

Career Outcomes of Graduates 2002

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Acronyms and Definitions

Acronyms:

Faculties and Institutes

Arts = Faculty of Arts

CCT = Centre for Communication Technology

Education = Faculty of Education

Engineering = Faculty of Engineering

FEMA = Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy

IHC = Institute of Health Care

Laws = Faculty of Laws

Medicine & Surgery = Faculty of Medicine and Surgery

Science = Faculty of Science

WPDC = Workers' Participation Development Centre

Courses

B.Accty. (Hons) = Bachelor of Accountancy Honours

B.Com (Hons) = Bachelor of Commerce Honours

B.Com = Bachelor of Commerce

B.Communications (Hons) = Bachelor of Communications Honours

B.Communications = Bachelor of Communications

B.E & A (Hons) = Bachelor of Engineering and Architecture Honours

B.Ed (Hons) = Bachelor of Education Honours

B.Eng (Hons) = Bachelor of Engineering Honours

B.Pharm (Hons) = Bachelor of Pharmacy Honours

B.Psy (Hons) = Bachelor of Psychology Honours

B.Psy = Bachelor of Psychology

BA (Hons) = Bachelor of Arts Honours (*Faculty of Arts*)

BA = Bachelor of Arts (*Faculty of Arts*)

BA (Hons) Euro Stud = Bachelor of Arts Honours in European Studies

BA (Hons) Soc Work = Bachelor of Arts Honours in Social Work

BA (Youth & Cs) = Bachelor of Arts in Youth and Community Studies

BSc (Bus & Comp) = Bachelor of Science in Business and Computing

BSc (Hons) = Bachelor of Science Honours

BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy = Bachelor of Science Honours in Physiotherapy

LLD = Doctor of Laws

PGCE = Post Graduate Certificate in Education

Others

ETC = Employment and Training Corporation

EU = European Union

NSO = National Statistics Office

SAS = Students Advisory Services

Definitions:

Unless otherwise stated:

- a. “graduates” comprise all those who were conferred with their academic awards from the University of Malta during the graduation ceremonies held in November 2002. This includes people obtaining certificates, diplomas, bachelors, masters and PhDs.
- b. “study” consists of study, research, or training.
- c. “post-graduate study” means any study, research or training carried out after graduates were conferred with their academic awards in November 2002.

ABSTRACT

The University of Malta seeks to promote cultural values and drive the Maltese economy. This study addresses the need for scientific data regarding the career-outcomes of University graduates by gathering a wide-range of information about their present employment and further studies. A survey consisting of 35 questions was delivered to year 2002 graduates. A total of 938 participants (49% of the graduate population) answered the survey. The results were analysed in stages as follows. The main findings of the study were first described and discussed. Subsequently, the most significant results were analysed according to gender, classification, age bracket, and faculties/ institutes. These findings are intended to aid relevant authorities to sustain the University's contribution to Malta's development. This study also aims to provide up-to-date information to Maltese career guidance officers and similar practitioners both within and outside educational institutions.

1. INTRODUCTION

The University of Malta is the highest and most prestigious educational institution on the island. It dates back several centuries and has during all this time been contributing in many ways towards the country's human and professional development. The University of Malta currently employs around 900 lecturers (of whom 550 are full-timers), together with over 600 administrative and technical personnel. Its student population is increasing every year and has exceeded the 9000 mark. This figure also includes around 600 foreign students from all over the world. Students can today choose from an ever-increasing list of over 70 courses at levels varying from certificates and diplomas, to bachelors, masters and doctoral degrees.

The University undoubtedly gives a significant contribution to Maltese culture, especially through several humanistic courses. However, it also arguably has a responsibility for preparing students for high-level employment. Virtually all Maltese professionals and many administrators and managers have been trained at the University of Malta. Therefore, it is not surprising that the University is often at the centre of controversy and debate on whether it is giving the right preparation to students who will eventually lead Malta at the various levels and sectors of the economy and society. The University is frequently accused of having insufficient links and dialogue with the world of work, and consequently, of running courses which are not necessarily in-step with Malta's contemporary labour market needs.

As a response to this and other concerns, a number of studies have been devised to obtain valuable feedback by graduates, managers and employers on the career situation and career prospects of University graduates. One of the earliest graduates' tracer studies was carried out by the WPDC (Baldacchino, 1997) amongst 237 graduates who were conferred with their academic awards between 1986 and 1992. The study sought to examine "the relationship between qualification and occupation, education and economy among the country's stock of graduate workers" (Baldacchino, 1997, p.19). Subsequently, the ETC (1999) published a tracer study of graduates' employment situation. The study focused on the position in the labour market and the unemployment rate of those who graduated in November 1999 from the University of Malta. In 2002, the Graduate Potential Group based at the University carried out a survey among main Maltese employers who were asked to forecast their needs for graduates in the following years. In the same year, Debono, Delicata & Caruana (2001) carried out a study of the outcome of November 2000 graduates in the job market. The study was very comprehensive as it was distributed to all year 2000 graduates and dealt with a considerable variety of career-related issues. It was intended to guide the University's Students Advisory Services (SAS) in its career guidance work, and help the University in the periodic review of its courses.

After two years, the SAS decided to conduct a similar study with graduates of 2002. The main aim of this study, like the previous one, is to gather a wide-range of career-related information about University graduates. Such information is directed first of all to University authorities who require objective and reliable feedback about graduates' career outcomes. This feedback should motivate and guide University Faculties, Centres and Institutes to enhance the relevance of their courses. This study is also intended to inform Maltese career guidance officers both within and outside educational institutions, since these often lack local scientific data about tertiary-education outcomes. It can also be used as a reference work by students reading for the Diploma in Social Studies (Occupational Guidance and Career Counselling) and other sociology based courses. In view of the increasing competition that the University is facing by local and foreign educational institutions, this and future similar surveys might be used as a marketing instrument, attesting the usefulness of University qualifications.

In order to enhance the quality of the research, the Students Advisory Services sought and obtained the assistance of Professor Godfrey Baldacchino who gave a significant contribution throughout the different stages of the research process. Relevant feedback from Professor Edward Zammit, Mr Anthony Gellel, and Mr Saviour Rizzo was also incorporated in this document.

The study is divided into four sections. The research objectives and design will follow after this introduction. Subsequently, the main findings of the study will be described and discussed. In order to facilitate understanding, the findings will be divided into five main subsections. The main graduates' career-related outcomes will be discussed as one single group, and subsequently according to gender, classification, age bracket, and faculties/ institutes. Finally, a brief synthesis of the discussion is presented together with future research suggestions.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND DESIGN

2.1 Research Objectives

The research project's main objective is to examine the career outcomes of those persons who graduated from the University of Malta at the November 2002 graduation ceremonies (University graduates 2002). In detail, the study aims to:

1. Investigate the graduates' pre-graduation profile by examining their parents' education and occupation, the graduates' age, sex, qualification, classification, and any previous work experience.
2. Assess the employment and study outcomes of graduates nine months after they completed their last University exams.
3. Analyse the graduates' job-related attitudes and their perceived competencies and skills.
4. Examine the specific relationship(s) that may exist between graduates' career outcomes and sex, age, classification and faculty or institute.

2.2 Participants

This study was conducted amongst all graduates of the University of Malta who were conferred with their academic awards during the graduation ceremonies held in November 2002. Survey packages were sent by post to all 1,920 graduates.

A total of 938 graduates (49%) answered the survey. In line with the actual University graduate population, most of the respondents (58%) were females. While three fourths of the respondents were between 20-25 years old, less than 5% were 41 years or older. This is also consonant with the general situation at University of Malta.

Table 1. Gender and age bracket

	Males		Females		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
20-25 years	276	70.6	432	80.0	708	76.0
26-30 years	55	14.1	46	8.5	101	10.8
31-40 years	36	9.2	41	7.6	77	8.3
41- years	24	6.1	21	3.9	45	4.8
Total	391	100	540	100	931	100
Missing					7	
Total Respondents					938	

Graduates from 19 faculties and institutes participated in the study. As expected, most respondents graduated from *FEMA, Education, Arts and Laws*. The amount of replies per faculty and institute generally corresponded to their number of graduates. Only the nine faculties and institutes with the largest groups of respondents (between 27 and 237 persons per group) will be examined in Section 3.5 (Responses by Faculties and Institutes).

Table 2. Faculties and institutes in descending order of respondents

		Count	%
1.	Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy	237	25.5
2.	Faculty of Education	216	23.2
3.	Faculty of Arts	106	11.4
4.	Faculty of Laws	102	11.0
5.	Institute of Health Care	58	6.2
6.	Faculty of Medicine and Surgery	40	4.3
7.	Faculty of Engineering	38	4.1
8.	Faculty of Science	35	3.8
9.	Centre for Communication Technology	27	2.9
10.	Institute of Public Administration and Management	19	2.0
11.	Faculty of Theology	14	1.5
12.	Faculty of Architecture	10	1.1
13.	Board of Studies for IT	10	1.1
14.	European Documentation and Research Centre	10	1.1
15.	Institute of Agriculture	3	.3
16.	International Institute for Baroque Studies	2	.2
17.	Institute of Forensic Studies	2	.2
18.	Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies	1	.1
19.	Institute for Islands and Small States	1	.1
	Total	931	100
	Missing	7	
	Total number of respondents	938	

Most respondents were conferred with a Second Class Upper/ Category IIA (41%), or Second Class Lower/ Category IB (33%). The smallest group of respondents graduated with a Third Class/ Category III (4%).

Table 3. Classification

	Count	%
First Class/ Category I	64	10.0
Second Class Upper/ Category IIA	260	40.6
Second Class Lower/ Category IIB	211	32.9
Third Class/ Category III	27	4.2
Other*	79	12.3
Total	641	100
Missing	297	
Total number of respondents	938	

**This category includes students reading for PhD, master, diploma and certificate programmes which do not have such a classification*

2.3 Research Instrument

The self-report instrument used in this study was a questionnaire consisting of 35 items divided into six sections. The first section requested demographic and educational information. The second section dealt with the current career status of the sample - whether the participant was employed and/ or pursuing further study. The third section sought to analyse further job-related aspects. Section four explored prospective job expectations of participants who were seeking employment. Section five concerned any further study that graduates might be pursuing. Section six examined reasons why unemployed graduates who were not pursuing further study were not seeking employment.

2.4 Procedure

A survey package consisting of a covering letter, a three-page questionnaire, and a self-addressed envelope was prepared. The survey package was pre-tested on a sample of 15 University graduates who were asked to comment on the clarity of the instructions, the wording of the items, and the layout of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was then revised, taking into consideration the remarks of the sample. Subsequently, it was circulated among all Maltese graduates who were conferred with their academic awards in November 2002. After wide-ranging discussion, it was decided to maintain the survey questionnaire only in an English language version.

The covering letter included details about the rationale of the survey. It also described the questionnaire's structure and specified the time it should take to be completed. The letter emphasised that strict confidentiality will be respected throughout the whole process. The graduates were instructed to post the questionnaire in the self-addressed envelope provided without affixing any stamps. Finally, the participants were given the Students Advisory Services' contacts should they require any further details. A web-site was also specified for those interested in the results of the research.

The survey package was sent out by post on the 13 March 2003. A reminder letter was sent on the 21 March in order to enhance the response rate. Graduates were invited to send back the filled-in questionnaire by the 31 March 2003.

2.4.1 Data Analysis

Data was analysed through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 11.5.1). The statistical analysis was conducted in two stages. First, frequencies were derived for all variables. Then, variables of interest were analysed with the help of cross-tabulations, Chi-Square and ANOVA.

In order to keep the document as simple as possible, Chi-square and Anova results will not be printed. Whenever, there is a 'difference' in the examined variables, that difference is statistically significant at the .05 confidence level.

3. ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES

The analysis of responses will be divided into five main sections. Section One will deliver the General Results. Sections Two to Five will present results from the perspective of Gender, Age Bracket, Classification, and Faculties/ Institutes respectively.

The five sections are structured in a similar way. Comments about each individual finding consist of a description of the results and some insights about them. These are followed by a table of results, and occasionally, a figure. Each section ends with an overall analysis of its main findings.

3.1 General Results

3.1.1 Parents' Education and Occupation

Most University graduates have parents with a secondary level of education (42% of fathers and 50% of mothers). However, there are more mothers than fathers with primary and secondary levels of education and more fathers with post-secondary and tertiary levels of education. The difference in the proportion of tertiary educated fathers and mothers is particularly striking (20% and 13% respectively).

Until some decades ago, very few Maltese persons used to further their studies beyond secondary education and most of those who continued studying, especially at University level, used to be males.

Table 4. Parents' education

	Father		Mother	
	Count	%	Count	%
None	3	.3	3	.3
Primary	176	18.9	220	23.7
Secondary	386	41.5	464	50.0
Post-secondary	181	19.5	124	13.4
Tertiary	184	19.8	117	12.6
Total	930	100	928	100

The study examined the parents' occupations when graduates were 16 years old. This particular age was chosen as research shows that it is a critical age in which students tend to make important career choices. The fathers of most graduates at age 16 held white-collar employment positions. The most common types of fathers' occupations were in fact administrative/ managerial and professional/ technical (24% and 21% respectively). The fathers of the third largest group of graduates occupied executive/ clerical positions. Fewer graduates' fathers worked in skilled/ semiskilled, or unskilled occupations, or were employers/ self-employed.

In line with the Maltese traditional division of labour in which the husband is the expected bread-winner and the wife is the home maker (Abela, 2001), most mothers of graduates at age 16 were not in paid employment (65%). Out of the employed mothers, most worked in professional/ technical or executive/ clerical occupations (16% and 11% respectively). Similar to the fathers' results, few mothers were employers/ self-employed, or worked in skilled/ semiskilled, or unskilled occupations.

NSO statistics (December 2002) show that around 41% of all employed persons hold skilled/ semiskilled, or unskilled occupations. Around 14% of all Maltese are self-employed. Taking into consideration that the ratio of skilled/ semiskilled, or unskilled occupations in Malta was even higher in the past decades, it can be concluded that parents' occupation is linked to students' career choice. Children of white-collar workers seem to have a higher disposition to complete a University course than their blue-collar peers.

Table 5. Parents' occupation at age 16

	Father		Mother	
	Count	%	Count	%
Employer/own account worker	96	10.6	20	2.3
Professional/technical	191	21.1	143	16.2
Administrative/managerial	213	23.5	16	1.8
Executive/clerical	137	15.1	93	10.5
Skilled/semiskilled	119	13.1	8	.9
Unskilled	98	10.8	17	1.9
Unemployed	11	1.2	1	.1
Housewife/househusband	0	0	572	64.8
Deceased	17	1.9	5	.6
Pensioner	16	1.8	1	.1
Student	8	.9	7	.8
Total	906	100	883	100

3.1.2 Employment Outcomes

Most graduates (81%) are currently employed. The majority of employed graduates (73%) hold full-time employment. 19% are employed on a part-time basis. A large proportion of those who are in part-time employment or unemployed are studying on a full-time basis. The unemployment situation of Maltese graduates will be tackled in Section 3.1.6.

