



Findings from the Tracer Survey of UWI Graduates, Class of 2020

Office of Planning and
Institutional Research,
University of the West Indies,
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Introduction

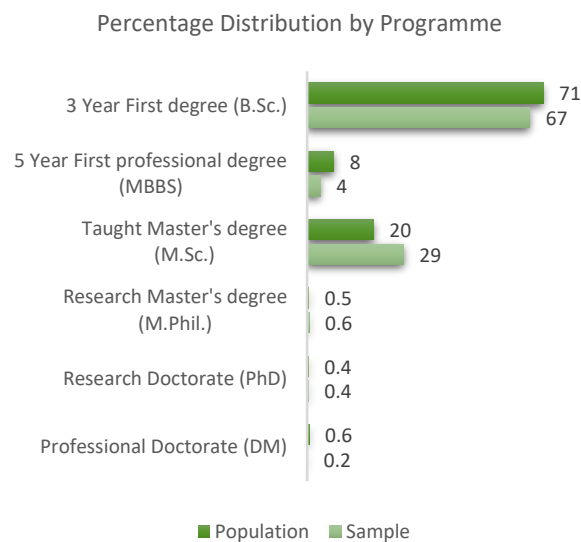
In keeping with the mission of the Office of Planning and Institutional Research (OPAIR), graduates from the Class of 2020 were invited to partake in a survey. The survey targeted first- and higher-degree graduates who were asked about their programme of study, employment opportunities, job satisfaction, previous work experience, further education, and UWI's influence on knowledge and intellectual abilities. The survey was conducted during April 21 to June 10, 2022 and was administered using the online survey platform, Qualtrics^{XM}.

The information gathered will be useful for gauging institutional effectiveness in terms of teaching, learning and student development. Evidence of these activities is needed for quality assurance and accreditation reviews. In addition, stakeholders such as students, employers, government agencies and others are interested in knowing *the returns* to a university education.

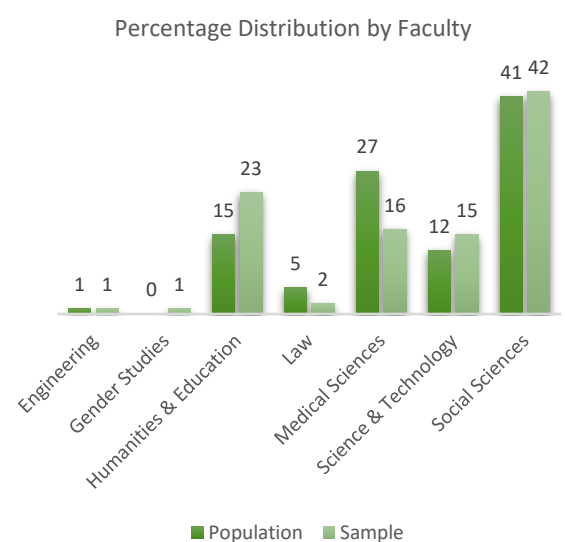
About the Target Population

For the Class of 2020, there were 4,254 graduates, 78% of whom were first-degree and 22% of whom were higher-degree. Among the 510 respondents, 70% were undergraduates while 30% were postgraduates. The overall response rate was 12% with 11% of undergraduates responding and 17% of postgraduates responding. While the proportion of respondents, by degree level, is similar to the student population who graduated, one should be cautious of generalizing the findings, for some questions, to the entire cohort of graduates. Questions related to employment and income may be inherently biased leading to social desirability in responses or a propensity for graduates with well-paying jobs to disclose information. Questions on employment and income may also result in non-response to protect privacy or for fear of information being shared with government agencies such as the Students' Loan Bureau. In the case of income, checks were made as much as possible with job search engines to verify the accuracy of the reported earnings.

Graph 1



Graph 2



Profile of Respondents

Among those who responded to the survey (n=510), 70% were undergraduates while 30% were postgraduates. Eighty-one percent (81%) of undergraduates were in the age group 19-29 while 79% of postgraduates were in the age group 25-44. Just over three-quarters of respondents (76.5%) were female and 89% of all respondents were Jamaican.

