

## 1997 University of Washington Graduates, One Year After Graduation: Methodology and Response Frequencies

OEA Assessment Group <sup>1</sup>  
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### INTRODUCTION

Since 1978, the Office of Educational Assessment (OEA) has conducted regular surveys of University of Washington (UW) graduates, nine to twelve months after graduation.<sup>2</sup> *Graduate Surveys* were initially conducted on an annual basis and were composed of items relating primarily to post-graduate activities (especially employment and continuing education) of UW degree recipients. In 1991, the administration schedule was changed to every other year, and questions regarding general educational outcomes were added. Further modifications were made to the survey for the purpose of the present study. First, a separate instrument was developed for recipients of graduate or professional degrees by modifying particular items and adding others. Previously, the same survey instrument had been used for graduates at all degree levels. Second, items were added to this year's survey as a part of a comprehensive study examining student and alumni views regarding their college education at several points in their educational career. This report describes the methodology for the survey of 1997 graduate and undergraduate degree recipients and provides links to response summaries.

### METHODOLOGY

#### Population

All students who received a degree from the University of Washington during the 1997 calendar year were included in this study.

#### Instruments

The **Graduate Survey** has traditionally comprised a single-page, two-sided machine-readable (scannable) questionnaire. As noted above, the questionnaire was modified for this year's administration by 1) creating a second version for graduate or professional degree recipients, and 2) augmenting the undergraduate questionnaire with additional questions as part of a larger study of UW student and alumni groups.

The **Undergraduate Questionnaire** consisted of two single-page, two-sided scannable forms. The first of these was the same single-page questionnaire used in previous years. It contained questions on graduates' current activities (e.g., working, going to school or unemployed), and satisfaction with skills and benefits of UW educational and academic programs. A second, supplemental page was created expanding the assessment to student learning. Items focused on what the alumni learned while at the UW, self-rating of skills, the perceived necessity of those skills in relation to their current activities, and the

UW's contribution to skill development. Other items focused on graduates' preparedness for life after graduation and their contribution back to society. The supplemental form was administered to spring, summer and autumn graduates only; it was not available for administration to winter quarter graduates. All questions on both forms were in a closed-ended, forced-choice format, with the exception of written responses provided by respondents listing their current job and employer, or institution of continuing education. Written responses were manually entered into the survey database.

[Undergraduate Degree Questionnaire, first page, first side](#)

[Undergraduate Degree Questionnaire, first page, second side](#)

[Undergraduate Degree Questionnaire, second page, first side](#)

[Undergraduate Degree Questionnaire, second page, second side](#)

The ***Graduate/Professional Student Questionnaire*** was a single-page, two-sided scannable form. Items on the front of the questionnaire were identical to those on the survey sent to undergraduate degree recipients. The back of the questionnaire was parallel to the undergraduate questionnaire with some item rewording to fit graduate and professional education, and an added section in which respondents were asked to classify their current occupation.

[Graduate/Professional Degree Questionnaire, first side](#)

[Graduate/Professional Degree Questionnaire, second side](#)

## **First mailing**

Although different instruments were used for undergraduate versus graduate or professional degree recipients, the two populations were surveyed simultaneously. Questionnaires were sent to graduates approximately eleven months after they were awarded their degrees, with the intention of allowing as much time as possible for alumni to become established in post-graduate activities, and at the same time to conduct mailings within the one-year forwarding limitation utilized by the U.S. Postal Service. Graduates who received their degrees winter quarter, 1997 were sent questionnaires in early March, 1998, and spring quarter graduates were sent questionnaires in early June. Alumni receiving degrees summer or autumn quarter were surveyed in mid-September.

Questionnaires were mailed along with a personalized cover letter and self-addressed, stamped envelope for survey return. This mailing also included a "UW Alumni" sticker for spring, summer and autumn degree recipients. Unfortunately, stickers were not available for the winter mailing.

## **Follow-up mailing**

A second copy of the questionnaire, a personalized letter and a return envelope were sent to all alumni who had not returned completed questionnaires within two and one half weeks of the original mailing to their group. The total number of returned questionnaires is shown below. Response rates have been

adjusted by reducing the size of the original mailing by the number of questionnaires returned as undeliverable.

### Survey Response

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	Population N	Undeliverable <sup>3</sup>	Completed Questionnaires	Percentage Returned
<b>Undergraduate --</b>				
<b>Winter</b>	927	54	409	46.8%
<b>Spring</b>	3435	151	1258	38.3%
<b>Summer</b>	1077	88	319	32.2%
<b>Autumn</b>	903	44	285	33.1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	6342	337	2271	37.8%
<b>Graduate/Professional --</b>				
<b>Winter</b>	387	30	212	59.4%
<b>Spring</b>	1546	98	803	55.4%
<b>Summer</b>	411	35	208	55.3%
<b>Autumn</b>	364	15	184	52.7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	2708	178	1407	55.6%

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## RESPONSE FREQUENCIES

A formal summary of responses to the *Graduate Survey* has traditionally been sent to each academic department for their respective graduates. Equivalent reports are available in PDF format for this year's survey for each University of Washington campus and by department or program:

[1997 Graduate Survey Results](#)

The supplementary data collected from undergraduate degree recipients in correspondence with other student and alumni groups is also available in PDF format:

[Response Frequency Tables](#)

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<sup>2</sup> Basson, L. & Taggart, T. (1995). *Graduate Survey 1978-93: Education, Employment, and Unemployment*. **OEA Reports, 95-3**;

Gillmore, G.M. (1996). *The University of Washington Survey of Bachelor Degree Recipients: Summary of the Last Four Surveys*. **OEA Research Notes, N-96-6**.

<sup>3</sup> The initial population was reduced by the number for whom addresses were unavailable or incorrect, and those who were deceased.