



# WHAT DO GRADUATES DO?

THE CLASS OF 2012

AN ANALYSIS OF THE UNIVERSITIES FIRST DESTINATION OF GRADUATES SURVEY 2013

DECEMBER 2013





What Do Graduates Do? The Class of 2012.  
An Analysis of the Universities First Destination of Graduates Survey 2013  
A report by the Higher Education Authority  
December 2013

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The authors wish to acknowledge the assistance of their colleague, Dawn Carroll, and of higher education institution staff involved in submitting data to the Higher Education Authority.

# 01

## INTRODUCTION

Higher education's most direct contribution to enterprise development is through the provision of graduate labour from undergraduate and postgraduate provision. All research points to the fact that graduates have a better chance of gaining and maintaining employment and of earning higher salaries than non-graduates. The most recent Education at a Glance<sup>1</sup> editorial comments that '*Young people have been particularly hard hit by un- and underemployment as a result of the global recession.*' They further comment that '*education attainment has a huge impact on employability and that the crisis has strengthened this impact even further.*' Gathering and communicating graduate destinations data which reflect the value of higher education is particularly relevant in the current economic climate in Ireland. Employment forecasts to 2015 highlight the fact that '*the recovery is not expected to be uniform across occupational groups and is likely to create greater employment opportunities for high skilled*<sup>2</sup>'.

The Higher Education Authority's First Destination Survey was first carried out by the institutions in 1982 and the results of this survey continue to benefit policy makers, students, guidance counsellors, teachers and all with an interest in education. For the past three years the institutes of technology<sup>3</sup> have not been involved in this survey. They do however, conduct their own in-house survey of graduates on an annual basis at graduation. The First Destinations Survey was carried out on all 2012 university graduates nine months after graduation by the careers offices in each university. The high response rates yielded from this 2013 survey, 72% of the 2012 Level 8 Honours Bachelor degree graduating cohort, make the results of this survey highly significant.

This short report firstly looks at the destinations of level 8 and level 9/10 graduates from the 2012 cohort. Trend data for the last five years is also examined. The report takes a focused look at graduate destinations by broad field of study. Some characteristics of employed graduates are examined such as gender and salary. Finally for the first time we examine the relationship between the relevance of qualification and first destination employment gained as self-reported by the graduate.

The design and development of a new and improved graduate destinations survey is a priority in 2014 for the Higher Education Authority. It is the intention that this survey will encompass graduates from all higher education institutions both public and private. The survey will also incorporate a longitudinal dimension to track the destinations of graduates throughout their career to inform the long term benefits of higher education. The survey will also focus on the careers of research graduates.

<sup>1</sup> OECD (2013), Education at a Glance 2013:OECD Indicators, OECD Publishing

<sup>2</sup> Behan, J. and Shally, C., Occupational Employment Forecasts 2015, FÁS/ESRI Manpower Forecasting Studies, Report no. 13, February 2010, p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> Dublin Institute of Technology continue to return First Destination of Graduates data to the HEA. This data is not included in this analysis so as not to directly identify DIT results.

## FIRST DESTINATION OF GRADUATES, 2012

### 2.1. Undergraduate Level 8 Honours Bachelor Degree Graduates

The overall results of the 2012 First Destination Survey of undergraduate level 8 Honours Bachelor Degree graduates are outlined in Table 1. 72% of the 2012 Honours Bachelor degree graduates in the universities responded to the survey.

**Table 1: First Destination of Graduates Level 8 Undergraduate Honours Bachelor Degree, 2012 and 2011**

	2012	2011
In Employment	52%	48%
<i>In Employment - Ireland</i>	42%	39%
<i>In Employment- Overseas</i>	10%	9%
Further Studies / Training	37%	41%
Work Experience Schemes	0%	0%
Seeking Employment	7%	7%
Unavailable for Work/Study	3%	4%