Table 6. Current employment

	Count	%
Yes	763	81.4
<i>Of whom in Part-time employment</i>	83	8.9
<i>Full-time employment</i>	680	72.6
No	174	18.6
Total	937	100

22% of all new University graduates perform voluntary work. This figure is considerably lower than the national average that ranges between 27% and 32% (Abela, 2001), with older persons performing more voluntary work than younger ones. Interestingly, the rate of new University graduates performing voluntary work is similar to the European average of people between 18 and 34 years old (which is also about 22%). Relatively low participation in voluntary work might be negatively influenced by the difficulties encountered during the first year after graduation. Most graduates would be struggling with their new job, thus having little time to participate in voluntary work. The level of participation probably increases in time, as Abela (2001) found that 43% of all tertiary educated people perform voluntary work. Tertiary education might limit social participation in the short-term, and increase it in the long-term.

Table 7. Performing voluntary work

	Count	%
Yes	198	21.6
No	717	78.4
Total	915	100

For two thirds of the employed graduates, their University course was required to apply for their current job. One third of the employed graduates did not require their latest University qualification to get their present employment.

This statistic might be an indication that the graduate job market is rather saturated, and a considerable percentage of graduates are underemployed. This figure is in line with Debono et al. (2001) who found that out of all full-time employed year 2000 graduates, 10% claimed to perform unrelated work (with the figure increasing to 55% in Faculty of Arts graduates). Similar findings were also reported by Baldacchino (1997). Future studies should verify whether there is a downward trend in the percentage of graduates employed in jobs requiring their University qualification; and whether having graduate employees performing work intended for non-graduates leads to better or worse quality work.

Table 8. University course required to apply for job

	Count	%
Yes	505	67.1
No	248	32.9
Total	753	100

The majority of year 2002 graduates (55%) work in the public sector. The private sector absorbed 45% of these graduates within nine months after they completed their course. This figure does not tally with NSO statistics (December 2002) which suggest that around 66% of all Maltese employees work in the private sector and only 34% work in the public sector. The likely explanation for this apparent discrepancy is that most new graduates are initially employed in the public sector; however, a large proportion probably move to the private sector after getting some

experience. Baldacchino (1997) found that 20% of graduates whose first job is in the public sector join the private sector when the right opportunities turn up.

Most of the respondents (85%) work on indefinite contracts. The ratio of those working on definite contracts is similar in the public and the private sector. Unlike the general perception, the public and private sectors generate a fairly similarly level of definite contracts. It would be interesting to verify across the years whether the ratio of definite contracts is increasing.

Table 9. Sector of employment and termination date

	Count	%
Public	414	55.2
of whom on a definite contract	60	8.2
an indefinite contract	342	46.7
Private*	336	44.8
of whom on a definite contract	46	6.3
an indefinite contract	270	36.9
Total	750	100

*Includes self-employment

A third of all graduates work in Education. Two other sectors that absorb a large quantity of graduates are health, and banking/ finance/ audit (15% and 12% respectively). The largest two faculties at University are those of *Education* and *Fema*, and the largest institute is *IHC*.

Table 10. Field of employment

	Count	%
Education	243	33.2
Social	43	5.9
Health	108	14.8
Manufacturing	47	6.4
Banking/finance/audit	86	11.7
IT	19	2.6
Hotels/catering	24	3.3
Consultancy	40	5.5
Transport/communication	45	6.1
Retail/wholesale	13	1.8
Environment	14	1.9
Other	50	6.8
Total	732	100

62% of working graduates are employed at the professional/ technical level. 17% work in administrative/ managerial posts, and 15% work in executive/ clerical jobs. Very few graduates are employers, or work in skilled/ semiskilled or unskilled jobs. As most University courses provide the academic basis of professionals, it stands to reason that most graduates are employed in professional/ technical posts. This distribution is in line with Baldacchino (1997). The major difference between the two studies is that Baldacchino (1997) found a

lesser amount of graduates in professional/ technical posts (56%) and a greater amount in administrative/ managerial posts (29%). Such difference can be attributed to the fact that Baldacchino (1997) dealt with graduates who had been in employment for a number of years, and in time, many professional/ technical employees move to administrative/ managerial posts.

Table 11. Type of occupation

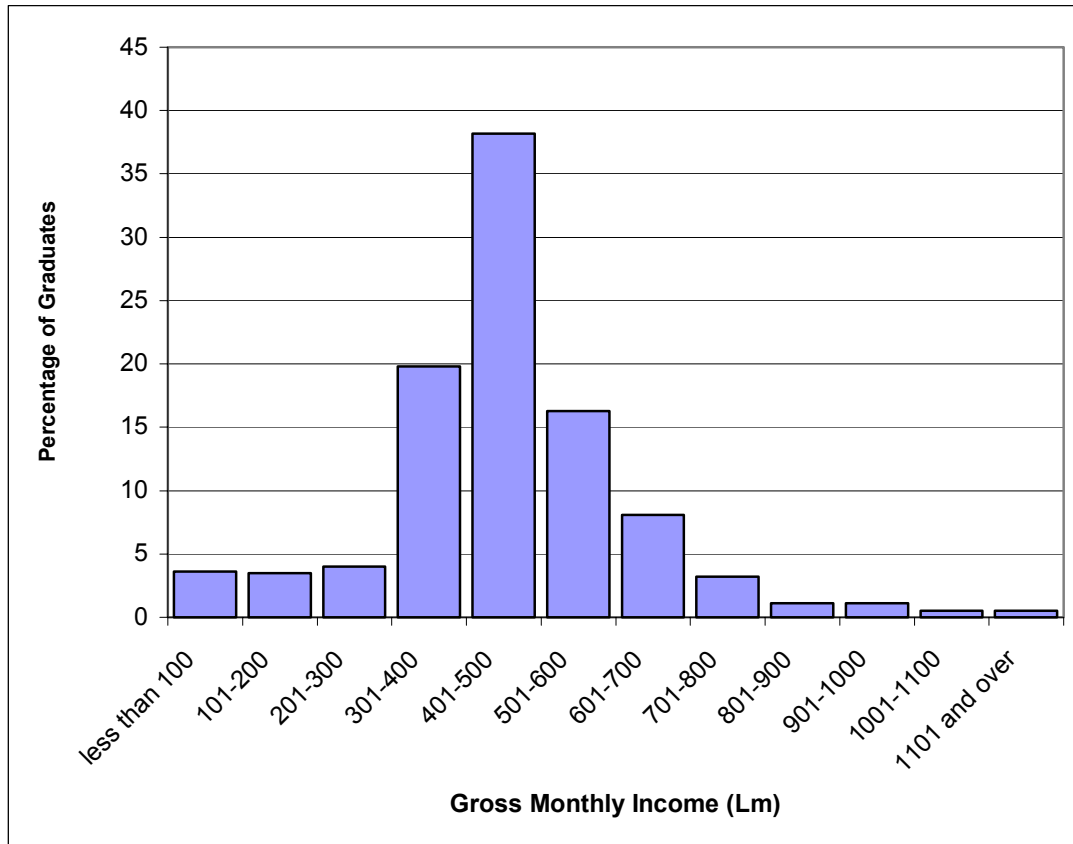
	Count	%
Employer/own account worker	24	3.3
Professional/technical	457	62.4
Administrative/managerial	125	17.1
Executive/clerical	108	14.8
Skilled/semiskilled	12	1.6
Unskilled	6	.8
Total	732	100

38% of all employed graduates claim to earn between Lm401-500 per month, 20% earn between Lm301-400, while 16% earn between Lm501-600. Few graduates earn Lm300 or less per month, and most of these work on a part-time basis. Most graduates in the first year after graduation already earn more than the national average gross annual salary of Lm 4,912 (NSO statistics, December 2002). One should note that the earnings of most professionals tend to increase considerably over time. Therefore, one can safely say that, other things being equal, getting a University degree is related to higher income.

Table 12. Current net monthly income

	All Employed Graduates		Full-time Employed Graduates	
	Count	%	Count	%
- 100	27	3.6	3	.4
101-200	26	3.5	3	.4
201-300	30	4.0	16	2.4
301-400	147	19.8	144	21.6
401-500	284	38.2	277	41.5
501-600	121	16.3	118	17.7
601-700	60	8.1	58	8.7
701-800	24	3.2	24	3.6
801-900	8	1.1	8	1.2
901-1000	8	1.1	8	1.2
1001-1100	4	.5	4	.6
1101-	4	.5	4	.6
Total	743	100	667	100

Figure 1. Current net monthly income



As can be seen from the Table below, a fourth of all employed graduates found out about their current job through adverts on newspapers. Such predominance of independent job search can in part be attributed to the insufficient role played by the employment agencies which (together with Internet) are not frequently used by graduates. Malta's public employment organisation (the ETC) and the various private, licensed, employment agencies do not seem to cater adequately to graduates' needs and aspirations.

Another one-fourth of all employed graduates, got to know about their eventual job through the Government's education and health divisions. These two divisions have in the past years employed the largest numbers of graduates. Besides, graduates with several degrees and diplomas are recruited through a contract with the health division signed at the beginning of their University course.

Relatives and friends are another important method used by graduates to find work. As the Maltese society is still predominantly community- and network-based, it is not surprising that personal and family connections are the third most common way to find out about a job.

Table 13. Type of job search

	Count	%
Advert newspaper	176	26.1
Relatives/friends	102	15.1
Employment agency	21	3.1
Information available at University	36	5.3
Education/health department	162	24.0
Internal call/promotion	27	4.0
Approached by employer	75	11.1
Spontaneous job search	68	10.1
Internet	6	.9
Other	2	.3
Total	675	100

3.1.3 Job-related Skills and Attitudes

Overall, graduates find the skills they learnt at University as relevant to their job. The most applicable skills are those of factual knowledge and organisational skills. The factual knowledge and organisational skills imparted by the University are perceived by its students to be useful - 78% agreeing about the relevance of the former and 71% about the latter.

The University is often accused of not being linked with the world of work, and of its failure of providing its students with adequate work-related skills. This accusation tends to be well founded as only 61% of employed graduates state that technical skills and techniques, and a critical orientation nurtured at University, are applicable to their job. Besides, less than half of the working graduates believe that, at University, they learnt relevant application of theory to practice and development of creativity and originality.

Table 14. Job relevance of skills learnt at University (%)

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Critical orientation	8.8	32.3	58.9
Organisational skills	9	19.7	71.1
Factual knowledge	7.2	14.6	78.2
Application of theory to practice	24.3	26.3	49.4
Development of creativity & originality	18.5	34.8	46.7
Technical skills and techniques	14.7	24.1	61.1

While only 60% of employed graduates feel that the technical skills and techniques learnt at University are relevant to their job, 84% believe to have adequate job-related skills. The 24% increase can be attributed to skills learnt on the job or from sources outside University.

Graduates' work related attitudes are mostly positive. The majority of employed graduates have satisfactory relationships with their colleagues (83%) and feel

respected by their superiors (72%). Graduates tend to be satisfied with their job (73%) and do not intend to quit their job (73%). Most graduates can develop their career with their present employer (61%) and can easily balance their work and private life (61%).

Stress and dissatisfaction with salary are the most common work-related problems. In fact, only 37% are not unduly stressed in their job and a meagre 38% are satisfied with their salary.

Table 15. Job-related attitudes

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Mean
Skilled enough for job	4.4	11.5	84	93
Satisfied with job	8.4	18.4	73.2	88
Unduly stressed in job	36.8	35.3	28.0	64
Can develop career with present employer	17.2	22.1	60.7	81
Satisfied with salary	38.8	24.1	37.2	66
Perceive job as challenging	9.6	13.6	76.8	89
Satisfied with colleagues relationships	3.6	13.0	83.4	93
Satisfied with respect superiors show	11.7	15.9	72.4	87
Considering quitting job	72.3	16.0	11.8	47
Easily balance work/private life	15.4	23.6	61.0	82

3.1.4 Employment History

Most University graduates were employed before graduating (56%). This figure is high because it includes graduates who followed part-time courses and those who followed a University course as 'mature students'.

Table 16. Employed before graduating

	Count	%
Yes	425	56.3
No	330	43.7
Total	755	100

Most graduates do not change their employer in the short-term after getting their University qualification. Two-thirds of those who were employed before graduating continued working for the same employer after getting their University qualification. This can be attributed to lack of job mobility in the category of work in which they are employed, and though probably to a lesser extent, to pending contracts with employers.

Table 17. Worked for current employer before graduating

	Count	%
Yes	268	64.6
No	147	35.4
Total	415	100

On the other hand, 42% of those who were in gainful employment before graduating, changed their job with the same or another employer after graduating. This means that around 6% of graduates who have been employed before graduating changed job but remained with the same employer. Prospects for occupational mobility within the same organisation are possibly boosted with a University qualification.

Table 18. Changed job after graduation

	Count	%
Yes	165	41.6
No	232	58.4
Total	397	100

As expected, most of those who changed their employment believe that they have improved their career (80%). A worrying 20% state that the change in employment has not resulted in net career benefits. However, one must consider that the benefits resulting from career change often take time to materialise, while any negative aspects might be felt earlier, and could be seen as more direct.

Table 19. Change in employment improved career

	Count	%
Yes	182	78.8
No	49	21.2
Total	231	100

3.1.5 Post-Graduate Study

45% of all graduates are pursuing further study. The group is equally divided between those studying part-time and full-time. In the past decades, the number of University students has increased exponentially. The fact that many graduates are pursuing further studies may indicate that they are placing more value on lifelong learning. However, as pointed out by Baldacchino (1997), it may also be an indication of the difficulty they encounter to get a high status job with a first degree. The increase in the supply of graduates has created a qualification inflation.

Table 20. Currently pursuing further study

	Count	%
Yes	420	45.3
<i>of whom part-time</i>	216	23.3
<i>full-time</i>	202	21.8
No	508	54.7
Total	928	100

While in 1997, graduates tended to enrol more in short courses (Baldacchino, 1997), the preference has now changed to higher level courses. In fact, most graduates who are pursuing further study are reading for a master's programme

(36%). 17% are reading for a bachelor degree. A considerable number of graduates are enrolled in a course leading to a diploma or certificate, or in a professional training course. Another large group of graduates are pursuing an LLD (16%).

Table 21. Type of further study

	Count	%
Doctoral	17	4.2
Master	145	35.7
Bachelor	69	17.0
Diploma or certificate	58	14.3
Professional training course	45	11.1
Other	9	2.2
LLD	63	15.5
Total	406	100

3.1.6 Current Job Search

About a fourth of all graduates are actively seeking employment, or alternative employment. Most of these graduates are already in employment but wish to find another job. Job-mobility tends to be very high among new graduates, but tends to diminish after the first year of work.

23% of job seekers are not in full-time employment but are enrolled in full-time study. Out of those seeking employment, only 25% are unemployed and not studying on a full-time basis. This amounts to about 6% of the whole population of graduates. The results from this survey yield a significantly higher level of unemployment than that reported by ETC in March 2003 when there were only 32 graduates in all registering for work. The difference is an indication that not all unemployed graduates seeking employment register with the ETC. One must also note that around 70% of graduates are under 25 years of age. The youth unemployment levels tend to be higher than other age groups throughout all educational categories.

