### Graduate outcomes and employment

Literature Review

* Graduate outcomes (attainment) and employment destinations and earning potential are a growing area of interest in Australian equity-related higher education research;
* Patterns of participation in disciplinary study according to equity groupings/ demographic profiles play out in employment trends;
* Low SES are less likely to invest in higher education because they are more debt averse than the middle classes;
* Low SES are less likely to complete their university studies, but for those who complete they are as likely to get work as higher SES graduates;
* Doing paid work in the final year of university increases the likelihood of being employed after graduation;
* Women earn less than men (especially in STEM fields); mature age students initially earn more than younger students but this difference levels out over time.

There is a growing body of work that examines the ‘transitions out’ of higher education, using the lens of equity to examine patterns in graduate outcomes and employment/ further study destinations of under-represented students in Australian higher education.

Graduate outcomes (attainment)

Lim’s 2015 NCSEHE-funded study of tertiary completions suggests that there is a 30% difference in university completions according to equity groupings. His work reports that low SES students are less likely to complete their university studies than their higher SES peers, which he argues is the result of patterns of disadvantage that originate early in schooling. Socioeconomic status is more likely to have an impact if the student is also Indigenous; Lim’s research suggests that low SES Indigenous students are 12 percentage points less likely to complete university than high SES indigenous students. Moreover, the field of study is also a significant factor when combined with SES, with low SES students in technical disciplines least likely to complete. Conversely, Lim’s findings suggest that the influence of field of study is less significant for high SES students. Other factors that impact on attainment include the type of school attended (with attendance at a Catholic or Independent school making completion more likely for low SES students), regionality (with regional students having lower rates of completion compared to metropolitan peers; see also the Annotated Bibliography on Regional, Rural & Remote students), and language background (students who come from ‘Asian language backgrounds’ are most likely to complete university[[1]](#footnote-1)).

Pathways out: employment

The literature that explores the pathways of equity students as they move out of their undergraduate studies suggests that by and large, most of the social and cultural barriers that underrepresented students face are removed five years after graduation (Edwards & Coates, 2011). However, there are significant social differences that persist and these appear to be largely the result of schooling (see ‘Outreach’ annotated bibliography) and the disciplinary orientations of particular groups. In their 2016 examination of the relationship between equity and graduate outcomes, Richardson, Bennett & Roberts report that regional and low SES students tend to be concentrated in the broad fields of *medicine, related studies* and *education*, while Indigenous students and students with disabilities are concentrated in fields of study related to *society and culture.* NESB students are more likely to study *management, commerce, engineering* and *related technologies.* Richardson, Bennett & Roberts (2016) also note that equity group students tend to be in lower status courses (e.g. nursing, midwifery, public health/ human welfare studies/ teaching) and therefore take pathways into lower status professions.

Richardson, Bennett & Roberts (2016) also report on the employment trends of particular groups of students. They note that indigenous graduates more likely to be employed by government agencies and not-for-profits, and are more likely to work in the public sector if they work in health or education. NESB graduates are more likely to work in retail, manufacturing, hospitality, finance, the insurance sector or as information and communication technology professionals. With regard to the types of contracts they hold, NESB graduates and those with disabilities are more likely to be on temp/casual contracts while low SES and regional graduates are more likely to be on fixed term contracts. This may be in part connected to the different approaches taken to gain work, with regional graduates most likely to approach an employer directly, NESB graduates drawing mostly on friends and family, and Indigenous graduates relying primarily on work contacts or networks.

The work by Richardson, Bennett & Roberts (2016) and Li et al. (2016) both strongly suggests that undertaking paid work in the final year of undergraduate studies increases the likelihood of being employed post-graduation, with “those graduates who reported undertaking paid work during their final year of study, more than 60 per cent still worked for the same employer” and two thirds continuing to work for same employer and not seeking alternative work (Richardson, Bennett & Roberts, 2016: 7). However, Li et al.’s (2016) research suggests that students who work in their final year are much less likely to be matched study-to-job (by 14%) and less likely to have a ‘quality’ job (11%). In terms of salary, Richardson, Bennett & Roberts (2016) report that high SES students consistently earn the most money and graduates of Group of Eight universities earn more than graduates from other university groupings. In contrast, indigenous graduates earn comparatively less than their non-indigenous peers, as do NESB graduates compared to native English speakers and students with disabilities.

Age also appears to be a significant influence on post-graduation pathways. The findings presented in Richardson, Bennett & Roberts (2016) illustrate that younger graduates are more likely to go on to further studies, while older graduates more likely to be working. Similarly, in their 2014 paper, Chesters & Watson argue that initially (first year after graduating) the returns of education are slightly better for mature than younger students; however, the benefits to mature age students, such as earning more than younger students in the first year after graduating, diminish over time and with less time available in the labour market than younger peers, Chesters & Watson suggest that “the returns to education are lower for mature-age graduates compared to younger graduates” (p.1645). Gender also continues to be a significant factor in perpetuating inequality. Research shows that women have not gained parity in earning potential (Edward & Coates, 2011; Chesters & Watson, 2014; Li et al., 2016; Richardson, Bennett & Roberts, 2016).

Wheelahan et al. (2012) argue that patterns of disadvantage post-graduation are compounded by the fragmentation of educational pathways and labour market pathways, as a result of weak and partial policy attempts in Australia. While some fields have strong links to the workplace (for example, nursing), others have much weaker relationships with specific jobs, such as in finance and agriculture, as “most policies that attempt to improve pathways focus only on education and not on the structure of the labour market or the relationship between the two” (2012: 7). According to Wheelahan et al. (2012), this can be explained in part by the economic organisations of a country; they argue that Australia has an ‘education logic’, which means that vocational education and training is based on industrial models (workplace/ task-oriented), rather than an ‘employment logic’, which privilege more generalist and citizenship-orientations to curriculum and pathways. Wheelahan et al. argue weak pathways between study and employment are problematic in a context where students tend to stay within their initial field of education depending on how “narrowly vocational” the discipline/area is, leading to entrenched trends of employment in particular disciplines by particular social groups, thus fuelling existing patterns of inequity. To shift away from such reproductive educational models, Wheelahan et al. (2012) advocate for a capabilities approach to study-employment pathways, whereby “Capabilities are differentiated from generic skills, employability skills or graduate attributes because they are not ‘general’ or ‘generic’. Rather, the focus is on the development of the individual and on work, and consequently students need access to the knowledge, skills and capabilities so they can exercise agency in their vocational stream” (p.37).

Attending to the relationship between study and work pathways is of great importance when view alongside the policy imperative to raise aspirations, particularly when viewed through the conceptual lens of ‘cruel optimism’ (Berlant, 2011; see the ‘Aspirations’ annotated bibliography). As part of the widening participation agenda, universities are both explicitly and tacitly selling a promise that university education will lead to better job prospects and better earning potential. However, the literature presents a mixed picture as to how that promise translates for students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. Li et al.’s (2016) research suggests that low SES graduates perform as well as their peers in the labour market after graduation, which is echoed in Lim’s (2015) findings as his research suggests that the disadvantage of coming from a low SES background is ameliorated through university study if they achieved highly in the NAPLAN test at age 15. However, Lim

’s work also illustrates the significant differences between high and low SES students with regards to the NAPLAN test, with high SES students substantially more likely to score highly than low SES in NAPLAN. Moreover, processes of admission and selection impact on the parity of entrance for different levels of SES. Worryingly, Li et al.’s research suggests that NESB graduates face significant disadvantage in the labour market; after controlling for explanations in human capital endowments, which explain for 25% of the difference between NESB and native English speaking peers, the other 75% of difference is unexplained.

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**Equity and Higher Education Annotated Bibliography Series**