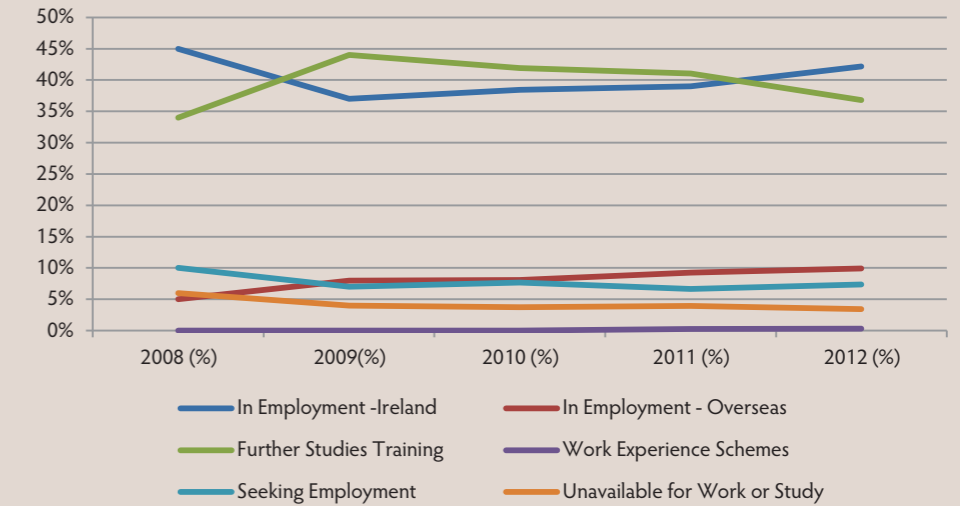
Of the 2012 Honours Bachelor Degree graduates in the university sector 52% were in employment nine months after graduation. This figure increased from 48% of the 2011 graduates. The proportion of 2012 graduates in employment in Ireland increased to 42% from 39% of 2011 graduates while 10% of 2012 graduates found employment overseas, an increase from 9% of the 2011 graduates. The proportion of 2012 graduates seeking employment remained unchanged at 7% from the 2011 cohort of graduates. Graduates of 2012 returning to further study declined to 37% from 41% of the 2011 cohort.

Table 2 and Figure 1 outline graduate destination trends for undergraduate Honours Bachelor Degrees from 2008-2012.

**Table 2: First Destination of Graduates Level 8 Undergraduate Honours Bachelor Degree, 2008-2012**

	2008 (%)	2009 (%)	2010 (%)	2011 (%)	2012 (%)
In Employment	50%	45%	46%	48%	52%
<i>In Employment -Ireland</i>	45%	37%	38%	39%	42%
<i>In Employment - Overseas</i>	5%	8%	8%	9%	10%
Further Studies / Training	34%	44%	42%	41%	37%
Work Experience Schemes	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Seeking Employment	10%	7%	8%	7%	7%
Unavailable for Work or Study	6%	4%	4%	4%	3%

**Figure 1: Level 8 Graduates - First Destinations 2008-2012**



Employment prospects of Honours Bachelor Degree graduates have been improving since 2009, from 45% of the 2009 cohort of graduates in employment to 52% of the 2012 cohort in employment. Of those graduates in employment those gaining employment overseas doubled over the last five years from 5% of the 2008 graduates to 10% of the 2012 graduates reflecting the continued need for graduates to pursue opportunities overseas, a trend that is likely due to the current economic climate in Ireland. Graduates gaining employment in Ireland increased steadily from 37% of the 2009 graduate cohort to 42% of the 2012 graduates. Those seeking employment remained constant over the last 4 years. The numbers of level 8 graduates pursuing further studies continued to decline year on year for the last four years following a period of gain.

## 2.2. Postgraduate Level 9 Masters and Level 10 PhD Graduates

The overall results of the 2012 First Destination Survey of level 9 Masters and level 10 PhD graduates are outlined in Table 3. The survey achieved a response rate of 62% among these graduates.