While the majority of respondents (42%) graduated from the Social Sciences, a higher percentage of undergraduates (39%) than postgraduates (17%) studied in the Sciences (Engineering, Medical Sciences, and Science and Technology) while a higher percentage of postgraduates (42%) than undergraduates (15%) graduated from Humanities and Education.

When asked about parental education, 80% of postgraduates reported that neither parent graduated from university while the comparative figure was 73% for undergraduates. This information suggests that The UWI serves a predominantly first-generation student population who are the first in their family to access a university education.

In terms of financing their education, undergraduates were more likely to secure funds from their *parents* (50%), *loans from banks and agencies* (38%), *earnings from employment* (28%), and *awards/scholarships* (27%). By contrast, postgraduates were more likely to rely on *loans from banks and agencies* (89%), *earnings from employment* (68%), and *awards/scholarships* (16%) to finance their studies.

Mobility and Migration of Respondents

Approximately 4% of respondents at the time of the survey indicated that their country of residence was different from their country of origin. Of the 21 respondents, 12 were Jamaican nationals and 9 were non-Jamaican nationals. The countries of residence among Jamaicans were the United States (n=6), followed by Barbados (n=1), Canada (n=1), China (n=1), Trinidad (n=1), Turks and Caicos Islands (n=1), and the United Kingdom (n=1). Although it has been speculated that UWI graduates migrate in droves to other countries, it is difficult to obtain data to support this. In a recent publication by the International Organization for Migration (Thomas-Hope, 2018),¹ migration data in Jamaica has been hampered by inconsistent reporting and lack of detail to allow for meaningful analyses (Thomas-Hope, 2018). The author recommends collecting emigrant data from the destination countries.

What is known about Jamaican emigrants to the United States and Canada, is that the majority are admitted under family-related reasons compared to economic ones (Thomas-Hope, 2018). In addition, 40% of emigrants to the United States comprised the prime working age group of 25-44 and in 2012, 45% of Jamaicans aged 15 and over in the United States were reported to have a tertiary education (Thomas-Hope, 2018). The author acknowledges that the general emigration trend has been disproportionately in favour of the highly skilled and educated Jamaican population. Based on the Jamaican respondents to the Tracer survey who resided overseas (n=12), 83% reported employment. For the 10 employed, 5 were attached to the Education sector, 2 to the Health sector, 1 to the Financial services sector and 1 to Wholesale and Retail Trade. There is some evidence here to support the perception of the continued exodus of teachers and medical professionals as a means of upward mobility and employment.

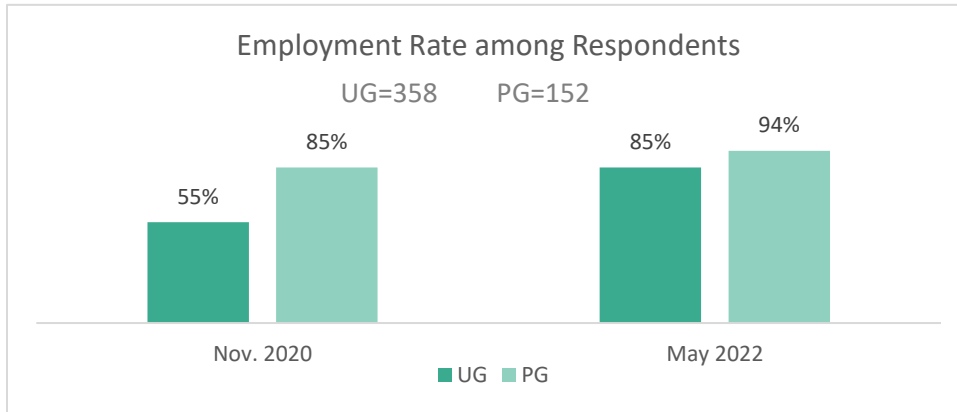
¹ Thomas-Hope, E. (2018). *Migration in Jamaica: A Country Profile*. Kingston, Jamaica: International Organization for Migration. https://caribbeanmigration.org/sites/default/files/repository/migration_in_jamaica_-_profile_2018.pdf

