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# Teaching, science grads get jobs

Although youth unemployment remains a problem for the country, more and more graduates are finding jobs

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Many university graduates are finding jobs within six months of completing their studies. Some even secure jobs within three months of graduating or while they are still studying. And, in most cases, graduates are finding employment in their field of study.

The state and the private sector remain the biggest employers for graduates, and a small number go into civil society organisations, become self-employed or work in family businesses.

Those graduating in science disciplines, education and engineering seem to secure jobs quicker. Graduates who decide to pursue honours degrees are at a greater advantage of securing employment.

These are some of the findings that come out of universities' graduate exit surveys. Most of the higher-education institutions conduct these surveys every year to provide insight into where their graduates go after graduating, which sectors they work in and how much they earn.

The *Mail & Guardian* asked all 26 public universities in South Africa to share their latest graduate exit surveys and only three — Rhodes University, Sol Plaatje University and Walter Sisulu University — indicated that they did not conduct surveys.

A spokesperson for Rhodes, Veliswa Mhlophe, said the university was in the process of developing such a survey.

Kashini Maistry, of the four-year-old Sol Plaatje University, said the university was yet to track its graduates' employability.

North-West University (NWU), Vaal University of Technology (VUT), the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), University of Johannesburg (UJ), the University of Cape Town (UCT), Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT), Nelson Mandela University (NMU), the University of Pretoria (UP), the University of KwaZulu-Natal and Stellenbosch University (SU) are the only ones that shared their surveys.

The spokesperson for VUT, Mike Khuboni, said, depending on the discipline of study, for some of their graduates it takes two to three years to find employment. In some cases students end up getting jobs that do not match their field of study.

"Students are so eager to get a job after graduating, therefore they sometimes grab any job they find for the sake of working," said Khuboni.

The senior director of institutional planning, evaluation and monitoring at UJ, Denyse Webbstock, said the university's 2018 survey, which looked at graduates from 2015, 2016 and 2017, showed that 65.5% of their graduates found employment within three months, 83% within six months, 92.8% within a year and 74.4% of graduates found work in the industries that matched their field of study.

"Respondents who studied education, law and health sciences have the largest proportion of respondents



To cap it all: Surveys at universities indicate that graduates are finding work in less time than in the past, in the field they studied. Photo: Abbas Momani/AFP/Getty Images

ents working in the same field as their studies. It seems the longer the students take to find a job, the higher the probability that graduates will move to areas of work outside their direct field of study," said Webbstock.

Although the majority of the university's graduates are employed in the private and public sectors, 7.1% are employed in international companies, 2% are self-employed and 4.8% work at academic institutions.

The spokesperson for NWU, Willie du Plessis, said 86.84% of students who graduated in 2015, 2016 and 2017 found work after six months and the majority of them after five job applications. At times some filled in more than 40 job applications before getting a job, whereas others found work without even applying.

The majority of students from

MUT opt to study further after graduating, according to the spokesperson for the university, Bheki Hlophe.

But among chemical engineering and biomedical sciences graduates, 69% and 87% respectively typically find work within three months of completing their studies.

Hlophe also added that most of the university's graduates find employment at state-owned enterprises such as Eskom, Transnet and Umgeni Water.

At SU, the top five fields that secure graduates jobs are education, law, economics and management sciences, science and engineering. Of these, 62.3% of graduates are employed in the private sector, 14.14% in government, 0.52% in the nongovernmental organisation sector and 2.62% in family-run businesses.

This is based on data from December 2017 and March last year.

The 2017 UCT graduate exit survey, the latest survey, showed that the employment rate of the university's graduates stood at 47.6%, 33.2% of graduates were studying further and 10.7% were still seeking employment.

Of the university's 2017 graduates already employed, 10.28% were earning between R30 000 and R40 000 a month, with 17.77% earning a starting salary of more than R20 000. A further 16.97% were in the R15 000 to R20 000 bracket and 11.81% earned between R12 001 and R15 000 a month, according to spokesperson Elijah Moholola.

The NMU conducts its survey every two years and, according to the latest survey, which was in April 2017, 95% of graduates found employment

within six months after completion of their studies, said spokesperson Zandile Mbabela.

Graduates pursuing programmes in the faculties of education, health sciences, law, engineering, the built environment and IT secure jobs soon after graduating and most of these jobs are in the private sector, she said.

Of those who graduated between March 2017 and July 2018 at Wits, 97% found jobs within six months of completing their qualifications and 67% found jobs during their studies or before completion. Only 1% of Wits graduates indicated that they are self-employed.

"The university seeks to grow the number of Witsies who consider entrepreneurship as a viable employment option at a very early stage. As of 2019, all Wits programmes will have an element that promotes entrepreneurship," the university said in a statement.

Although it may seem that graduates are finding employment, thousands of graduates are still left unemployed and since 2017 these graduates have voiced their frustrations with protests.

In 2017, unemployed graduates from the Eastern Cape marched to demand jobs. Twice last year, unemployed graduates from KwaZulu-Natal also marched through the streets of Durban, and in November job-seeking graduates marched to the Union Buildings to hand over a memorandum to President Cyril Ramaphosa. Over the years, there has been a growing phenomenon of graduates standing at robots with placards listing their qualifications and asking for jobs.

According to Statistics South Africa's quarterly labour force survey in May 2018, the graduate unemployment rate stood at 33.5% for those aged 15 to 24, 10.2% among those aged 25 to 34 and 4.7% for those aged 35 to 64 years. The unemployment rate among young people aged 15 to 34 was 38.2%.