Table 22. Active job seekers

	Count	%
Employed full-time	114	52.3
Unemployed full-time but enrolled in full-time study	49	22.5
Unemployed full-time and not enrolled in full-time study	55	25.2
Total	218	100

Out of those searching for a job, 87% expect the job to be related to their University studies. This figure is identical to that reported by Debono et al. (2001). One must note that a substantial 10% would be satisfied with any job. It would be interesting to examine the reasons for such a response.

Table 23. Prospective job expectation

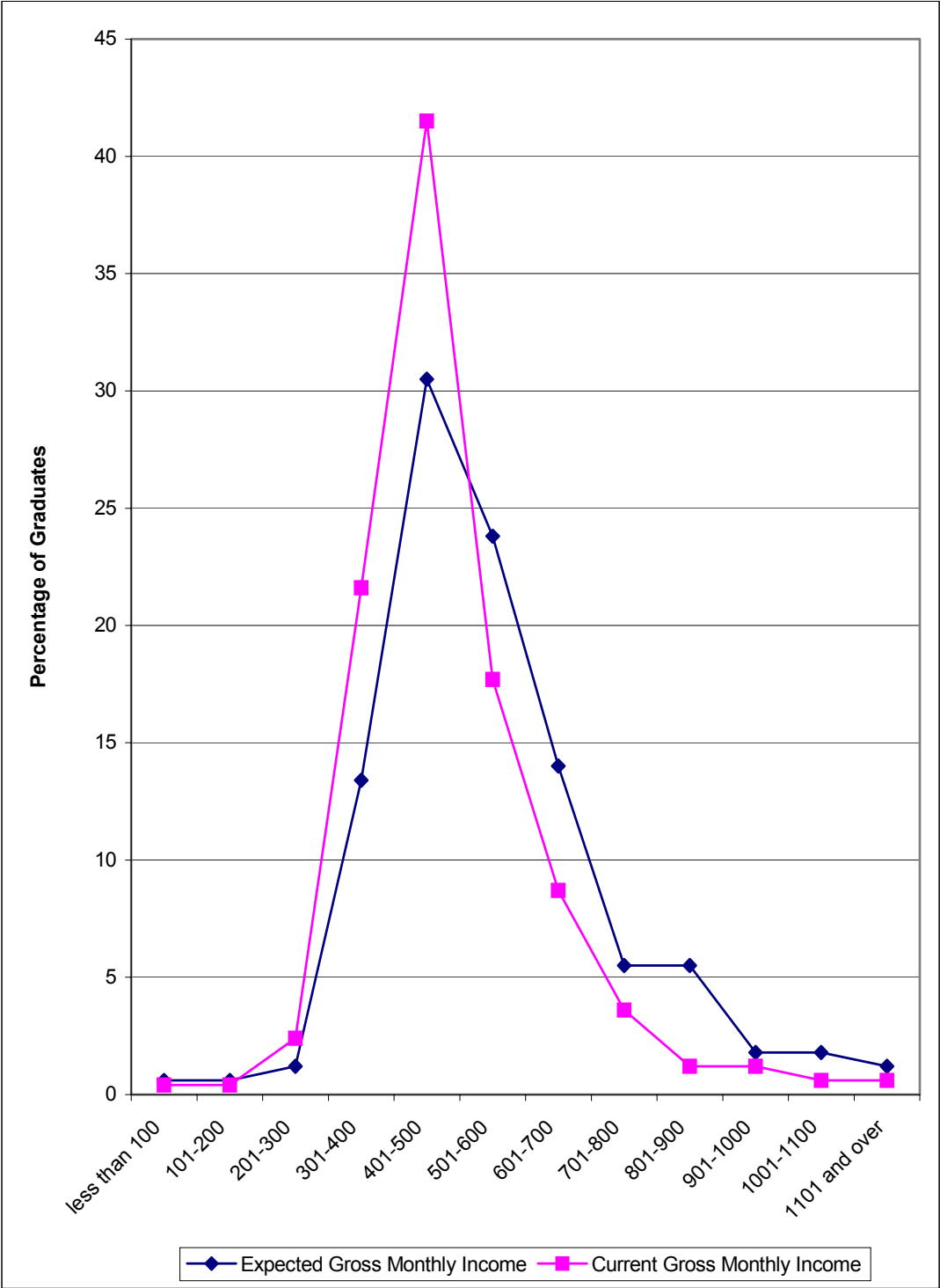
	Count	%
Related to studies	156	86.7
Not related to studies	6	3.3
Any	18	10.0
Total	180	100

Most of those searching for a job expect their new job's monthly salary to be between Lm300-600. This is in the same range earned by most graduates currently employed on a full-time basis. However, as can be seen in the Table and Figure below, a considerable percentage of graduates expect higher salaries than what full-time graduates currently earn. High expectations can motivate graduates to achieve higher earnings. However, if the expectations are unrealistically high, graduates will be inevitably dissatisfied with the existing job opportunities, and will run a greater risk of remaining unemployed for a long time. This is in line with the Expectancy Theory which states that vocational choice is dependent on what one values or wants from a job (including money) and the expectation that getting a particular job will actually satisfy that value (Furnham, 1997).

Table 24. Expected net monthly income (Lm)

	Count	%
-100	1	.6
101-200	1	.6
201-300	2	1.2
301-400	22	13.4
401-500	50	30.5
501-600	39	23.8
601-700	23	14.0
701-800	9	5.5
801-900	9	5.5
901-1000	3	1.8
1001-1100	3	1.8
1101+	2	1.2
Total	164	100

Figure 2. Current net monthly income vs expected net monthly income



3.1.7 Discussion of Main Findings

Most University graduates come from a middle or upper class family background. However, they are usually more academically qualified than their parents. In line with Tabone (1987), upward social mobility seems to be occurring through education. After less than a year of having been conferred with their academic awards, most graduates are in full-time employment in professional/ technical posts and earning a higher wage than the average Maltese person. Most of them are employed on an indefinite contract, with a slight tendency to prefer employment in the public sector, with education and health being the most chosen types of employment organisations. Graduates are relatively satisfied with the skills they learnt at University, and tend to have positive attitudes towards their working life. Most graduates were employed before graduating and nearly half of them are furthering their studies, many of whom at master's level.

This general portrait of graduates is a rather traditional one, where positive career prospects are linked to family background. As expected, graduates tend to find jobs with relatively high incomes and good working conditions.

However, this portrait also points out the great importance being attached to post-graduate study. University life seems to increase the disposition towards further study (Baldacchino, 1997, p.70). Such disposition is possibly related to the increasing difficulty of finding a job that meets graduates' high expectations.

The unemployment rate of new graduates should be carefully monitored to see whether the local labour market for graduates in some disciplines is getting closer to saturation and whether more effort should be made to direct students to areas for which there is more demand. Another related aspect, which is worth examining, is why some graduates do not use employment agencies to find employment, as appears from official ETC data which differs from the result of this survey. In fact, as can be seen in the Table below, in the past 5 years, around 40 graduates registered every year under Part 1 of the ETC Unemployment Register. (This figure includes all graduates, and not only those who got their qualifications last year.)

Table 25. Graduates Registered Unemployed Part 1

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
March	34	34	27	23	33	32
June	29	30	33	13	34	33
September	46	82	55	36	62	
December	41	55	39	33	53	
Yearly Average	38	50	39	26	46	

Employment and Training Corporation (2003)

The Employment and Training Corporation (ETC), Malta's largest employment agency, has tended to focus on the employment demands of lower level occupations, ignoring (by default rather than by active design) the needs of tertiary educated people. This situation needs to be remedied before the rate of unemployed and underemployed graduates increases.

Another important finding from this study is related to the job relevance of skills learnt at University. As can be seen in the Table below, most of the results are in line with Baldacchino (1997). Both studies confirm that factual knowledge and critical orientation are among the most useful skills students learn at University. University graduates are equipped with a comprehensive range of factual knowledge that is found very useful at work. Besides, the University imparts its students a critical orientation often indispensable at the work place. On the negative side, this study confirms that graduates are less satisfied with technical skills and techniques learnt at University, together with skills related to development of creativity and originality. These results suggest that the University is too focused on theories and knowledge, and pays less attention than it should to practical skills deemed useful at the place of work. Besides, as can be seen in the Table 14, the University does not stimulate enough creativity and originality in its students.

Table 26. Job relevance of skills learnt at University in present study and Baldacchino (1997)

	Present Study	Baldacchino (1997, p.63)
Critical orientation	3	1
Organisational skills	2	4
Factual knowledge	1	2
Application of theory to practice	6	3
Development of creativity & originality	5	6
Technical skills and techniques	4	5

Note: 1 = most relevant; 6 = least relevant

Two significant differences emerge on this point between this study and Baldacchino (1997). Application of theory to practice, which was highly placed in the previous study, is now ranked last. This finding may be seen as an indication that the University is becoming more detached from the world of work. As argued above, while being imparted a lot of knowledge and theories, graduates suggest that they are not being given enough chance to apply theory to practice.

Another difference is that organisational skills have been promoted from the least effective job-related skill learnt at University, up to the second most relevant skill. This might be the result of a greater emphasis placed in the University courses on organisational and management skills. Courses such as B.Eng (Hons), B.Psy (Hons), B.Pharm (Hons), B.Ed (Hons) and others have incorporated several organisational/ management units in their structure, not to mention the increase in popularity of explicit management courses.

3.2 Responses by Gender

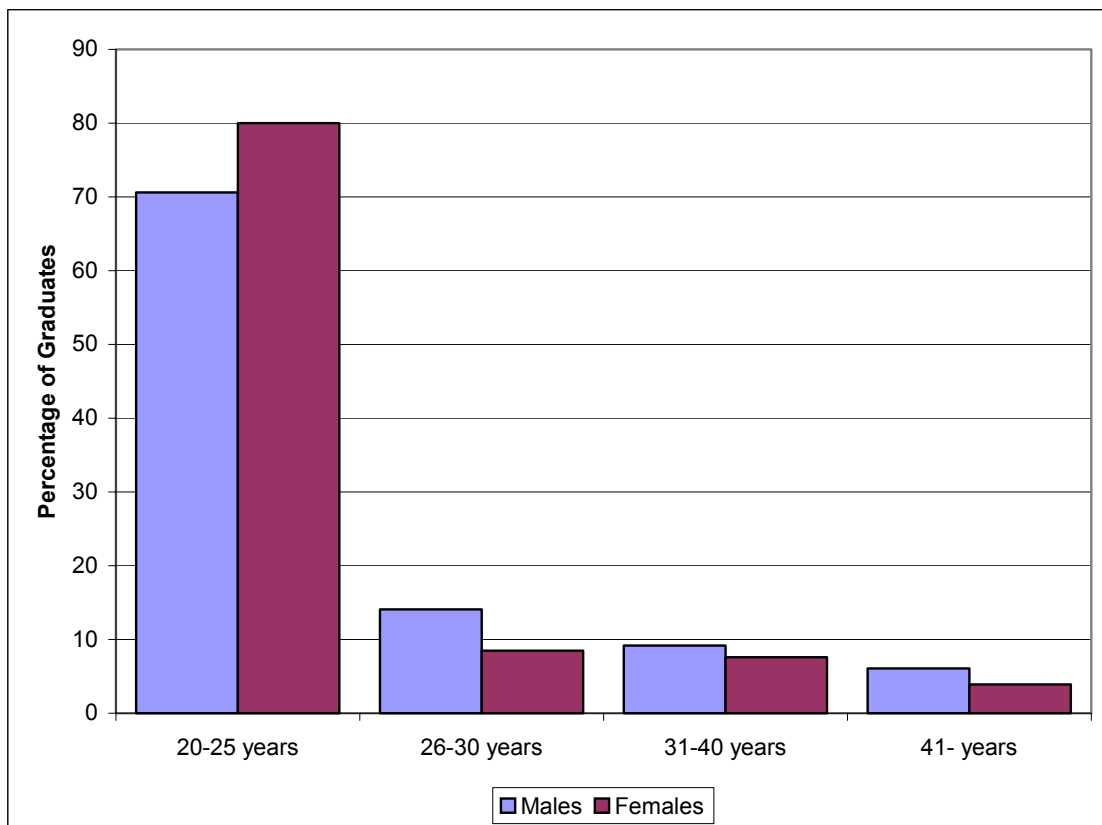
3.2.1 University Course Followed by Gender

A larger proportion of female graduates falls in the 20-25 years age bracket when compared to males (80% and 71% respectively). A smaller proportion of females get their degree when they are 26 years and over. While 6% of all male graduates are 41 years and over, this is true for only 4% of female graduates. These figures reflect the new cultural phenomenon, whereby younger females show more readiness to pursue tertiary education than older ones. Older females find it harder than their male peers to get a University qualification.

Table 27. Age bracket by gender

	Males		Females		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
20-25 years	276	70.6	432	80.0	708	76.0
26-30 years	55	14.1	46	8.5	101	10.8
31-40 years	36	9.2	41	7.6	77	8.3
41- years	24	6.1	21	3.9	45	4.8
Total	391	100	540	100	931	100

Figure 3. Age bracket by gender



The traditional division of professions can still be seen when one looks at the gender ratios graduating per faculty and institute. A higher percentage of females graduated from *Arts* (14% vs 7%) and *Education* (29% vs 16%), and from the *IHC* (7% vs 5%). On the other hand, a higher ratio of male graduates followed courses at *Engineering* (8% vs 2%), *Science* (6% vs 2%) and *FEMA* (30% vs 22%). However, there seems to be a tendency in University faculties and institutes towards more equal gender representation. For example, the traditionally male-dominated faculties of *Laws* and *Medicine & Surgery* have in time become gender balanced.

Certain professions are still seen as 'male' or 'female' domains, and members of the other sex are culturally discouraged from 'invading' them. The teaching profession may be attracting a high number of females because the school hours may make it easier for women to combine their work with the demands of the stereotyped female role in the family. In Malta, females have traditionally been assigned the caring role in society. This is still reflected in their predominance in the helping/ caring professions.

Table 28. Graduates from faculties/ institutes by gender

	Males		Females		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Arts	29	7.4%	76	14.2%	105	11.3%
FEMA	118	30.3%	119	22.2%	237	25.6%
Education	61	15.6%	153	28.5%	214	23.1%
Engineering	30	7.7	8	1.5	38	4.1
Laws	41	10.5	61	11.4	102	11.0
Medicine & Surgery	18	4.6	22	4.1	40	4.3
Science	22	5.6	13	2.4	35	3.8
CCT	12	3.1	15	2.8	27	2.9
IHC	19	4.9	38	7.1	57	6.1
Other	40	10.3	32	6.0	72	7.8
Total	390	100	537	100	927	100

Men tend to get more extreme classifications than their female counterparts. In fact, more males than females are awarded with the highest (13% and 8% respectively) and the lowest classifications (7% and 3% respectively), while the ratio of females is higher in the middle classifications.