	2012	2011
In Employment	72%	71%
<i>In Employment - Ireland</i>	61%	58%
<i>In Employment - Overseas</i>	11%	13%
Further Studies / Training	11%	13%
Work Experience Schemes	1%	1%
Seeking Employment	13%	12%
Unavailable for Work/Study	4%	4%

A very high proportion, 72%, of level 9/10 Masters and PhD 2012 graduates were in employment nine months after graduation, a slight improvement on the previous year's graduate cohort. Those graduates gaining employment in Ireland increased with 61% of the 2012 graduates finding employment at home compared to 58% of the 2011 graduates. The proportion of 2012 graduates gaining employment overseas declined to 11% from 13% of the 2011 level 9/10 Masters and PhD graduate cohort.

The proportion of 2012 graduates seeking employment increased to 13% from 12% of the 2011 cohort. This is almost twice that of those seeking employment at level 8, perhaps due to the greater numbers going on to further study beyond level 8. Postgraduates returning to further study/training declined to 11% of the 2012 cohort from 13% of the 2011 graduate cohort.

Table 4 and Figure 2 outline graduate destination trends for postgraduate levels 9 Masters and level 10 PhD from 2008-2012.

	2008 (%)	2009 (%)	2010 (%)	2011 (%)	2012 (%)
In Employment	63%	63%	67%	71%	72%
<i>In Employment - Ireland</i>	54%	53%	57%	58%	61%
<i>In Employment - Overseas</i>	9%	10%	10%	13%	11%
Further Studies / Training	16%	17%	12%	13%	11%
Work Experience Schemes	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%
Seeking Employment	12%	15%	16%	12%	13%
Unavailable for Work or Study	8%	5%	5%	4%	4%

**Figure 2: Level 9/10 Masters and PhD Graduates – First Destinations 2008-2012**



Table 4 shows that employment outcomes for postgraduates have been increasing steadily since 2009 with the proportion of graduates in employment rising from 63% of 2009 to 72% of 2012 graduates. Those gaining employment in Ireland increased from 53% of the 2009 graduates to 61% of the 2012 graduate cohort. Employment overseas increased from 9% of the 2008 graduate cohort to 13% of the 2011 graduate but has fallen back to 11% of the 2012 graduates at level 9/10. Graduates seeking employment reached a high of 16% of the 2010 cohort and are now 13% of the 2012 graduates.

It is interesting to note when looking at Tables 2 and 4 together that those with undergraduate qualifications are continuing to seek and gain employment overseas while those with postgraduate qualifications have declining numbers gaining employment overseas, suggesting even further the relevance of educational attainment. As the Irish economy shows some signs of recovery postgraduate students appear best-placed to access the opportunities arising from growth in employment.

## FIRST DESTINATION OF GRADUATES BY FIELD OF STUDY

This section looks at the destination of level 8 Honours Bachelor Degree and Level 9 Masters and 10 PhD 2012 graduates by field of study.

### 3.1. Undergraduate Level 8 Honours Bachelor Degree Graduates

**Table 5: First Destination of Graduates Level 8 Undergraduate Honours Bachelor Degree, 2012, By Field of Study**

	Education	Arts & Humanities	Social Science, Business & Law	Science & Maths	Computer Science	Engineering	Agriculture & Veterinary	Health & Welfare	Services	All Graduates
Respondents	70%	71%	76%	70%	80%	78%	82%	69%	56%	72%
In Employment	74%	40%	48%	44%	73%	61%	68%	77%	67%	52%
<i>In Employment -Ireland</i>	59%	29%	41%	36%	66%	44%	55%	63%	44%	42%
<i>In Employment -Overseas</i>	15%	11%	7%	7%	7%	17%	13%	14%	22%	10%
Further Studies / Training	13%	45%	43%	42%	17%	27%	20%	14%	0%	37%
Work Experience Schemes	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	11%	0%
Seeking Employment	8%	10%	5%	10%	8%	8%	9%	6%	11%	7%
Unavailable for Work or Study	3%	4%	3%	4%	2%	4%	3%	3%	11%	3%

