97.3)	88.2 (84.8, 90.9)	87.0 (83.4, 89.8)
University of the Sunshine Coast	92.6 (87.2, 95.9)	87.6 (81.3, 92.1)	88.1 (81.9, 92.4)	90.2 (84.2, 94.2)	83.8 (76.8, 89.1)	83.3 (76.6, 88.5)
University of Wollongong	95.2 (91.2, 97.5)	93.7 (89.4, 96.4)	93.7 (89.4, 96.4)	92.9 (88.3, 95.8)	88.8 (83.7, 92.5)	91.7 (87.1, 94.8)
Victoria University	95.8 (92.3, 97.8)	92.1 (87.9, 95.0)	91.7 (87.4, 94.6)	95.7 (92.2, 97.8)	92.4 (88.0, 95.2)	88.4 (83.6, 92.0)
Western Sydney University	92.1 (88.5, 94.7)	90.1 (86.2, 93.0)	89.2 (85.2, 92.3)	92.8 (89.3, 95.3)	86.3 (81.9, 89.8)	84.6 (80.1, 88.2)
All Universities	**93.4 (93.0, 93.8)**	**90.1 (89.6, 90.6)**	**88.7 (88.2, 89.2)**	**93.5 (93.1, 93.9)**	**86.3 (85.7, 86.8)**	**84.7 (84.1, 85.3)**

7. Skills relevance and utilisation

With the rapid expansion in student enrolments in recent years, concerns have been expressed that this may be leading to an oversupply of higher education graduates. This oversupply can manifest itself in the 'over-education' of graduates where they may not be fully utilising their skills or qualifications in their present position. There is a considerable literature on qualification related underemployment[1]. The Employer Satisfaction Survey provides valuable evidence on employers' perceptions on the relevance and utilisation of higher education graduates' skills and qualifications. It remains important to monitor these assessments over time.

Overall, graduates tend to view their completed qualification as less important for their current employment than their supervisors, as shown by Table 7. Slightly over half of the graduates, 51.1 per cent, considered their qualification to be 'very important' or 'important' to their current job. Approximately one in seven graduates, 14.4 per cent, felt that it was 'not at all important'. On the other hand, 60.4 per cent of supervisors indicated that the qualification was 'very important' or 'important' and only 8.1 per cent indicated that it was 'not at all important' for the graduate's current job. Given that a little under half of graduates employed, had been with their employer for less than one year after completing their qualification, their relative lack of work experience may explain why they did not fully comprehend the extent to which their qualification is important for their job.

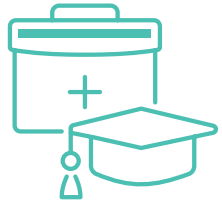
Table 7 **Importance of qualification for current employment, 2021 (%)**

	Graduates	Supervisors
Very important	33.1 (31.7, 34.5)	37.8 (36.5, 39.2)
Important	18.0 (16.9, 19.1)	22.6 (21.4, 23.8)
Fairly important	18.4 (17.3, 19.6)	16.7 (15.6, 17.7)
Not that important	16.1 (15.1, 17.2)	14.8 (13.8, 15.8)
Not at all important	14.4 (13.4, 15.5)	8.1 (7.4, 8.9)
Total	**100.0 (99.9, 100.0)**	**100.0 (99.9, 100.0)**

As seen in Table 8, Health and Education qualifications were rated by graduates and supervisors as being significantly more important for their current position than most other fields of education. This is consistent with these qualifications being a requirement for employment in many instances. For example, 65.0 per cent of graduates and 77.0 per cent of supervisors thought that Health qualifications were important for current employment. Similarly, 72.0 per cent of graduates and 77.6 per cent of supervisors thought that Education

51.1%

graduates indicating their qualification was 'very important' or 'important' for their current employment



60.4%

supervisors indicating the graduate's qualification was 'very important' or 'important' for their current employment

1 For example, see Mavromaras, K. McGuinness, S. & O'Leary, N. (2009). Job mismatches and labour market outcomes, 1–26. Retrieved from http://www.econstor.eu/handle/10419/50157 on the match between graduates and their jobs

qualifications were important for current employment. Supervisors of Creative arts, Management and commerce and Information technology graduates were least likely to think that the qualification was important for current employment at 45.9 per cent, 46.7 per cent, and 46.5 per cent respectively. The largest discrepancy between the views of graduates and employers was in Agriculture, environmental and related studies where 37.3 per cent of graduates rated their qualification as being important compared with 63.5 per cent of supervisors, a difference of 26.2 percentage points. Other areas where supervisors rated the qualification substantially higher than graduates was in Creative arts, Health, and Engineering and related technologies with gaps of 10 or more percentage points. Information technology had the lowest difference between graduate and employer assessments of the importance of the qualification to current work with a gap of 4.2 percentage points.