Graduate Outcomes

Employment

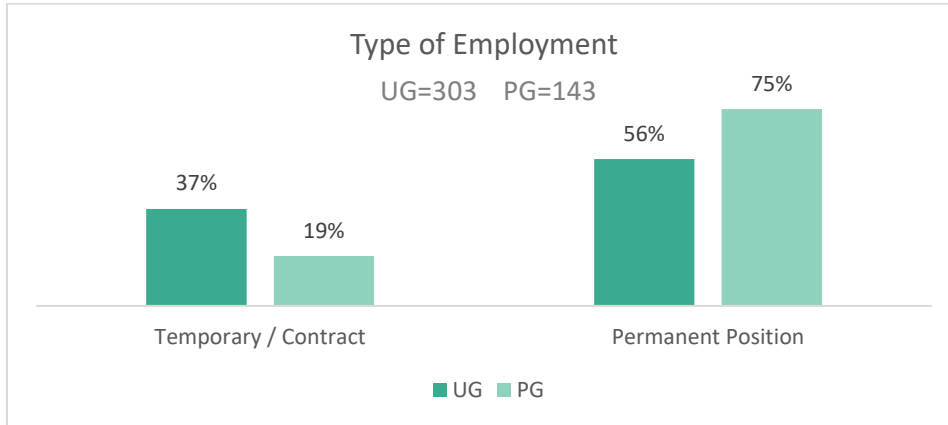
Most graduates who responded to the survey were employed at, or shortly after, graduation. One and a half years later, in 2022, employment increased more so among undergraduates than postgraduates (Graph 3).

Graph 3



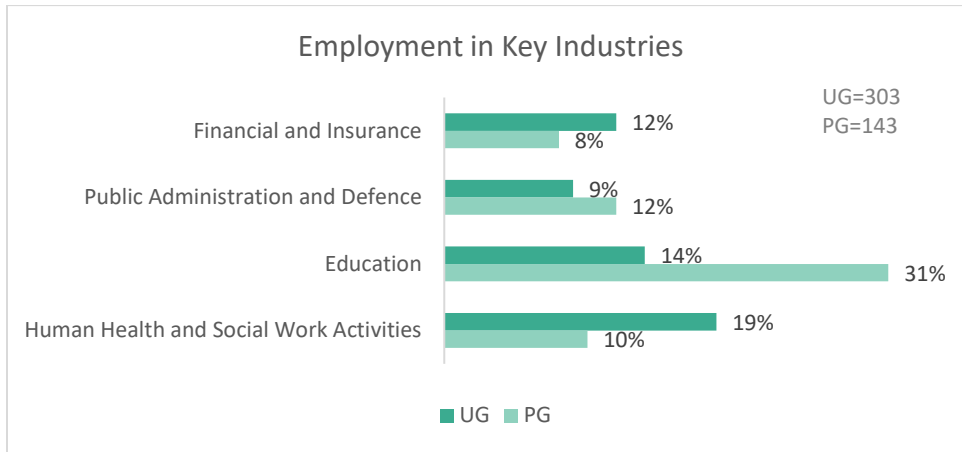
Undergraduates were more likely to report temporary or contract work than postgraduates while postgraduates were more likely to report permanent employment than undergraduates (Graph 4).

Graph 4



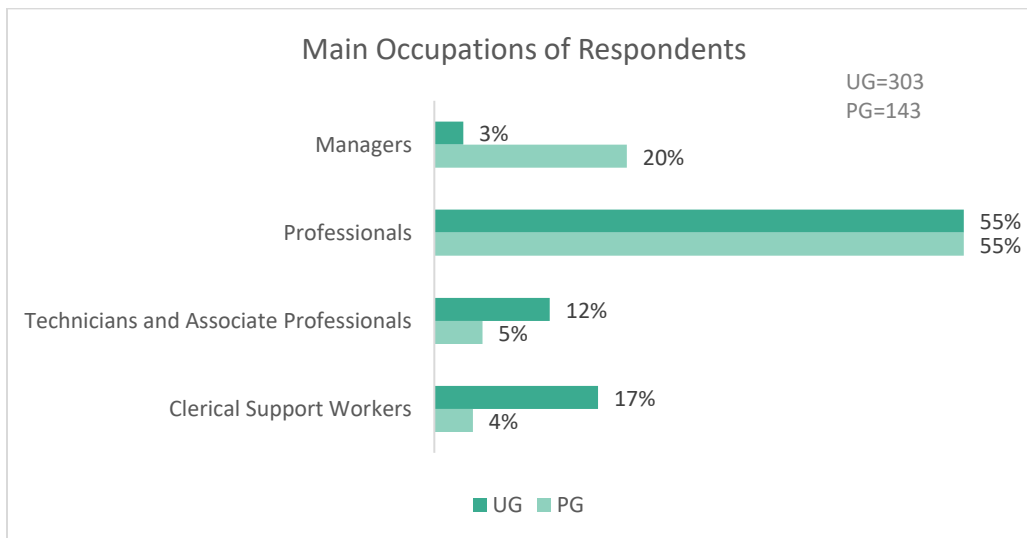
Although respondents were employed in key industries, postgraduates were concentrated in the Education sector (Graph 5).