Table 5 shows that Health & Welfare graduates have the highest level of employment with 77% of 2012 graduates employed nine months after graduation. This is followed by Education at 74% and Computer Science at 73%. Of the top three fields of study Computer Science has the highest proportion of 2012 graduates employed in Ireland at 66% compared to 63% for Health & Welfare and 59% for Education reflecting strong employment opportunities for computing graduates in Ireland. Arts & Humanities, Science & Mathematics and Social Science, Business & Law have the lowest proportion of graduates in employment at 40%, 44% and 48% respectively. This is counteracted by the fact that they have the highest proportion of graduates in further study at 45%, 42% and 43% respectively. These figures reflect the less applied or career focussed programme structure of these fields of study compared to Health & Welfare and Education which tend to have higher proportions of graduates successfully gaining employment and lower proportions of graduates going on to further study. Services graduates in 2012 have the highest proportion employed overseas at 22% and also the highest proportion of graduates seeking employment at 11%.

### 3.2. Postgraduate Level 9/10 Masters and PhD Graduates

**Table 6: First Destination of Graduates Level 9 Masters and Level 10 PhD Graduates, 2012, by Field of Study**

	Education	Arts & Humanities	Social Science, Business & Law	Science & Maths	Computer Science	Engineering	Agriculture & Veterinary	Health & Welfare	Services	All Graduates
Respondents	74%	63%	61%	61%	60%	57%	77%	63%	53%	62%
In Employment	79%	60%	76%	63%	82%	73%	56%	76%	67%	72%
<i>In Employment -Ireland</i>	70%	50%	64%	52%	73%	60%	47%	66%	53%	61%
<i>In Employment -Overseas</i>	9%	10%	12%	12%	9%	13%	8%	11%	14%	11%
Further Studies / Training	10%	15%	10%	16%	4%	10%	8%	9%	6%	11%
Work Experience Schemes	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%
Seeking Employment	9%	17%	11%	18%	10%	14%	33%	10%	25%	13%
Unavailable for Work or Study	1%	8%	3%	3%	3%	2%	3%	4%	2%	4%

Computer Science graduates had the highest proportions of 2012 graduates in employment at 82% with 73% employed in Ireland. Postgraduates from four fields of study experienced below average employment (71%) rates: Arts & Humanities (60%), Science & Mathematics (63%), Agriculture & Veterinary (56%) and Services (67%). One third of Agriculture & Veterinary graduates from the 2012 cohort were still 'seeking employment' nine months after graduation. Graduates from Services and Arts & Humanities also had relatively high proportions of their level 9/10 Masters and PhD graduates seeking employment nine months after graduation at 25% and 17% respectively.

Overall when comparing Tables 5 and 6 as one would expect the more profession-orientated fields of study such as Education and Health & Welfare experience higher levels of employment. It is significant to note for both of these professions that high proportions are now gaining employment abroad. This may reflect the embargo on recruitment in the Irish public sector since 2009. The demand for Information Communication Technology graduates in Ireland has been growing significantly in Ireland over the last decade. This is reflected in the results at both level 8 and level 9/10 for Computer Science graduates. They have very high proportions of 2012 graduates in employed nine months after graduation with the majority gaining employment in Ireland.