Table 8 **Importance of qualification for current employment by broad field of education, 2021 (%)**

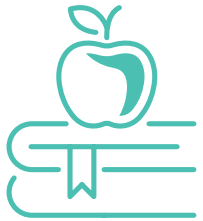
Field of education	Graduates	Supervisors
Natural and Physical Sciences	43.3 (38.3, 48.4)	51.4 (46.5, 56.3)
Information Technology	42.3 (36.6, 48.3)	46.5 (41.1, 52.1)
Engineering and Related Technologies	54.1 (48.7, 59.4)	66.0 (61.0, 70.7)
Architecture and Building	51.2 (42.2, 60.2)	60.5 (51.6, 68.7)
Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies	37.3 (28.3, 47.4)	63.5 (54.0, 72.1)
Health	65.0 (61.8, 68.0)	77.0 (74.2, 79.5)
Education	72.0 (68.3, 75.4)	77.6 (74.3, 80.6)
Management and Commerce	37.2 (34.1, 40.5)	45.9 (42.8, 49.1)
Society and Culture	47.5 (44.3, 50.7)	56.5 (53.4, 59.6)
Creative Arts	30.0 (23.8, 37.0)	46.1 (39.3, 53.0)
Total	**51.0 (49.6, 52.5)**	**60.4 (59.0, 61.8)**
Standard deviation	13.0	12.0

NB: Refers to the percentage of graduates and supervisors rating the qualification as 'very important' or 'important' for current employment.

Graduates and supervisors of those working in Professional occupations were most likely to state that the qualification was important for the job at 63.8 per cent and 74.6 per cent respectively (see Table 9). This is consistent with the ABS classification of occupations where managerial and professional jobs are defined at Skill Level 1 being commensurate with qualifications at bachelor level or higher. Graduates and supervisors working in lower skill level jobs, that is, Technicians and trades workers, and below, were much less likely to state that the qualification was important for the job.

72.0%

of Education graduates indicated that their qualification was important for their current employment - highest



77.6%

of supervisors of Education graduates indicated that their qualification was important for their current employment - highest

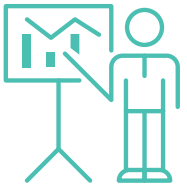


Table 9 **Importance of qualification for current employment, by occupation, 2021 (%)**

Occupation	Graduates	Supervisors
Managers	39.2 (33.9, 44.7)	55.7 (50.2, 60.9)
Professionals	63.8 (62.0, 65.6)	74.6 (73.0, 76.1)
Technicians and trades workers	34.6 (28.1, 41.7)	43.7 (36.9, 50.8)
Community and personal service workers	35.0 (30.1, 40.3)	39.5 (34.7, 44.4)
Clerical and administrative workers	26.7 (22.7, 31.2)	39.7 (35.3, 44.3)
Other workers	19.1 (15.5, 23.3)	17.5 (14.3, 21.3)
Total	**51.0 (49.6, 52.5)**	**60.4 (59.0, 61.8)**
Standard Deviation	15.2	19.0

NB: Refers to the percentage of graduates and supervisors rating the qualification as 'very important' or 'important' for current employment. Almost two-thirds of respondents were supervising graduates in professional occupations, with the remainder spread fairly evenly across all other occupations.

63.8%

of graduates in Profesisonal occupations indicated their qualification was important for current employment

74.6%

of supervisors of graduates in Profesisonal occupations indicated their qualification was important for current employment

Graduates and their supervisors were also asked to indicate the extent to which the recent qualification prepared the graduate for their job. A high proportion of graduates and supervisors, 84.6 per cent and 92.1 per cent respectively, thought the qualification prepared the graduate well or very well for the job, as shown in Table 10. The proportion of supervisors who thought the qualification prepared the graduate for the job has remained consistently high since the employer survey was first conducted in 2016, ranging between 92 per cent and 94 per cent in rounded terms. Overall, there appears to be a strong relationship between skills and knowledge acquired by higher education graduates and the requirements of their jobs after graduation. This result strongly affirms the value of higher education qualifications in terms of preparation for work.

Table 10 **Extent to which qualification prepared graduate for current employment, 2021 (%)**

	Graduates	Supervisors
Very well	39.2 (37.7, 40.7)	51.4 (49.9, 52.9)
Well	45.4 (43.9, 46.9)	40.7 (39.2, 42.1)
Not well	8.0 (7.2, 8.8)	3.5 (3.0, 4.1)
Not at all	7.4 (6.6, 8.2)	4.4 (3.9, 5.1)
Total	100.0 (99.9, 100.0)	100.0 (99.9, 100.0)
Other workers	19.1 (15.5, 23.3)	17.5 (14.3, 21.3)
Total	**51.0 (49.6, 52.5)**	**60.4 (59.0, 61.8)**

Taken in conjunction with the findings regarding the importance of the qualification, it seems to be the case that importance could be related to domain-specific skills or knowledge whereas preparedness is a broader concept, encapsulating generic skills and potentially basic employability. Alternatively, as around half of graduates whose employers responded to the survey had been employed in their current position before they completed their qualification, it is understandable that a higher education qualification could be perceived as being less important while still preparing the graduate for employment by broadening or deepening existing skills and knowledge.