Table 29. Classification by gender

	Males		Females	
	Count	%	Count	%
First Class/ Category I	33	12.5	31	8.3
Second Class Upper/ Category IIA	94	35.7	164	43.7
Second Class Lower/ Category IIB	82	31.2	128	34.1
Third Class/ Category III	17	6.5	10	2.7
Other	37	14.1	42	11.2

3.2.2 Employment Outcomes by Gender

There is no significant difference in the overall proportion of employed males and females. However, there is a slightly higher ratio of males than females in full-time employment (73% and 71% respectively). These results tend to go against the common perception that the labour market makes it easier for men to get jobs.

Table 30. Current employment by gender

	Males		Females		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Yes	323	82.0	436	80.9	759	81.4
<i>Of whom full-time</i>	295	72.8	381	70.6	676	71.5
No	71	18.0	103	19.1	174	18.6
Total	394	100	539	100	933	100

Male graduates tend to be significantly more involved in voluntary work than females (26.1% and 18.4% respectively). Various reasons might be attributed to this difference. Females might be busier with family responsibilities while males might have more free time at their own disposal. Males might also have a wider choice of voluntary organisations to join. Alternatively, male graduates might have more initiative.

Table 31. Performing voluntary work by gender

	Males		Females		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Yes	100	26.1	97	18.4	197	21.6
No	283	73.9	431	81.6	714	78.4
Total	383	100	528	100	911	100

Male and female graduates differ significantly in their employment sector. While most graduates are employed in the public sector, the trend is stronger among females (58% females and 51% males respectively). On the other hand, more males take up private employment after graduating. This is strongly influenced by the fact that males tend to have more qualifications needed in the private sector (such as IT, and Engineering). The two largest employers of females are education and health organisations which are mostly found in the public sector. International research shows that private employers sometimes prefer male employees when the two groups have similar qualifications and work experience (Seta, Paulus and Baron, 2000). Such situation might also be occurring in Malta.

Table 32. Sector of employment by gender

	Males		Females		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Public	163	51.4	247	57.6	410	55.0
Private*	154	48.6	182	42.4	336	45.0
Total	317	100	429	100	746	100

*Includes self-employment

A larger proportion of male graduates work in administrative/ managerial jobs when compared to females (21.8% and 13.1% respectively). However, more females are employed in professional/ technical jobs (65% and 60% respectively) and as employers/ own account workers (4% and 2% respectively).

Table 33. Occupation by gender

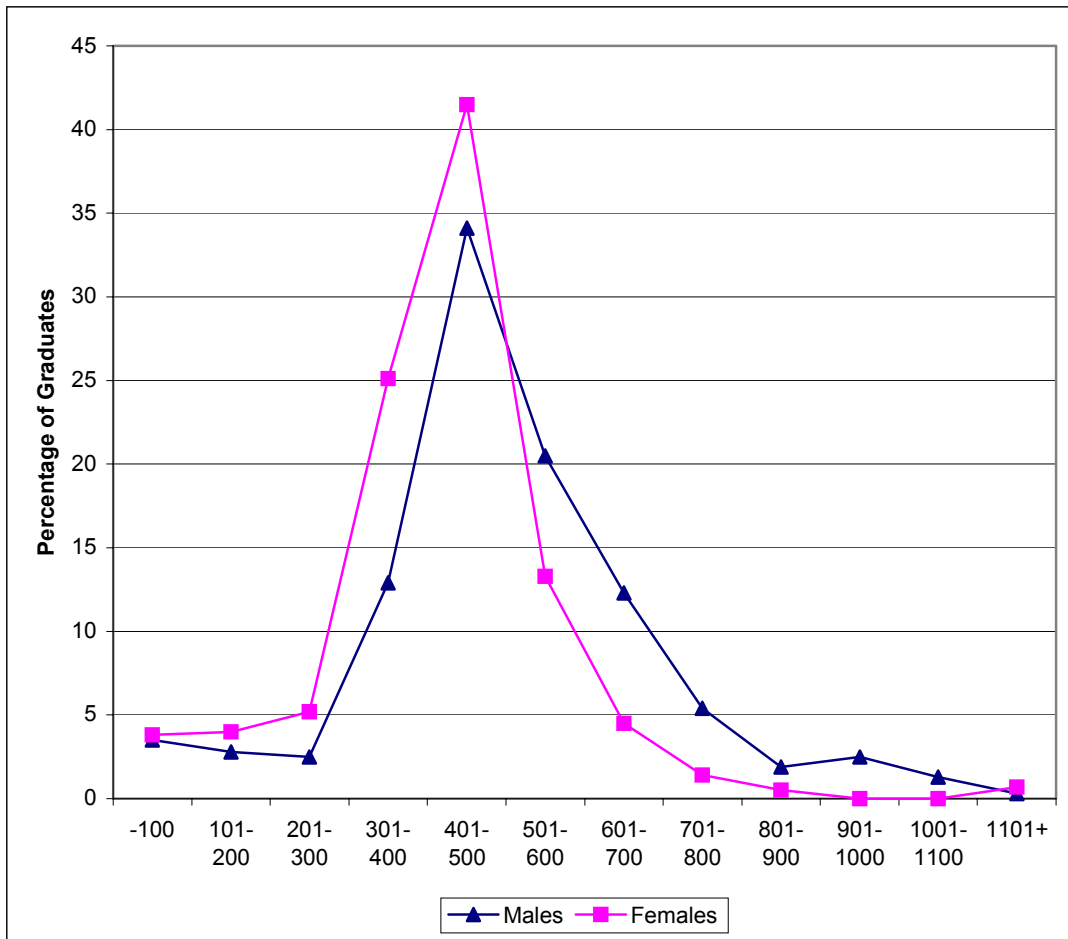
	Males		Females		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Employer/own account worker	7	2.2	17	4.1	24	3.3
Professional/technical	189	59.8	267	64.6	456	62.6
Administrative/managerial	69	21.8	54	13.1	123	16.9
Executive/clerical	44	13.9	64	15.5	108	14.8
Skilled/semiskilled	5	1.6	7	1.7	12	1.6
Unskilled	2	.6	4	1.0	6	.8
Total	316	100	413	100	729	100

Male graduates tend to earn considerably more than their female counterparts. A greater proportion of females earn Lm500 or less per month. However, the trend inverses as regards salaries exceeding Lm600 per month. These results are influenced by the fact that more males graduate from commercially needed courses. It is widely known that the private sector (in which more males than females find employment) pays more than the public sector at the higher ranges of the occupational hierarchy. Besides, as was seen above, more males work in management posts. This in part stems from the higher percentage of older male graduates who would have had more time to climb the organisational hierarchy. However, NSO Statistics (2002) show that men tend to earn more than women even within the same occupational category (at a ratio of 4:5).

Table 34. Current net monthly income by gender

	Males		Females		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
-100	11	3.5	16	3.8	27	3.7
101-200	9	2.8	17	4.0	26	3.5
201-300	8	2.5	22	5.2	30	4.1
301-400	41	12.9	106	25.1	147	19.9
401-500	108	34.1	175	41.5	283	38.3
501-600	65	20.5	56	13.3	121	16.4
601-700	39	12.3	19	4.5	58	7.8
701-800	17	5.4	6	1.4	23	3.1
801-900	6	1.9	2	.5	8	1.1
901-1000	8	2.5	0	.0	8	1.1
1001-1100	4	1.3	0	.0	4	.5
1101+	1	.3	3	.7	4	.5
Total	317	100	422	100	739	100

Figure 4. Current net monthly income by gender



3.2.3 Job-Related Attitudes by Gender

Males tend to perceive a greater opportunity to develop their career with their present employer than females (68% and 55% respectively).

Table 35. Can develop career with present employer by gender

	Males		Females		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Disagree	45	14.2	82	19.4	127	17.2
Neutral	57	17.9	107	25.4	164	22.2
Agree	216	67.9	233	55.2	449	60.7
Total	318	100	422	100	740	100

Significantly more males are satisfied with their present salaries than their female counterparts (42% and 34% respectively). This is understandable, especially in view of the fact that they earn more than their female counterparts.

Table 36. Satisfied with salary by gender

	Males		Females		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Disagree	105	32.9	181	42.6	286	38.4
Neutral	81	25.4	99	23.3	180	24.2
Agree	133	41.7	145	34.1	278	37.4
Total	319	100	425	100	744	100

However, women claim to be better able to balance their working and private life when compared to males (66% and 55% respectively). While females' jobs are paid less, they might not be as demanding as males' jobs. An alternative explanation is that females might be more capable of handling stress and balancing their work and private lives.

Table 37. Easily balance work/private life by gender

	Males		Females		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Disagree	58	18.4	55	12.8	113	15.2
Neutral	85	26.9	92	21.4	177	23.8
Agree	173	54.7	282	65.7	455	61.1
Total	316	100	429	100	745	100

Gender differences are apparent as regards the methods through which graduates find work. However, it seems that these differences are mostly attributable to the fact that males and females specialize in different areas of study and thus search for different careers. As expected, the large percentage of females interested in education and health normally find their job through the relevant Government department.

Males use more relatives/ friends, and spontaneous job search and their careers tend to be more related to the private sector. More men might be approached by employers due to the nature of their qualifications. For instance, it is known that employers in the IT and Engineering fields often approach students in their final University year. On the other hand, some might argue that the Maltese employers approach more males than females as they prefer to employ males, or because the employers or managers undertaking the search for employees are themselves mostly males in the first place.

Table 38. Type of job search by gender

	Males		Females		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Advert newspaper	79	27.6	97	25.2	176	26.2
Relatives/friends	50	17.5	52	13.5	102	15.2
Employment agency	10	3.5	11	2.9	21	3.1
Info at university	16	5.6	20	5.2	36	5.4
Education/health department	47	16.4	112	29.1	159	23.7
Internal call/promotion	8	2.8	19	4.9	27	4.0
Approached by employer	38	13.3	36	9.4	74	11.0
Spontaneous job search	32	11.2	36	9.4	68	10.1
Internet	4	1.4	2	.5	6	.9
Other	2	.7	0	.0	2	.3
Total	286	100	385	100	671	100

3.2.4 Employment History by Gender

A larger proportion of males worked for their current employer before graduating (70% males vs 60% females). This probably stems from the fact that the ratio of older graduates is higher in males than females. Older graduates might prefer to remain more with their previous employer than younger graduates. In fact, when one considers the youngest age bracket (20-25 years), no significant gender differences arise.

Table 39. Work for current employer by gender

	Males		Females		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Yes	129	69.7	135	59.7	264	64.2
No	56	30.3	91	40.3	147	35.8
Total	185	100	226	100	411	100

The same reason applies for the fact that a larger proportion of females changed their job after graduating, either with the same employer or with a new employer (48%) and 35% respectively).

Table 40. Changed job after graduation by gender

	Males		Females		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Yes	63	35.0	102	47.9	165	42.0
No	117	65.0	111	52.1	228	58.0
Total	180	100	213	100	393	100

Out of those who are currently seeking a job, males tend to have considerably higher salary expectations than females. For example, 45% of males in contrast to 19% of females expect a salary of over Lm600 per month.

Table 41. Expected net monthly income by gender

	Males		Females		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
-100	0	.0	1	1.0	1	.6
101-200	1	1.5	0	.0	1	.6
201-300	1	1.5	1	1.0	2	1.2
301-400	8	12.3	14	14.3	22	13.5
401-500	13	20.0	37	37.8	50	30.7
501-600	13	20.0	26	26.5	39	23.9
601-700	10	15.4	13	13.3	23	14.1
701-800	6	9.2	3	3.1	9	5.5
801-900	6	9.2	2	2.0	8	4.9
901-1000	3	4.6	0	.0	3	1.8
1001-1100	2	3.1	1	1.0	3	1.8
1101+	2	3.1	0	.0	2	1.2
Total	65	100	98	100	163	100

3.2.5 Post-Graduate Study by Gender

An important difference between the two sexes emerges in relation to post-graduate study, where more males than females undertake further studies beyond their University qualification (50% and 42% respectively). Besides, a larger ratio of males pursue such study on a full-time basis (23% and 20% respectively).

Table 42. Currently pursuing further study by gender

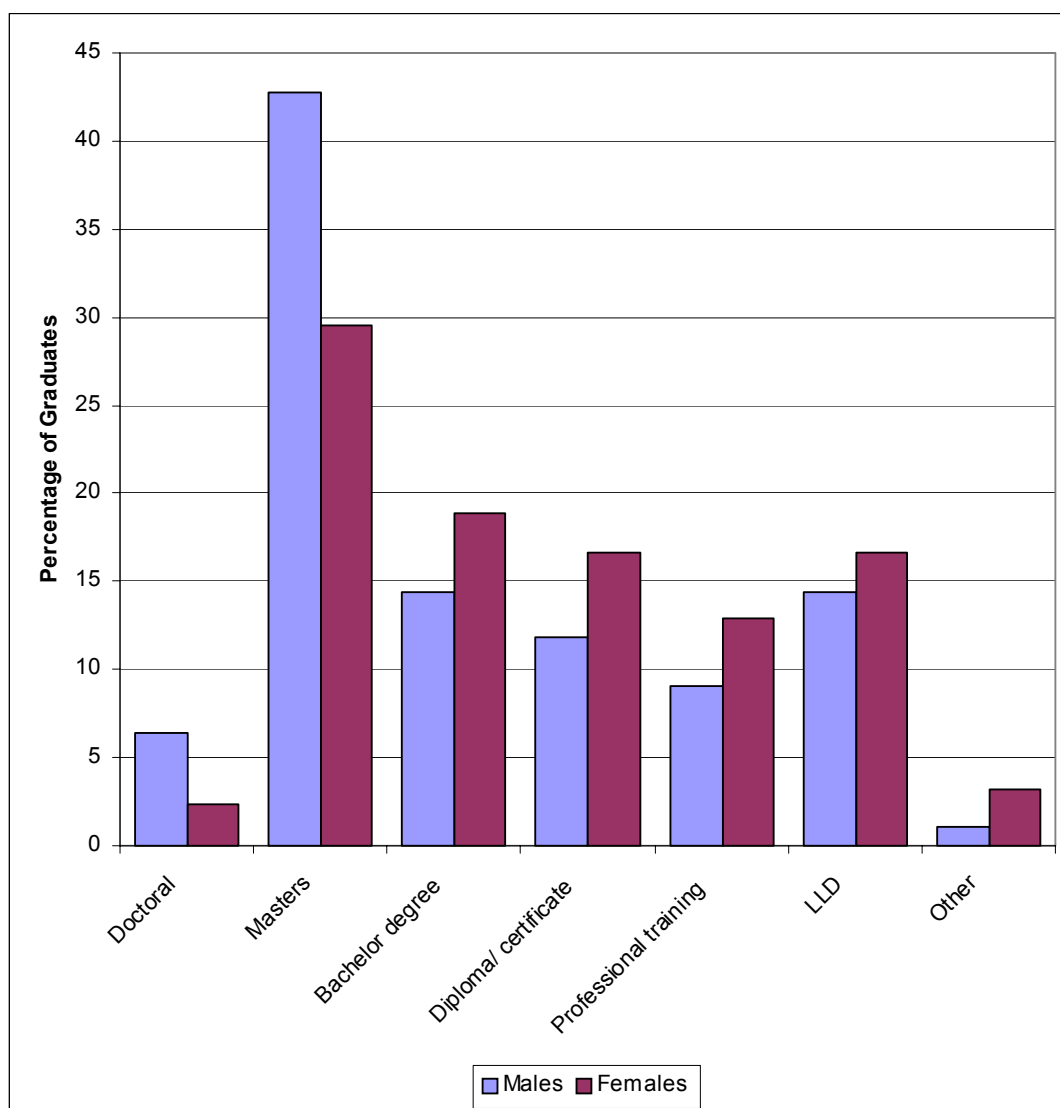
	Males		Females		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Yes	195	49.6	222	41.8	417	45.1
<i>Of whom full-time</i>	94	23.2	107	19.8	201	21.3
No	198	50.4	309	58.2	507	54.9
Total	393	100	531	100	924	100

When it comes to post-graduate study, males and females make different choices. More males read for doctoral and master degrees, whereas females tend to follow more bachelor degrees, diploma/certificate, or professional training courses.