## RELEVANCE OF QUALIFICATION

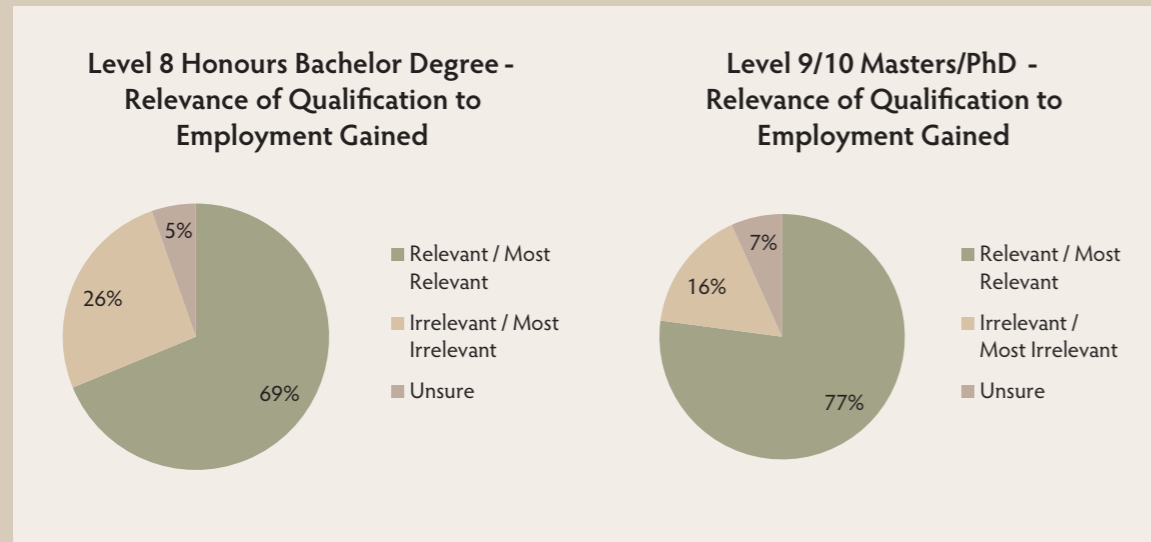
Survey respondents<sup>4</sup> who had found employment were invited to rate the relevance of their educational qualification to their area of current employment on a 1-5 scale:

- 1 -> Most relevant
- 2 -> Relevant
- 3 -> Unsure
- 4 -> Irrelevant
- 5 -> Most irrelevant

### 4.1. Relevance of Qualification to Employment for Graduates Employed In Ireland

Figure 3 outlines how level 8 and level 9/10 Masters/PhD 2012 graduates rated the relevance of their educational qualification to their area of employment. Overall, 69% of level 8 graduates rated the relevance of their qualification as relevant or most relevant to their area of employment. A total of 26% rated their qualification as irrelevant or most irrelevant, 5% were unsure. At levels 9 Masters and 10 PhD, 77% of graduates rated their qualification as relevant /most relevant to their area of employment; 16% rated as irrelevant /most irrelevant, 7% were unsure.

Figure 3: Relevance of Qualification to Employment, 2012 Graduates



More postgraduates finding that their qualification is relevant/more relevant to their employment is not unexpected as a postgraduate qualification is more specialised in most cases. However, the difference between undergraduate and postgraduate is not as pronounced as one would expect with 69% of level 8 and 77% of level 9/10 Masters/PhD graduates rating their qualification as relevant/most relevant to their employment.

<sup>4</sup> Data available for six universities only

Table 7 looks at the relevance of qualification by field of study. The table gives the percentage of responses that indicated that their qualification was relevant / most relevant or irrelevant / most irrelevant to their area of employment.

Table 7: Relevance of Qualification by Field of Study, 2012 Graduates				
ISCED	Level 8		Levels 9/10	
	Relevant / Most Relevant	Irrelevant / Most Irrelevant	Relevant / Most Relevant	Irrelevant / Most Irrelevant
Education	73%	24%	82%	11%
Arts and Humanities	31%	59%	55%	35%
Social Sciences, Business and Law	66%	27%	77%	16%
Science	61%	34%	83%	15%
Computer Science	89%	7%	95%	3%
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	80%	15%	82%	10%
Agriculture and Veterinary	79%	15%	47%	41%
Health and Welfare	92%	7%	89%	7%
Overall	69%	26%	77%	16%

Unsurprisingly Health & Welfare level 8 2012 graduates had the highest rate of relevance of qualification to employment with 92% stating that their qualification was relevant/most relevant to their area of employment while only 7% rated their qualification as irrelevant/most irrelevant. Computer Science level 8 2012 graduates also considered their qualification to be very relevant to their area of employment with 89% stating that their qualification was relevant/most relevant to their employment while only 7% of rated their qualification as irrelevant/most irrelevant.