Graduates across all fields of education were less likely than their supervisors to indicate they felt their qualification prepared them for their current job, as shown by Table 11. Architecture and Building graduates, 73.7 per cent, Natural and physical sciences graduates, 78.4 per cent, Information and technology graduates, 80.5 per cent, and Society and culture graduates, 80.7 per cent, were least likely to state that their qualification prepared them for their job. Supervisors in each of these areas were more likely to state that the course had prepared the graduate well or very well for their current employment, with Architecture and building graduate supervisors rating preparedness 17.7 percentage points higher than graduates. Supervisors of graduates from the Natural and physical sciences, Information technology, and Society and culture fields of education also rated preparedness higher than graduates by 10.0 percentage points, 6.7 percentage points, and 12.0 percentage points respectively.

It should also be noted there was less variation across fields of education among supervisors stating the qualification prepared the graduate for current employment, with a standard deviation of 2.6 (see Table 11), than amongst supervisors stating the qualification was important for the job, with a higher deviation of 12.0 (see Table 8). This seems to support the previous observation that while higher education qualifications may not be 'important' in the sense they are not 'mandatory' or 'required', they nevertheless prepare graduates for employment very well.

Graduates across all fields of education were less likely than their supervisors to indicate they felt their qualification prepared them for their current job.

Table 11 **Extent to which qualification prepared graduate well or very well for current employment, by broad field of education, 2021 (%)**

Field of education	Graduates	Supervisors
Natural and Physical Sciences	78.4 (73.6, 82.6)	88.4 (84.5, 91.5)
Information Technology	80.5 (75.0, 85.0)	87.2 (82.6, 90.7)
Engineering and Related Technologies	82.3 (77.6, 86.1)	91.8 (88.4, 94.4)
Architecture and Building	73.7 (64.6, 81.1)	91.4 (84.6, 95.4)
Agriculture and Environmental Studies	82.3 (72.9, 88.9)	93.9 (86.9, 97.5)
Health	91.6 (89.5, 93.3)	95.2 (93.6, 96.4)
Education	90.6 (88.0, 92.8)	94.2 (92.1, 95.8)
Management and Commerce	83.6 (80.8, 86.0)	90.9 (88.7, 92.6)
Society and Culture	80.7 (77.9, 83.3)	92.7 (90.7, 94.3)

Creative Arts	84.0 (77.2, 89.0)	89.6 (83.8, 93.5)
Total	**84.6 (83.5, 85.7)**	**92.1 (91.2, 92.8)**
Standard deviation	5.3	2.6

Table 12 shows that supervisors of graduates working in Managerial and Professional occupations were most likely, at 95.3 per cent for both, to state that the qualification had prepared the graduate well or very well for current employment. The difference in ratings of preparedness by graduates and supervisors for graduates working in Professional and Managerial occupations was quite low at around 5 to 6 percentage points. Differences for Community and personal service workers, Clerical and administrative workers, Technicians and trades workers, and graduates in 'Other' occupations were all above 10 percentage points, which seems to indicate that those employed in lower skill occupations were less confident in how well their course had prepared them for work compared with their immediate supervisors.

Table 12 **Extent to which qualification prepared graduate well or very well for current employment, by occupation, 2021 (%)**

Occupation	Graduates	Supervisors
Managers	88.8 (84.6, 92.0)	95.3 (92.2, 97.2)
Professionals	89.7 (88.5, 90.8)	95.3 (94.5, 96.0)
Technicians and trades workers	79.8 (72.9, 85.3)	92.2 (86.9, 95.5)
Community and personal service workers	75.6 (70.4, 80.2)	89.3 (85.4, 92.3)
Clerical and administrative workers	78.7 (74.3, 82.6)	91.4 (88.1, 93.8)
Other workers	55.9 (50.2, 61.4)	68.3 (63.2, 73.0)
Total	**84.6 (83.5, 85.7)**	**92.1 (91.2, 92.8)**
Standard Deviation	12.3	10.2

Supervisors were also offered the opportunity to provide feedback on the main ways that the qualification had prepared the graduate for employment, as shown by Table 13, and there were almost 3,000 comments across eight themes. Overall, 48.7 per cent of supervisors reported favourably on graduates' Adaptive skills and 36.2 per cent reported favourable on graduates' Domain specific skills and knowledge. A substantial number of comments were also made that expanded on the quantitative ratings of graduate attributes including Employability and enterprise skills, 27.4 per cent, Technical and professional skills, 26.8 per cent, and Foundation skills, 26.0 per cent. Positive feedback was also provided in relation to the graduates' Personal attributes, 12.5 per cent, Teamwork and interpersonal skills, 7.4 per cent, and Institutional and course attributes with 6.6 per cent.