Table 43. Type of further study by gender

	Males		Females		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Doctoral	12	6.4	5	2.3	17	4.2
Master	80	42.8	64	29.5	144	35.6
Bachelor	27	14.4	41	18.9	68	16.8
Diploma or certificate	22	11.8	36	16.6	58	14.4
Professional training course	17	9.1	28	12.9	45	11.1
LLD	27	14.4	36	16.6	63	15.6
Other	2	1.1	7	3.2	9	2.2
Total	187	100	217	100	404	100

Figure 5. Further study by gender



3.2.6 Discussion of Main Findings by Gender

Male and female graduates' employment situation and career prospects differ considerably. Men take up more commercially needed courses. They are more often found in managerial/ administrative posts, and immediately start earning better wages. They believe to have better job prospects and have higher salary expectations than their female counterparts.

A greater ratio of male graduates further their studies and do so on a full-time basis. Besides, they tend to study for higher-level courses than females. This will probably accentuate the difference in employment conditions in future years.

Men tend to get closer to traditional definitions of career success such as high paid and high ranking positions. However, the reason for this and whether it is a worthy goal are debatable.

Many social scientists, especially those supporting the 'feminist cause' argue that our culture favours males over females, and drives men towards more profitable courses and jobs than females, leading to career and income disparity. Even inadequate social conditions such as lack of childcare facilities are known to push females towards particular lower paid professions (such as teaching). However, it is probably too simplistic to reduce gender attitudes and life choices to cultural programming and social conditions. Both local and international studies show that value differences between males and females are widespread. Abela (2001) found that Maltese men tend to prefer hard work and leadership, while Maltese women prefer politeness, respect of others and independence. Commenting of international research, Seta, Paulus and Baron (2000) state that men consistently value job dimensions that relate to status, prestige, and high incomes; whereas women value job dimensions relating to helping others and social relations.

It is unreasonable to measure career success only vertically. Western culture has taken the traditional male career model and transformed it into a benchmark towards which women should aspire. Having higher ranking and a higher paid job does not necessarily mean a more successful or satisfactory career. After all, this study found no significant gender difference as regards job stress and job satisfaction. One should also note that female graduates find it easier to reconcile their career with their private life.

As was argued above, the gender representation gap in specific University courses is narrowing down. However, men and women will probably never exhibit identical career paths. After all, it is widely accepted that their nature is not identical but complimentary. A democratic society should not impose on everyone the values of a particular segment of the population, but should facilitate both males and females to reach their often different career and life aspirations.

3.3 Responses by Age Bracket

3.3.1 Fathers' Education by Age Bracket

Paternal education seems to follow a trend among the different graduate age groups with the majority of fathers across all groups having completed secondary education. Nevertheless it is interesting to note an increase in the number of fathers having reached tertiary education within the 20-25 graduate age group when compared to other age groups; and a high ratio of the 31-40 year old graduates with secondary-educated fathers. This is a likely indication of a growth in the general educational level of the population and its influence on the younger generation to continue on the path of academic training.

Table 44. Fathers' education by age bracket

	20-25 years		26-30 years		31-40 years		41- years		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
None	1	.1	0	.0	1	1.3	1	2.1	3	.3
Primary	126	18.0	15	14.9	17	22.1	18	37.5	176	19.0
Secondary	276	39.4	49	48.5	40	51.9	20	41.7	385	41.5
Post-secondary	146	20.8	22	21.8	6	7.8	5	10.4	179	19.3
Tertiary	152	21.7	15	14.9	13	16.9	4	8.3	184	19.8
Total	701	100	101	100	77	100	48	100	927	100

3.3.2 Employment Outcomes by Age Bracket

Around 20% of graduates amongst the 20-40 age bracket have declared that they perform voluntary work. It is interesting to note that within the 41+ age group the percentage of those performing voluntary work is double that of the 20-40 age group. This figure might be related to the stronger value that was attributed to performing voluntary work in the past, and the greater possibility that young people nowadays have to choose a part-time job instead of performing voluntary work in order to maximise income. Many of the 41+ age group have consolidated their work careers. Besides, they might have less family responsibilities as their children have grown up. This figure is also partly attributable to the fact that a proportion of the 41+ graduates are pensioners and so have a greater amount of free time than employed persons. In Malta, older persons tend to perform more voluntary work than younger ones. However, the national average difference is not as strong as the difference found among University graduates. In fact, Abela (2001) reports that 31.6% of the 55+ age bracket as opposed to 27.2% of the 18-34 age bracket perform voluntary work.

Table 45. Performing voluntary work by age bracket

	20-25 years		26-30 years		31-40 years		41- years		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Yes	143	20.7	18	18.4	18	23.4	19	41.3	198	21.7
No	548	79.3	80	81.6	59	76.6	27	58.7	714	78.3

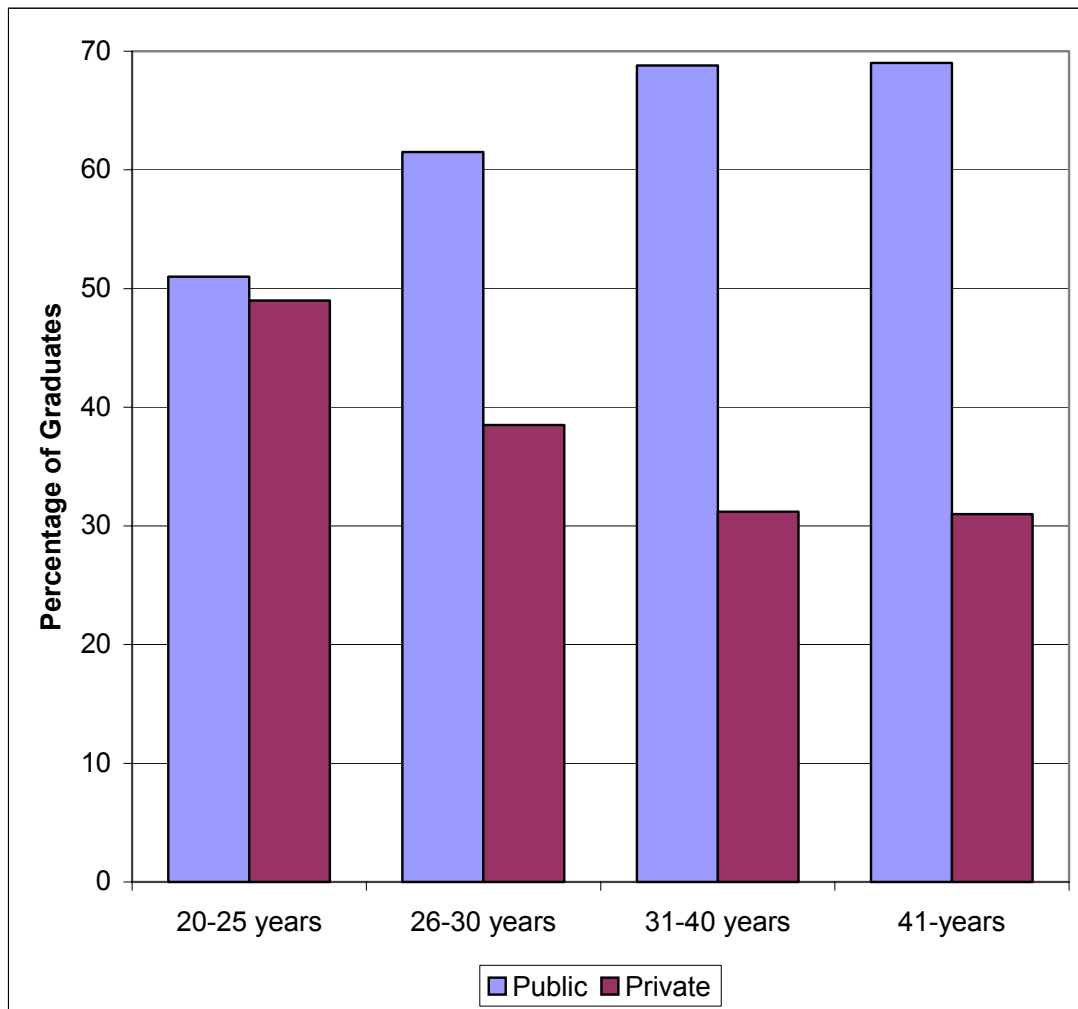
While the public sector employs 55% of graduates, a greater proportion of young graduates are being employed within the private sector. In fact, nearly half of the 20-25 age bracket and around a third of graduates over 31 years old are employed in the private sector. Whilst the public sector remains the largest employer, its relative loss in employment ratio to the private sector along the years is also indicated in the Table and Figure below.

Table 46. Sector of employment by age bracket

	20-25 years		26-30 years		31-40 years		41- years		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Public	274	51.0	56	61.5	53	68.8	29	69.0	412	55.2
Private*	263	49.0	30	38.5	24	31.2	13	31.0	345	44.8
Total	537	100	91	100	77	100	42	100	747	100

**Includes self-employment*

Figure 6. Sector of employment by age bracket



Most graduates across the age groups declare to work in the education employment field, with a remarkable rise to more than half the population of graduates in the 41+ age bracket. The educational sector seems to be more successful in promoting lifelong learning amongst its employees rather than amongst employees in other sectors.

The health sector tends to absorb a relatively large number of 20-25 year old graduates. Fewer older persons manage to get University qualifications useful in such a sector.

Graduates aged 41+ tend to work in a limited number of sectors. They are rarely found in such sectors as IT, Hotels/catering, retail/wholesale, and environment. Among the various reasons for this, one can deduce that older students might be facing difficulties such as insufficient entry requirements, or social pressure, in choosing courses leading to careers in such fields. Besides, the private labour market is less easily accessible to persons aged 41 years and over. It is widely known that employers in competitive sectors such as IT, Hotels/catering, and retail/wholesale prefer recruiting younger persons rather than older ones. Another potential contributor for this result is that older persons working in the above mentioned fields find it harder to spare enough time to follow a course at University when compared to their peers working in Education, Health and other public-dominated employment fields.

Table 47. Field of employment by age bracket

	20-25 years		26-30 years		31-40 years		41- years		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Education	170	32.2	33	37.5	18	24.0	21	55.3	242	33.2
Social	28	5.3	5	5.7	8	10.7	2	5.3	43	5.9
Health	88	16.7	7	8.0	10	13.3	3	7.9	108	14.8
Manufacturing	34	6.4	5	5.7	6	8.0	2	5.3	47	6.4
Banking/finance/audit	65	12.3	9	10.2	9	12.0	1	2.6	84	11.5
IT	18	3.4	1	1.1	0	.0	0	.0	19	2.6
Hotels/catering	18	3.4	4	4.5	2	2.7	0	.0	24	3.3
Consultancy	29	5.5	8	9.1	2	2.7	1	2.6	40	5.5
Transport/communication	26	4.9	8	9.1	6	8.0	5	13.2	45	6.2
Retail/wholesale	11	2.1	0	.0	2	2.7	0	.0	13	1.8
Other	31	5.9	6	6.8	10	13.3	3	7.9	50	6.9
Environment	10	1.9	2	2.3	2	2.7	0	.0	14	1.9
Total	528	100	88	100	75	100	38	100	729	100

Most new graduates are employed in the professional/ technical, and the administrative/ managerial areas, with a trend seeing younger graduates in professional/ technical jobs and older ones within the administrative/ managerial area. Not surprisingly, mature and experienced graduates are more likely to be employed in administrative and managerial positions.

Table 48. Type of occupation by age bracket

	20-25 years		26-30 years		31-40 years		41- years		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Employer/own account worker	20	3.8	3	3.4	1	1.3	0	.0	24	3.3
Professional/technical	347	66.2	54	61.4	35	46.7	20	47.6	456	62.6
Administrative/managerial	70	13.4	12	13.6	25	33.3	18	42.9	125	17.1
Executive/clerical	73	13.9	15	17.0	14	18.7	4	9.5	106	14.5
Skilled/semiskilled	9	1.7	3	3.4	0	.0	0	.0	12	1.6
Unskilled	5	1.0	1	1.1	0	.0	0	.0	6	.8
Total	524	100	88	100	75	100	42	100	729	100

One graduate out of five within the 20-25 age bracket is likely to be employed on a definite contract, while virtually all graduates above 41 years of age are employed on an indefinite contract. Young graduates have to take greater risks than their predecessors as their jobs are less secure. Nevertheless, this might be an important factor creating job mobility and flexibility at the workplace. It might be interesting to investigate whether University students expect instability in their first jobs after graduation or whether most of them are still enrolling under the impression and expectation that a degree will guarantee a job for life.

Table 49. Definite and indefinite contract by age bracket

	20-25 years		26-30 years		31-40 years		41- years		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Definite	94	17.6	10	11.1	4	5.3	0	.0	108	14.6
Indefinite	439	82.4	80	88.9	72	94.7	40	100	631	85.4
Total	533	100	90	100	76	100	40	100	739	100

3.3.3 Job-Related Skills and Attitudes by Age Bracket

Graduates aged 31 years or over have acquired more important job skills by following their University course than younger graduates (31-40 bracket = 88%; 41+ bracket = 93%; 20-25 bracket = 82%; 26-30 bracket = 77%). This difference might be attributed to the experience of more mature students which helps them to appreciate more the skills acquired.

Table 50. Job relevance of skills learnt at University by age bracket

	20-25 years		26-30 years		31-40 years		41- years		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Disagree	8	1.6	6	6.8	0	0	1	2.5	15	2.2
Neutral	83	16.5	14	15.9	8	12.5	2	5.0	107	15.4
Agree	413	81.9	68	77.3	56	87.5	37	92.5	574	82.5
Total	504	100	88	100	64	100	40	100	696	100

There is an inverse relation between age and satisfaction with salary. While only 36% of graduates aged 20-25 confess not to be satisfied with their salary, this rises to over 60% of the population of graduates aged 41+. This result occurs in spite of the fact that many older graduates earn more than younger ones.