Graph 5



UWI graduates were concentrated in occupations associated with *white collar* work. Fifty-five percent (55%) of respondents were *Professionals*, while a higher percentage of undergraduates were *Technicians and Associate Professionals* and *Clerical Support Workers*. By contrast, more postgraduates were *Managers* than were undergraduates (Graph 6).

Graph 6



Earnings can be influenced by many factors such as age, experience, education, occupation, and geographic location. What is evident from responses to the survey is that more education is associated with higher earnings. A five-year first professional degree can also attract higher earnings than a Master's degree.

Table 1 Gross Monthly Earnings of Respondents in Current Jamaican Dollars

Programme	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	N
3 Year First degree (BA, B.Ed., B.Sc., BFA, LLB, etc.)	\$48,000	\$964,877	\$161,199.02	\$120,000.00	\$120,676.524	221
5 Year First Professional degree (MBBD, DDS, PHARM.D)	\$170,000	\$660,000	\$367,916.64	\$346,436.50	\$149,702.623	14
Taught Master's degree (MA, M.Ed., MSc., MBA, LLM, etc.)	\$30,000	\$825,766	\$282,105.08	\$238,056.00	\$165,023.764	93
Research Master's degree (M.Phil)	\$233,000	\$245,000	\$239,000.00	\$239,000.00	\$8,485.281	2
Research Doctorate (PhD)	\$625,000	\$1,600,000	\$1,112,500.00	\$1,112,500.00	\$689,429.112	2
Professional Doctorate (DM, DPH, DBA, etc.)	\$450,000	\$450,000	\$450,000.00	\$450,000.00	.	1
Total	\$30,000	\$1,600,000	\$210,704.47	\$162,400.00	\$169,363.307	333

Job Satisfaction

When asked about job satisfaction, 68% of undergraduates and 62% of postgraduates reported being *somewhat satisfied* to *very satisfied* with their employment. When asked to state their satisfaction with aspects of their job (Table 2), respondents were least satisfied with *opportunities for advancement, salary, and benefits* and most satisfied with *job location, contribution to society, degree of independence, and level of responsibility*. Postgraduates had higher levels of satisfaction than undergraduates.

Table 2 Satisfaction of Respondents with Aspects of Job

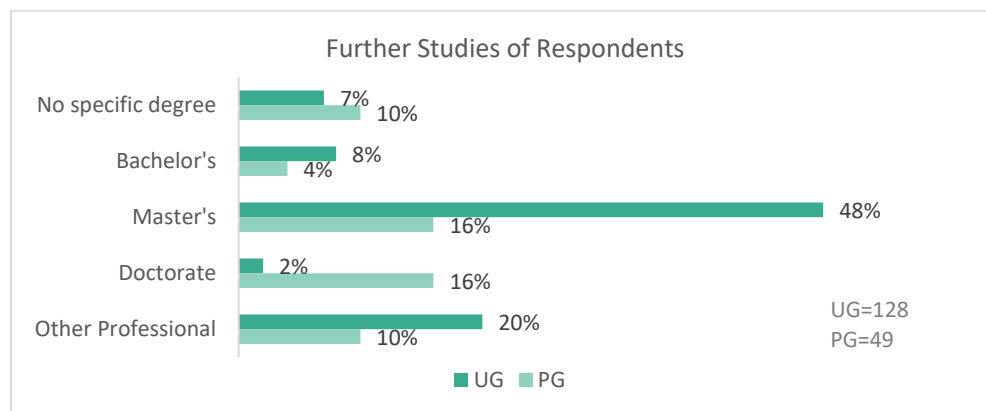
<i>Somewhat to very satisfied</i>	% Distribution	
	UG	PG
Salary	50	48
Benefits	52	52
Job Security	65	78
Job Location	79	84
Opportunities for Advancement	51	45
Intellectual Challenge	65	64
Level of Responsibility	74	74
Degree of Independence	77	83
Contribution to Society	74	87
Total Employed Respondents (N)	303	143