Table 13 **Main ways that the qualification prepared the graduate for employment, 2021 (%)**

	Supervisors
Adaptive skills	48.7 (46.9, 50.4)
Domain specific skills and knowledge	36.2 (34.5, 37.9)
Employability and enterprise skills	27.4 (25.9, 29.0)
Technical and professional skills	26.8 (25.3, 28.3)
Foundation skills	26.0 (24.5, 27.6)
Personal attributes	12.5 (11.4, 13.7)
Teamwork and interpersonal skills	7.4 (6.5, 8.3)
Institutional and course attributes	6.6 (5.8, 7.5)

NB: Percentages do not add up to 100 percent as supervisors were able to provide more than one comment.

There were substantially fewer comments (1,770) regarding the ways in which the qualification could have better prepared the graduate for employment suggesting the majority of supervisors felt that the graduate had been well prepared for the workplace. These observations are consistent with the generally very positive supervisor ratings of graduate preparation.

As seen in Table 14, the greatest number of comments related to the ways in which graduates could have better prepared for employment were made in relation to Domain specific skills and knowledge, 43.8 per cent and Technical and professional skills, 29.0 per cent. Supervisor feedback also referenced Employability and enterprise skills, 25.9 per cent, Institutional and course attributes, 20.6 per cent, Foundation skills, 11.5 per cent, Adaptive skills, 10.8 per cent, Teamwork and interpersonal skills, 6.7 per cent, and Personal attributes, 5.7 per cent.

Table 14 **Main ways that the qualification could have better prepared the graduate for employment, 2021 (%)**

	Supervisors
Domain specific skills and knowledge	43.8 (41.1, 46.6)
Technical and professional skills	29.0 (26.5, 31.6)
Employability and enterprise skills	25.9 (23.5, 28.5)
Institutional and course attributes	20.6 (18.4, 22.9)
Foundation skills	11.5 (9.8, 13.4)

Adaptive skills	10.8 (9.2, 12.7)
Teamwork and interpersonal skills	6.7 (5.5, 8.3)
Personal attributes	5.7 (4.5, 7.1)

NB: Percentages do not add up to 100 percent as supervisors were able to provide more than one comment.

Appendix 1 Methodology

1.1 Methodological summary

1.1.1 Overview

Graduates of 95 higher education institutions, including all 41 Table A and B universities, and 54 NUHEIs, were in scope to provide contact details for supervisors to participate in the 2021 ESS. Of these institutions, supervisors of graduates from 41 universities and 54 NUHEIs were included in the 2021 ESS sample. In all, supervisors responded with data for 41 universities and 51 NUHEIs.

The population frame for the 2021 ESS comprised 95,978 graduates, domestic and international, who responded in the 2021 GOS and indicated they were employed. Of these, 8,196 employed graduates provided sufficient contact details to approach 7,846 supervisors, yielding a supervisor referral rate of 8.2 per cent.

This is higher than the 7.6 per cent supervisor referral rate achieved in the 2020 ESS, but still lower than the 9.5 per cent achieved in 2019. As in previous years, there remains a reluctance among graduates to pass on their supervisor contact details.

In the 2021 ESS, a total of 3,450 valid survey responses from direct supervisors were collected across all study levels, representing a supervisor response rate of 44.0 per cent. This is lower than the 45.6 per cent supervisor response rate achieved in 2020. Further information on institutional responses is included at Appendix 3. A copy of the generic survey items (i.e. excluding any department or institution specific items) is included at Appendix 2.

Table 15 **ESS operational overview, 2019 to 2021**

	2019			2020			2021		
	Nov/Feb	May	Total	Nov/Feb	May	Total	Nov/Feb	May	Total
Number of in-scope supervisors[2]	2,889	6,842	9,731	3,235	4,288	7,523	3,316	4,530	7,846
Number of completed surveys	1,428	3,261	4,689	1,430	2,000	3,430	1,466	1,984	3,450
Supervisor response rate	49.4%	47.6%	48.1%	44.2%	46.6%	45.6%	44.2%	43.8%	44.0%
Data collection mode	Online and CATI								
Analytic unit	Supervisor								

2 Excludes opt outs, disqualified and out of scope surveys

1.1.2 Sample build

The collection of supervisor details occurred each round at the end of the GOS. All graduates in employment (but not self-employed or working in a family business) were asked to provide details (name, email and/or phone number) of their current supervisor so that the supervisor could be invited to take part in the ESS.

Several strategies were implemented in an attempt to increase the number of graduates providing valid contact details for their supervisor, such as calls to graduates to correct inaccurate or incomplete supervisor contact information and follow up calls to graduates who requested more information prior to agreeing to provide supervisor contact details.

There remains a reluctance among graduates to pass on their supervisor contact details. Establishment of the QILT brand allied with efforts to promote the QILT surveys and especially the ESS among companies that are known employers of graduates may help to lift the supervisor referral rate over time.