Table 51. Satisfied with salary by age bracket

	20-25 years		26-30 years		31-40 years		41- years		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Disagree	195	36.4	36	40.0	32	42.1	26	60.5	289	38.8
Neutral	130	24.3	21	23.3	22	28.9	7	16.3	180	24.2
Agree	211	39.4	33	36.7	22	28.9	10	23.3	276	37.0
Total	536	100	90	100	76	100	43	100	745	100

Interestingly, graduates aged 31-40 claim to find it considerably harder to strike a balance between their work and private life than any other age group. This age bracket might be experiencing an increased tension because of greater work and private life responsibilities. Older graduates tend to have higher job-related responsibilities. At the same time, many of them would be experiencing the private-life stress of caring for young children.

Table 52. Easily balance work/private life by age bracket

	20-25 years		26-30 years		31-40 years		41- years		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Disagree	75	13.9	15	16.5	16	21.6	8	18.6	114	15.3
Neutral	132	24.5	19	20.9	17	23.0	8	18.6	176	23.6
Agree	331	61.5	57	62.6	41	55.4	27	62.8	456	61.1
Total	538	100	91	100	74	100	43	100	746	100

Job satisfaction increases until 30 years, then decreases in the 31-40 bracket, and goes up again in 41+ year old graduates. In line with the previous Table regarding the work-life balance, the 31-40 year old graduates are also the most unsatisfied with their job. The job-satisfaction issue of this age-bracket will be analysed in relation to other factors at the end of this chapter.

Table 53. Satisfied with job by age bracket

	20-25 years		26-30 years		31-40 years		41- years		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Disagree	42	7.8	6	6.5	12	16.0	3	7.0	63	8.4
Neutral	94	17.5	17	18.5	18	24.0	9	20.9	138	18.5
Agree	401	74.7	69	75.0	45	60.0	31	72.1	546	73.1
Total	537	100	92	100	75	100	43	100	747	100

3.3.4 Post-graduate Study by Age Bracket

While nearly half the graduates aged 20-25 are pursuing further studies, the amount drops to around a third in the other age groups. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that, within the 31-40 age bracket, the amount rises to 41%. The motivation towards further studies amongst the different age brackets cannot be assumed to be similar. Most younger graduates probably prefer to follow up their student life through such courses in order to upgrade their chances of landing better careers. On the other hand, older graduates might further their studies either to enhance their established careers or out of personal interest.

Table 54. Currently pursuing further study by age bracket

	20-25 years		26-30 years		31-40 years		41- years		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Yes	340	48.4	31	31.0	31	40.8	16	34.0	418	45.2
No	362	51.6	69	69.0	45	59.2	31	66.0	507	54.8
Total	702	100	100	100	76	100	47	100	925	100

Another indication to this hypothesis is the fact that, among graduates pursuing further studies, the older the age the greater the number who do so as part-time students. These older graduates are determined to sacrifice their time after work to follow part-time courses. While no graduate above 41 years follows full-time courses, 54% amongst the 20-25 age group actually do so.

Table 55. Type of further study by age bracket

	20-25 years		26-30 years		31-40 years		41- years		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Part-time study	155	45.9	19	61.3	24	77.4	16	100	214	51.4
Full-time study	183	54.1	12	38.7	7	22.6	0	.0	202	48.6
Total	338	100	31	100	31	100	16	100	416	100

3.3.5 Discussion of Main Findings by Age Bracket

The analysis of findings by four main age brackets has confirmed certain notions and shed light on new information, which could serve as an important basis for further research.

The educational growth amongst the Maltese population can be seen through the large amount of graduates whose parents have not completed tertiary education. Graduates tend to have a higher education than their parents, and younger graduates have a higher disposition to further their studies, often on a full-time basis, beyond their first University course. While this can certainly be seen positively at face value, it might indicate the fear that young graduates have of being unable to find a good job with their first University course.

Younger graduates are more likely to work in the private sector and on a definite contract when compared to their older peers. This trend can be expected to increase in the years to come. The virtually total exclusion of elder graduates from professions such as IT, Hotels/catering, retail/wholesale, and environment might indicate that younger graduates have a wider variety of job prospects. However, following a University course later on in life also has certain advantages. One such advantage is that they are better able to relate the skills learnt at University with their current job.

Unlike the other age groups, graduates in the 31-40 age bracket experience a relatively low level of job satisfaction together with an ineffective balancing of their work and private life. This trend across the two different dimensions indicates that something might be affecting the particular age bracket. The employment sector might not be answering to the specific needs of the mentioned age group who tend to feel more frustrated in their work and private lives. Such phenomena are probably symptoms of the 'mid-career plateau'. Research shows (Collin & Young, 2000) that many employees in this age group tend to pass through the mid-career plateau, a period of stagnation and lack of progress on the job.

In line with other European Countries, 'good pay' is the job characteristic that most Maltese consider important (Abela, 1991). While many positive attitudes grow along the years, the salary satisfaction is inversely proportional to age. This is probably due to the higher salary expectations of older graduates. Graduates' level of satisfaction with salary derives from the difference between the expected and the actual salary. While older graduates often have higher salaries than younger ones, their expectations are probably higher than those of their younger peers.

Voluntary work forms part of the lives of a considerable number of graduates, especially older ones. Younger graduates seem to be absorbed with other issues and are at greater risk of putting aside this important social contribution.

3.4 Responses by Classification

3.4.1 Fathers' Occupation by Classification

Most fathers of graduates in all four academic classification categories were employed in professional/ technical and administrative/ managerial jobs. 1st Class/ Category I had the highest ratio of fathers in administrative/ managerial and skilled/ semiskilled posts. However, they also had the lowest percentage of fathers in unskilled jobs. 3rd Class/ Category III graduates had the highest ratio of fathers in professional/ technical and executive/ clerical jobs. These complex results suggest that one does not require fathers occupying high-level posts in order to get good grades at University.

Table 56. Fathers' occupation at age 16 by classification (%)

	1st Class/ Category I	2nd Class Upper/ Category IIA	2nd Class Lower/ Category IIB	3rd Class/ Category III
Employer/ own account worker	7.9	12.6	11.8	3.8
Professional/technical	22.2	19.3	21.1	30.8
Administrative/ managerial	28.6	21.3	22.5	23.1
Executive/ clerical	14.3	14.6	14.7	19.2
Skilled/ semiskilled	19.0	10.6	13.2	11.5
Unskilled	4.8	13.4	10.3	11.5
Unemployed	.0	2.4	1.0	.0
Deceased	3.2	2.4	2.5	.0
Pensioner	.0	2.8	1.5	.0
Student	.0	.8	1.5	.0
Total (Count)	63	254	204	26

3.4.2 Employment Outcomes by Classification

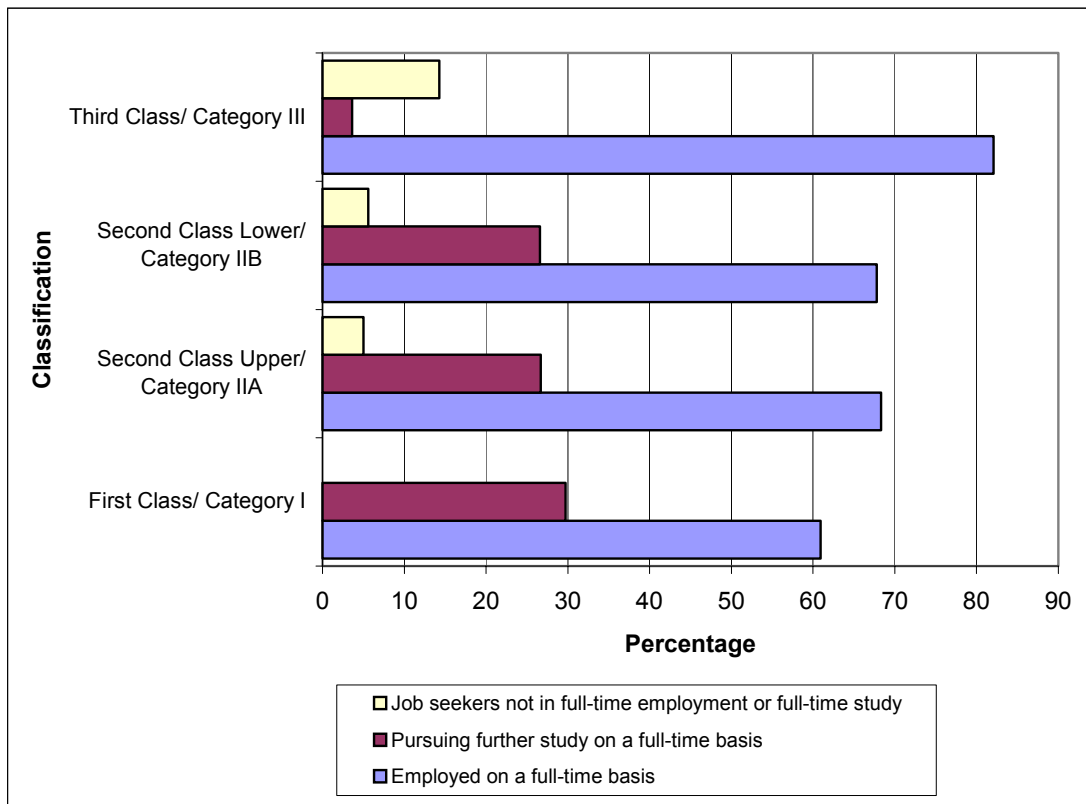
The lower the classification, the higher the number of graduates who are neither in full-time employment nor in full-time study and are seeking employment. Virtually no first class graduates in contrast to the 14% of third class graduates are seeking employment. Low University grades increase considerably the chances of remaining unemployed in the first year after graduating, while high University grades significantly increase one's chances of landing a job. This fact should be used as a motivator for students to achieve higher grades.

The largest ratios of full-time employed graduates are those holding the lowest classifications. On the other hand, 1st Class/ Category I graduates are the most likely to pursue further studies on a full-time basis.

Table 57. General outcomes by classification

	Employed on a full-time basis		Pursuing further study on a full-time basis		Job seekers neither in full-time employment nor in full-time study	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
First Class/ Category I	39	60.9	19	29.7	0	0.0
Second Class Upper/ Category IIA	179	68.3	70	26.7	13	5.0
Second Class Lower/ Category IIB	145	67.8	57	26.6	12	5.6
Third Class/ Category III	23	82.1	1	3.6	4	14.3

Figure 7. General outcomes by classification



While adverts on newspapers are claimed to be the most common way of finding a job, some interesting results arise. Fewer graduates holding top classifications find work through Education or Health Divisions, suggesting that the higher classification students are being absorbed by the private sector. Graduates possessing the highest and the lowest classifications are more likely to be approached by the employer (22% and 17% respectively), and through spontaneous job search (13% and 16% respectively). These two groups tend not to use the services of employment agencies. Relatives and friends are favoured most by graduates holding 2nd Class Lower/ Category IIB classifications.

Table 58. Type of job search by classification (%)

	1st Class/ Category I	2nd Class Upper/ Category IIA	2nd Class Lower/ Category IIB	3rd Class/ Category III
Advert newspaper	30.4	34.4	23.4	16.7
Relatives/ friends	15.2	12.6	20.7	8.3
Employment agency	.0	3.3	3.4	.0
Info at University	4.3	8.7	4.8	.0
Education/ health depts.	8.7	21.9	24.8	37.5
Internal call/ promotion	2.2	2.2	.7	.0
Approached by employer	21.7	8.7	10.3	16.7
Spontaneous job search	13.0	7.1	11.7	16.7
Internet	4.3	1.1	.0	.0
Other	.0	.0	.0	4.2
Total (Count)	46	183	145	24

More top classification students are in jobs requiring their University training than their peers with lower University grades. Nearly a third of the lower three classified groups did not require their University course for their job. Lower classified groups are clearly in a greater danger of being underemployed.

Table 59. University course required to apply for job by classification

	1st Class/ Category I		2nd Class Upper/ Category IIA		2nd Class Lower/ Category IIB		3rd Class/ Category III	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Yes	46	86.8	146	71.6	114	72.2	17	70.8
No	7	13.2	58	28.4	44	27.8	7	29.2
Total	53	100	204	100	158	100	24	100

3.4.3 Job Related Skills by Classification

Most graduates believe that the skills learnt at University are relevant to their job. No significant difference arises among the groups with different classifications. Better University grades do not seem to be related to a greater job relevance of skills learnt at University. However, this figure should not be interpreted at face value. Higher classified graduates might have learnt more relevant skills than lower classified ones. However, they might also have higher unmet expectations, thus resulting in differently classified graduates holding deceptively similar attitudes.

Table 60. Job relevance of skills learnt at University by classification

	1st Class/ Category I		2nd Class Upper/ Category IIA		2nd Class Lower/ Category IIB		3rd Class/ Category III	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Disagree	1	2.0	4	2.1	3	2.0	0	.0
Neutral	8	16.3	29	15.2	22	14.8	1	4.3
Agree	40	81.6	158	82.7	124	83.2	22	95.7
Total	49	100	191	100	149	100	23	100

3.4.4 Employment History by Classification

Employment before graduating is related to classification. More 1st Class/ Category I graduates have been employed before graduating than any other group. This might be an indication of the efficiency of the employment sector in reaching out and absorbing the best assets first. Besides, students who were employed before graduation could have learnt skills that helped them to get higher academic grades.

Table 61. Employed before graduating by classification

	1st Class/ Category I		2nd Class Upper/ Category IIA		2nd Class Lower/ Category IIB		3rd Class/ Category III	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Yes	28	54.9	95	46.8	84	52.8	12	48.0
No	23	45.1	108	53.2	75	47.2	13	52.0
Total	51	100	203	100	159	100	25	100

3.4.5 Post-graduate Study by Classification

The largest proportion of graduates who are pursuing a master course are holders of 1st Class/ Category I qualifications. The lower the classification, the lesser the ratio of graduates pursuing master courses and the greater the ratio following diplomas or certificates. While a large proportion of graduates are motivated to pursue further studies, the categorisation determines the available possibilities. Thus, a high classification facilitates the admission to a master course.

Table 62. Type of further study by classification (%)

	1st Class/ Category I	2nd Class Upper/ Category IIA	2nd Class Lower/ Category IIB	3rd Class/ Category III
Doctoral	2.9	1.5	3.8	.0
Master	60.0	39.4	29.8	.0
Bachelor	20.0	19.7	26.0	25.0
Diploma or certificate	5.7	15.9	15.4	50.0
Professional training course	11.4	6.8	10.6	25.0
Other	.0	3.0	1.0	.0
LLD	.0	13.6	13.5	.0
Total (Count)	35	132	104	4

3.4.6 Discussion of Main Findings by Classification

This section highlights the more positive career outcomes of top classified graduates. Fewer remain unemployed, while more pursue further studies often leading to a master degree. Those who get a job are more often approached directly by the employers themselves when compared to their peers. Besides they tend to be employed in jobs requiring University qualifications, thus risking less underemployment.

Lower University classifications should be avoided as they lead to more negative career outcomes. Maltese persons place great importance on jobs that meet their abilities (Abela, 1991). A larger proportion of lower classified graduates are either unemployed or underemployed. Besides, they tend to pursue less further full-time studies, thus having a potentially fewer opportunities to enhance their career prospects.