Other discipline areas where 2012 level 8 graduates consider their qualification to be relevant/most relevant to their area of employment are Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction (80%), Agriculture & Veterinary (79%) and Education (73%). All fields of study had relevant/most relevant scores above 60% at level 8, with the exception of Arts & Humanities, where only 31% of graduates felt that their qualification was relevant/most relevant to their area of employment.

At levels 9 Masters and level 10 PhD the data shows that Computer Science graduates rated the significance of their qualification to their employment highest with 95% stating that their qualification was relevant/most relevant. Health & Welfare graduates came second for considering their qualification to be the relevant/most relevant to their area of employment at 89%. Other discipline areas where level 9/10 Masters/PhD graduates consider their qualification to be very relevant to their area of employment are Education (82%), Science (83%), and Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction (82%). It is interesting to note here the change in Science graduate results. It shows that Science graduates continuing to postgraduate level and gaining employment have a much higher relevance of qualification to their employment, from 61% at level 8 to 83% at levels 9/10. Arts & Humanities graduates at this level consider their qualification more relevant to their employment increasing from 31% at level 8 to 55% at level 9/10.

Respondents were also asked to provide their job title. Of those graduates engaged in employment that is considered irrelevant or most irrelevant to their qualification, the areas of employment mainly include retail, waiting / bar work, or customer service/call centre work.

#### 4.2. Relevance of Qualification to Employment for Graduates in Employment Overseas

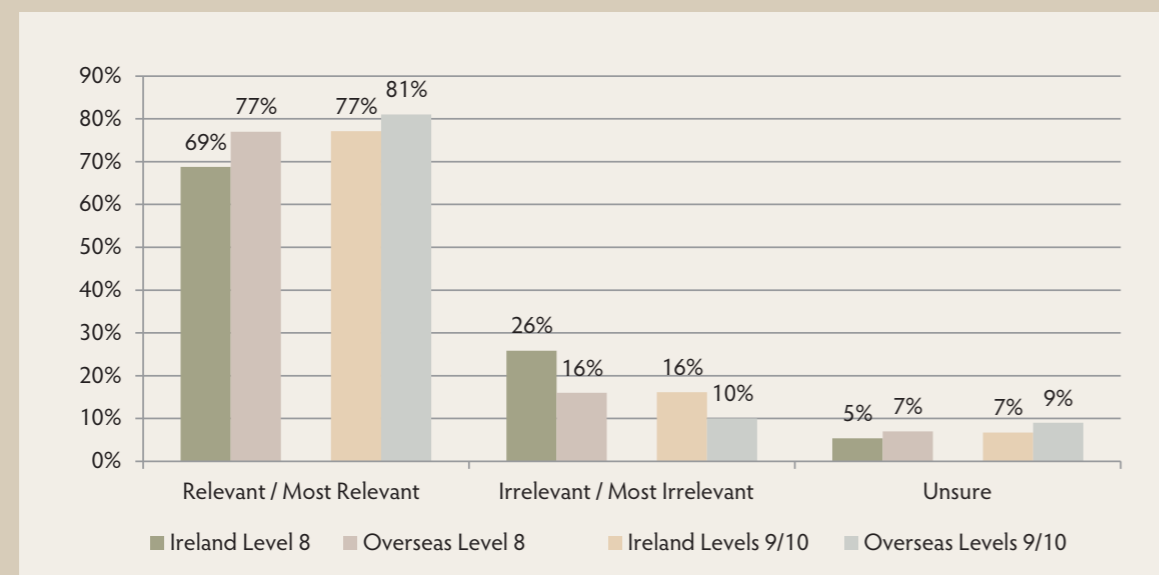
Finally, the relevance of qualification for those who found employment overseas is considered. We earlier noted that 10% of level 8 and 11% of level 9/10 2012 graduates found employment overseas.

Of those level 8/9/10 graduates in employment overseas, 78% consider their qualification relevant / most relevant to their area of study, 14% irrelevant or most irrelevant, 7% are unsure

At level 8 the figures are 77% relevant / most relevant, 16% irrelevant / most irrelevant and 7% unsure. This compares with 69%, 26% and 5% respectively with those who found employment in Ireland.