1.1.3 Data collection

The main collection periods for the 2021 ESS were November 2020 to February 2021 and May to August 2021, with a smaller collection taking place in February 2021 to April 2021. The February collection is undertaken to accommodate institutions with August to October 2020 graduate completions. For reporting purposes, the November and February collection period outcomes are reported together. The survey was fielded primarily online, in English only.

Online was the primary mode of collection for the ESS, with Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) a secondary mode. If a valid email address was provided by the graduate, the supervisor would receive an email invitation to the online ESS on the following working day. If the graduate only provided a phone number for their supervisor, the supervisor was called in an attempt to complete the ESS via CATI.

The email invitation was followed by up to five reminder emails to non-responding supervisors. Where a phone number as well as an email address was provided by the graduate, non-responding supervisors after the second reminder email were channelled into the CATI workflow.

Refer to the 2021 ESS Methodological Report for further information on target population definition, sample design and preparation, survey design and procedures, response maximisation strategies, data preparation processes, final field outcomes and response analysis.

1.2 Response bias

The tables that follow compare the course, demographic and labour market characteristics of employed graduate respondents to the GOS, with the characteristics of graduates whose supervisors responded to the ESS to detect possible bias in the ESS. That is, these tables identify the extent to which the ESS departs from being a representative survey of employers of recent graduates. Employed graduate respondents to the GOS were asked to provide contact details of their supervisors and as such represent the population frame for the ESS.

Comparison of employed graduates with supervisor responses by field of education shows that Education graduates are overrepresented by 4.2 percentage points in the survey whilst Health, Management and commerce, Society and culture, Information technology and Creative arts are underrepresented in the ESS, as shown by Table 16.

Table 16 **Respondents by broad field of education, 2021**[3]

Field of education	Graduates	Supervisors
Natural and Physical Sciences	7.8 (7.7, 8.0)	8.2 (7.4, 9.0)
Information Technology	7.1 (7.0, 7.3)	6.1 (5.4, 6.8)
Engineering and Related Technologies	6.2 (6.0, 6.3)	7.1 (6.4, 7.9)
Architecture and Building	2.4 (2.3, 2.5)	2.5 (2.1, 2.9)
Agriculture and Environmental Studies	1.5 (1.4, 1.5)	2.1 (1.8, 2.6)
Health	21.2 (20.9, 21.4)	19.6 (18.5, 20.7)
Education	9.1 (9.0, 9.3)	13.3 (12.4, 14.3)
Management and Commerce	19.8 (19.6, 20.0)	18.3 (17.2, 19.4)
Society and Culture	20.2 (20.0, 20.4)	19.0 (18.0, 20.2)
Creative Arts	4.7 (4.5, 4.8)	3.8 (3.3, 4.4)
Total	**100.0 (100.0, 100.0)**	**100.0 (99.9, 100.0)**

There is a slightly higher level of responses from supervisors of external graduates in the ESS by 2.1 percentage points as seen in Table 17. Supervisors of external graduates report lower overall satisfaction (see Table 3) so that overrepresentation of the supervisors of external graduates could lead to a downward bias in reported overall satisfaction in the 2021 ESS.

Supervisors of postgraduate coursework and postgraduate research graduates are somewhat over-represented by 1.3 percentage points and 3.1 percentage points respectively, while undergraduate supervisors are underrepresented by 4.3 percentage points.

3 Total includes a small number of responses in Food, Hospitality and Personal Services. Note that total figures by broad field of education shown elsewhere in this report include Food, Hospitality and Personal Services.

Table 17 **Respondents by type of institution and course characteristics, 2021**

	Graduates	Supervisors
Type of institution		
University	91.7 (91.5, 91.8)	91.7 (90.9, 92.5)
NUHEI	8.3 (8.2, 8.5)	8.3 (7.5, 9.1)
Mode of attendance code		
Internal/Multi Mode	79.3 (79.0, 79.5)	77.2 (76.0, 78.3)
External/Distance	20.6 (20.4, 20.8)	22.7 (21.6, 23.9)
Course level		
Undergraduate	52.5 (52.2, 52.8)	48.2 (46.8, 49.6)
Postgraduate coursework	42.4 (42.2, 42.7)	43.7 (42.4, 45.1)
Postgraduate research	5.0 (4.9, 5.2)	8.1 (7.3, 8.9)
Total	**100.0 (100.0, 100.0)**	**100.0 (99.9, 100.0)**

Table 18 compares the demographic characteristics of employed graduate respondents to the GOS with the demographic characteristics of graduates whose supervisors responded to the ESS. Supervisors of male graduates are slightly overrepresented in the ESS by around 4.4 percentage points as seen in Table 18, and they report slightly lower overall satisfaction as shown by Table 4. However, differences in employer satisfaction with male and female graduates are not significant so the overrepresentation of employers of male graduates is unlikely to materially impact on reported overall satisfaction.

Supervisors of graduates aged 30 years and over are overrepresented in the ESS by 7.3 percentage points. This is consistent with the overrepresentation of supervisors of postgraduate coursework and postgraduate research graduates as shown in Table 17. Employers of older graduates reported lower overall satisfaction as shown in Table 4, so the overrepresentation of older graduates is likely to lead to a small downward bias in reported overall satisfaction.