Contrary to common expectations, there seems to be no relation between the students' performance and the educational level of their parents. Besides, one does not necessarily require fathers occupying high-level jobs in order to get good grades at University. The difference in classification can probably be attributed to other factors such as motivation and enabling environment. Further research should be conducted in order to examine these hypotheses in greater depth.

3.5 Responses by Faculties and Institutes

3.5.1 Parents' Education and Occupation by Faculty/ Institute

Graduates from different faculties and institutes tend to have parents with varying educational levels. There is a relation between social class and the choice of particular courses at University. *Engineering* and *Laws* graduates tend to have the most qualified parents (52.6% and 47.5% of the respective groups have post-secondary and tertiary educated parents). On the other hand, *Education* and *FEMA* graduates have the least qualified parents (26.4% and 26.2% of the respective groups have post-secondary and tertiary educated parents). These courses seem to be more accessible to students of lower educated parents.

Table 63. Parents' education by faculty/ institute

	None/ primary/ secondary		Post-secondary/ tertiary	
	Count	%	Count	%
Arts	141	66.8	70	33.2
FEMA	346	73.8	123	26.2
Education	315	73.6	113	26.4
Engineering	36	47.4	40	52.6
Laws	105	52.5	95	47.5
Medicine & Surgery	47	58.8	33	41.3
Science	49	70.0	21	30.0
CCT	31	58.5	22	41.5
IHC	73	62.9	43	37.1
Other	98	69.5	43	30.5
Total	1241	67.3	603	32.7

The choice of University courses is influenced not only by parents' education but also by the fathers' job. Most of the University courses are significantly more accessible to students whose fathers are employed in white-collar occupations. *Engineering*, *Laws*, and *Science* graduates had the highest ratios of parents in professional and technical jobs (45%, 34%, and 31% respectively). *Engineering*, *Laws*, *Medicine & Surgery*, and *Science* graduates also had the lowest percentages of unskilled fathers, and among the lowest percentages of fathers in executive and clerical grades. *Engineering*, *Science*, and *IHC* graduates had the highest ratios of fathers in skilled and semiskilled professions (16%, 17%, and 17% respectively). *Medicine & Surgery* and *FEMA* graduates had the highest ratios of fathers in administrative or managerial grades (38% and 27% respectively).

The respondents with the highest levels of unskilled fathers were *CCT*, *Education*, and *Arts* graduates (24%, 14%, and 13% respectively). *CCT* graduates also had the highest ratios of fathers in executive and clerical levels (28%). This institute and the two faculties are thus more open to children of lower educated parents and fathers in lower-level jobs.

A larger than expected percentage of *FEMA* graduates have fathers who were employers or own account workers (14%). Therefore graduates' choice of course could have been influenced by the fathers' employment. Such graduates might have chosen this particular line of study as it was the safest way to land a good job in a family run business.

While the number of University students has increased a lot in the past years, social barriers may still be acting to impede an equal distribution of students from different family backgrounds into different courses.

Table 64. Fathers' occupation at age 16 by faculty/ institute (%)

	Employer/ own account worker	Professional/ technical	Administrative/ managerial	Executive/ clerical	Skilled/ semiskilled	Unskilled	Other	Total (Count)
Arts	12.6	20.4	21.4	17.5	1.0	12.6	3.9	103
FEMA	14.3	14.8	27.4	15.7	1.3	10.4	4.3	230
Education	9.7	20.4	19.4	15.5	1.9	14.1	6.8	206
Engineering	2.6	44.7	13.2	10.5	2.6	5.3	7.9	38
Laws	11.1	34.3	24.2	12.1	1.0	7.1	4.0	99
Medicine & Surgery	12.5	12.5	37.5	15.0	2.5	5.0	5	40
Science	2.9	31.4	25.7	11.4	.0	8.6	2.9	35
CCT	4.0	24.0	16.0	28.0	4.0	24.0	4.0	25
IHC	8.6	13.8	24.1	13.8	5.2	10.3	12.1	58
Other	7.5	19.4	22.4	13.4	1.5	9.0	9	67
Total	10.5	21.2	23.4	15.1	1.8	10.9	5.8	901

3.5.2 Employment Outcomes by Faculty/ Institute

Medicine & Surgery and *IHC* graduates have the highest employment ratios (100% and 93% respectively). This is mostly influenced by the Government employment contracts signed in the beginning of several courses offered by *Medicine & Surgery* and *IHC*. At the same time, these graduates are among those who tend to pursue less full-time study. As the health sector largely falls under the Government's domain, graduates from both *Medicine & Surgery* and *IHC*, are mainly employed by the Government. A very high ratio of *Education* graduates are also in full-time employment, less than a year after they completed their University studies.

On the other hand, the highest rate of graduates continuing their studies are *Laws* graduates (67%). This occurs since, to graduate as a notary public or a lawyer nowadays, one needs to pursue further studies after the first degree.

The highest ratios of graduate job seekers neither in full-time employment nor in full-time study are from *CCT* (26%) and *Arts* (15%). The labour market in the local

communications sector is very limited and is rather saturated. On the other hand, several *Arts* courses tend not to be job-oriented, and this makes it harder on the graduates to land a job. But then, *CCT* and *Arts* graduates may not have pursued a University course with a job in mind. It is interesting to note also that a high unemployment rate together with the availability of postgraduate courses in *Arts* is linked to a greater ratio of graduates who pursue further studies after finishing their degrees.

Table 65. General outcomes by faculty/ institute

	Employed on a full-time basis		Pursuing further study on a full-time basis		Job seekers neither in full-time employment nor in full-time study		Total respondents per category (Count)
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	
Arts	57	53.8	31	29.2	16	15.1	106
FEMA	166	70.0	60	25.3	9	3.8	237
Education	197	91.2	8	3.7	9	4.2	216
Engineering	31	81.6	6	15.8	1	2.6	38
Laws	28	26.7	70	66.7	7	6.7	105
Medicine & Surgery	40	100	0	0.0	0	0.0	40
Science	30	85.7	5	14.3	0	0.0	35
CCT	14	51.9	4	14.8	7	25.9	27
IHC	56	93.3	4	6.7	0	0.0	60
Other	55	76.4	11	15.3	6	8.3	72
Total	674	72.0	199	21.3	55	5.9	936

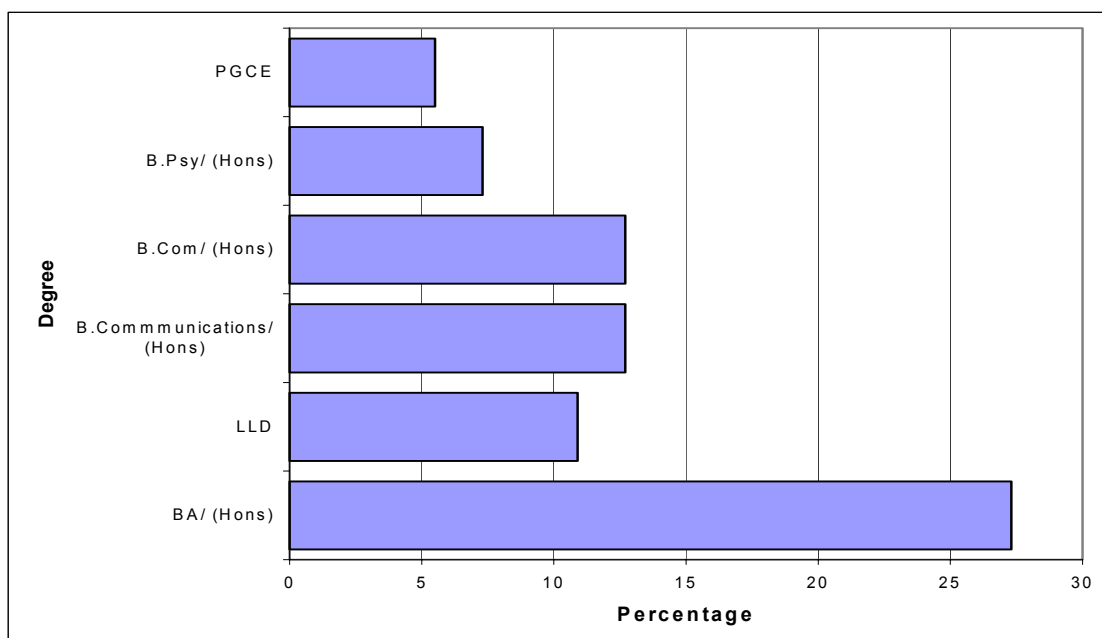
As can be seen in the Table and Figure below, more than a fourth of all job seekers neither in full-time employment nor in full-time study are BA/ (Hons) graduates. The second largest group of job seekers are B.Communications/ (Hons) graduates, closely followed by B.Com/ (Hons) and LLD. However, when examining the unemployment rate of specific faculties and institutes, one should take into consideration the number of graduates. In fact, only 4.8% of B.Com/ Hons graduates are seeking employment. However, the figures for LLD, B.Communications/ (Hons) and BA/ (Hons) graduates remain alarmingly high.

Table 66. Job seekers* by course

	Count	% of all respondents with the same qualification	% of total job seekers neither in full-time employment nor in full-time study
BA/ (Hons)	15	16.7	27.3
B.Communications/ (Hons)	7	25.9	12.7
B.Com/ (Hons)	6	4.8	10.9
LLD	6	26.1	10.9
B.Psy/ (Hons)	4	12.9	7.3
PGCE	3	8.1	5.5
Other	14	2.3	25.4

**Only job seekers neither in full-time employment nor in full-time study are presented*

Figure 8. Graduate unemployment by course*



* % of total job seekers neither in full-time employment nor in full-time study. Only the courses with the highest level of unemployed graduates neither in full-time employment nor in full-time study and seeking employment are listed

Most graduates from all faculties and institutes required their University course to apply for their current job. This is especially so in the case of *Engineering, Medicine & Surgery, Education, and IHC* graduates (100%, 85%, 83%, and 91% respectively). These groups of graduates tend to find work in the field they graduated in, and their professions tend to be regulated by law. On the other hand, *CCT and Arts* graduates tend to find jobs not requiring their University qualification (86% and 60% respectively). These results stem from the fact that the degrees from *CCT and Arts* do not lead to regularized professions. One should also note that *CCT and Arts* also have graduates with the highest unemployment rates.

Table 67. University course required to apply for job by faculty/ institute

	Yes		No		Total (Count)
	Count	%	Count	%	
<i>Arts</i>	31	39.7	47	60.3	78
<i>FEMA</i>	111	61.3	70	38.7	181
<i>Education</i>	169	82.4	36	17.6	205
<i>Engineering</i>	33	100	0	.0	33
<i>Laws</i>	22	52.4	20	47.6	42
<i>Medicine & Surgery</i>	33	84.6	6	15.4	39
<i>Science</i>	21	65.6	11	34.4	32
<i>CCT</i>	3	14.3	18	85.7	21
<i>IHC</i>	51	91.1	5	8.9	56
Other	27	45.0	33	55.0	60
Total	501	67.1	246	32.9	747

Most employed *Medicine & Surgery* and *IHC* graduates work in the public sector (80% and 100% respectively). The existence of a contract with the Government forces a large proportion of *Medicine & Surgery* and *IHC* graduates to spend the first years of post-graduate work in the public sector.

Education and *Science* graduates also predominantly work in the public sector (70% and 60% respectively). As no contract ties these graduates, their choice of work might be attributable to lack of better private employment alternatives. The private sector job market for graduates of these faculties might be smaller than the public one. On the other hand, the large majority of *Engineering*, *FEMA* and *CCT* graduates work in the private sector (82%, 65%, and 76% respectively). This can be attributed to better employment opportunities in the private sector.

An interesting balance between public and private employment can be found in *Arts* graduates. Such result can be analysed in relation to their low full-time employment rate and high rate of job seekers. It seems that the job market for such graduates is small in both public and private sector.

Table 68. Sector of employment by faculty/ institute

	Public		Private*		Total (Count)
	Count	%	Count	%	
Arts	38	49.4	39	50.6	77
FEMA	60	33.0	122	67.0	182
Education	142	69.6	62	30.4	204
Engineering	6	18.2	27	81.8	33
Laws	16	39.0	25	61	41
Medicine & Surgery	31	79.5	8	20.5	39
Science	19	59.4	13	40.6	32
CCT	4	19.0	17	81	21
IHC	55	100	0	0	55
Other	39	65.0	21	35	60
Total	410	55.1	334	44.9	744

*Includes self-employment

Engineering, *Medicine & Surgery*, *IHC* and *Education* graduates are those who tend to work most at the professional/ technical level (94%, 90%, 86% and 84% respectively). A large proportion of *FEMA* and *Laws* graduates work in administrative/ managerial posts (31% and 33% respectively). These figures are not surprising due to the nature of the courses offered within the respective faculties and institutes. However, the following results are more intriguing. Nearly half of the employed *CCT* graduates are in executive, or skilled/ semiskilled employment (However, one should note that the low number of *CCT* respondents might have affected the ratio). Around 30% of *Arts*, *Laws*, and *FEMA* graduates have executive/ clerical, skilled/ semiskilled, or unskilled jobs. Such results indicate that these graduates may be underemployed.

Table 69. Occupation by faculty/ institute (%)

	Employer/ own account worker	Professional/ technical	Administrative/ managerial	Executive/ clerical	Skilled/ semiskilled	Unskilled	Total (Count)
Arts	5.5	46.6	17.8	26.0	.0	4.1	73
FEMA	1.7	40.1	31.1	25.4	1.1	.6	177
Education	5.0	83.7	5.9	4.5	1.0	.0	202
Engineering	.0	93.5	.0	6.5	.0	.0	31
Laws	2.7	35.1	32.4	18.9	8.1	2.7	37
Medicine & Surgery	5.1	89.7	5.1	.0	.0	.0	39
Science	3.2	64.5	16.1	12.9	3.2	.0	31
CCT	.0	30.0	25.0	35.0	10	.0	20
IHC	5.4	85.7	5.4	.0	3.6	.0	56
Other	.0	46.7	28.3	23.3	.0	1.7	60
Total	3.3	62.4	17.1	14.7	1.7	.8	726

33% of the respondents who work on a full-time basis earn a net of more than Lm500 per month. *Engineering* and *Medicine & Surgery* graduates are the highest earners. 84% and 67% respectively of these graduates earn more than Lm500 per month. These figures can be compared to those of graduates from *CCT*, *IHC*, and *Arts* who tend to be the lowest earners (57%, 44%, and 37%, of the respective groups earn less than Lm401 per month).