At levels 9/10, the figures are 81% relevant / most relevant, 10% irrelevant / most irrelevant and 9% unsure. This compares with 77%, 16% and 7% respectively with those who found employment in Ireland.

**Figure 4: Relevance of Employment for Those Gaining Employment in Ireland Compared to Those Gaining Employment Overseas by Level of Graduate, 2012**



The chart shows that for those who graduated in 2012 and gained employment a higher proportion of those level 8 undergraduates employed overseas felt that their qualification was relevant or most relevant to their job than those employed in Ireland. The reverse is true for our postgraduates. Much higher proportions of undergraduates and postgraduates employed in Ireland felt that their qualification was irrelevant or most irrelevant to their job.

This section examines the destinations of graduates by gender and focuses on the salaries gained by employed graduates at all levels.

#### 5.1 Gender

Table 8 shows the first destination of the 2012 undergraduate and postgraduate graduates by gender.

Table 8: First Destination of Level 8 and Level 9/10 2012 Graduates by Gender				
	Level 8		Levels 9/10	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
In Employment	49%	54%	73%	71%
<i>In Employment- Ireland</i>	40%	44%	61%	60%
<i>In Employment - Overseas</i>	9%	10%	12%	10%
Further Studies / Training	39%	35%	10%	11%
Work Experience Schemes	0%	0%	0%	1%
Seeking Employment	8%	6%	13%	13%
Unavailable for Work or Study	3%	4%	4%	4%

Table 8 shows that among level 8 2012 graduates, employment outcomes were better for females than males, 54% of females and 49% of males were in employment nine months after graduation. More level 8 2012 male graduates continued to further studies or training (39% of males and 35% of females) while a higher proportion of level 8 2012 male graduates were seeking employment than females (8% of males and 6% of females).

At level 9/10 the employment outcomes for 2012 graduates were slightly better for males than females, 71% of females and 73% of males were in employment. At postgraduate level more female 2012 graduates went into further studies or training (11% of females and 10% of males) while similar proportions of males and females were seeking employment (13%) nine months after graduation.

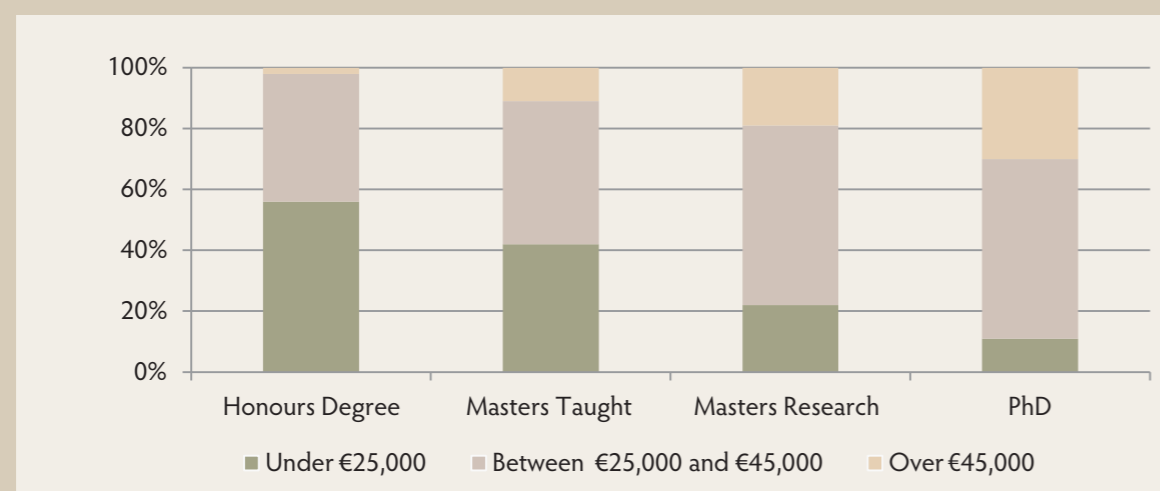
## 5.2 Mode of Employment

Of those level 8 2012 graduates in employment, 83% were employed full-time, 15% were employed part-time and 1% were self-employed. Of those level 9/10 Masters/PhD 2012 graduates in employment, 83% were employed full-time, 13% were employed part-time and 4% were self-employed.