Table 18 **Respondents by demographic characteristics, 2021**

	Graduates	Supervisors
Gender		
Male	37.7 (37.4, 37.9)	42.1 (40.7, 43.4)
Female	62.1 (61.9, 62.4)	57.8 (56.4, 59.1)

	Graduates	Supervisors
Age		
30 years or under	69.1 (68.8, 69.3)	61.8 (60.4, 63.1)
Over 30 years	30.9 (30.7, 31.2)	38.2 (36.9, 39.6)
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander		
Indigenous	1.1 (1.0, 1.2)	1.2 (0.9, 1.5)
Non-Indigenous	98.9 (98.8, 99.0)	98.8 (98.5, 99.1)
Main language spoken at home		
English	82.7 (82.5, 82.9)	84.8 (83.8, 85.8)
Language other than English	17.3 (17.1, 17.5)	15.2 (14.2, 16.2)
Disability		
Reported disability	6.7 (6.6, 6.9)	7.9 (7.2, 8.7)
No disability	93.1 (93.0, 93.2)	92.0 (91.2, 92.7)
Total	**100.0 (100.0, 100.0)**	**100.0 (99.9, 100.0)**

Supervisors of graduates working in Professional occupations are overrepresented by 8.2 percentage points in the ESS. From Table 5 earlier, supervisors of graduates working in Professional occupations reported higher overall satisfaction. All other things equal, this would lead to an upward bias in the reported overall satisfaction in the 2021 ESS.

Supervisors of graduates employed full-time are overrepresented in the ESS by 4.0 percentage points. From Table 5 earlier, there was little difference in reported overall satisfaction among supervisors of graduates who worked either full-time or part-time. Supervisors of graduates who have worked in their current job for between three months and one year are over-represented in the 2021 ESS by 8.2 percentage points. Satisfaction with this group was higher than for those who had been employed for under three months or those who had been employed for 1 year or more (see Table 5) and so their overrepresentation may lead to an upward bias in employer satisfaction.

Table 19 **Respondents by labour market characteristics, 2021**

	Graduates	Supervisors
Occupation		
Managers	7.7 (7.5, 7.8)	6.8 (6.1, 7.5)
Professionals	54.0 (53.7, 54.2)	62.2 (60.8, 63.6)

	Graduates	Supervisors
Technicians and trades workers	3.8 (3.7, 3.9)	4.0 (3.5, 4.6)
Community and personal service workers	11.0 (10.9, 11.2)	8.0 (7.2, 8.8)
Clerical and administrative workers	10.4 (10.2, 10.5)	9.5 (8.7, 10.3)
Other workers	13.2 (13.0, 13.4)	9.6 (8.8, 10.4)
Employment status		
Full-time	63.5 (63.2, 63.8)	67.5 (66.2, 68.8)
Part-time	36.5 (36.2, 36.8)	32.5 (31.2, 33.8)
Duration of job with current employer		
Less than 3 months	14.6 (14.4, 14.8)	10.2 (9.4, 11.1)
3 months to < 1 year	34.7 (34.4, 34.9)	42.9 (41.5, 44.3)
1 year or more	50.7 (50.5, 51.0)	46.9 (45.5, 48.3)
Total	**100.0 (100.0, 100.0)**	**100.0 (99.9, 100.0)**

1.3 Graduate Attributes Scale - Employer

The Graduate Attributes Scale – Employer (GAS-E) was developed as part of the original 2013–14 Trial of the Employer Satisfaction Survey. The project team synthesised a number of frameworks relevant to the skills of university graduates and identified a number of general attributes. The GAS-E has been designed to assess common rather than specific graduate attributes, within a limited workplace context. The items were further tested and refined during a 2015 trial of the instrument. The five graduate attribute domains identified, as noted earlier, include:

- Foundation skills
- Adaptive skills
- Collaborative skills
- Technical skills
- Employability skills.

The GAS-E forms the core of the ESS. Graduates responding to the GOS had previously been asked to assess their Foundation, Adaptive and Collaborative skills using the GAS, however these items were removed from the core GOS in 2021, and are now institution opt-in.

Appendix 2 ESS questionnaire

2.1 Core instrument

A summary of all items included in the 2021 ESS core instrument are provided in Table 20 below. A copy of the core survey instrument (i.e. excluding any institution specific items) and screenshots of the survey are included in the 2021 ESS Methodological Report.