Table 70. Current net monthly income of full-time workers by faculty/ institute

	Less than Lm401		Lm401 to Lm500		More than Lm500		Total (Count)
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	
Arts	20	37.0	19	35.2	15	27.8	54
FEMA	52	31.9	61	37.4	50	30.7	163
Education	39	20.4	119	62.3	33	17.3	191
Engineering	1	3.2	4	12.9	26	83.9	31
Laws	5	19.2	7	26.9	14	53.8	26
Medicine & Surgery	0	.0	13	33.3	26	66.7	39
Science	3	10.3	12	41.4	14	48.3	29
CCT	8	57.1	3	21.4	3	21.4	14
IHC	23	44.2	20	38.5	9	17.3	52
Other	8	15.1	17	32.1	28	52.8	53
Total	159	24.4	275	42.2	218	33.4	652

Further analysis of net monthly income by course for new graduates can be viewed in the Table and Figure below. Only full-time bachelor courses with 9 or more respondents working full-time are listed. B.Eng (Hons), B.Pharm (Hons), BSc (Bus & Comp) graduates tend to earn the highest salaries. Most B.Accty (Hons), B.Ed (Hons), BSc (Hons), B.Psy (Hons) and B.E&A (Hons) graduates tend to earn between Lm 401-Lm500. On the other hand, the lowest earners are B.Com, BA (Hons) Soc Work, BSc (Hons), and BA (Hons) graduates.

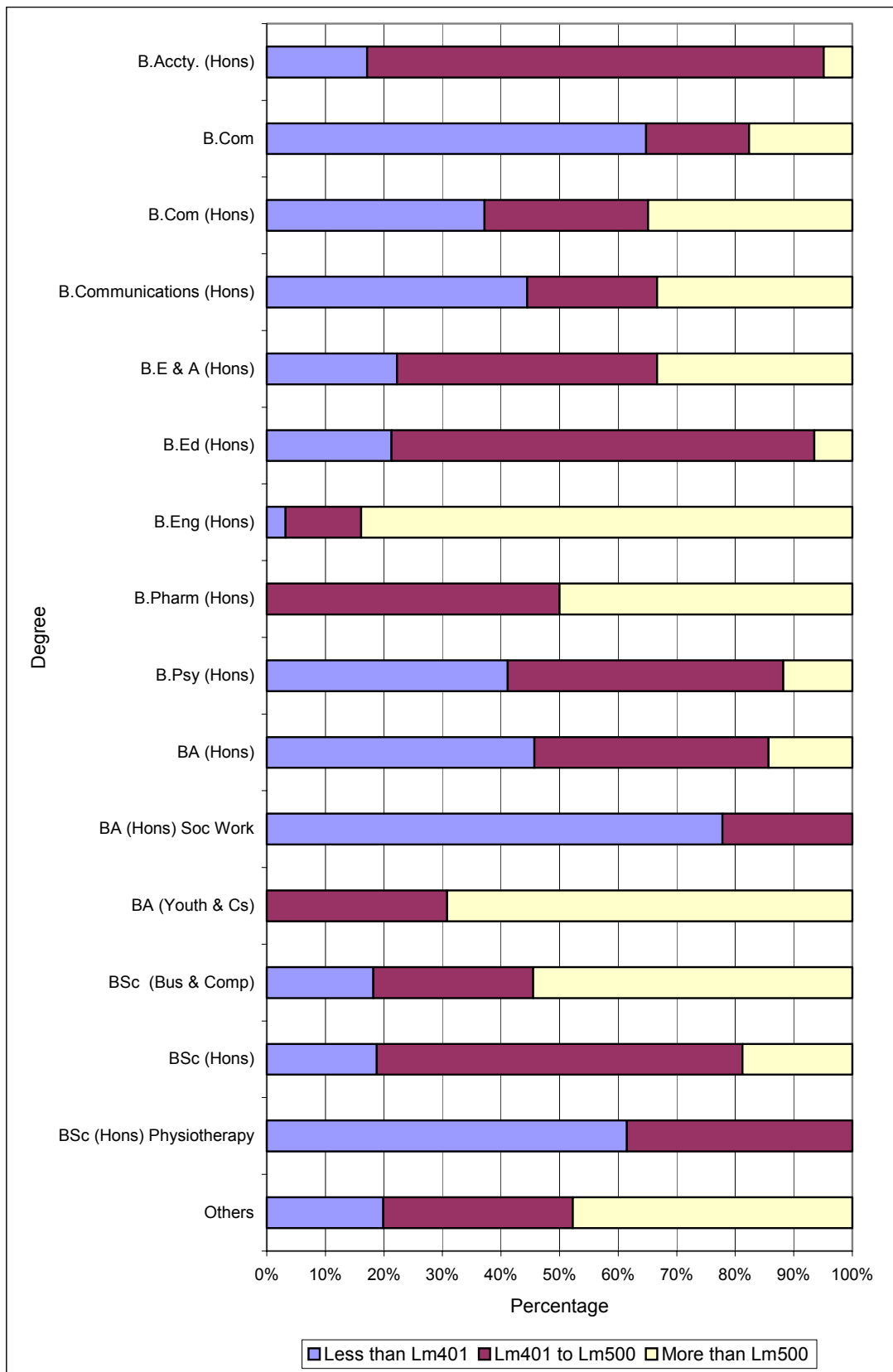
A considerable difference in income arises in graduates from faculties and institutes that offer science-based courses and those that offer art-based courses. Graduates in caring professions and the arts tend to find jobs with lower salaries than those in sciences, especially those involving computers, engineering, and pharmacy. One should note that this data mostly reflects the first jobs one gets after graduating, and salaries in different jobs might increase in different ways.

The high income earned by BA (Youth & Cs) graduates results from the fact that the degree is offered on a part-time basis and its students tend to have been in employment for a number of years.

Table 71. Current net monthly income of full-time workers by degree

	Less than Lm401		Lm401 to Lm500		More than Lm500		Total (Count)
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	
B.Accty. (Hons)	7	17.1	32	78.0	2	4.9	41
B.Com	11	64.7	3	17.6	3	17.6	17
B.Com (Hons)	16	37.2	12	27.9	15	34.9	43
B.Communications (Hons)	4	44.4	2	22.2	3	33.3	9
B.Ed (Hons)	23	21.3	78	72.2	7	6.5	108
B.Eng (Hons)	1	3.2	4	12.9	26	83.9	31
B.Pharm (Hons)	0	.0	7	50.0	7	50.0	14
B.Psy (Hons)	7	41.2	8	47.1	2	11.8	17
BSc (Bus & Comp)	2	18.2	3	27.3	6	54.5	11
BSc (Hons)	3	18.8	10	62.5	3	18.8	16
BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy	8	61.5	5	38.5	0	.0	13
BA (Hons)	16	45.7	14	40.0	5	14.3	35
BA (Hons) Soc Work	7	77.8	2	22.2	0	.0	9
BA (Youth & Cs)	0	.0	4	30.8	9	69.2	13
B.E & A (Hons)	2	22.2	4	44.4	3	33.3	9
Other	54	19.9	88	32.4	130	47.8	272
Total	161	24.5	276	41.9	221	33.6	658

Figure 9. Current net monthly income of full-time workers by degree



Most *Education* (50%), *Medicine & Surgery* (57%), and *IHC* (65%) graduates found work through the Government's Education and Health departments respectively. Most *Arts*, *FEMA*, *Laws*, *Science* and *CCT* graduates found work through adverts on newspapers, or through relatives or friends. A greater ratio of *Engineering* and *Science* graduates were approached by employers (31% and 22% respectively). Some of these graduates have probably been approached by foreign employers. A large proportion of *Engineering* graduates found their job through spontaneous job search (19%).

Table 72. Type of job search by faculty/ institute (%)

	Advert newspaper	Relatives/ friends	Employment agency	Info at University	Education/ health department	Internal call/ promotion	Approached by employer	Spontaneous job search	Internet	Other
<i>Arts</i>	39.4	21.2	1.5	1.5	4.5	3.0	12.1	12.1	4.5	.0
<i>FEMA</i>	32.5	22.5	7.1	8.3	.6	4.7	11.8	11.8	.0	.6
<i>Education</i>	20.3	8.5	1.7	1.7	50.3	2.3	6.8	8.5	.0	.0
<i>Engineering</i>	25.0	6.3	.0	18.8	.0	.0	31.3	18.8	.0	.0
<i>Laws</i>	35.5	25.8	3.2	.0	.0	3.2	12.9	12.9	3.2	3.2
<i>Medicine & Surgery</i>	10.8	.0	.0	5.4	56.8	2.7	13.5	10.8	.0	.0
<i>Science</i>	34.4	18.8	3.1	6.3	9.4	3.1	21.9	3.1	.0	.0
<i>CCT</i>	31.6	26.3	15.8	.0	5.3	.0	15.8	5.3	.0	.0
<i>IHC</i>	5.8	9.6	.0	11.5	65.4	1.9	1.9	3.8	.0	.0
Other	25.9	14.8	.0	1.9	14.8	16.7	9.3	13.0	3.7	.0
Total	26.0	15.1	3.1	5.2	23.9	4.0	11.2	10.2	.9	.3

3.5.3 Job-Related Skills by Faculty/ Institute

Engineering, *Education* and *IHC* graduates view skills they learnt from University as most relevant (97%, 90%, and 89% respectively) to their jobs. *Laws*, *Arts*, and *CCT* graduates tend to view the skills they learnt at University as least relevant to their jobs (59%, 71%, and 70%) respectively. This data is in line with Table 67 showing that fewer *Laws*, *Arts*, and *CCT* graduates find jobs requiring their University qualifications.

Table 73. Job relevance of skills learnt at University by faculty/ institute (%)

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Mean
<i>Arts</i>	6.8	21.9	71.2	88
<i>FEMA</i>	1.8	16.0	82.2	93
<i>Education</i>	1.6	8.9	89.5	96
<i>Engineering</i>	.0	3.2	96.8	99
<i>Laws</i>	5.9	35.3	58.8	84
<i>Medicine & Surgery</i>	.0	19.4	80.6	94
<i>Science</i>	3.2	19.4	77.4	91
<i>CCT</i>	.0	30.0	70.0	90
<i>IHC</i>	.0	11.3	88.7	96
Other	1.8	14.5	83.6	94
Total	2.2	15.3	82.5	93

3.5.4 Employment History by Faculty/ Institute

The percentage of graduates employed before graduating varies according to faculty/ institute. The highest level of employed students is found in *Laws* and *FEMA* (73% and 70% respectively). As this figure might be inflated with older students who enrolled at University after a number of years in employment, it is interesting to check the figures for students in the youngest age-bracket (20-25 years old). In fact, while the figures are lower, *Laws* and *FEMA* still have the highest percentages of employed students. Students enrolled in these faculties might be more enterprising than their peers.

On the other hand, *IHC* has the fewest employed students (24% in the 20-25 age bracket). This institute is closely followed by *Science* (28%), and *Medicine & Surgery* (31%) and *Education* (33%). These results do not probably stem from lesser economic needs as these students do not have fathers in higher-level posts than their peers in *FEMA* and *LAWS*. Therefore, the difference might arise from students' personality. Science oriented students seem to be less oriented to work during University than their peers. In addition, these courses might leave less spare time in which students can get a part-time job.

Table 74. Employed before graduating by faculty/ institute (%)

	All age groups		20-25 years old	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
<i>Arts</i>	63.3	36.7	52.6	47.5
<i>FEMA</i>	70.2	29.8	60.3	39.7
<i>Education</i>	46.1	53.9	32.7	67.3
<i>Engineering</i>	42.4	57.6	42.4	57.6
<i>Laws</i>	72.5	27.5	64.0	36.0
<i>Medicine & Surgery</i>	40.0	60.0	31.3	68.8
<i>Science</i>	53.1	46.9	27.8	72.2
<i>CCT</i>	59.1	40.9	55.6	44.4
<i>IHC</i>	35.7	64.3	24.4	75.6
Other	68.3	31.7	33.3	66.7

3.5.5 Discussion of Main Findings by Faculty/ Institute

A significant relationship has been found among graduates from specific faculties, parents' education and fathers' occupation. Figures indicate that graduates from *Engineering* and *Laws* have the highest ratio of tertiary-educated parents together with the highest amount of fathers in professional/ technical occupations. This finding is consistent with Baldacchino (1997) who reported that graduates from *Laws* and *Engineering* have among the highest percentage of university-exposed parents.

The number of students differs among faculties and institutes. There are most graduates in faculties and institutes that provide specific job-oriented courses. *FEMA* and *Education* have the largest number of students.

Work-related outcomes vary according to faculties and institutes. Graduates of science-based courses earn more than those with arts-based qualifications. This is in line with the current situation in Western countries where greater economic emphasis is placed on science-related qualifications.

While most graduates are employed on a full-time basis, such trend is strongest in graduates from *Medicine & Surgery*, *Education* and *IHC*. On the other hand, the unemployment and underemployment rate for LLD, B.Communications/ (Hons) and BA/ (Hons) graduates is possibly of concern and may need to be examined in greater depth. The University must make the appropriate decisions needed to enhance the employability of its graduates.

The Graduate Potential Group (2002) found that Maltese employers will be mostly requiring IT/Computing, Engineering, marketing and management graduates in the coming years. The shortage of qualified and internationally certified system engineers, internet experts and network specialists indicates that future graduates holding qualifications in these areas will experience fewer risks of remaining unemployed.

4. Synthesis of Discussion

Educational authorities should try to improve the integration of graduates into employment. This can only be done by examining both supply and demand sides of the equation. The supply side includes the existing educational opportunities and the prospective and current employees' needs and aspirations. A proper analysis of the demand side would take into consideration labour market trends and employers' current and future needs. Such examination should be conducted on a regular basis by competent researchers.

This study viewed the early career-outcomes from the graduates' perspectives. It took a comprehensive snapshot of the work and study-related issues of ex-University students who were conferred with their academic awards in November 2002.

The following are some of the most significant results deriving from this study:

- Graduates tend to find jobs with relatively high incomes and good working conditions.
- Nearly half of all graduates further their studies, and most of these enrol in a master programme.
- Around 6% of graduates who were conferred with their academic awards in November 2002 were unemployed and searching for a job in March 2003.
- The University passes on several useful skills to its students. However, graduates feel not to have been equipped with adequate job relevant technical skills and techniques, and skills related to the development of creativity and originality.
- University courses are still not equally accessible to students coming from different social backgrounds.
- Males and females are not equally represented in all University courses.
- Male graduates tend to experience more favourable work-related outcomes than their female peers according to traditional standards.
- Younger graduates are more likely to work in the private sector and on a definite contract when compared to older graduates.
- A proportion of graduates in the 31-40 age bracket experiences symptoms of the mid-career plateau.
- Higher final classification is related to more favourable career outcomes.
- Parental education and occupation are related to choice of University course but not to classification.
- Graduates from science-based courses run fewer risks of unemployment or underemployment, and tend to earn more than their peers in arts-based courses.
- *Engineering, Education* and *IHC* graduates view skills they learnt at University as most relevant to their jobs, while *Laws, Arts*, and *CCT* graduates view them as least relevant.

These results should be examined in greater depth by the authorities concerned so that the University of Malta remains a relevant contributor to Malta's economic and cultural development.

Similar tracer surveys should be carried out on a regular basis to understand the changing nature of graduates' career outcomes. The research team asked the participants to give their identity card numbers on a voluntary basis. This will enable longitudinal studies in which the career patterns of year 2002 graduates could be traced in future years.

For the second time round, the Students Advisory Services took the initiative to conduct such project at the office's time expense and with special funding by the Registrar's Office. The allocation of a yearly budget by the University, together with the necessary administrative arrangements for the project to continue running, is strongly recommended.

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