## 5.3 Graduate Salaries

Figure 5 gives the salary ranges of those graduates in employment for whom salary information was returned, by qualification type.

**Figure 5: Graduates in Employment – Salary Range and Qualification**



Of those Honours Bachelor Degree graduates in employment for whom salary information was returned:

- 56% were earning under €25,000
- 42% were earning between €25,000 and €45,000
- 2% were earning over €45,000

Of those Masters taught graduates in employment for whom salary information was returned:

- 42% were earning under €25,000
- 47% were earning between €25,000 and €45,000
- 11% were earning over €45,000

Of those Masters research graduates in employment for whom salary information was returned:

- 22% were earning under €25,000
- 59% were earning between €25,000 and €45,000
- 19% were earning over €45,000

Of those PhD graduates in employment for whom salary information was returned:

- 11% were earning under €25,000
- 59% were earning between €25,000 and €45,000
- 30% were earning over €45,000



## KEY POINTS

- This report considers 2012 graduates and their status nine months after graduation (March 2013).
- The trend of increasing proportions of 2012 level 8 graduates in employment has continued with 52% in employment. Although employment in Ireland is increasing the proportions of level 8 graduates employed overseas continues to increase also. There are fewer graduates continuing to further study continuing a trend since the 2010 cohort of graduates. This may be due to increased employment opportunities but it may also reflect the reduction in funding availability and cuts to grants available for postgraduate students in recent years.
- The trend of increasing employment is also seen at levels 9 Masters and 10 PhD with 72% of 2012 graduates in employment. The proportion employed overseas is in decline. This suggests that, as the economy is showing signs of recovery here in Ireland, those graduates with a postgraduate qualification are reaping the benefits to a greater extent than those with an undergraduate degree only.
- Employment by field of study continues to show strong employment for those studying in the professions such as Education and Health & Welfare. These graduates also rate the relevance of their qualification to their employment highly.
- In a sign of the times, computing graduates are showing employment outcomes comparable to those graduates of the teaching and health professions at both undergraduate level 8 and levels 9 Masters and 10 PhD. Of the 2012 graduates, 73% of undergraduate level 8 and 82% of postgraduate computing graduates were employed. These graduates also rate the relevance of their qualification to their employment very highly and are least likely to have gained employment overseas reflecting strong employment opportunities in Ireland.
- The trends for Science & Mathematics graduates require attention and more indepth analysis at programme level. Of the 2012 graduate cohort, 44% gained employment at level 8 with 63% of level 9 Masters and level 10 PhDs gaining employment. Science graduates rate the relevance of their qualification to their employment at level 8 quite low. Among level 8 graduates, 61% rated their qualification as relevant/most relevant. This increased to 83% among postgraduates (level 9/10).
- Low proportions (31%) of Arts & Humanities graduates who found employment (40%) rated their qualification as relevant/most relevant and this proportion only increased to 55% for postgraduates, 60% of whom gained employment.
- The data show that the relevance of the qualification to employment is significantly better for those level 8 graduates who found employment overseas. 77% of those employed overseas rated their qualification as relevant/most relevant to their employment compared to 69% employed in Ireland. This is not however the case for postgraduates employed overseas. Significantly higher proportions of those employed in Ireland at both undergraduate level 8 and postgraduate rated their qualification as irrelevant/most irrelevant to their employment.
- More female level 8 Honours Bachelor Degree graduates are employed 9 months after graduation than males, 54% compared to 49% while the reverse is true for postgraduates, 71% female compared to 73% male.
- The salary of those employed increases as the qualification increases. Salaries of €45,000 and above are earned by just 2% of level 8 graduates while 30% of PhD graduates are earning this level of income.





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