Table 20 **Questionnaire item summary**

Question ID	Question	Response frame
	Module A: Screening and confirmation	
QS1	First, we have a few questions about your role and <E403> <E402>'s role, so we can understand your relationship to <E403>. Just to check, do you currently supervise <E403>? By supervisor, we mean a person who has the authority to direct someone to do certain tasks and who has a good idea of the work that the person does in their job.	1. Yes 2. No, but I used to be their supervisor 3. No, I have never been their supervisor
QS2	And, how long have you been <**E403**>'s supervisor?	1. Less than 1 month 2. At least 1 month but less than 3 months 3. At least 3 months but less than 1 year 4. 1 year or more
QS3	Before today, were you aware that <E403> completed a qualification from <E306C>?	1. Yes 2. No
QS4	And, before today, were you aware that the qualification <E403> completed was a <E308>?	1. Yes 2. No
QS5	What is <E403>'s occupation in your business?	1. <verbatim text box>
QS6	What are the main tasks that they usually perform in their job?	1. <verbatim text box>
QS7	What is your occupation in your business?	1. <verbatim text box>
QS8	What are the main tasks that you usually perform in this job?	1. <verbatim text box>

Question ID	Item label	Response frame
	Module B: Overall graduate preparation	
QOP1	Is a <**E308**> or similar qualification a formal requirement for <**E403**> to do their job?	1. Yes 2. No
QOP2	To what extent is it important for <**E403**> to have a <**E308**> or similar qualification to being able to do the job well? Is it…	1. Not at all important 2. Not that important 3. Fairly important 4. Important 5. Very important
QOP3	Overall, how well did <**E403**>'s <**qualfinal**> prepare <**him/her**> for their job?	1. Not at all prepared 2. Not well prepared 3. Well prepared 4. Very well prepared 5. Don't know / unsure
QOP4	What are the **MAIN** ways that <**E306C**> prepared <**E403**> for employment?	1. <verbatim text box> 2. Don't know / unsure
QOP5	And what are the **MAIN** ways that <**E306C**> could have better prepared <**E403**> for employment?	1. <verbatim text box> 2. Don't know / unsure
QS11	Based on your experience with <**E403**>, how likely are you to consider hiring another <**E308**> graduate from <**E306C**>, if you had a relevant vacancy?	1. Very unlikely to consider 2. Unlikely to consider 3. Neither unlikely nor likely to consider 4. Likely to consider 5. Very likely to consider 6. Don't know / unsure
	Module C: Graduate attributes scale	
GAS Stem	For each skill or attribute, to what extent do you agree or disagree that <**E403**>'s <**E308**> from <**E306C**> prepared them for their job? If the skill is not required by <**E403**> in their role, you can answer 'Not applicable'.	

Question ID	Item label	Response frame
GAS	1. Oral communication skills 2. Written communication skills 3. Numeracy skills 4. Ability to develop relevant knowledge 5. Ability to develop relevant skills 6. Ability to solve problems 7. Ability to integrate knowledge 8. Ability to think independently about problems	1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither disagree nor agree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree 9. Not applicable
GAS	9. Broad background knowledge 10. Ability to develop innovative ideas 11. Ability to identify new opportunities 12. Ability to adapt knowledge to different contexts 13. Ability to apply skills in different contexts 14. Capacity to work independently	1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither disagree nor agree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree 9. Not applicable
GAS	15. Working well in a team 16. Getting on well with others in the workplace 17. Working collaboratively with colleagues to complete tasks 18. Understanding different points of view 19. Ability to interact with co-workers from different or multi-cultural backgrounds	1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither disagree nor agree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree 9. Not applicable
GAS	20. Applying professional knowledge to job tasks 21. Using technology effectively 22. Applying technical skills in the workplace 23. Maintaining professional standards 24. Observing ethical standards 25. Using research skills to gather evidence	1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither disagree nor agree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree 9. Not applicable
GAS	26. Ability to work under pressure 27. Capacity to be flexible in the workplace 28. Ability to meet deadlines 29. Understanding the nature of your business or organisation 30. Demonstrating leadership skills 31. Demonstrating management skills 32. Taking responsibility for personal professional development 33. Demonstrating initiative in the workplace	1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither disagree nor agree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree 9. Not applicable

Question ID	Item label	Response frame
	Module E: Institution specific issues	
	Module F: Close	
C3	Would you like to be notified when the national data is released on the Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) website?	1. Yes 2. No
C4	Would you like your organisation to be acknowledged on the QILT website for supporting this important research? If you are unsure please select yes, as you will be able to opt out of this during our follow up with you.	1. Yes 2. No
C2	Can we confirm the best email address to contact you on?	1. My email address is <supemail> 2. The best email address to contact me on is: <VERBATIM RESPONSE TEXT BOX>
C5	So that we can properly acknowledge your business on the QILT website, can you please confirm your business name as you would like it to appear on the site?	1. My business name is: (VERBATIM RESPONSE TEXT BOX)
END	Thank you for your time today and support in ensuring that graduates are well equipped to meet the needs of organisations like yours. If you would like further information about the ESS, including previous year's results you can go to www.qilt.edu.au/ess	

Appendix 3 Institutional participation

The tables below show institutions that participated in the GOS with one or more responses in the ESS.