**Pathways out of higher education: Graduate outcomes/ Employment**

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| **Citation** | **Annotation** |
| Allen, K.; Quinn, J.; Hollingworth, S. & Rose, A. (2013). [Becoming employable students and ‘ideal’ creative workers: exclusion and inequality in higher education placements](https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=Becoming+employable+students+and+%E2%80%98ideal%E2%80%99+creative+workers:+exclusion+and+inequality+in+higher+education+placements&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8), *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* 34(3): 431-452.  UK  Annotation written by Sally Baker  Keywords: *higher education; work placements; employability; inequality; creative industries; social mobility; extra-curricular activities; social class* | **Context:** ‘Employable student’ and ‘ideal’ creative workers = construction through higher education work placements. Creative industries identified as key site for knowledge economies of the future, with higher education viewed as key player in terms of producing creative ‘talent’. Widening participation agenda has opened access to ‘non-traditional’ students; massified student body = unmatched with graduate jobs, meaning more competition. Work placements and internships are key part of creating competitiveness for job market. Labour market research suggests unequal entry into creative workforce  **Aim:** To “identify the discourses and practices through which students are produced and produce themselves as neoliberal subjects” (abstract), and which students are excluded through this process through the classed, raced and gendered ways that normative perceptions are perpetuated; to “argue that work placements operate as a key domain in which inequalities within both higher education and the graduate labour market are (re)produced and sustained” (abstract)  **Theoretical frame:** Discourse (Foucault): “the technologies of governance operating within work placements that cultivate students as ‘ideal’, compliant and enterprising future workers” (p.434), and how they privilege particular ways of being. Creative workers = “neoliberal subject par excellence”: enterprising, motivated and ‘resourceful’ (p.434)  **Methodology:** Qualitative study of student work placements in creative sector, which authors define as “as a realm in which inequalities are (re)produced” (p.433), and ‘filter’ students. Study funded by Equality Challenge Unit [national?], which define ‘equality students’ as black and minority ethnic students, disabled students,1  and students seeking to enter sectors with significant gender imbalance (see p.435). Methods: in-depth interviews with students (n=26) and uni staff (n=9) and employers (n=11)  **Findings:** Creative workers/ students must be ‘resource-ful’: have “the capacity to produce oneself and be recognised as an ‘employable’ student and ideal future creative worker is dependent on having access to a range of unequally distributed resources” (p.434)  Students as self-sufficient and self-enterprising: work placements = essential/expected part of courses/ preparation for employment. Staff viewed work placements as “students’ future employability through increasing their understanding of how to apply their learning in ‘real-world’ settings, developing entrepreneurialism, and providing access to industry contacts” (p.437)  Sense among students that not organizing a work placement would damage their future careers, otherwise they are perceived as ‘lacking’ or irresponsible; “This only operates to discipline students to become self-managing subjects, it also inculcates an ethic of personal culpability for future labour-market success and failure” (p.438). Student ‘Bel’ (middle class student) described not wanting to be seen as idle, thus necessitating the “negat[ion of] the presence of other responsibilities (such as part-time work or childcare) that constrain this capacity” (p.438). Notion of self-sufficiency =echoed in government definition of employability. Middle class bias (in terms of being able to utilise range of resources to find/ fund a work placement) signals assumptions about students’ resourcefulness: “networking as a ‘mandatory practice’ (Lee 2011) operates as a mechanism of social closure to the creative sector” (p.440), with personal contacts favoured (and placements advertised by the institution viewed as ‘lesser’). Working class students ‘lacked’ access to ‘hot’/informal networks. Unpaid/ poorly paid placements = also significantly favour the middle class. Some uni staff viewed the unpaid issue as problematic; others perceived that students should be paying for the opportunity. This creates particular problems for students who are also working (see example of Carlo on p.442). Conversely, some middle class students use the unpaid issue to demonstrate ‘commitment’: “the middle class have resources but, crucially, that they know how to display these in ways that accrue value” (p.443).  Self-exploitation = component of ‘creative subject/ position’  Discussion of gendered dimension of working in male-centric industries on p.445–6.  Discussion of racialised dimension on p.446–7. **Core argument:** Positioning of self as ‘self-enterprising’ = classed: “middle-class students were more likely to embrace this subject position of the entrepreneurial, ever-strategising ‘go-getter’” (p.439) – underpinned by capacity to make a choice and sense of entitlement. This notion of a ‘good’ work placement = privileges middle class by ignoring the challenges for equity students (privileging ‘get up and go’)  Authors produced toolkits for universities and students to help reduce the inequities described in the study |
| Andrewartha, L. & Harvey, A. (2017). [Employability and student equity in higher education: The role of university careers services](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1038416217718365), *Australian Journal of Career Development,* 26(2), 71–80.  AUS  Annotation written by Sally Baker  Keywords: *Employability, career development, student equity, widening participation, low socio-economic status* | **Context:** Inequity in completion rates and graduate outcomes for equity students in Australia; marginal place of equity in university career advice/ employment strategies; equity students are underrepresented/ under use university careers services: “Unequal outcomes raise questions of what universities are doing to address student equity within their employability strategies, and what more might be required” (p.71).  Employability in higher education = conceived as discipline-specific and generic skills (teamwork, communication, and planning) and career-management skills (navigating the employment market), both Bridgstock, 2009 on p.72. Universities use ‘graduate employment outcomes’ as proxy for employment, which is likely to impact on potential recruitment. Equity students not only have lower completion rates than peers, they also have poorer employment outcomes, and are consistently underrepresented in higher-paying careers. Careers services differ in size and provision across the country (Harvey et al., 2017) and most are optional. Literature strongly contends that equity students are less likely to use careers services (see p.73), because they are less aware of them (Greenbank & Hepworth, 2008), be less confident about accessing them (Urbis, 2011), and might underestimate the value of careers services (see Redmond, 2006 in UK). Literature also contends that careers services are most helpful when tailored to students’’ needs/ backgrounds.  **Aim:** To respond to two RQs: “What role do university careers services play in improving student employability and equity? What broader university strategies can redress inequities in graduate outcomes?” (p.74)  **Methodology:** Survey of careers services managers (n=29 (78% response rate)  **Findings:** “Multiple reasons were identified for unequal access, including a paucity of tailored services for specific under-represented groups, a lack of staffing and financial resources, and a dearth of data to inform strategies and priorities.  There were also issues of reluctance and ambivalence, fear of negative preconceptions, and other disincentives among some equity groups.  Careers managers also noted the need to mainstream more services and provide greater careers education for all commencing students” (p.71).  *What role do university careers services play in improving student employability and equity?*  Majority of managers recognised inequitable patterns in graduate outcomes, especially for NESB and students with disabilities. Two main issues identified by managers = 1) issues with recruitment processes; 2) employers are unwilling to make reasonable accommodations for people with disability.  70% of careers managers = monitoring graduate outcomes, primarily through national graduate outcomes surveys, but also through LinkedIn, other survey data.  Monitoring of uptake of services: lack of systematic monitoring; only 48% believed that their service monitored uptake according to equity groups, and if they did it was mostly for Indigenous students. Managers reported difficulty in identifying low SES students. Anecdotal data suggest = career services less accessed by equity groups (particularly Indigenous students and students with disability); career services not proactive in identifying students in need. Some evidence of careers services tailoring provision to equity groups; 55% offered tailored provision to NESB students (inc. English language development). Most participants identified benefits to tailoring provision for equity students.  p.76  Staffing = limitation to tailoring, and varies massively according to university group (ATN= average of 25.4 staff; Go8 = 10.3; IRU = 8.2; RUN = average of 4.6)  **Core argument:**  *What broader university strategies can redress inequities in graduate outcomes?*Linked employability + equity strategies: “The need for institutional collaboration and a multi-pronged commitment to employability and equity was identified, including increasing the amount of work-integrated learning and providing more accessible placements and internships” (p.77)  Embedded employability in mainstream curricula: would help to reach all students.  More effective relationships with employers: every participant university is approached by employers looking to recruit students, often according to discipline’s reputation and links. 33% of universities = approached by employers who specifically want to recruit equity students (mostly Indigenous and students with disability) – mostly government departments and large companies. Barriers to better engagement with employers: “General barriers included the lack of centralised coordination of employer relationships, reflecting a ‘silo mentality’ with universities, and the lack of staff with direct responsibility for the management of these relationships, such as dedicated employer liaison roles. Major barriers to employers recruiting from under-represented groups related to organisational cultures and potentially lowered expectations about the abilities of these students” (p.77).  Also, universities need to employ more staff/ develop tailored careers education and support than can be accessed online (see p.78). |
| Bennett, D., Knight, E., Divan, A., Kuchel, L., Horn, J., van Reyk, D. & Burke da Silva, K. (2017). [How do research intensive universities portray employability strategies? A review of their websites](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1038416217714475?journalCode=acda), *Australian Journal of Career Development,* 26(2), 52–61.  AUS/ UK/ CAN/ US  Keywords: *Employability development, graduate outcomes, higher education, research-intensive, university* | **Context:** International higher education; lack of consistency within graduate outcomes/employability discourses; authors note that there is no systematic review of how universities approach employability. Employability = shifted from ‘job ready’ to ‘capacity to adapt, lead and learn’ (p.52)  **Aim:** To review how universities in Australia, the UK, Canada and the US represent/ portray employability on their websites; to respond to these RQs:  “(1) What employability related content appears on the public pages of university websites?  (2) What does this content communicate about employability strategies?” (p.53)  **Theoretical frame:** Farenga & Quinlan’s (2016) three strategic models of employability: *Hands-off* (seen as naturally developed through engagement in the academic program, with little if any relationship with careers services; most likely in institutions that rely on reputation to attract students)*, Portfolio* (portfolio of opportunities to develop employability and associated ‘skills’, either through embedding in courses or through extracurricular engagement) *and Award* (offer formal credentials). Also, authors draw on Holmes’ (2013) three-part typology of possessional, processual and positional approaches to employability.  **Methodology:** Website content analysis (Saichaie & Morphew, 2014) of 104 universities’ websites (see p.54 for details of universities, and see p.55 for process). Content analysed using Farenga & Quinlan’s heuristic  **Findings:**  Employability content on websites: All but 2 in US have some form of centralised career services.   * Over half (51.4%) universities coupled enhanced employability with institutional reputation (‘hands off’) * UK universities = more likely to embed employability activities in programs; Australia = least likely (75% compared with 37.5%). * Almost all universities offer multiple opportunities for students to engage with employability (see p.56 for detail of diversity across national/ institutional contexts). * Portfolio approach = most common (39.3% of institutions); Hands off and Award = 22.4% and 18.7% respectively * Nearly 20% fell outside of Farenga & Quinlan’s categories (“absence of a formal employability award and had no evidence of embedded employability development” but “opportunities to engage in centrally delivered credit and non-credit bearing employability activities” (p.57)). * Portfolio = most common in UK (58.3%) * Awards = least popular in Austaralia and Canada (25% and 20%) and non-existent in US (1.7%) * Hands off = most common in US (30%); least common in UK (4.2%) * These findings support Holmes’ contention that possessional approaches to employability are most common, followed by positional approaches * Reputational claims = highest correlation with Award approach |
| Bradley, A., Quigley, M. & Bailey, K. (2019) [How well are students engaging with the careers services at university](https://srhe.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03075079.2019.1647416?journalCode=cshe20)*?, Studies in Higher Education*, DOI:  10.1080/03075079.2019.1647416  UK  Annotation written by Dr Prasheela Karan  Keywords: *Employability; embedded; parallel; career self management; careers service* | **Context:**Employability is a key concern for students and universities, as well as governments. Universities have various approaches to addressing employability: embedding teaching within the curriculum, or providing parallel events and supports.  **Aims:** This study sought to address questions pertaining to: “How many students are on a course with no embedded or bolt-on career support who are in the position of having to find and attend appropriate career guidance? And second, of the students in this position-how many actually find and attend such career guidance?” (p.2)  **Theoretical frame:**  **Methodology:** Survey method, with 258 undergraduate psychology student participants.  **Findings:** Few psychology departments have embedded employability within the curriculum. Further, the studyfound that students do not attend events intended to assist with exploring career options, and with working through the application process. However, students’ having sufficient information about events and understanding how such events are relevant positively impacted on students attending such events.  **Core argument:**The authors seek to encourage researchers and educators teaching on courses with a parallel approach to explore ways in which non-engaging students can transition from their studies into employment. |
| Bridgstock, R. & Jackson, D. (2019) [Strategic institutional approaches to graduate employability: navigating meanings, measurements and what really matters](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1360080X.2019.1646378?journalCode=cjhe20), *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 41(5), 468-484  AUS/UK  Annotation written by Dr Prasheela Karan  Keywords: *Graduate employability; graduate outcomes; university policy; graduate attributes; professional accreditation* | **Context:** Corporatisation of university, massification and efficiency are features of the higher education sector, along with concerns for graduate employment. Within this context, the higher education sector has promoted counterproductive and competing discourses around graduate employability.  **Aims:** The article sought to unpack and explore three views and their associated strategies universities have adopted in relation to graduate employability: “(i) short-term graduate outcomes; (ii) professional readiness; and (iii) living and working productively and meaningfully across the lifespan” (see abstract, p. 468).  **Theoretical frame:**  **Methodology:** Review of studies  **Findings:** The authors highlight tensions in views adopted by universities. For example, the authors point out that definitions focusing on possession of skills to attain employment fail to consider other factors, such as social and cultural capital. Various factors affect employability, including labour market conditions, which means that “the impact of educational interventions on percentage fulltime employment is likely to be somewhat limited” (p471). In addition, focusing only on graduate short-term outcomes as an indicator of employability is problematic, and fails to consider for example, subjective dimensions such as the aims and goals of graduates. Regarding professional readiness, universities prepare students through professionally accredited pathways. The authors point out that it is quite possible graduates leave their profession within five years of employment, and that flexible degree programs could be effective in helping students identity career-related goals and opportunities new to them. The third approach to employability focuses on the lifespan of graduates, and considers various factors such as self-management, harnessing of skills, and social and civic contribution. While it considers the identity of the graduate, there are a range of criticisms associated with this approach, including concerns related to neoliberalisation in education.  **Core argument:**This study proposes the following principles as a way to better address tensions in employability (p.480):   * “Adopt a systematic, explicit and evidence-based approach to determining the desired balance of employability views and outcomes for each program; * Develop a programmatic approach to employability that reflects the desired balance of aims; * Offer optional pathways that permit learners to pursue individual learning and employability pathways beyond the core programmatic approach and   Keep learners informed, and support them to make good, active choices about their employability learning”. |
| Budd, R. (2016). [Disadvantaged by degrees? How widening participation students are not only hindered in accessing HE, but also during – and after – university](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13603108.2016.1169230), *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*  UK  Annotation written by Sally Baker  Keywords: *UK higher education; widening participation; graduate employability; student experience* | **Context:** Looks at continuing ‘disadvantage’ for ‘WP’ students after they have accessed higher education (during and after).  **Aim:** To discuss issues that WP students face in accessing, during, and after studying UG level  **Theoretical frame:** Nothing explicit  **Methodology:** Critical discussion  **Discussion:** Sets paper in context of educational policies that have failed to improve social mobility (such as extended compulsory schooling). Examines UK context – notes that students who attend schools ‘less oriented to university’ and with parents/ teachers ‘less savvy’ about HE, students = more likely to attend local university (and are thus less mobile in many senses) – draws a fair bit on Sutton Trust 2011 report. Notes the diversity of responses to WP (ACCESS) by universities (and lack of empirical comparison of effectiveness of strategies) and briefly discusses ‘contextual admissions’ (see Hoare & Johnson, 2011; Allison, 2013). Also discusses WP in context of increased personal cost of HE. Scopes literature on ‘student experience’ (DURING) – notes diversity in experience and problematic collapse of this into the term ‘the experience’; touches on issues of diversity of experience with transition, pathways, experience when studying (with ‘minority’ status). Discusses post-graduation experience: briefly discusses employment patterns – different patterns of getting ‘positional edge’ to enhance CV between traditional/WP students. Brief paragraph on postgrad students (p.4)  **Core argument:** WP students suffer from disadvantage beyond access to HE; need to focus both on what universities can do to ameliorate this but also attend to entrenched systemic disadvantage in schooling system and thinking about ‘transition out’ into workplace. |