Response options: *very dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, somewhat satisfied, very satisfied*.

Further Studies

Since graduating in 2020, approximately 35% (n=177) of respondents have pursued further studies as a means of personal and professional development. The majority pursued programmes leading to a master's degree. When combined with doctoral studies, fifty percent (50%) of undergraduates and 32% of postgraduates pursued higher degrees.

Graph 7



UWI's Influence on Knowledge and Intellectual Abilities

One of the objectives of The UWI Strategic Plan is to gauge the development of attributes among students. In an effort to measure UWI's contribution to the attainment of these qualities, graduates were asked to rate the development of these characteristics, retrospectively, thinking back to the beginning and end of their academic programme. The results support UWI's contribution to these qualities and skills. As seen in Table 3, there is an increase in scores among undergraduates and postgraduates at the end of their programme. More than half of respondents reported that the following traits were *mostly to fully developed* at the end of their programme: *critical and creative thinking skills; effective communication and interpersonal skills; information technology skills; globally aware and well-grounded in regional identity; socially, culturally and environmentally responsible; and strong ethical values*. By contrast, one area in need of improvement was the development of *innovative and entrepreneurial skills*.

Table 3 Development of Attributes among Respondents

	% Reporting Mostly/Fully Developed			
	Start of Programme		End of Programme	
	UG	PG	UG	PG
Critical and creative thinking skills	46	63	63	75
Effective communication and interpersonal skills	46	61	62	70
Information technology skills	41	46	52	52
Innovative and entrepreneurial skills	23	29	38	40
Globally aware and well-grounded in regional identity	32	46	51	62
Socially, culturally and environmentally responsible	45	50	58	64
Strong ethical values	58	67	63	67
Total Respondents (N)	358	152	358	152

Response options: *not at all developed, somewhat developed, mostly developed, fully developed*.

Summary and Conclusion

For just over one decade, the Office of Planning and Institutional Research has been surveying graduates starting with the Class of 2007. For the first time, higher degree graduates were surveyed in the Class of 2014 and have been included in the last three Tracer surveys. By comparing undergraduates to postgraduates, the returns to a university education become amplified. As illustrated in this report, postgraduates have higher employment rates and earnings, increased job satisfaction, and higher development of esteemed attributes as identified in The UWI Strategic Plan.

There are notable differences among undergraduates and postgraduates. Undergraduates are more likely to fund their education with the help of their parents; loans from banks and government agencies; and earnings from employment. Postgraduates, on the other hand, tend to fund their education through loans from banks and agencies; earnings from employment, and awards/scholarships. To the extent that students are employed while pursuing their studies, this has implications for student throughput which may extend the time-to-degree for employed students.

Another important difference among undergraduates and postgraduates is their absorption into the labour market. While undergraduates are more likely to hold positions that are temporary or contractual in nature, this is something that should change over time as they pursue further studies and gain valuable employment experience.

It is also noteworthy that the survey respondents, regardless of concerns they had with their jobs related to salary and benefits and opportunities for promotion, were satisfied with aspects of their job such as level of responsibility, degree of independence, and contribution to society. These esteemed features of their job may have contributed to over 60% of respondents reporting satisfaction with their employment.

As the University strives to improve teaching, learning and student development, the academy needs to be cognizant of the fact that many of our students are first-generation ones. While students appear to develop skill sets during their programme of study, there is still room for improvement for larger numbers of students reporting *fully developed* attributes at the end of their programme. This may entail the promotion of proven teaching methods which allow students to apply what they have learned and encourage independence of thought so that students feel confident in their abilities as UWI graduates.



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