Table 21 **University participation 2019 to 2021**

University	2019	2020	2021	Total
Australian Catholic University	110	97	100	307
Bond University	21	16	16	53
Central Queensland University	82	49	72	203
Charles Darwin University	42	23	34	99
Charles Sturt University	140	97	83	320
Curtin University	120	103	84	307
Deakin University	223	142	162	527
Edith Cowan University	68	54	83	205
Federation University Australia	46	40	41	127
Flinders University	110	39	25	174
Griffith University	141	111	88	340
James Cook University	76	59	44	179
La Trobe University	148	101	105	354
Macquarie University	113	75	63	251
Monash University	235	188	202	625
Murdoch University	36	38	35	109
Queensland University of Technology	80	95	152	327
RMIT University	189	106	152	447
Southern Cross University	65	48	39	152
Swinburne University of Technology	80	63	93	236
The Australian National University	47	80	47	174
The University of Adelaide	91	67	78	236
The University of Melbourne	321	257	238	816
The University of Notre Dame Australia	43	34	27	104
The University of Queensland	204	174	110	488
The University of South Australia	119	83	100	302

University	2019	2020	2021	Total
The University of Sydney	143	120	103	366
The University of Western Australia	49	25	27	101
Torrens University	34	33	40	107
University of Canberra	73	45	41	159
University of Divinity	20	6	12	38
University of New England	108	78	55	241
University of New South Wales	75	75	101	251
University of Newcastle	134	63	53	250
University of Southern Queensland	114	71	58	243
University of Tasmania	236	151	118	505
University of Technology Sydney	136	88	96	320
University of the Sunshine Coast	50	33	32	115
University of Wollongong	77	27	45	149
Victoria University	61	59	56	176
Western Sydney University	111	62	55	228

Table 22 **NUHEI participation, 2019 to 2021**

University	2019	2020	2021	Total
Academy of Information Technology	3	1	3	7
ACAP and NCPS	16	11	3	30
Adelaide Central School of Art	2			2
Adelaide College of Divinity	2	1		3
Alphacrucis College	7	5	7	19
Asia Pacific International College			2	2
Australian Academy of Music and Performing Arts	1			1
Australian College of Christian Studies		1		1
Australian College of Nursing	9	12	16	37
Australian College of Theology Limited	7	15	18	40

University	2019	2020	2021	Total
Australian Institute of Business Pty Ltd	63	25	13	101
Australian Institute of Higher Education			1	1
Australian Institute of Management Education & Training	2	7	11	20
Australian Institute of Professional Counsellors		2	1	3
Avondale University College	13	9	8	30
BBI - The Australian Institute of Theological Education		3	1	4
Box Hill Institute	1	4	3	8
Canberra Institute of Technology		1		1
Chisholm Institute	1	2	1	4
Christian Heritage College	8	3	7	18
CIC Higher Education			1	1
Collarts (Australian College of the Arts)	4		1	5
Eastern College Australia	3	1	3	7
Endeavour College of Natural Health	6	2	3	11
Engineering Institute of Technology			4	4
Excelsia College	1		5	6
Gestalt Therapy Brisbane			2	2
Health Education & Training Institute	1	2	2	5
Holmes Institute	11	8	19	38
Holmesglen Institute	5	1	4	10
Ikon Institute of Australia			2	2
International College of Hotel Management	5	1	4	10
International College of Management, Sydney	4	6	3	13
Kaplan Business School	10	15	17	42
Kaplan Higher Education Pty Ltd	8	7	7	22
Kent Institute Australia			5	5
King's Own Institute	7	6	4	17

University	2019	2020	2021	Total
LCI Melbourne		1	1	2
Le Cordon Bleu Australia	6	1		7
Leo Cussen Centre for Law	2	5	8	15
Macleay College	2	2	1	5
Marcus Oldham College	8	1	3	12
Melbourne Institute of Technology	6	6	7	19
Melbourne Polytechnic	4	3	3	10
Montessori World Educational Institute (Australia)			3	3
Moore Theological College	7	9	4	20
Morling College	1	3		4
National Art School	1	1		2
Perth Bible College	1	2		3
Photography Studies College (Melbourne)	1			1
SAE Institute	9	5	3	17
SP Jain School of Management		1		1
Stott's College		2		2
Sydney College of Divinity	8	6		14
Tabor College of Higher Education	6	6	3	15
TAFE NSW	5	2	5	12
TAFE Queensland	4	1		5
TAFE South Australia	1			1
The Australian College of Physical Education	1	1		2
The Australian Guild of Music Education			1	1
The Australian Institute of Music	1	3	1	5
The Cairnmillar Institute	2		3	5
The College of Law Limited	35	33	46	114
The MIECAT Institute		2		2

University	2019	2020	2021	Total
The Tax Institute Higher Education			1	1
Think Education	3	2	1	6
UTS College	3	2		5
VIT (Victorian Institute of Technology)		1	8	9
Wentworth Institute of Higher Education		1	2	3
Whitehouse Institute of Design, Australia		2		2
William Angliss Institute	1			1