| Cebulla, A. and Whetton, S. (2017) [All roads leading to Rome? The medium term outcomes of Australian youth’s transition pathways from education](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13676261.2017.1373754?journalCode=cjys20), *Journal of Youth Studies*, 21(3), 304–323.  AUS  Annotation written by Dr Megan Rose  Keywords: *Transitions, Australia, Youth, Education, Employment, Salaries, Job Satisfaction* | **Context:**Post-education pathways taken by youth aged 15-24 years of age compared to pathways of youth aged 29-38.  **Aim:**To explore the links between transition from education to employment pathways and graduate earnings, perception of employment opportunities, job satisfaction and debt.  **Methodology:**Applied sequence analysis of Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey (2001-2014); built on Fry and Boulton’s (2013) study, extending to include 14 years of data; n=20,000 households.  **Findings:**   * Fry and Boulton (2013) found that across all pathways, earnings and employment converged over time, however the most rewarding pathway was a combination of earning and work. * 24% of the sample of the HILDA survey in 2014 pursued a work and study to work pathway, where participants engaged in work and study equally. * 15% of the sample in 2014 pursued the work, with and without study, pathway, whereby study is the primary focus for the first 2-3 years followed by increased work and study. * 10% partook in the not in the labour force pathway, whereby they were not employed or in the labour work force. * 39% were in the “churning with work” pathway, where work was the primary focus. * The work, with and without study and churning with work pathways produced the highest 4 year average earnings 2009-2013. * The work and study to work pathway, whereby a higher educational qualification was obtained, did not enable them to match the earnings of work, with and without study group. This suggests that the returns of participating in higher education are in decline, where this group is “sandwiched” between a prioritised pool of top-graduates, post-graduates and the churning with work group, and then the HSC educated group moving from education to work.   **Core argument:**  Earnings for those churning with work or studying with an increasing amount of work were the highest among all 5 pathways. While transition pathways provide different earnings in the medium term, this difference does not impact on young peoples perception of employment opportunities or ability to pay bills. In the medium term, pathways that combined study and work (either with a strategy in mind, or as part of a work/study balance) appeared to be the most rewarding.  “Currently being in work, higher education qualifications, good health and living in a coupled household without children most consistently ‘explained’ more positive outcomes, alongside having parents with higher  occupational background and (in the case of unpaid bills) the absence of unpaid bills when last asked.” (11) |
| Chesters, J. (2014). [Learning to adapt: does returning to education improve labour market outcomes](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02601370.2014.971893)?, *International Journal of Lifelong Education,* 33(6), 755-769.  AUS  Annotation written by Sally Baker  Keywords: *adult education; employment; HILDA* | **Context:** Returning to education in context of post-industrial Australia/ shifting labour market, particularly for low-skilled/ industrial workers and women returning after children. Uptake of adult education in Australia = higher than in other advanced economies. Sets context using ABS data: opportunities, welfare support and state of labour market encouraged return to education (both VET and higher education), reflected by increase in post-school qualifications from 1993 to 2013 (35%–53%), largely driven by growth in university-level qualifications (from 13% to 35%). This is likely due to positive association between educational attainment and full-time employment (62.5% with undergrad qualification employed compared to 37.7% who didn’t have post-school qualifications), conversely, those with bachelor-level qualifications = less likely to be unemployed (2.9% to 5.5% respectively). Unemployment is highest for those with Cert I or II qualifications (9.1%)  **Aim:** To respond to these RQs:  Is the completion of a new educational qualification after age 25 associated with initial educational attainment?  Does the completion of a new educational qualification enhance employment prospects?  **Theoretical frame:** Human capital theory (credentialism/ rational choice theories); signalling theory  **Methodology:** Quantitative: draws on first 12 waves of HILDA data (between 2001–2012). Logistical regression analysis (see p.762)  **Findings:** In Australia there is no formal link between formal education and labour market. When links are weak, educational qualifications can signify other things (e.g. motivation), but can lead to credential inflation: “when individuals are encouraged to invest in higher levels of education in order to obtain particular jobs regardless of whether those jobs actually require higher levels of skills” and where “older workers [are encouraged] to return to education and upgrade their qualifications in order to remain competitive in the labour market” (p.760). In Australia, participation in post-compulsory education declines with age; people with low levels of education were more reluctant to return to education (known as ‘the Matthew effect’).  HILDA data   * Between 2001–2012, one quarter of respondents completed a new educational qualification. * Females more likely than men to complete a new qualification (27% to 22%) * Youngest cohort most likely (28%); people aged 45–49 = 17% * People with higher levels of qualifications more likely to undertake a new qualification * 19% who had not completed school/ post-school qualification had completed a new qualification by 2012 * People employed on full-time basis = less likely to undertake new qualification   *Is the completion of a new educational qualification after age 25 associated with initial educational attainment?*   * People with postgraduate qualifications (Master/ PhD) = 2.8 times more likely to complete new qualification * People with Grad Cert/Diploma = 2 times as likely as Bachelor to complete new qualification   *Does the completion of a new educational qualification enhance employment prospects?*  Completing VET certificate = “associated with a lower chance of securing full-time employment than the completion of a university-level qualification” (p.765)  Type of qualification did not correlate with part-time employment  Female = positive impact on part-time employment (3 times more likely than men than being unemployed)**Core argument:**  Australia has high rate of return to education for adults  “The inability of VET qualifications to facilitate full-time employment is an indication that the linkages between the education system and labour market are very weak” (p.766).  Completion of school seen as essential for entry into labour market  Type of new qualification (VET/ HE; level) has positive association with full-time employment |
| Chesters, J. & Watson, L. (2014). [Returns to education for those returning to education: evidence from Australia](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03075079.2013.801422), *Studies in Higher Education,* 39(9), 1643-1648.  AUS  Annotation written by Sally Baker  Keywords: *mature-age students, employment, earnings, widening participation* | **Context:** focuses on mature age students (25+) and compares ‘the returns of education’ for young and mature age graduates between 2001-2009. Questions the assumption that higher education brings returns to all students, especially mature age students. Works from context of rapid socioeconomic change and Bradley targets to expand higher education.  **Aim:** To “consider whether those who undertake university education at a later stage in their life enjoy similar rewards to those who transition directly from secondary school to university” (p.1635). Do mature age students get same levels of FT employment as younger graduates and does it have same effect on earnings?  **Theoretical frame:** Discusses human capital theory (based on assumption that personal investment in education delivers high personal returns because of increased productivity in labour market); rational choice theory = individuals are able to estimate probable returns on investment but are constrained by class position; subjective expected utility theory assumes that individuals will calculate future financial returns that will accrue from various educational options and then select the option that offers ‘highest expected net utility’ (all p.1637). Thus = assumption (based on 3 theories) that investment in education has direct and indirect costs and benefits for individuals, thus “mature-age students face substantial risks and costs in embarking on higher education” in terms of getting adequate/expected return on investment (p.1638).  **Methodology:** Quantitative/ statistical. Uses data from HILDA (Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia; nine waves: 2001-2009). In 2001, 13969 people aged 15+ participated (representative of national population) and returns annually. This study used 3 points: year before graduation, year of graduation, and year after graduation (thus = between 2002-2008). Two dependent variables = employment status and earnings and five independent variables: sex; father’s education; mother’s education; age at graduation; and socio-economic status in the year before graduation  **Findings:**  Employment status  Year before graduation: 7% of younger group **FT employed** compared to 27% of older group  Year of graduation: 32% of younger group FT employed compared to 47% of older groupYear after graduation: 58% of younger group FT employed compared to 69% of older group  Year before graduation: 20% of younger group **unemployed** compared to 34% of older groupYear after graduation: 9% of younger group unemployed compared to 8% of older group\  Earnings  Effect is similar for both groups  Between Time 1-2, younger group had average increase in earnings by $169 per week. Between T2-3, younger group had increased earnings by $428 per week.  Between Time 1-2, mature group had average increase in earnings by $171 per week. Between T2-3, mature group had increased earnings by $465 per week.  One year after graduation, gender has no difference but it does in Yr 2 and 3 after graduation  Effect of age (privileging mature age) declines over time (by year 3 post-graduation = statistically significant difference between two groups), suggesting “the returns to education are lower for mature-age graduates compared to younger graduates” (p.1645).  Summary: “Although mature-age graduates were more likely to reside in less-advantaged areas, be the first person in their family to attend university, and were less likely to be employed in the year before graduation, they were more likely to be employed on a full-time basis one year after graduation than younger graduates” (p.1644).  **Core argument:** Initially the returns of education = similar. Age is not a barrier: “age is not a barrier to improving one’s human capital and enjoying the economic rewards of doing so” (p.1643), aligning with hypothesis of human capital theory |
| Christie, H., Cree, V., Mullins, E. & Tett, L. (2018). [‘University opened up so many doors for me’: the personal and professional development of graduates from non-traditional backgrounds](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03075079.2017.1294577?journalCode=cshe20), *Studies in Higher Education,* 43(11), 1938–1948.  SCOT  Annotation written by Sally Baker  Keywords: *University students; socioeconomic status; employment outcomes; student identities; qualitative research; non-traditional students* | **Context:** Dearth of qualitative evidence about benefits that non-traditional graduates accrue from their studies. University for economic advancement and social mobility = generally accepted but “the graduate labour market is highly stratified, with greater financial and personal gains accruing to those graduates who come from more affluent backgrounds and who attended prestigious universities, took longer courses, and were more likely to study the traditional and professional subjects that act as a gateway to the established (and well-paid) professions” (p.1939). In addition to economic benefits of engaging in higher education (on average), other components of subjective success are also important to factor (e.g. increases in self-confidence, independence and maturity, as well as improved communication skills and understanding of others, Brennan et al., 2010 – see p.1940). Literature also attests to the idea that studying is not enough, and that ‘capital acquisition stategies’ need to extend into extra-curricula/ work placement spaces; however, equity students = “less likely to engage in these capital acquisitions strategies during their time at university (Pennington, Mosley, and Sinclair 2013) and have more limited access to the social networks that facilitate decision-making about careers, both of which are powerful drivers in the process of matching graduates to jobs in a highly stratified labour market.” (p.1940).  **Aim:** To focus on “a cohort of non-traditional students and their perceptions of the personal and professional benefits they accrued after leaving university” (p.1941)  **Methodology:** Longitudinal qualitative research; returned to ‘field’ 10 years ago first study. One third (n=15) of participants were willing to be interviewed again (14= female; 12 = FinF; mostly in caring professions). Interviews = reflect on whole experience of university and the impact that their studies had on their subsequent personal and professional lives. Limitations of methodology on p.1942.  **Findings:**  *Did the degree offer labour market advantage?*  Most of participants felt they had benefitted; commonly reflected study had been ‘investment in the future’. In 2015, 12/15 were working in graduate-level jobs (teacher, social worker, government advisor, family support worker, college lecturer, social care worker, local gov admin assistant, carer, nursery nurse). Reasons for study = desire to work in professions that require degree qualification and financial benefits of career advancement.  *Did the degree confer wider benefits*?  Participants had continued commitment to learning (10 did continuing professional development; 8 did postgrad studies). Pleasures of learning = repeated theme. Identity changes also identified + changes to ways of thinking.  Also led to increased confidence and self-belief (including friendships) and improved working practices. Some also inspired children to consider/ attend university **Core argument:** Attending university confers economic benefits, as well as other subjective benefits, such as increased confidence, ongoing interest in learning and enhanced work practices. |
| Cook, S., Watson, D. & Webb, R. (2018). [‘It’s just not worth a damn!’ Investigating perceptions of the value in attending university](https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2018.1434616), *Studies in Higher Education,*  UK  Keywords: *Higher education; graduate premium; massification; attitudes; underpayment* | **Context:** Perceptions of the financial value of higher education in context of massification/ erosion of ‘well-documented benefits’. Previous consensus was that a graduate earning premium existed for individuals, as well as economic and societal benefits. Graduate earning premium = estimated to be 27% for university graduate compared to someone leaving school with 2+ A-levels, and graduates = 3% more likely to get a job. Also, graduates believed to have more stable employment and pay more tax, be more productive and increase co-productivity among colleagues, more fulfilling jobs and less dependency on the state. Other non-financial benefits also replete in the literature (e.g. better health, more enjoyment, more savings, better life choices). Authors cite research that suggests these benefits—particularly the financial ones—are waning post-GFC. One author argues that the cited figure of being 100,000GBP better off over lifetime equates to 2000GBP per year, which is less than annual interest on student loan (Kemp-King, 2016). Authors also cite arguments that the graduate benefits are disproportionately spread across social groups, with privileges higher SES students so that “attending the right school; completing an internship before attending university; social-economic class and family background… all increas[es] your chances of obtaining a well-paid job” (p.3), and benefits are skewed towards graduates from elite institutions (Russell Group) —see Vignoles et al., 2008. Authors cite the work of Brown (2013), who explains the erosion of graduate benefits with the concept of social cohesion, so that “a degree provides less and less in terms of traditional benefits and strategic positioning and that all socialeconomic classes have become squeezed” (p.4), again privileging the higher classes who have more resources to compete for position. Introduction of student fees = shifted perceptions of higher education as an investment/ creation of consumer culture  **Aim:** To investigate attitudes towards HE with regard to “widening access to HE; whether HE is worth the time and money involved; whether HE is important to a young adult; whether a degree will garner financial benefits; whether it is perceived that a degree has non-pecuniary benefits; whether HE guarantees you a good job (or not) and whether perceptions regarding job prospects are changing and two questions examining the role of grants and fees” (p.5).  **Hypotheses:**  Hypothesis 1: βs > 0; reduced graduate employment prospects will positively affect the belief that attending university is not financially beneficial;  Hypothesis 2: βc > 0; rising costs associated with a university education will positively affect the belief that attending university is not financially beneficial;  Hypothesis 3: βD > 0; remuneration from attending university is skewed and wage underpayment will positively affect the belief that attending university is not financially beneficial.  **Methodology:** Quantitative; British Social Attitudes survey from 2010 (n=1081; working class respondents n=390)  **Findings:**  Working class = generally more supportive of widening participation + more likely to report that HE is not worth the time/ money + graduates will not be better off financially  Working class = more likely to think that graduates get better jobs  Working class = more likely to respond well to student grants subsidising cost of HE  Working class = more likely to be anti-student fees  Hypothesis 1 = accepted, meaning that the graduate job market appears to be getting worse which may in turn “significantly restrict the perceived value of acquiring a degree” (p.8) – thus supporting Brown’s (2013) idea of social congestion. Also concurs with Webb et al.. (2015) who argued that 1) students likely to report fewer benefits over time and 2) students are likely to end up in jobs that they didn’t need the degree for – both may result in dissatisfaction with HE experience, “with both the lack of a personalized degree experience and the non-strengthening of key employment skills in the course of HE” (p.8).  Hypothesis 2 = accepted; “If a degree is viewed as a financial asset, complete with corresponding risks and rewards, then attitudes are again likely to be increasingly affected as uncertainty over future costs and income intensifies” (p.9) – particularly significant given that we know that working class are more debt averse (evidence provided in this study; also see Callendar & Jackson, 2005), so that university study will be seen as too risky.  Given these conditions, it is likely that the middle classes will use their resources to invest in extra-curricular activities to buy position to get into more elite institutions, and universities may be incentivized to invest less in teaching/ learning/ support and more in meeting the expectations of what constitutes an attractive learning environment (see p.9)  Hypothesis 3 = accepted as underpayment appears to be substantial, particularly for certain groups. It’s unclear if the perception of a graduate earning premium ever existed, or whether perceptions have shifted because of fewer job opportunities **Core argument:** Implications:  Working classes are less likely to pursue higher education  Middle classes who view HE as more than financially rewarding are likely to continue pursuing higher education, but this will likely involve investment in forms of positioning/ capital that will create competitive advantage for elite courses/ institutions.  Universities are likely to become increasingly polarised  “Each of these implications alone demands reflection. Taken together, they speak of a HE sector in which the declining value attached to a degree threatens far-reaching consequences in both the sphere of HE itself and the world of employment that lies beyond. The evidence increasingly suggests that significant shifts are already under way” (p.11). |
| de la Harpe, B. & David, C. (2012). Major influences on the teaching and assessment of graduate attributes, *Higher Education Research & Development*, 31(4), 493–510.  AUS  Annotation written by Sally Baker  Keywords: *assessment; beliefs; curriculum; graduate attributes; teaching* | **Context:** ALTC-funded project; explores ineffectiveness of top-down directives regarding the teaching of graduate attributes in university programs. Authors argue that “the positive relationship between graduate attributes, employability and lifelong independent learning is well researched and generally accepted” (p.493); however, development of graduate attributes = limited impact, and literature suggests that academic staff  **Aim:** To examine how “academic staff influence facilitation, or obstruction, of graduate attribute initiatives” (p.494); framing question: “What factors at the individual level are key to influencing whether or not academic staff will engage with the integration into the curriculum of graduate attributes?”; to “explore academic staff beliefs about graduate attributes, their willingness and confidence to teach and assess them, and the relationship between these factors (beliefs, willingness and confidence) and actual teaching and assessment practice” (p.494)  **Methodology:** Survey of 16 Australian universities (selection of which = based on AUQA report on universities’ engagement with employability/ grad attributes agenda). Survey respondents = academic staff (n=1064) – see p.495 for detail of cohort.  **Findings:**  Beliefs: majority (73%) indicated a belief that graduate attributes (GA) = important and should be included in the curriculum. Females/ people who had been there for 10 years+/ people on continuing contracts = more likely than males to view GA as important; academics with a teaching qualification = more likely to view as important to embed GA in curriculum  Most important GA = critical thinking, written communication, problem solving  Least important GA = ICT, teamwork, information literacy  Academic staff = more willing than confident about teaching GA, but less willing and confident than the authors expected: “just over half reported emphasising written communication and problem solving in their teaching, despite three quarters believing these were important attributes” (p.498)  Academics with industry experience = more likely to teach and assess information literacy, ethical practice and ICT (considered important by industry)  **Core argument:** Universities should focus more on supporting academics’ *willingness* and *confidence* in teaching GA, and that their beliefs do not necessarily translate into practice.  Given that teaching qualifications appear to shift the ways that academics engage with GA, it is important for teaching academics to undertake teaching quals.  For workplace planning, it would be good for universities to value industry experience (particularly for women – see p.505)  Whole-of-institution approaches should be considered  “Continuing to rely solely on teachers and their ability to integrate attributes into the formal curriculum will not deliver university graduates equipped for the rapidly changing world of work. To drive such a significant shift requires strong leadership and an evidence-based approach to aligning aspirations, policies and strategies. Institutional approaches that incorporate the key insights discussed in this paper hold great promise for graduate attributes becoming central to the teaching and learning experience for all involved” (p.507). |
