

MEDIA RELEASE

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF DEANS OF AGRICULTURE

Labour Market Clarity for Agriculture Graduates

Despite flat employment prospects for many graduates currently coming out of universities, agriculture graduates are currently enjoying strong demand in the labour market. The Australian Council of Deans of Agriculture (ACDA) has now joined forces with Graduate Careers Australia (GCA) to emphasise the high level of demand for new agriculture graduates.

Recognising an anomaly in careers information and advice given about graduate employment and salaries in the agriculture sector, the ACDA has been concerned that, despite a buoyant career market for agriculture graduates, advice to prospective students commonly has often not been positive regarding prospects in agriculture. One source of information for career advisors is the Graduate Destination Survey conducted by GCA whose published employment figures over recent years have been at odds with the findings of ACDA research on graduate employment.

Secretary of the ACDA, Professor Jim Pratley of Charles Sturt University explained that university courses are categorised. Agricultural courses are in the same category as those in environmental science and management. Often the category as a whole is labelled 'agriculture' and this has been the case with GCA's survey data. "Because there are around four times as many environmental graduates as agriculture graduates, using total category data skews employment figures to reflect more the situation for environment graduates than those from agriculture", Professor Pratley said.

In recent years, the combined data suggest only about 70% fulltime employment four months after graduation, whereas separating the numbers shows graduates specifically from agriculture courses to have more than 90% employment, i.e., effectively full employment for new graduates.

GCA Policy Adviser Bruce Guthrie indicated that GCA understood ACDA's concerns. "GCA recognises the importance of providing accurate data on careers" Mr Guthrie said. "Detailed data sets featuring complete field of education breakdowns are provided with our summary reports but that does not mean they are used" he added.

President of ACDA Professor Iain Young praised GCA for their cooperation. "We in the university sector are delighted to have common interests with GCA and are very appreciative of its actions to clarify its survey results to reflect the actual agriculture situation". Currently there are more than five jobs for every graduate in agriculture and related courses.

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