| Divan, A., Knight, E., Bennett, D. & Bell, K. (2019). [Marketing graduate employability: understanding the tensions between institutional practice and external messaging](doi:%20%2010.1080/1360080X.2019.1652427), *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*,  UK/AUS/ CAN  Keywords: *Graduate outcomes; graduate employment; marketing; higher education; student experience* | **Context:** Marketisation of higher education v. reality of finding employment. These tensions are reflective of the inherent contradictions that universities currently face, between being sites of critical exchange and knowledge production, and competitive, market-based corporations. Dominant focus has been on human capital understandings of employability. Authors highlight that it is comparatively easy to measure graduate outcomes, but less easy to measure ‘employability’; the authors argue that a “realistic measurement of employability should take into account individual characteristics, labour market demand and the ability of the graduate to navigate the labour market in the longer term” (p.2). Research cited that says language used to discuss employability (by careers services) should be consistent, particularly to external (prospective student) audiences  **Aim:** To explore “how and why [inconsistencies in how employability is constructed internally and externally) might arise and we sought to highlight the consequences of misalignment in terms of curricular development and pedagogical approaches to employability” (p.3)  **Theoretical frame:** Holmes’ (2013) conceptions of employability: ‘possessional’, ‘positional’, ‘processual’ approaches to developing a graduate identity.  **Methodology:** Part of a larger study that examined employability in 107 universities; this article focuses on follow-up qualitative data (interviews with 16 academic and career development professionals from 9 different universities), asking three questions: “What is your institution’s working definition of employability? How does your institution promote an ‘employability culture’? What employability message do you give on the institution’s website?” (p.4). Data coded using Holmes’ framework. External messages on university websites. Data discussed according to national context.  **Findings:**  Half of institutions focused on human capital/ possessional construct  Three institutions focused on processual (lifelong, identity, development) construct  Most institutions suggested a fragmented relationship between academics, professional staff, students and senior management.  Australia: interview data from two universities discussed their approach in ways that align with Holmes’ processual construction of employability (e.g. self-awareness, identity, lifelong learning), but analysis of the universities’ websites did not correspond with this framing, focusing more on ‘skills’. Interview participants flagged importance of distinguishing between graduate outcomes and employability, and were aware of the ways that university websites privileged a skills/ outcomes view and “bemoaned the inconsistency of internal and external employability messaging across the sector” (p.6).  Canada: employability understood to be a newer concept in Canada, which was matched in analysis of websites (which found no evidence of the term ‘employability’ being used). Instead, the dominant phrasing is ‘career readiness’, with suggestion on the websites of “a sophisticated engagement” with career development theories (p.6). In contrast, discussions with staff in one university suggested a more possessional construction of employability (skills acquisition), while a participant from another university indexed a more processual approach, but “viewed the marketing of any idea of employability to prospective students as a separate concern to that of the work of the institution in supporting its students to develop their employability” (p.7).  UK: Participants from UK universities were aware that graduate outcomes = important aspect of marketing, which relates to mandatory reporting of Key Information Sets on university websites, which include graduate outcomes data. Employability generally discussed in progressive terms. Analysis suggests ‘two divergent themes’: 1) fatigue with idea of employability/ focus on outcomes and reputational currency  2) a more processual construction (continuous, identity development, cognition). **Core argument:**   * Understandings of employability are “rich and diverse” (p.8) across institutions, national contexts, between public facing and personal representations/ constructions * Consistent messaging is important but not evident * Working together with a ‘learning view’ of employability = optimal * Positional approach = creates conditions for inequity (see Pitman et al., 2019) |
| Doyle, E. (2011). [Career development needs of low socio-economic status university students](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/103841621102000309), *Australian Journal of Career Development,* 20(3), 56–65.  AUS  Annotation written by Sally Baker | **Context:** Introduction of Demand Driven System post-Bradley review in Australia; equity in higher education. Author argues that attending to career needs of low SES cohort = “of utmost importance” (p.56)  **Aim:** To “highlight the career needs of low SES university students as an area that requires further research and clarification; more specifically, identifying if the career needs of low SES university students are different from students who don’t have a low SES. If so, how can a university careers service meet these needs effectively?” (p.56). Author notes that there has been a persistent lack of attention to minority sub-groups, meaning there are problematic assumptions about ‘ideal circumstances’ that careers advice is based. Low SES career advice needs are different from higher SES peers because of differences in work, work experience [and role models], which are further exacerbated by financial resources impeding take up of work placements/ acquisition of necessary resources. Also, low expectations from school and community can contribute to differential needs.  Careers services in higher education = one-to-one advice considered to be most effective (permitting tailored advice). However, research shows that the students who would benefit most are the least likely to seek careers advice.  Strategy to overcome lack of take-up = embedding careers counseling in curriculum.  Literature reports relationship between careers advice and retention rates (but variation in this finding)  **Theoretical frame:** Systems theory framework (Patton & McMahon, 2006): “approaches a person as being interconnected with their external surroundings, as a part of the larger system” (p.57), such as reinforcement from family, friends, community. Second pertinent theory = person-centred theory (Carl Rogers) – focusing on relationship builder between advisor and student.  **Methodology:** Essay  **Findings:** Targeting careers services to low SES students supported by some, but considered pointless by others (including Crozier et al., 2008), who argue that there is too much homogeneity in the low SES category  Should be done early in study  Should involve low SES students in designing and implementing targeted careers services  Low SES students generally have lower awareness of careers services and/or tend not to prioritise careers-focused activities.  Low SES students prefer to seek advice from family and friends  To target careers services, careers advisors should consult more with community/ student body to get a better sense of the needs of the students, keep up to date with labour market information to give up-to-date information and undertake employer visits, extend availability of careers support beyond enrolment (two years beyond advised) and facilitate networking between employers and students (via job fairs) |
| Edmond, N. & Berry, J. (2014). [Discourses of ‘equivalence’ in HE and notions of student engagement: resisting the neoliberal university](https://uhra.herts.ac.uk/handle/2299/15314), *Student Engagement and Experience Journal,* 3(2), 1–19.  UK  Annotation by Sally Baker | **Context:** Marketisation of higher education and development of ‘students as consumers’ discourse; discourse of employability on student engagement.  **Aim:** To “ discuss the impact of the discourse of employability on student engagement and argue that it positions students as engaged in an individual process of CV building rather than a collective process of learning and knowledge development” (abstract)  **Methodology:** ‘Documentary analysis’ of five universities’ websites where students have been protesting (student union webpages)  **Discussion:** Authors describe the contemporary neoliberal/ marketised shape of English higher education, arguing that to “mount opposition, it is vital to conceptualise education in the same way as neoliberals do, as a commodified – and increasingly privatized - good to be bought, sold and bid for along with housing, healthcare, energy and basic transportation” (p.5). They offer an overview of how higher education has changed over time, which has pushed the employability agenda to the fore (which they call the ‘vocationalisation’ of higher education). They make an argument for ‘equivalence’, which “legitim[ise] the expansion of universities’ involvement in the development of the existing workforce through means such as part-time in-service courses and bespoke programmes for employers and the trend within some universities to move into the ‘territory’ of the workplace to enhance and accredit workplace learning” (see p.7) – leading to academic capitalism (Rhodes, 2003).  Authors discuss how market competition requires differentiation, which has led to deepening inequity within participation/ achievement of particular groups, because “markets have their own logic for calculating value and this discourse of ‘equivalence’ can serve to obscure or deny inequality (in this case of the exchange value of qualifications) much as the ‘equal but different’ discourse of apartheid and the Jim Crow laws sought to do” (p.9).The assumption of choice depends on the assumption of independence/ autonomy: “Essentially, within a marketized system in which the ‘value’ of HE is expressed in terms of eventual earning potential (the exchange value of labour power), student engagement becomes a process of ‘commodification of the self’” (p.10)  Authors explore possibilities for ‘active resistance’ — through promotion of participation (work/ volunteering) in student union protests against increasing student fees through justification of employability angle  **Core argument:** “we argue that it is only through challenging some of these basic precepts of value - of which employability, the privileging of skills and the development of certain notions of character are most prevalent – can we, as students and academics, open up the possibilities of concerted opposition to neoliberal hegemony” (p.14) |
| Edwards, D. & Coates, H. (2011). [Monitoring the pathways and outcomes of people from disadvantaged backgrounds and graduate groups](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07294360.2010.512628), *Higher Education Research & Development,* 30(2), 151–163.  AUS  Annotation written by Sally Baker  Keywords: *educational planning; graduate outcomes; higher education policy; reducing disadvantage; social inclusion*  PATHWAY OUT | **Context:** Works from starting point that vibrant knowledge economy and managing ‘national productivity’ is dependent on ‘building successful learning outcomes’ among university graduates (p.151). Authors argue that “entrenched patterns of disadvantage inhibit the full development of individual talent and, hence, of the system overall” (p.151).  **Aim:** To examine Graduate Pathways Survey data to seek patterns in outcomes of ‘disadvantaged learners’ five years after course completion. Particular focus = pathways taken *after* completion of degree  **Theoretical frame:**  **Methodology:** Examines data collected via GPS and focuses specifically on indigenous, low SES, rural/remote and disabilities. All 40 (38 public, 2 private) universities in Australia invited to participate, “making the study a census” (p.153). Invitations to participate sent to all undergraduates who graduated in 2002 (choice between paper/online versions). N=9238 responses (=12% response rate). Data weighted accordingly. Analysis also compares genders (thus NESB is only equity category not included). Data collected in 2008  **Findings:**  *Indigenous*: 60 = indigenous = less than 1%. Results show that these respondents = slightly more likely to be working by 5th year after graduation (96.9% compared with 90.9% of non-indigenous). Indigenous students more likely to be positive about higher education, about overall benefits of work and for long-term career goals. 65.4% of indigenous students said their degree had been ‘very beneficial’ (compared with 50.3% of non-indigenous). 63.8% = saw it as ‘very beneficial’ for long-term career (compared with 49.6% of non-indigenous)  *Low SES*: calculated according to parents’ occupation, parents’ education level and childhood postcode.  Low SES students more likely:  ● attend institutions that were less than 50 years old or in regional locations;  ● study in the fields of education, engineering, IT or business;  ● attend part-time or externally or by distance;  ● be slightly older;  ● have a non-English speaking background;  ● be of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin;  ● identify themselves as having a disability; and  ● come from a provincial or remote area (p.155)  These students = just as likely to be doing more education/ training in 1st, 3rd and 5th years after graduation as other students. After 5 years, low SES = slightly less likely to have done PG study (22% compared with 25%). This group = more likely to be looking for work in 1, 3 and 5 years after graduation.  *R&R*: 55% of R&R students were living in state/territory capital 5 years after graduation. 84% students who attended metro universities = still living in capital cities. Little difference in type of work for all students by 5 years (but differences noted between R&R/ metro students in year 1/3 after graduation). Metro students slightly lower unemployment rates one year after but unemployment rate patterns leveled after 3 and 5 years  Gender: large differences in disciplines – more females in health and education, more men in IT and engineering. Males more likely to be involved in further study in 1st/3rd year after UG graduation but slightly less so 5 years after. Men = more likely to hold PG research qualification p.159. Men more likely to be participating in labour force 5 years after graduation (96% to 91%), even more for full time employment (96% to 87%). Women’s wages are also lower (AUS$70k to $57k) – with a steady gap growing from year 1 out of university  All equity group students less likely to be in ‘professional or managerial’ jobs 5 years after graduation. Median salary = on par in 1st year post-graduation. Overall, students from disadvantaged backgrounds who were retained through to graduation “reported educational and occupational outcomes equal to their relatively less disadvantaged contemporaries” (p.156). **Core argument:** After 5 years, most social and cultural barriers are removed; however, “there are still clear gender differences apparent among higher degree educated people five years after completing university studies, even after controlling for a range of other influences on salary” (p.160). Authors argue that “studying graduate outcomes provide a useful critical frame for investigating aspects of university education – including the examination of disadvantaged groups” (p.161) |
| Galliott, N. (2015). [Youth aspirations, participation in higher education and career choice capability: where to from here](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs13384-015-0177-0)? *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 42(2), 133–137  AUS  Annotation written by Sally Baker | **Context:** Editorial for SI of Aus Ed Res on youth aspirations – situates the SI in the context that youth aspirations and post-school transitions are a hot topic for researchers and policy makers alike, but that an SI of Critical Studies in Education (following NCSEHE symposium in 2010) pointed to how “the modern conceptualisation of  ‘aspiration’ risks establishing disadvantaged young people with dreams that are different to the dominant culture as ‘outcasts’” (p.133). National policy context = ‘National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions’ requires all young people to remain in education or training until the age of 17, and income support for people aged 15-20 = conditional on this engagement. Moreover, DET made many career development resources available in 2014 (including ‘My Big Tomorrow’) to assist young people in making post-school  **Papers:**  Gale & Parker (2015): ‘To aspire: a systematic reflection…’ – critique of discourses underpinning aspirations; 4-concept clusters: social imagination, taste/distinction, desire/possibility and navigational capacity/archives of experience; draw on empirical data to argue low-SES students have less of specialized knowledge needed for navigation.  Gore et al. (2015): ‘Socioeconomic status and career aspirations…’ – draw on longitudinal aspirations survey to examine degree of certainty of career ambitions of students in Years 4,6,8. Findings suggest low SES students are more likely to base decisions on money rather than interest.  Galliott & Graham (2015): ‘School-based experiences…’ – draw on survey with 706 high school students (Yr 9-12); findings suggest students largely are uncertain about aspirations, experience a lack of curriculum diversity and have little/no exposure to careers advisory advice. Authors suggest that careers advice should be offered to all students prior to selection of elective subjects.  Sellar (2015): ‘Unleashing aspiration…’ – looks at promises made by policymakers with relation to social mobility and employability and higher education. Explores discourses of ‘potential’ (realization and waste) exploit learners’ feelings; broken promises are often ‘explained away’ as a lack of talent or potential, rather than the unrealistic expectations set up by the discourse/ system.  Harwood et al. (2015) ‘Recognising aspiration: the AIME program…’ – explores possibilities of strengths-based approaches for individual aspirations to show how AIME (Aus Ind. Mentoring Experience) impacts on indigenous high school students.  Molla & Cuthbert (2015) ‘Issue of Grad Employability’ – explores assumptions in policy about graduate employability and the ‘skills gap’ between HRD graduates and labour market. Findings = skills deficit in dominant discourse = unfounded as most PhDs have worked prior to RHD and thus have already developed ‘soft skills’  Gale (2015) ‘Social imaginary’ – examines social inclusion strategies in Aus HE agenda (Labor policies) and argues that there is a lack of social imagination in strategies, thus placing assumptions of deficit on students. |
| Garcia-Aracil, A.; Monteiro, S. & Almeida, L. (2018). [Students’ perceptions of their preparedness for transition to work after graduation.](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1469787418791026) *Active Learning in Higher Education,* online first  PORT  Annotation written by Dr Clemence Due  Keywords: *competencies, higher education, learning experiences, students’ perceptions, work transition* | **Context:** Debate in literature about role of higher education- “On the one hand, there is the perspective that universities should adopt an educational and human development approach in their curriculum development and quality assessment on the other hand, there is the functionalist perspective that considers higher education should use the terms, values and objectives of the general society, and so its effectiveness should be assessed in an instrumental way through the impact on the capacity to contribute to society and economy”. Overall, need to understand factors that contribute to students’ preparedness to transition to work from HE.  **Aim:** Tounderstand factors contributing to students’ perceptions of their preparedness to transition from HE to employment  **Theoretical frame:** No overarching frame but draws on models of employability, self perception and self efficacy.  **Methodology:** Questionnaire based quantitative study – convenience sample of 641 students enrolled in masters programs at a public university in Portugal. Descriptive statistics.  **Findings:** The results of the study show that students perceive that participation in lectures seems particularly beneficial for their transition to work, whereas regular attendance at lectures seems less important. Participation likely see as important in development of critical thinking skills. Both practical and theoretical work contributed positively to perceptions of preparedness to transition. Study areas that focus on competencies associated with employability have a positive impact. In terms of individual factors, gender didn’t affect outcomes, but age did (older students felt more prepared). Work experience did not influence preparedness.  **Core argument:** Universities need to provide opportunities for students to increase employability competencies during their studies. |
| Herman, C. (2015). [Returning to STEM: gendered factors affecting employability for mature women students](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13639080.2014.887198), *Journal of Education and Work*, 28(6), 571–591.  UK  Keywords: *gender; STEM; employability; career break; women returners* | **Context:** STEM and gender (mature age women) – set against underrepresentation of women in STEM (studies and workplaces) and assumptions that graduates are young and about to embark on their professional lives, which “effectively invisibilises the experiences of mature students and particularly those who have taken career breaks and are studying in order to return to work or change careers” (p.571). Also, author notes that gendered dimensions are lost particularly in STEM fields. Graduate employability discourses = often focused on ‘employability skills’ (e.g. Bridgstock, 2009); also the neoliberal push to self-marketing means that graduates have to craft their own employability narratives (Tomlinson, 2007). Author also points to the ways that perceptions of particular characteristics/ circumstances can be positive for some and negative for others (parenting for men v. women, for example), plus things that are ‘attractive’ for employers (being mobile/ working long hours) are gendered. Gender is also significant in a lifecourse perspective, when career breaks for parenting and other reasons are taken into account. Three dominant strategies = identity work (making ‘the right impression’), (re)training to update skills, social networks  **Aim:** To “make the case for a life course perspective on employability, and for an explicit recognition of gender in employability initiatives within higher education”; to identify strategies that women take to return to STEM field. (p.571)  **Theoretical frame:**  **Methodology:** Longitudinal (2005–2011) study of women returning to work after participating in 10-week online course designed to support people to return to STEM careers after a break. Article based on return interviews in 2012 with 23 of women who responded to a survey (total n=66).  **Findings:**  Of 66 who completed the survey, 71% were working; 29% were not working (but only 4 were unemployed). 79% of working women were in STEM jobs.  Reflections on participating in the course: most remembered the course as a period of transition; gave an opportunity to do ‘identity work’: “the process of articulating their skills and experiences in ways that would present them in the best light for prospective employers helped to enhance self-confidence” (p.579).  Three key factors:  1) Gender normative beliefs  2) Location/ mobility  3) Structural/ institutional barriers  *Gender normative beliefs*: most women had partners supporting them and had taken on normative roles in their families after having children  *Locality*: geographic proximity of work = important factor  *Barriers*: participants shared perception that barriers to work were structural, with few opportunities in the system to return to work after a break (especially in terms of flexibility around time). Career paths = generally conceived as linear in STEM. Returning to research = particularly challenging because of the gap in publication record. Age also perceived to be a barrier.  Strategies for success  Retraining  Networking (realizing value of contacts)  Doing unpaid/low paid work  **Core argument:** Employment/ employability = lifelong. Focusing on mature age students can help to refocus/ reframe issues to take a longer-term approach |
| Hey, V. & Leathwood, C. (2009). [Passionate Attachments: Higher Education, Policy, Knowledge, Emotion and Social Justice](https://doi.org/10.1057/hep.2008.34), *Higher Education Policy,* 22(1), 101–118.  UK  Annotation written by Sally Baker  Keywords: *affects desire emotion gender HE policy* | **Context:** Examine ‘the affective turn’ in HE policy studies, with particular interest in ‘employable student’ and ‘non-traditional student’ subjectivities, and policy sites/ discourses of WP and employability. Widening participation = 2 developments in particular: new emphasis on creating support/ivelearning cultures – seen in new focus on well-being and belonging, mentoring, WP projects, support for all students (rather than remedial support for deficit subjects). Such developments = often focused on student retention. 2nd development = creating ‘employable’ subjects who are emotionally literate/ intelligent. Authors note that these are “a difficult ideological assemblage to be ‘against’” (p.104); however = not clear who the ‘addressee’ of these policies and practices. Authors point to long history of such inquiries into affective from feminist perspectives (Freire, hooks, Boler) – recognizing that emotion/ pedagogy/ agency = “having passionate components and thus to fundamentally question the traditional binary split between emotion and reason” (p.105). Psychosocial understanding = sees affective/emotions not as ‘things’ to be studied, but rather as a ‘flooding’: “an  overcoming or a momentary disturbance in one’s equilibrium or has been seen as socialized, conceived as a shared apprehension, or collective panic” (p.105).  **Aim:**  **Theoretical frame:** Feminist scholarship that has worked with emotions: Judith Butler – identity and subjectivity as subjectivation (1990, 1997) and embodiment of subjectivity. Also draws on Butler’s take on Foucault – genealogical analysis of policy, which “questions the notion of origin and linear progression, instead emphasizing discontinuities, interruptions and contingencies” (p.102)  **Methodology:** Argue for psycho-social methodology to ‘tease out the affective in policy’  **Analysis of policy:** Analysis of New Labour education policy in UK = positioned as “key driver of subject re/formation” (p.107), in line with new modes of accountability and surveillance – what happens to the social, the collective and the community when individuals become competitive self-entrepreneurs? Psychosocial lens offers a way in to exploring risk (manufactured by New Labour policy as a ‘fear of being left behind’). Authors also apply psychosocial lens to micropolitics of being staff or a student in contemporary HE – policy discourses serve to deny difference “by striving to ensure subjects’ singularity and ‘fitness for purpose’ in terms of the market and consumption” (p.110), so that students are changed, rather than institutional structures or cultures. **Core argument:** Paper argues for value in psychosocial reading of higher education policy. Main findings = 1) policy reflects feelings about social change and difference (in relation to ‘the other’); 2) desires to manage risk = limiting subjectivities recognised (‘employable’ ‘emotionally intelligent’ subject, p.113); 3)HE = formation of cultural feelings and ideas (see also Clegg & David, 2006) |
| Jackson, D. & Bridgstock, R. (2018). [Evidencing student success in the contemporary world-of-work: renewing our thinking](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/07294360.2018.1469603), *Higher Education Research & Development*, 37, 984–998.  AUS, USA, UK, IRL  Annotation written by Dr Prasheela Karan  Keywords: *Student success; Career success; Employment outcomes; Employability* | **Context:**With a particular focus on developed countries, the authors review the use of graduate employment outcomes as a measure of student success, and critique the way graduate outcomes are conceptualised and measured.  **Aims:**This study raises “suggestions for more appropriate measures which align with broader conceptualisations of career success for the future world-of-work, and which cater to differences among disciplines” (p.985).  **Theoretical frame:**  **Methodology:**The authors review surveys measuring graduate outcomes in Australia, UK, Ireland and the USA.  **Findings:** Current measures of graduate outcomes have an overreliance on full-time employment as the main indicator of success, which the authors argue should be applied with caution and only as a complement to subjective indicators, such a perceived graduate value, perceived employability and wellbeing among graduates. In addition, the study discusses revising the timing of when data is collected in Australia (4 months post-graduation), suggesting options, including during the course and prior to graduation, and 18 to 24 months after graduation.  **Core argument:** The authors assert that there is a need to shift away from overreliance on objective measures, such as full-time employment, given (1) the limited control of higher education on influences affecting employment, and (2) the way in which the different motivations of students for undertaking higher education studies can be devalued, as well as their contributions to the economy and society, through the privileging of such objective measures. Consequently, the authors argue for “a more nuanced approach to measurement, involving characterisation of a range of objective and subjective indicators including employment outcomes, social and economic value, career satisfaction and well-being” (p. 995). |
| Karmel, T. & Carroll, D. (2016). *Has the graduate job market been swamped? NILS working paper series No.228/2016*. National Institute of Labour Studies: Flinders University, Adelaide. | **Context:** Shifting labour market; widening participation and massification of higher education; graduate employment; Australia. Report based around question of “whether the expansion in the supply of graduates has more than outstripped the changes in labour demand and has impacted on the labour market success of graduates” (p.1) because the proportion of graduates gaining full-time employment declined from 2009–2014  **Aim:** To examine “whether there has been a structural shift in the graduate labour market, such that new graduates are experiencing labour market conditions more severe than those expected on the basis of earlier experience” and whether there has been a “change in quality of jobs” (p.1)  **Theoretical frame:**  **Methodology:** Quantitative analysis of the Graduate Destination Survey (GDS) over 30 years, focusing on differences between 1) men and women; 2) different fields of study; 3) different groups of universities (Go8, ATN, RUN, IRU)  **Findings:  Core argument:** |
| Li, I. W., Mahuteau, S., Dockery, A. M., Junankar, P. N. & Mavromaras, K. (2016.) [*Labour Market Outcomes of Australian University Graduates from Equity Groups*](https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/publications/factors-influencing-university-student-satisfaction-dropout-and-academic-performance-an-australian-higher-education-equity-perspective/). Report submitted to the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE), Curtin University: Perth.  AUS  Annotation written by Sally Baker  Keywords: *equity, graduate outcomes, employment, job match, job quality, earnings* | **Context:** Examines trends in equity group enrolments in higher education between 2007- 2012 – working from context of Bradley Review and Koshy (2014). Seeks to assess graduates’ labour market performance according to the primary motivators for access/participation policies and funding for equity groups (and who typically face disadvantage in the labour market)  **Aim:** To assess a range of employment outcomes of disadvantaged students from four universities in one state = probability of working/ studies-job match/ job quality/ earnings.  **Methodology:** Quantitative/ statistical. Used ‘confidentialised unit record data’ for domestic students who completed a bachelor’s degree and were admitted on ATAR/ year 12 achievement. These data = linked to Australian Graduate Survey (AGS) – using the Graduate Destination section of the survey. Data linkage between AGS and student records possible in one university [ethics??]: “the linked dataset consists of three sorts of variables: i) personal and demographic characteristics; ii) university study characteristics and iii)  labour market characteristics” (p.8). Uses binary probit models to examine graduate outcomes. Earnings calculated using Ordinary Least Squares model  **Findings:** 27% of graduates = low SES/ 14% R&R/ 9% = NESB/ WINTA = 9%/ Disabilities = 1.6%/ Indigenous = 0.3%  Average Course Weighted Average Mark for all graduates = 70. ACWAM = similar for all equity groups  23% = STEM  Low SES = more represented in the fields of Science, Engineering, Nursing, Education and Creative Arts  R&R = slightly more likely to have studied STEM, Education and Allied Health fields.  NESB = more likely to be in Science, Engineering and Accounting than NES  Women = more in the fields of Allied Health, Nursing, Education, Psychology and Creative Arts and less in the fields of Information Technology, Engineering and Accounting.  Employment  Graduates who worked in final year = more likely to be employed (increased probability 28%) but much less likely to be matched study-to-job (by 14%) and less likely to have a quality job (11%)  Graduates who go on to do further study = less likely to have a job (by 12%), 29% less likely to be matched study-to-job and 27% less likely to have quality job  ACWAM = consistent predictor of job outcomes “with every one percentage point increase in the Weighted  Average Mark leading to an increased 0.1 percent probability of being employed” (p.15) and larger likelihood of matched and quality job  *Low SES* = comparable employment outcomes with higher SES students. Low SES slightly more likely to get matched job. No earning disadvantage for SES graduates  *Regional* = less likely to complete (see Lim, 2015) but those who do complete have equal probability of finding work as metro peers and have increased likelihood of getting matched/quality job. Male regional graduates have better earning potential than metro males (but for those of higher grade average)  *NESB* ‘lag behind’ NES peers on all outcomes in terms of gaining employment; however, for NESB graduates in work, no difference in job match or quality. NESB = earn less by 12% (with women more disadvantaged at 15% less than NES females). 25% of difference between NESB and NES = explained by human capital endowments; other 75% = unexplained and “hence NESB graduates face a substantial amount of disadvantage in the labour market” (p.17). Cites research by Lim (2015) who showed that Asian graduates = more likely to complete university.  *WINTA* = females in STEM. Both genders = similar propensity to be employed (skills and job quality) but women earn less by 10%. STEM graduates (m&f) have lower likelihood of employment, matching and quality  **Core argument:** Appears that low SES graduates perform as well as their peers in the labour market after graduation, but must consider processes of admission at point of entry. Also, regional students as likely to get work (if not slightly more likely) than metro peers. NESB face significant disadvantage in labour market. “The evidence is highly suggestive of gender-based barriers or discrimination against females in the rewards to STEM-based qualifications” (p.20). Number of disabled and indigenous students = well below benchmark |
| Lim, P. (2015). [*Do individual background characteristics influence tertiary completion rates? A 2014 Student Equity in Higher Education Research Grants Project*.](https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/publications/do-individual-background-characteristics-influence-tertiary-completion-rates/) National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education, Perth: Curtin University.  AUS  Annotation written by Sally Baker  Keywords: *equity, completion, school background, SES, indigenous, NESB, regional, school achievement, NAPLAN* | **Context:** NCSEHE-funded project. Explores completion probabilities of students according to equity (or not) status. Explores combined disadvantage (low SES + other categories). Literature review offers brief international overview of SES and completion for USA, Europe, Australia  **Aim:** Aims to answer these RQs:   For the students who commence a bachelor degree level course, do their background characteristics  (in particular SES) influence completion of that course?   If there are substantial differences, what are the size and direction of these differences?  **Theoretical frame:**  **Methodology:** Uses LSAY data “to investigate whether or not low SES students complete university at different rates than their high SES peers” (p.6). Number of respondents = 3741 individuals, 2479 of whom started UG degree. Also uses random effects model. Uses 2003 cohort (participants = 25 years of age in 2013). Measurement of SES = “include mother’s and father’s educational attainment and occupation, the extent of the cultural items held in the home, and the individual’s access to study and other resources” (p.8).  **Findings:**  School = responsible for 30% of variation in university completion   * Lower SES have lower completion rates than higher SES peers * Students with lower achievement at age 15 (NAPLAN) are further disadvantaged if low SES. Being a high achiever ameliorates being low SES. High SES students score more highly than low SES in NAPLAN by 5 percentage points (see p.34) * Females are more likely to complete than males (low SES/ females more than males (irrespective of SES) in NAPLAN (see p.35) * SES = more likely to impact on indigenous students: low SES indigenous students are 12 percentage points less likely to complete than high SES indigenous * Field of study = higher impact on likelihood of completion for SES (low SES students in technical disciplines least likely to complete). Influence of field of study is less significant for high SES students * Attending a Catholic or independent school cushions low SES student to some extent; government school students have lower completion rates * Regional students have lower completion rates than metro students * SES is not significant for students who work less than 20 hours a week. Low SES students who do not work are much worse off than higher SES counterparts. * Students with Asian language = most likely to complete university   **Core argument:** Significant support needs to be offered to support all student groups to complete: “low SES students from regional areas, who attended government schools and who are female, may need further support to ensure they complete at the same rate as their high SES peers” (p.7). |
| Merrill, B., Finnegan, F., O’Neill, J. & Revers, S. (2019). [‘When it comes to what employers are looking for, I don’t think I’m it for a lot of them’: class and capitals in, and after, higher education](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03075079.2019.1570492), *Studies in Higher Education*  ENG/IRE  Annotation written by Sally Baker  Keywords: *Non-traditional students; employability; class inequalities; biographicity; higher education* | **Context:** Most equity research focuses on access and participation; not enough is known about what happens when equity (working-class in this article) leave university. Persistent inequality in participation rates in higher education amongst working-class students, and in post-degree outcomes. Shift in focus from access to access-to-what? Authors argue this necessitates a ‘double focus’: absolute participation rates, and participation rates in highest value courses and careers, which “necessitates research that takes the ‘long view’ and which can explore trajectories into, through and out of HE into the labour market” (p.3). In the literature review, the authors note human capital arguments for widening participation, but note how in uni/ WP context, this doesn’t always translate into ‘transition out’, so that “Such an individualistic and decontextualized way of thinking about employability has been fused with a human capital approach to access in widening participation initiatives” (p.3). Authors argue that massification of HE + current economic conditions mean that many graduates are under- or unemployed.  **Aim:** To focus “on the voices of working-class students and their aspirations in relation to employability” (abstract)  **Theoretical frame:** Bourdieu: social space—fields, habitus and capitals  **Methodology:** Data drawn from Irish and English studies, part of broader European research project entitled Enhancing the employability of non-traditional students in HE’ (EMPLOY), which spanned across 6 countries— UK, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden. Methods: feminist biographical narrative interviews; Irish team interviewed 30 non-trad students; English team interviewed 40 students (30 UG; 10 PG). Case studies of 2 students: Sharon (England) and David (Ireland).  **Findings:** Overall analysis suggests ‘detraditionalisation’ of work/ education/ communities/ relationships, meaning that “new pathways [have opened] through work and life and biographical projects which do not follow predictable patterns” (p.7). Education in particular is viewed as important for providing important resources to cope with multiple transitions, and described by participants as “a space of opportunity, development and upward mobility” (p.7). Instead of traditional pathways/ barriers, authors argue that “there are new branching points and forms of differentiation in HE which effect these outcomes (in discipline, institution, postgraduate qualification)” (p.7), and class differentiation is being modified by precaritisation.  *Sharon*: age 37, studied Law, went to state school, was in foster care, had a baby young, ended up working in a prison, did Access course and chose her university based on proximity to home. Choice of law = related to her challenging childhood. She struggled because she also had to work, meaning she missed lectures. She felt different from her younger/ more privileged peers. She is dyslexic. Classic ‘fish out of water’. She couldn’t afford to do an unpaid work placement. She went to a Law Society dinner but couldn’t afford the membership. Sharon can’t afford to do the Legal Practice Course to be able to practice as a solicitor. She witnessed younger students walking into good jobs because of personal connections. She failed two exams because of illness, but was later allowed to retake one that would prevent her from working as a solicitor. She got a low overall mark, but the prestige of the university she attended helped to ameliorate some of that. To finance her degree she started gambling. Sharon = resilient, agentic, strategic (cultivating friendships that could help her in the future).  David: in 40s, two children, studied Arts & Humanities degree + PGCE. David was ‘edged out of school’ at age 16; parents = low qualified, came from rough community = not supported to continue education/ lack of cultural capital. Worked as taxi driver for 20 years, through which he realized how important education can be for making a difference. He loves films so did a script-writing course, after which he signed up for an Access course. He found university to be the opposite of school and loved it and described himself as ‘the new me’. Becoming a teacher was something that appealed from beginning of degree. After completing PGCE, he took substitute teaching work and built his network, but has been in 5 years of precarious teaching work since, leaving him exhausted: “‘I have done everything I can’ to ‘be, try and make myself invaluable’ ‘trying to fecking please everybody’” (quoted on p.11). **Core argument:** “When a basic degree loses value our research indicates other resources – including wealth alongside social and specific forms of cultural capital, especially embodied cultural capital- come into to play in securing good graduate jobs”… “but it is sharply constrained by structural limits and objective possibilities”.  “While attending HE brings benefits the full extent of these risks becomes clear when one explores what happens after university especially in a period characterised by increased precarity and competition in the labour market”. (all p.12). |
| Moore, T & Morton, J. (2017). [The myth of job readiness? Written communication, employability, and the ‘skills gap’ in higher education](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03075079.2015.1067602), *Studies in Higher Education*,  42(3), 591–609.  AUS  Keywords: *employability; job readiness; written communication; professional practice; generic skills; higher education policy* | **Context:** Strong emphasis on ‘job readiness’ and so-called ‘soft skills’ in higher education. Authors focus on ‘professional writing skills’ as one area of employability, with calls to align writing ‘skills’ taught/assessed in higher education with the kinds of genres/ textual practices of industry  **Aim:** To respond to these questions:  “What are the specific concerns employers have about their graduates’ writing abilities? What expectations do they have of these abilities? How are perceived problems dealt with in the workplace? Do graduates in fact improve their writing over time, or do these abilities remain a permanent impediment both to their own careers and to the performance of the employing organisation? And finally, what do employers think can be done to best prepare graduates for the writing demands of their professional work?” (p.592)  **Theoretical frame:**  **Methodology:** Discourse-based interviews (looks like talk-around-text approach) with work supervisors/ employers of graduates (n=20) from a variety of professional areas. Interviews covered issues relating to writing abilities of graduates, nature of written communication for specific workplaces/ jobs, strategies for dealing with ‘writing issues of graduates’, ways to better prepare students for professional writing demands.  **Findings:**  *Writing abilities of graduates:* Some participants noted ‘diminishing standards’ in graduates’ writing, particularly in terms of surface/ technical issues (relating to spelling, punctuation, grammar), and attributed to “to a general lack of ‘care and diligence’” (p.596); others were much more positive in their evaluations, but caveats offered in terms of selective recruitment strategies. Distinctions made between writing/ thinking and style/genre.  *Perceived differences between academic and professional writing:* Most common observation = communicative norms are different: graduates write in discursive long-hand, rather than bringing “brevity and concision” to their writing (p.598), or avoiding academic/ technical language (need for plain English).  *Uniqueness of workplace writing:* Expansive accounts of differences between academic and professional writing points to bespoke nature of the communicative styles and preferences of disciplines and individual workplaces; as a result, some participants did not think it appropriate to expect students to be able to write effectively when they begin work.  *Workplace pedagogies*: several different approaches to supporting graduates to adopt writing style/practices: training and mentoring (formal training mostly in larger organisations), modeling and scaffolding, monitoring/ reviewing documents written by new employees, graduating of tasks (mastery before moving to next genre).  *Better preparation?* Participants = “sceptical about there being any systematic ways by which students could be prepared in advance for the quite specific communicative demands of their particular organization” (p.602) **Core argument:** Data do not support the public lament about graduates not being able to write; modes of communication differ significantly between academic and professional contexts, which could be a source for concerns abour graduates’ writing; “it is difficult, if not in practice impossible, to identify writing requirements of  professional areas in any generic sense, and that these are often unique to specific professional areas, organisations, and workplace” (p.603); graduates often need to be explicitly inculcated into workplace textual practices.  “…universities [need] to have a better understanding of the broad contexts of activity their graduates are bound for; but equally for industry and business in their recruitment and training activities to recognise from whence their graduates have come” (p.606). |
| Okay-Somerville, B. & Scholarios D. (2017). [Position, possession or process? Understanding objective and subjective employability during university-to-work transitions](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03075079.2015.1091813?journalCode=cshe20), *Studies in Higher Education*, 42(7), 1275–1291.  UK  Keywords: *university graduates; employability; university employability; university-to-work transitions; careers; career self-management* | **Context:** Changing job market (not-UK specific). Predictors of objective and subjective graduate employability during university-to-work transitions, with subjective indicators underexplored. Graduate employability = generally defined as “the individual’s capability to obtain and maintain employment” (p.1276); objective predictors = “(i.e. job offers, employment status and employment quality” and subjective = perceived (abstract)  University-to-work transitions are challenging because they “happen at a time when graduates make decisions about the most important things in life while not having much experience in doing so” (p.1276)  **Aim:** To bring together three strands of inquiry in a novel way; to test three hypotheses:   * “Hypothesis 1 (H1): Middle-class graduates will report more favourable objective and subjective employability upon graduation, in comparison to working-class graduates. * Hypothesis 2 (H2): Graduates from old UK universities, with 2:1/1st class degrees and from professional degree subjects are more likely to report higher objective and perceived employability in comparison to those from new universities, with 2:2/lower classifications and from non-professional degree subjects. * Hypothesis 3 (H3): Educational credentials will account for part of the variability in objective and subjective employability due to social background… * Hypothesis 4 (H4): CSM (career exploration, guidance seeking, networking, and work experience) will be positively related to objective and subjective employability. * Hypothesis 5 (H5): CSM will account for part of the variability in objective and subjective employability due to educational background” (p.1279)   **Theoretical frame:** Three contrasting conceptual frames (Holmes, 2013): position (social background; recognises credential inflation and how higher SES students use their resources to ‘buy’ credentials/ enhance their position through attending more elite institutions or taking more elite courses), possession (of human capital, of possessing certain qualities like team work and problem solving – but fuels a deficit framing that blames individuals for ‘lacking’ employability), process (of career self-management; proactivity; quality of applications; networking, career exploration, work experience) – the last category has received little empirical attention  **Methodology:** Quantitative; survey data from two cohorts of graduates who planned to start work straight after graduation (2009 and 2010) in the UK (n=293). See p.1280 for details of cohort and social background measurements etc.  **Findings:**  Social background had no impact on grad employability (H1); education background had a significant impact of employability quality, internal and external employability (H2 and H3).  Networking, environmental exploration and guidance seeking = correlate positively with various indicators of employability (H4)  CSM variables explain variance more than social or educational background (H5)  Findings support argument that career self-management has an incremental impact on graduate employability more than position/ human capital arguments. Being proactive = explains objective and subjective employability; more specifically, networking and guidance seeking are particularly impactful. Self-exploration and work experience = not significant  Limitation: social background was categorised according to parental occupation/ employment; authors argue that a future study might consider graduates’ own conception of social status  **Core argument:** Careers counsellors should encourage students to engage in proactive career self-management activities: “this kind of support, particularly through networking and guidance seeking, is most beneficial for the more meaningful outcomes of university-to-work transitions: employment quality and perceived employability. Students/ graduates may be encouraged towards more interaction with professionals in their  field, for example, alumni” (p.1287). |
| Oraison, H. Konjarski, L. & Howe, S. (2019). [Does university prepare students for employment? Alignment between graduate attributes, accreditation requirements and industry employability skills](https://ojs.deakin.edu.au/index.php/jtlge/article/view/790), *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability,* 10(1), 173–194.  AUS  Annotation written by Dr Megan Rose  Keywords: *employability, graduate attributes, accreditation, employment, psychology, nursing, education.* | **Context:**Readiness of Australian HE graduates for employment  **Aims:**To explore the extent to which accreditation requirements and employability in the industry align with graduate attributes in Australian HE nursing, psychology and education courses.  To determine if any gaps are informed by different priorities of industry and tertiary sectors.  **Methodology:**Thematic analysis of graduate attributes from and Australian University (not disclosed), SEEK search results and accreditation requirements from the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council, and the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership.  **Findings:**   * The analysis found that university graduate attributes and accreditation requirements aligned more closely with each other compared to the criteria outlined on the found job advertisements. * The criteria in the found job advertisements prioritized practical competencies, problem solving and communication skills. * The job listings did not mention the necessity of cultural understandings and attitudes towards inclusion and diversity, which was a key feature of graduate attributes and accreditations.   **Core argument:** Graduate attributes may need to better reflect preparedness for the workforce, however workforces may need to be encouraged also by accreditation boards and tertiary institutions of the importance for graduates to develop an understanding of equity and diversity. |
| Pham, T., Saito, E., Bao, D., & Chowdhury, R. (2018). [Employability of international students: Strategies to enhance their experience on work integrated learning (WIL) programs](https://ojs.deakin.edu.au/index.php/jtlge/article/view/693), *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability*, 9(1), 62–83.  AUS  Annotation written by Dr Clemence Due  Keywords: *work-integrated learning, employability, international students, Australia, higher education* | **Context:** Systematic qualitative review of relevant literature, documents and reports, and critically discusses issues facing international students undertaking work integrated learning (WIL) activities as part of their higher education in Australia  **Aim:** To further investigation of international students’ engagement in WIL and what can be done to help this cohort overcome existing problems  **Theoretical frame:** N/A  **Methodology:** Qual review  **Findings:** Amongst a wide range of problems, language barriers and limited understanding of local culture emerged as the two common major issues in all the studies reviewed. These have been widely acknowledged as areas in which international students need additional assistance in order to excel in their studies and to gain the most of their Australian study experiences. Key language issues are accents and technology literacy. Other key barrier is around cultural knowledge of workplaces.  **Core argument:** Need to rethink how to support international students in WIl, including in relation particularly to language and cultural issues. |
| Pitman, T. & Broomhall, S. (2009). [Australian universities, generic skills and lifelong learning](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02601370903031280), *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 28(4): 439-458.  AUS  Annotation written by Sally Baker  Keywords: *lifelong learning, graduate attributes, generic skills, higher education, RPL, STAT test* | **Context:** Focus on policy imperative for university study to provide students with metaskills needed for 21st century workplace (aka ‘generic skills’ or ‘graduate attributes’), which include proficiency in communication, interpersonal skills, high-order reasoning, critical thinking and the ability to use technology. Authors question whether generic skills and graduate attributes = same thing (and what = connection to ‘lifelong learning’). Governments tend to position lifelong learning in terms of maximizing economic benefits; universities tend to foreground social agenda (means of meeting needs of diverse learners) – not ignoring the economic benefits. Prevalence of discourses around ‘lifelong learning’ = unsurprising that universities seek to demonstrate benefits “delivered to students from their institution that will position them as important players in any holistic lifelong learning agenda” (p.441). Embedding generic skills = one way to counter criticisms about lowering quality of courses (e.g. courses in surfing; see Nelson reviews, 2002-3); generic skills also give universities = competitive edge over other sectors (e.g. VET) and providers – seen in term ‘graduate attributes’. Sets of generic skills set out in two major reports: Finn committee report (1991) and Mayer committee report (1992) = ‘key competencies’, Conflation of generic skills and graduate attributes suggests “that the two terms have been used with relatively little consideration of distinctions between the kinds of learning that they imply conceptually or delineate in practice” (p.444).  **Aim:**  **Theoretical frame:**  **Methodology:** Desktop audit and content analysis of 38 universities’ (Aus) websites for formal statements pertaining to graduate attributes  **Discussion:**   * 37/38 universities refer to graduate attributes * 34/38 universities offer detailed information about what the attributes are (in university policy/ teaching and learning guidelines/ handbooks) * 25 distinct attributes found across Australian universities (Table 1, p.445) * 33/34 mention ‘communication skills’, followed by ‘interpersonal skills and problem solving’ * 5/34 explicitly mention numeracy skills; numeracy is sometimes collapsed into ‘self-confidence’ or other attitudinal categories * Many universities include ‘mastery of disciplinary knowledge’ (or related) = marker of difference, especially for Go8; this “represents a significant reformulation of the supposed purpose to which defining specific generic skills responds, that the knowledge of whole disciplines can be reduced to an educational ‘graduate attribute’ or ‘skill’” (p.446) * Some attributes = related to character, moral, ethical traits (e.g. ‘cultural awareness’) = value or skill?   Patterns of attributes across university groupings: Go8 = more likely to list ‘behaving ethically’ (86% compared to average high 50s%); ‘awareness and respect of others’ = more common in new universities (89% compared to 57% in Go8). Diversity = “suggests that, although the sector as a whole has taken a united approach to the re-definition of generic skills as graduate attributes, the correlation of these attributes to sectoral position within the market still indicates considerable institutional variance” (p.447).  Authors note critique of underlying assumptions (disadvantaging particular students, based on normative assumptions about language and culture, assumptions about ways of assessing competency.  They raise questions about what kinds of attributes are valued (e.g. universities judge students on prior attributes/ generic skills gained prior to university; assumptions are made about what students have learnt through an undergraduate degree but prior learning is not valued as recognised prior learning (RPL)   * Only 29/38 = allow students to use RPL * 24/28 = have a written policy about RPL   Thus = contradiction between lifelong learning and recognising learning that happened prior to university.  Discussion of STAT test (p.452-454) **Core argument:** Generic skills = problematise the notion of university study as part of lifelong learning = “deep reservations” about concept of, underpinning assumptions and assessment of generic skills/ graduate attributes, with a tendency towards abstract characteristics rather than ‘objective skills’. At the same time, recognition of graduate skills = “unevenly handled” across the sector (p.455), in terms of students being able to demonstrate competency through prior study. |
| Pitman, T., Roberts, L., Bennett, D., & Richardson, S. (2019). [An Australian study of graduate outcomes for disadvantaged students](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0309877X.2017.1349895?journalCode=cjfh20), *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 43(1), 45–57,  AUS  Keywords: *Higher education; social inequality; students with disabilities, economics of*  *gender; employability; educational policy* | **Context:** Dearth of attention to graduate outcomes in equity research/ practice/ policy. Equity in higher education/ massification framed as both social justice and social mobility (human capital). The “overwhelming focus of equity policy has been on the inputs side of HE; that is, increasing aspirations for, and access to, HE” (p.46), with some focus on attainment. Overall, equity policy has prioritized enrolments over graduate outcomes, resulting in a “general assumption that increased access and participation for disadvantaged students will lead, ipso facto, to consequential post-graduation benefits” (p.46).  Literature review: most research focuses on first job post-study (Cai, 2013)  Students who study in elite institutions generally go on to higher-level occupations and higher salaries (Power & Whitty, 2008; Britton et al., 2016 – both UK studies).  Gendered implications with women earning significantly less than male peers  **Aim:** To use national data “to investigate relationships between disadvantage and graduate outcomes”; to provide “critical insights into how access to higher education does, or does not, lead to improvements in post-graduation equity” (abstract); “to look more critically at the factors that influence post-graduation outcomes for disadvantaged students and how these factors work in combination to aid or hinder success” (p.46).  **Theoretical frame:**  **Methodology:** Quantitative analysis of 2014 Australian Graduate Survey data (n= 142,647) according to disadvantage (using 6 formally identified equity groups) and employability. “The probability of each outcome  was estimated using three sets of predictors:  (1) Demographic – Age, gender, disability, Indigenous status, first language, place of birth, SES, state of residence, place of residence (metropolitan-regional)  (2) Educational – Institution group, institution location (metropolitan/regional), level of study, broad field of education, mode of study, type of fees paid  (3) Educational experience – Satisfaction, generic skills, graduate qualities, work during final year of study” (p.48)  **Findings:**  *Paid work in final year of study*: single most important factor in predicting employment 4–6 months after graduation, especially for students with a disability = 15 times more likely to be in full-time employment and 11.6 times more likely to be in part-time work. Similar patterns observed with Indigenous students, especially with regard to self-employment.  p.49  Students who studied full-time/ on campus = less likely to find work post-graduation (perhaps because = more difficult to take on paid work with those modes of study).  Students most likely to be paid working in final year = from regional areas and low SES and/or Indigenous: 60% were still working for same employer after graduation, 2/3 of whom were not seeking alternative employment. Majority of the 60% said their qualification was somewhat or not useful for their employment – suggesting a continuation of existing work that is unrelated to degree. Most likely to use qualification/ report qual as useful = Indigenous (31%); least likely = WINTA (21%): “This last finding is perhaps surprising as it suggests that women enrolling in science, engineering and IT-related courses are, in general, not securing positions relevant to their expertise” (p.49).  *Type of work:*  p.50.  First full-time job = highest for NESB (57.7%), WINTA (56.5%); least likely for Indigenous (30.9%)  More than half WINTA and NESB = in industry/ commerce  Indigenous graduates most likely to be working in public sector  “(1) Indigenous graduates earned more than any other group of graduates analysed in this study, both in full-time and part-time employment.  (2) Regional graduates earned above the median wage in both full-time and part-time employment.  (3) Low-SES graduates out-performed other graduates in terms of part-time employment salary, but in full-time employment they earned below the median wage.  (4) Graduates from non-English-speaking backgrounds and women graduating from nontraditional disciplines performed the worst of all groups, earning well-below median wages in both full- and part-time employment.  (5) WINTA graduates were the only cohort who recorded more people in part-time than full-time employment” (p.52).  Median salary = $50,000  Indigenous graduates = best employment outcomes (security of tenure, median salary, proportion of graduates earning $70,000 or above and relevance of qualification to employment)  Regional students = second best outcomes  Low SES students = mixed outcomes  NESB = poor graduate outcomes compared with other equity groups  Poorest outcomes = WINTA (well below median salaries) **Core argument:** HE “outcomes are not equal for all students and that HE disadvantage persists, to varying degrees, for many groups of students after they have completed their studies” (p.53) Indigenous students struggle with entry and participation but do well with graduate outcomes.  WINTA and NESB struggle with both entry and graduate outcomes.  Authors also point to limitations in the methodology of the survey. |
| Richardson, S., Bennett, D. & Roberts, L. (2016) [*Investigating the Relationship Between Equity and Graduate Outcomes in Australia*](https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/publications/investigating-the-relationship-between-equity-and-graduate-outcomes-in-australia/). Report submitted to the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE), Curtin University: Perth.  AUS  Annotation written by Sally Baker  Keywords: *graduate outcomes, equity, disciplines, employment, salary, employability* | **Context:** Explores patterns of disadvantage in post-completion for equity group students (because there is a glut of interest in access and participation but not enough focus on what happens after, and in context of graduate employability being ‘an important yardstick’ for institutional effectiveness)  **Aim:** To offer critical insights into effectiveness of equity policies on access and post-graduate equity  **Theoretical frame:**  **Methodology:** Quantitative: used 2014 Australian Graduate Survey (n=142,647 graduates who completed in 2013 and 2014 = between 4-6 months after graduating). Used 5 categories of post-completion activity: neither working nor studying/ working full time/ working part time/ self-employed/ studying. Students of interest:   Indigenous Australians (Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander people) – 1,106   Graduates with a disability - 4,229   NESB (speaking a language other than English as their first language) - 39,408   Born outside Australia - 55,166.   Regional (living outside the capital city of any state or territory) - 25,240.   Low SES (from bottom socio-economic (SES) quartile) – 11,151.   Female graduates from engineering, science and information technology fields – 8,603  Also drew on qualitative data collected from OLT project on employability (Bennett, Richardson & Mackinnon)  **Findings:**  Disciplinary patterns evident:   * Regional and low SES students concentrated in *medicine, related studies* and *education* * Indigenous/ students with disabilities = *society and culture* * NESB = *management, commerce, engineering* and *related technologies* * Equity group students tend to be in lower status courses (e.g. nursing, midwifery, public health/ human welfare studies/ teaching).   Post-completion employment patterns:   * Compound disadvantage impacted on likelihood to be working * Undertaking paid work in final year = increased likelihood = most important indicator of working post-completion: “those graduates who reported undertaking paid work during their final year of study, * more than 60 per cent still worked for the same employer” and 2/3 who worked = working for same employer and not seeking alternative work (p.7) * Younger graduates more likely to do further studying; older graduates more likely to be working * Regional/ low SES/ NESB = more likely to be studying if also indigenous * Having disability decreased likelihood of working if also NESB * NESB less likely to go on to further study if low SES/ WINTA * Male + low SES/ NESB/ regional = more likely to be self-employed (statistics on p.24)   Salary outcomes:   * Graduates from top two SES quartiles earn more * Indigenous graduates earn less * NESB (born outside Aus & LBOTE at home) earn less * Students with disabilities earn less * Male graduates earn more than females (FT) * Go8 graduates earn more than ARN/ IRUA graduates * Graduates who studied by distance earned more than on-campus graduates * Graduates who worked in final year earned less but more likely to be in work   Types of work:   * Indigenous graduates more likely to be employed by government/ smaller proportion employed in industry and commerce * More indigenous and disabled graduates = employed by not-for-profits * More indigenous health/ education graduates employed in public sector * More indigenous/ regional graduates working in education/ health and community services * NESB graduates more likely to work in retail, manufacturing or hospitality/ finance and insurance sector and as * information and communication technology professionals. * NESB/ graduates with disabilities = more likely to be on temp/casual contracts * Low SES/ regional graduates more likely to be on fixed term contracts * “In order to find work, regional graduates were most likely to approach an employer directly. NESB graduates made the greatest use of friends and family, and Indigenous graduates made most use of work contacts or networks” (p.9).   Qualitative data on perceptions of employment/ employability   * Equity groups = NESB/ low SES/ Indigenous * All 3 equity groups expressed concern about getting work experience * Non-equity students = more likely to provide multi-faceted understandings of what employers want * Low SES/ Indigenous students = more likely to view university lecturers as best source of information on careers * NESB = more likely to source information from friends, family or the internet * “To enhance their employability, students from all three equity groups focused on study and gaining work experience, followed by practising their skills. These cohorts were the least likely to mention university resources such as careers centres or professional learning opportunities” (p.9).   **Recommendations:**   1. Create post-graduate measurement for employment that differentiates between work gained as a result of studies and work that has continued from when studying 2. Make provision for multiple graduate outcomes (e.g more than one job/ working and further study) 3. Broaden what counts as ‘success’ in shifting labour market 4. Gather data at regular intervals to gain insight into longer term consequences 5. Recruit students from all backgrounds into all fields (to ameliorate concentration in lower status professions/programs) 6. Provide training support to lecturers/ tutors on offering career advice, especially for students from equity groups 7. Identify barriers to employment for particular groups, especially graduates with disabilities |
| Robins, T., Roberts, R., Sarris, A. (2018). [The role of student burnout in predicting future burnout: exploring the transition from university to the workplace](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/07294360.2017.1344827?journalCode=cher20), *Higher Education Research & Development*, 37(1), 115–130.  AUS  Keywords: *student burnout; study transition; health students* | **Context:** Burnout at work and in studies in disciplines of nursing, psychology, occupational therapy and social work – who were followed from last year of university into 2nd year of work. Mental health/ burnout in university students = “growing concern”. Burnout definition = borrowed from Maslach, Jackson & Leiter (1996): “a psychological syndrome related to prolonged stressors at work and characterised by three components **exhaustion, cynicism and low professional efficacy**” (not a quote from Maslach et al.; on p.115, my highlighting). The disciplines studied also require working placements, which are likely to increase the stressors that lead to burnout. In medical students, burnout has correlated with negative effects, including lower exam  scores, erosion of moral behaviour and sub-optimal patient care, plus suicidal thoughts, less use of research knowledge in practice (see p.116). Gap in knowledge = little consideration of how study burnout relates to work burnout  **Aim:** To “explore the transition from study to work, including exploring the impact of student burnout on work burnout” (abstract); “to explore whether burnout increases or decreases upon entering the workplace and whether the experience of student burnout impacts future work burnout, even when controlling for personality and mental health” (p.116). Authors set out three hypotheses:  “H1a. Exhaustion will be higher in the workplace (T2 and T3) than in study (T1).  H1b. Cynicism will be higher in the workplace (T2 and T3) than in study (T1).  H1c. Professional efficacy will be lower in the workplace (T2 and T3) than in study (T1)” (p.116)  and  “H2a. Student exhaustion (T1) will predict workplace exhaustion (T3) when controlling for neuroticism and mental health (T1).  H2b. Student cynicism (T1) will predict workplace cynicism (T3) when controlling for neuroticism and mental health (T1).  H2c. Student professional efficacy (T1) will predict workplace professional efficacy (T3) when controlling for neuroticism and mental health (T1)” (p.117); and  “H3a. Job demands and job resources (T2) will predict exhaustion (T3) when controlling for neuroticism, mental health and student exhaustion (T1)  H3b. Job demands and job resources (T2) will predict cynicism (T3) when controlling for neuroticism, mental health and student cynicism (T1).  H3c. Job demands and job resources (T2) will predict professional efficacy (T3) when controlling for neuroticism, mental health and student efficacy (T1)” (p.117–8).  **Theoretical/ analytical frame:**  1) Masslach Burnout Inventory  2) Conservation of resources (COR) theory = burnout happens because of inadequate resources, and when burnout happens as student, workers are less likely to cope with workplace demands;  3) Job Demands and Resources (JDR) theory = demands/ resources of job can predict burnout.  **Methodology:** Quantitative: online survey (including measures of exhaustion, cynicism, professional efficacy, mental health, neuroticism, study/job demands and resources) at 3 points across the data collection period (once every 3 years). Data controlled for using measures of neuroticism and mental health. Participants = 260 for T1, 86 for T2 (first year in work), and 57 in T3 (working) – see p.118–9 for detail  **Findings:** Burnout = higher rate in final year of study than in first year of work  Over half of students had high levels of burnout (52%)  “Exhaustion and cynicism during the final year of study both predicted additional variance in corresponding exhaustion and cynicism in the third year in the workplace” (p.125) = supporting existing finding (Dahlin et al. 2010) that study burnout predicts work burnout.  **Core argument:** Important to explore student/ study burnout because of relationship with work burnout |
| Römgens, I., Scoupe, R. & Beausaert, S. (2019): [Unraveling the concept of employability, bringing together research on employability in higher education and the workplace](doi:%2010.1080/03075079.2019.1623770), *Studies in Higher Education,*  NETH  Annotation written by Dr Prasheela Karan    Keywords: *Employability; European higher education area; conceptions; workplace learning; professional competences* | **Context:**Employability has been defined in different ways in different streams of literature, with overlapping dimensions.  **Aim:**To investigate more integrated approaches to employability, combining employability research in higher education and in workplace learning.  Theoretical frame:  **Methodology:**The authors analyse various streams of literature, and: (1) present insights into definitions of employability based on competence-based approaches, and integrated overviews of conceptual frameworks of employability, and (2) discuss the similarities and differences between the different streams of literature. Through this comparison, the authors present an integrated overview of employability.  **Findings:**The authors suggest/argue five dimensions are associated with leading conceptualisations of employability in workplace learning literature: (1) human capital, (2) reflection on self and organisation, (3), lifelong learning and (active and passive) flexibility, (4), social capital, and (5) healthy work-life balance. They found similarities and overlaps in the two streams. For example human capital overlapped with (Applying) disciplinary knowledge and Transferable generic skills in higher education literature. **Core argument:**The authors argue that, “Given their close ties and complementarity, future research in either context should include a broader definition of employability, taking into consideration the concept dimensions from both contexts” (p.14). |
| Santos, G.G. (2019). [Career boundaries and employability perceptions: an exploratory study with graduates](doi:%2010.1080/03075079.2019.162072), *Studies in Higher Education*,  POR  Annotation written by Dr Prasheela Karan    Keywords: *Career boundaries; employability; focus group interviews; graduates; Portuguese labour market* | **Context:** The study investigates the views of graduates on employability barriers and career boundaries within the context of a crisis economy, Portugal.  **Aims:** The study sought to extend the focus within the Higher Education literature on human capital variables (individual characteristics and aptitudes) as a key aspect of employability to structural-contextual factors, such as labour market conditions.  **Methodology:** A qualitative study in which five focus group interviews were conducted with 30 graduates enrolled in business and management masters’ programmes at a public Portuguese university. The study had the following research questions: RQ1) Which type of career boundaries are perceived as most important for graduate employability?, and RQ2) How is graduate employability affected by those career boundaries? (p.3).  **Findings:** The study found a range of diverse issues affected graduate employability, categorised as: (1) Organizational and work- related boundaries (for those already in employment to advance their careers) - constraints included to lack of job autonomy and training by the employment);  (2) Contextual and labour-market boundaries – economic crisis  (3) Personal-related boundaries - not wanting to move geographical locations for a job and work-life balance; and  (4) Cognitive- cultural boundaries – these related to the “cultural rationales that people adopted in order to make sense of their specific employability opportunities” (13). For example, participants discussed that professional internships were being misused by employers, and raised the importance of family ties and personal recommendations in securing employment.  **Core argument:** Graduate employability and career progression is affected by a range of factors (not just human capital variables), such as organisational and workplace factors, labour market conditions and socio-cultural norms (for instance, the expectation that women will stay home and take care children regardless of their educational qualifications). Consequently, graduate employability cannot be the sole responsibility of the individual. The efforts of other stakeholders - governmental entities, Higher Education policy-makers and employers – are critical. |
| Sin, C.; Tavares, O. & Amaral, A. (2019) [Accepting employability as a purpose of higher education? Academics’ perceptions and practices](doi:%2010.1080/03075079.2017.1402174), *Studies in Higher*  *Education*, 44(6), 920–931.    POR  Annotation written by Dr Prasheela Karan    Keywords: *Employability; teaching and*  *learning; Bologna process; higher education policy; academics’ perceptions; purpose of higher education* | **Context:**As a result of the Bologna process, emphasis in Portugal has been placed on higher education students’ transition to the labour market, with information on the employment rates of graduates as one criterion for programme accreditation  **Aims:**This study sought to understand how the Bologna process is being implemented through the teaching practices of academics.  **Methodology:** The study adopted a qualitative approach. Data was gather through focus groups with close to 70 academics from 3 disciplinary areas - Arts/Design, Computer Engineering and Management. The research participants worked in different institutional types.  **Findings:**Employability was variably understood as synonymous with employment, as an ability, in its short-term interpretation (training to secure employment) and in its long-term one (development of skills important in the workforce, e.g. critical thinking, autonomy, a desire for learning) (see p. 925). Differences in understanding were found between academics in different disciplines, for example, academics teaching Arts subject discussed the difficulties aligning between arts subjects and labour market needs, in contrast with Computer Engineering and Management academics.  **Core argument:**Employability for all academics was a key consideration in their teaching practice, though with different ends in mind, i.e. fitting into specific employment vs introducing students to artistic practice. As a result, the “findings warn against equating employability with crude indicators of employment and using it as a performance indicator” (p.920). |
| Stevenson, J. & Clegg, S. (2011). [Possible selves: students orienting themselves towards the future through extracurricular activity](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01411920903540672), *British Educational Research Journal,* 37(2), 231–246.  UK  Annotation written by Sally Baker | **Context:** UK higher education context and employability agenda (which assumes future facing direction – see Clegg, 2009) – looks at extracurricular activity (ECA) through lens of possible selves. Authors argue such discourses and associated pedagogical strategies assume that students are able to imagine their futures. ECA = undefined set of activities that assume a student is funded, full-time and has time for leisure (p.232)  **Aim:** To explore whether students engage in ECA with future employability in mind  **Theoretical frame:** Possible selves literature, which had at the point of writing not explicitly been used to explore higher education. Possible selves “are representations of the self in the future, including those that are ideal and hoped for as well as those that one does not wish for” (p.233). The more developed a self is, the more = provides motivation (p,233). A person’s biography and demographic profile can impact on their possible selves (and the clarity of those imaginaries) – see Reay et al.’s (2005) work on university ‘choices’ and other work on aspirations. Authors don’t assume that a present tense stance is negative (noting conceptual work by Adam and Archer)  **Methodology:** Draws from larger mixed-methods study of diversity and value of ECA in relation to graduate outcomes. Data collection = survey and in-depth interviews with students from post-92 HEI (n=61). Study explored students self-defined ECAs, reasons for participation, value ascribed and perceptions of employers’ valuing.  **Findings:** Clear differences in terms of dispositions towards participating in ECA, forms of valued ECA and perceptions. Clear difference also between students’ perceptions of value and those of HEI. Three categorisations of orientations towards future and degree of clarity regarding the future:  1) well developed orientation with some ‘highly elaborated’ career-possible selves (34/61) = **highly developed**  Half = middle class, some students = changing career, most had already participated in range of ECA at school and in community and had used these experiences to gain access to university. Generally = high achieving goals (first class degree) and were now using ECA to help get a job post-degree: “Consequently,  their choice of ECA was specific, focused and linked specifically to developing the knowledge, skills and experience needed to be successful in a competitive labour market in a chosen field” (p.238). Generally quite single-minded.  2) strongly located in the present (20/61) = **underdeveloped/ blocked**  Six students = focused on being academically-successful students = time present (not beyond graduation) and these students engaged in ECA to support their academic pursuits and goals. These students also often chose not to engage in paid work = privileged position: “While oriented towards the present, it is clear that this group of students had high cultural capital and that the sorts of activities they were engaged could easily be rescripted in the future and aligned to possible selves after graduation” (p.240). Other present tense students = enjoying their time as students and generally had undeveloped career aspirations/ long-term goals. These students worked primarily to fund their present lifestyle. Seven (working class) students = only engaging in paid work = present survival strategy: “Their dominant temporality was in the present and participation was not designed to support a goal of a future possible self” (p.240). These students needed more support to develop envisaged self. Other group (4) = trapped in present time by caring responsibilities. These older women had partially developed future selves but faced structural and logistical barriers to realizing plans.  3) unified sense of past-present-future time (7/61) = **developed**  **Core argument:** Participation in ECA = multiple meanings, not just future employability. Participation in ECA= shaped by students’ embodied capitals. Authors argue the findings “raises questions about ways the differential advantages of higher education for future employability are compounded by experiences in  higher education, including the possibility of being able to elaborate possible selves through participation in ECA” (p.243). |
| Theodore, R., Taumoepeau, M., Kokua, J., Tustin, K., Gollop, M., Taylor, N., Hunter, J., Kiro, C. & Poulton, R. (2018). [Equity in New](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/07294360.2017.1344198)  [Zealand university graduate outcomes: Māori and Pacific graduates](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/07294360.2017.1344198), *Higher Education Research & Development*, 37(1), 206–221.  NZ  Keywords: *Equity; graduate outcomes; higher education; indigenous; longitudinal; Māori; Pacific Island; university* | **Context:** Lower participation in higher education and lower labour market outcomes for Māori and Pacific (M&P) peoples in NZ; authors argue that not enough is known about the labour market outcomes/ financial outcomes of M&P graduates. Māori = 14.9% of NZ population; Pacifika = 7.4%. M&P have higher unemployment levels, lower incomes, fewer assets, poorer health (p.208). While participation/ enrolment levels doubled between 2005–2015, their participation rate is still significantly lower than European-decent NZ/ other ethnic groups. M&P tend to track against other NZ in terms of employment, but are lower in terms of pay and take longer to repay student loans  **Aim:**  **Theoretical frame:**  **Methodology:** Data collected through Graduate Longitudinal Study New Zealand (GLSNZ); comparison of M&P outcomes compared with other groups from final year of study (n=8719) and two years after graduation (n=6104).  **Findings:**  M&P students = more likely to be parents, first in family, be studying in Humanities  M&P = more likely to be studying undergraduate  Pacific students= more likely to be older  M&P = had similar levels of employment 2 years post-graduation to other graduates  Income levels varied significantly; M&P reported “significantly worse financial circumstances across a range of measures” (p.212); were twice as likely to take out a student loan; Māori had 15%/ Pacific = 17% higher levels of student loan debt overall worse financial strain (see p.213)  M&P = significantly more likely to report helping family/ friends/community.  Analysis supports the idea that participating in higher education helps to bridge some of the equity gap in terms of employment rates; graduates = more likely to participate in civic behavior (voting, volunteering).  M&P = more likely to enter university with challenging financial situations, therefore explaining to some degree why they take on more debt, and longer-term reported financial strain  **Core argument:** NZ universities need to continue to think about how to encourage M&P participation in university that recognises the financial burden it adds |
| Tomlinson, M. (2017). [Forms of graduate capital and their relationship to graduate employability](https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/ET-05-2016-0090/full/html), *Education + Training,* 59(4), 338–352.  UK  Keywords: *Higher education, Policy, Employability, Skills, Capitals* | **Context:** Existing discussions/ understandings of graduate employability are based on skills concepts; graduate employability is more complex than this conceptualisation: “HEIs in particular have been very responsive to the language of skills adopted by employers and been prone to reproduce such discourse both in relation to institutional strategies and specific pedagogic initiatives” (p.339). Author notes James et al.’s (2013) distinction between ‘graduate skills’ (homogeneous) and ‘skills that graduates have’, with the latter being context/ discipline dependent. Author also notes literature that points to perceived ineffectiveness of skills teaching, particularly resulting from ‘contextual barriers’ between what is taught and what is practiced in the workplace – thus resisting assumptions about conduit-model/ transferability. Author also notes literature on ‘career management competencies’ (e.g. Jackson & Wilton, 2016)  **Aim:** To present a new model of employability; to “develop an alternative, relational conceptualisation of employability [than skills-centred accounts] based on the concept of capitals. It discusses how this provides a more detailed and multi-dimensional account of the resources graduates draw upon when transitioning to the labour market” (abstract)  **Theoretical frame:** ‘Graduate capitals’: *human, social, cultural, identity* and *psychological*, which are “key resources that confer benefits and advantages onto graduates. These resources encompass a range of educational, social, cultural and psycho-social dimensions and are acquired through graduates’ formal and informal experiences” (p.339). Author argues that these forms of capital “relate to different properties, they overlap to some degree and their boundaries are fairly fluid” (p.339).  p.340  **Methodology:** Essay  **Discussion:**  *Human capital*: “knowledge and skills which graduates acquire which are a foundation of their labour market outcomes” (p.341) – closest to ‘skills’ model that are dominant in HE responses to teaching graduate employability. In some disciplines, it is possible to receive professional training through university study (e.g. nursing, teaching, accountancy), but most courses are generalist when it comes to graduate employability.Although not necessarily practically useful, employers do respond to the language of ‘skills’, “therefore making it important for graduates to be aware and able to communicate these back to employers” (p.342). For graduates, it is important that they know how to discuss these and foreground the links between the ‘skills’ and the specialism of the job they are applying for/ starting in.  *Social capital:* “the sum of social relationships and networks that help mobilise graduates’ existing human capital and bring them closer to the labour market and its opportunity structures” (p.342). Participating in university offers the opportunity to develop ‘bridging ties’ (see Putnam, 1999 on bonding and bridging ties). Issue for students is whether they can spot opportunities and exploit them, which is where inequity plays out. Graduates/ students need to open opportunities for bridging through employer engagement (e.g. through careers fairs, online profiles), through work experience/ internships. University careers services can be useful for helping employer engagement, especially “if knowledgeable and engaging practitioners are able to impart valuable knowledge on how to access particular fields of employment and build relations with employers. This extends guidance on approaching and better interacting with employers, particularly amongst those who are reluctant to approach employers” (p.343)  *Cultural capital*: “the formation of culturally valued knowledge, dispositions and behaviours that are aligned to the workplaces that graduates seek to enter” (p.343). Cultural capital = institutionalized through participation in particular institutions, although massification of higher education has diluted the potency in shaping access to employment, meaning that graduates have to do more now to develop cultural capital (e.g. winning prizes, attending conferences). This presents equity challenges, in terms of “the different understandings of field rules, as well as knowledge and confidence in being able to negotiate them” and in the “decisions and orientations, including in the case of lower socio-economic graduates, precluding areas of the job market that their middle class colleagues may feel comfortable in approaching” (p.344).  *Identity capital*: “the level of personal investment a graduate makes towards the development of their future career and employability” + ability “to draw on experiences and articulate a personal narrative which aligns to the employment domains they seek to enter” (p.345). Graduates therefore need to develop career identities and perform them while trying to enter the labour market. Work of Jackson (2016) on ‘pre-professional identity’ = pertinent to universities’ work, “helping graduates to develop self-perceptions and goals which may form part of their wider career development” (p.346), through the ‘landscapes of practice’. Investment is key idea; “Previous research indicates that students who invest more strongly in their careers tend to show higher level of identity capital (Tomlinson, 2007) – future careers are a strong part of their on-going and anticipated future “life project”” (p.346). The resume/CV = important demonstrator of this: “If marketability is now a significant component of employability then graduates need to be primed in the ability to present a compelling employability narrative that conveys their identities” (p.347).  *Psychological capital*: “based on the psychosocial resources which enable graduates to adapt and respond proactively to inevitable career challenges” (p.347) = level of adaptability (inc. resilience in terms of withstanding set backs) – e.g. ‘career adapatability’ (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Self-efficacy also important. Two areas for development: “flexible contingency planning in early career management and guidance and the other is around expectation management and coping mechanisms for inevitable stress and set-back” (p.348). **Core argument:** Offers a new view of ‘graduate capital’: “One of the main features and strengths of the  capitals approach is its emphasis on the significance of multiple resources which are constitutive of employability, which are acquired across various domains and are not simply confined to formal educational provision. Capital formation is also, therefore, processual and relational in the sense that capitals are acquired and deployed over time and their effects sustained across a range of employment-related contexts” (p.349).  Universities need to:  1) help students to develop social/ bridging ties via careers services  2) ‘think creatively’ about how to enhance students’ cultural capital through “processes of cultural unfreezing and expanding the realms of the possible, including the development of personal confidence and horizon scanning” - “predicated on the principle that if students are exposed to institutional cultures, including its key cultural actors – i.e., current students, academics and managers – this will challenge their constraining impressions whilst also potentially expanding their horizons” – which is a key feature of WP activity (p.344). Employer engagement/ formal recruitment training could be helpful.  3) help students to prepare for ‘reality shock’; expectation management; to have honest conversations about the challenges of finding employment.  Author notes these themes as being significant for further consideration:  “The multi-faceted nature of HE and its many institutional offerings which help constitute graduates’ development in numerous ways – academic, pastoral, cultural, political and social” (p.349).  “The significance of experience, particularly narratives of experience, upon which different capitals are formed” (p.349).  “The importance of accessing, presenting and capitalising on experience and being aware of how these can be used for one’s advantage” (p.350). |
| Tones, M.; Fraser, J.; Elder, R.; & White, K. (2009). [Supporting mature-aged students from a low socioeconomic background](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10734-009-9208-y), *Higher Education,* 58(X): 505-529.  AUS  Annotation by Sally Baker  Keywords *Low socioeconomic status, Mature-aged students, Non traditional students, Study barriers, Student support services, Student marketing, Family, Employers* | **Context:** Sought to examine perspectives of mature age (25+) students’ experiences of support services and barriers to study. Works from Cullity’s (2006) estimate that 38% of commencing UG students = mature age. Cites work that argues mature age students = similar performance to younger students; mature age students more likely to have family responsibilities that impact on learning. Discusses ‘cycle of low wage employment’ and education as a means out of it. Returning to education = impact on learning identities. Works from rationale that low SES mature age students need support: “Mature students from a LSES background are likely to require additional support services to compensate for probable financial, educational, and social disadvantages” (p.509).  **Aim:** To examine a) barriers to study, b) use of current university support services, c) helpfulness of support  services if used, and d) responses to a range of proposed support strategies not currently offered by a major Australian institution among mature-aged students (p.509)  **Methodology:** Mixed methods – interviews and focus groups; audit of university support services + online survey to explore patterns of usage/ barriers to usage. Study conducted in 2006 (presumably at QUT). Uni has 60% new enrolments = mature age students/ 16% = low SES. Attrition rates for mature/younger students = same/ retention/success ratios similar for mature/young low SES students. Low SES students enter via access scheme and go through specialised orientation program. Two-phased study: pilot study (focus groups/interviews with mature age students – findings fed into ‘multifaceted strategy’ to support mature low SES students (phase 2 = evaluation of these via online survey). Low SES identified by possession of health care card. 31 participants (10 = low SES: Year 1 – PG). Phase 1 = 23 participants (4 x focus groups); 8 x individual interviews. 223 students participated in online survey + statistical analysis  **Findings:** Analysis suggests patterns in terms of usage according to SES, age and enrolment status  Phase 1: Two main barriers: responsibility conflict and adjustment to university life  Lack of awareness of support services = issue  Suggestions generated = social events for mature age students, computing courses, greater flexibility in delivery  Phase 2:  Low SES made more use of financial services  No statistic difference in perceived helpfulness of services (by SES)  Low SES students less likely to use disability support/ counselling and academic services  Low SES students reported not using services because services not available when needed (same for 45+ years)  **Core argument:** Students aged 45+ need greater support adjusting to university life and support services are inadequate: “who indicated that several services were not available when they needed or wanted to use them” (p.519). Lack of awareness of where to go for help = significant: “uncertainty of where to go for assistance was reported by 76% of LSES students, and 54% of non LSES students suggests that current support services targeted at adjustment to university life are not adequately promoted, or that students are unaware of how services could help them” (p.523) |
| Tuononen, R., Parpala, A. & Lindblom-Ylänne, S. (2019). [Graduates’ evaluations of usefulness of university education, and early career success – a longitudinal study of the transition to working life](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02602938.2018.1524000?journalCode=caeh20), *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education,* 44(4), 581–595.    FIN  Annotation written by Dr. Megan Rose    Keywords: *Student Experiences, Transition, Early Careers, Job Satisfaction, Employment, Academic Competence, Career Success* | **Context:**Finnish students perceptions of the usefulness of tertiary education for employment.  **Aim:**To develop a deeper understanding of how graduate students differ in the way in which they describe their academic competencies, as well as the degree of satisfaction students have of their education and career success.  **Methodology: Longitudinal mixed phase study.**  Phase one n=83 interviewed at time of graduation  Phase two n=57 participated in a follow-up questionnaire 3 years later.  **Findings:**  Students who were able to articulate their competencies during phase one perceived stronger correlations to their job and degree during phase two. Students who had a limited understanding struggled with employment and clarity around their career goals. Competencies identified included information processing, collaboration and communication skills.  Ability to recognise diverse competencies correlated with later career success and the capacity to face challenges in the workplace, as well as perceived satisfaction with their degree and its usefulness.  **Core argument:**The ability to understand and articulate the competencies achieved through studying at university are significant in individuals’ abilities to find employment and also feel satisfied in their employment. |
| Wheelahan, L.; Leahy, M.; Fredman, N.; Moodie, G.; Arkoudis, S.; & Bexley, E. (2012). [*Missing links: the fragmented relationship between tertiary education and jobs*](https://www.ncver.edu.au/__data/assets/file/0017/10664/missing-links-the-fragmented-relationship-2554.pdf). NCVER: Adelaide.  AUS  Annotation written by Sally Baker  PATHWAY OUT | **Context:** Reports on first year of 3-year research project: ‘Vocations: the link between postcompulsory education and the labour market’, which is exploring educational/occupational pathways (relationships between study and work) – particularly in terms of changing vocation/ taking other qualifications. Based on idea that “Where there are strong occupational pathways, strong educational pathways will follow” (p.7). Australia generally has weak occupational pathways, which is made worse by decline in mid-level jobs (evident in diminishing value of diplomas). “Most policies that attempt to improve pathways focus only on education and not on the structure of the labour market or the relationship between the two” (p.7). Mentions that lifelong learning can take a long time and many students drop out. Transition is made complex by different curriculum models between VET and HE. Explores pathways from starting point of structure of labour market and its impact on how education is structured and what pathways are made available.  Pathways may describe:   * an individual’s trajectory through education and employment * a career path or history of jobs (occupational pathways) * the string of programs an individual undertakes (educational pathways) * negotiated arrangements linking qualifications at different levels of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF; for example, from the certificate IV or diploma to the bachelor’s degree in nursing). These arrangements may enable access, guaranteed access or credit in the destination course (p.11)   Most learners who continue to further study do so in original sector (VET or HE); there are high levels of student transfer between VET and HE when = strong occupational pathway or in connected/similar industry-related programs. Connections are weaker in programs that are more generalist or theoretical (without strong occupational links). Strength of connections between work and education relate to economic organisation: “Anglophone liberal market economies use the labour market to match graduates and jobs, and graduates need similar, broad knowledge and skills to compete with each other. Where this is the case, education mainly screens in those regarded as high achievers, reflected by academic achievement, and screens out those regarded as low achievers” (p.13) – relates to two different logics: employment logic or education logic; education systems in coordinated market economies have an employment logic (not Australia) – programs are broader and prepare for citizenship; in Australia (education logic), VET =based on industrial models (workplace/ task-oriented)  **Aim:** Project aim = improve pathways within education, within work and between the two. Project has three strands: 1) entry-level VET qualifications (especially VET in school); 2) role of tertiary institutions in fostering vocations; 3) how to improve flows between education providers and workplaces/ how to improve occupational pathways  **Theoretical frame:** Models of capability approach: Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2000)  **Methodology:** Mixed methods. Quantitative: uses 2009 ABS Survey of Education and Training to examine student flows using logistical regression. Qualitative: interviews with students (22 = VET/ 9 = HE) and graduates (4 = VET graduates; 3 = HE graduates), as well as managers, careers advisors, learning advisors (n=13), teachers and academics (17; also 4 from UK). Case studies offered of: finance, primary health, and electrical trades  **Findings:**  General findings (so far) = educational pathways are fragmented, as are labour market pathways. Policy attempts to improve these are weak and partial.   * Some fields have strong links to the workplace (e.g. nursing) but others have much weaker relationships with specific jobs, such as in finance and agriculture. * Students tend to stay within their initial field of education depending on how “narrowly vocational” the discipline/area * Work is the major reason for students to take another qualification (chances of employment) * “Typically, students follow educational pathways for two main reasons: first, because the first credential allows entry into the higher program; and, second, to build confidence in their ability to study” (all p.3)   *Student flows*: previous work by team shows that limited numbers of students go on to get a second qualification in same field, suggesting “a lack of coherence between education, training and work in Australia” (p.15). Analysis of ABS data shows an increasing trend towards post-school qualifications and in multiple qualifications – mostly additional qualifications taken after 24, and increase in HE qualifications.  There are significant disciplinary differences between VET or HE first (see p.16-17)  57% of respondents (students) said they undertook their first qualification for a job. A common reason for VET students was as study prerequisite for other qualification (but only 13% said this). With second qualifications, most common reason was to get a job (32.6%).  *Student interview data:* Students reported they didn’t just want ‘a job’, they wanted a job connected with the field/program (with long-term view). Students used pathways for two main reasons: 1) to get credentials for higher level study; 2) to develop confidence/ to prepare/ to ‘warm up’. Authors note difficulties for students transitioning from VET to HE (p.25) – students referred to assessment, different types of learning, need to be more independent, develop good study skills. 3 students suggested an orientation program. Getting information = important (many students did not have a problem with this). Experiences of work experience differed by course: “Students value work placements but there are difficulties that need to be addressed by institutions and workplaces to strengthen the links between the two and improve students’ experiences of transition” (p.26).  *Institutional perspectives*: Teachers noted the time it takes to complete pathways (under-represented/ discussed in literature) – many teachers have taken similar pathways and are able to equate own experience/ be empathetic to students (e.g. balance need to earn with study/ family commitments etc.). Staff noted several benefits to pathways (e.g. achieving gov’t targets, providing flows of students, cut marketing costs, integration of sectors) but UK academics warned of believing that pathways = panacea to inequality/ inequities. Staff noted difficulties in hierarchical alignment of pathways: “Some interviewees thought the disparities in status between VET and higher education were reflected in the way pathways were developed: access to pathways is bestowed by the higher-level program, while those in the lower-level program are expected to organise them and ensure students are academically prepared to study at the next level” (p.30), with students viewed as ‘underprepared’ from all lower levels (e.g. VET in school students underprepared for VET). Mixed views = whether VET students are prepared for HE study. Also, pathways often driven by heads of dept. without necessarily getting input or investment from teachers/ lecturers and non-teaching staff. Funding and policies seen as obstacles. VET staff felt that HE staff dismissed or misunderstood what they do (except in dual sector institutions).  Two issues = consensus between staff from both sectors: CBT and mathematics. VET teachers = constrained by CBT and HE teachers agree – perhaps not enough engagement with theory and capacity of CBT ‘to develop the person’ (p.32) = too much focus on workplace outcomes. Also VET courses do not emphasise maths enough.  **Core argument:**  “While a focus on educational policies, governance and structures and institutional relationships between VET and higher education is essential to improving educational pathways and improving links between education and work, it is also necessary to focus on the way labour is deployed at work and the way work placements are structured, while recognising that learning needs to support and not supplant the employer’s main business” (p.8). Advocates for capabilities approach: “Capabilities are differentiated from generic skills, employability skills or graduate attributes because they are not ‘general’ or ‘generic’. Rather, the focus is on the development of the individual and on work, and consequently students need access to the knowledge, skills and capabilities so they can exercise agency in their vocational stream” (p.37) = need vocational streams. |

1. The category of ‘Asian language background’ needs unpacking [↑](#footnote-ref-1)