

PBC Graduate Research



A Global Survey of Graduate Recruiting Practices
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Personality Characteristics of Australian Graduates
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Introduction

Peter Berry Consultancy and Hogan have conducted two research studies to further the understanding of Australian graduates, the factors that contribute to or detract from their potential success and the systems that are put in place to select graduates. The first study describes a global survey conducted about methods to identify successful graduates and the systems and processes that support the efforts of graduate recruiters. A comparison across regions shows that the challenges and issues faced by organisations who seek to employ recent graduates are quite common despite the variance in educational systems, culture and industry. The problem of assessing the future work performance of those who have spent most of their life in academia presents similar issues for recruiters across the globe. The assessment processes also are similar with cognitive testing and structured interviewing being the most commonly used tools.

The second study examines employment from the point of view of the graduates and their own personality profiles. New graduates took three Hogan assessments to assess their day-to-day personality, their dark side or derailing characteristics, and their values and motives. Comparisons are made between graduates' personality profiles across a variety of industries and positions. In addition, qualitative feedback was collected from the graduates summarising their personal challenges and obstacles in settling in to the world of work.

These two studies are the beginning of a series of Australian graduate research conducted by Peter Berry Consultancy and Hogan. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions:

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A Global Survey of Graduate Recruiting Practices

As organisations become increasingly global in human resource practices, it is common that employee selection procedures and tools are shared, or even mandated, between far reaching countries. Given the inherent difficulties in selecting recent university graduates due to lack of work history, the implications for human resource systems designed to assess future potential (as opposed to past experience) are interesting when considering cultural and educational system differences across the globe. University systems in different countries provide different length programs, have a wide variety of entrance requirements, may require practical experience in the form of internships or formally supervised work experience, may be delivered online or remotely, and certainly have varying levels of difficulty and expectations of the students. We questioned how the processes used to select recent university graduates differ between countries and industries and what the implications might be for companies with global talent management programs comparing early career individuals.

The Survey

An online survey was designed to be deployed to human resource professionals who administer selection processes for recent university graduates across the globe. The survey solicited information to learn the basics of their graduate programs, specifically:

- Industries in which the graduate programs are administered
- Locations (country, city or region) of graduate programs
- Which tools, assessments and systems are used to select graduates
- The perceived impact and effectiveness of those tools
- Open-ended feedback about the challenges faced in identifying the best graduates
- Top three characteristics desired in a graduate
- Open-ended feedback about what will make graduates stay with an organisation

The survey was designed to take less than 10 minutes to complete and to be general enough to apply to a wide variety of locations. Respondents were solicited using a number of methods, including online networks such as LinkedIn and networks from professional organisations and client contacts.

Results

Data were collected from 105 respondents regarding the graduate programs they create and administer. Respondents designed graduate programs in the following locations:

- Australia
- Belgium
- Brazil
- China
- France
- Hungary
- Japan
- Kenya
- Macedonia
- Malaysia
- Mexico
- New Zealand
- Norway
- Qatar
- Russia
- Singapore
- Slovakia
- South Africa
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Tanzania
- Thailand
- Turkey
- UAE
- Uganda
- United Kingdom
- United States

For comparative purposes, respondents were grouped into the following categories: Australia/New Zealand, Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas.

For each of the selection tools, respondents indicated if they used the tool to select graduates. Tables 1 and 2 below represent the frequency with which each of the graduate recruiters are using each of the assessment tools. The most commonly used tools are resume/CV review (85% overall) and personality testing (67% overall). The least commonly used tools are graphology (0% overall and therefore not included on the graphs) and unstructured interviews (16% overall).

Table 1
Frequency of Assessment Tool Usage by Region

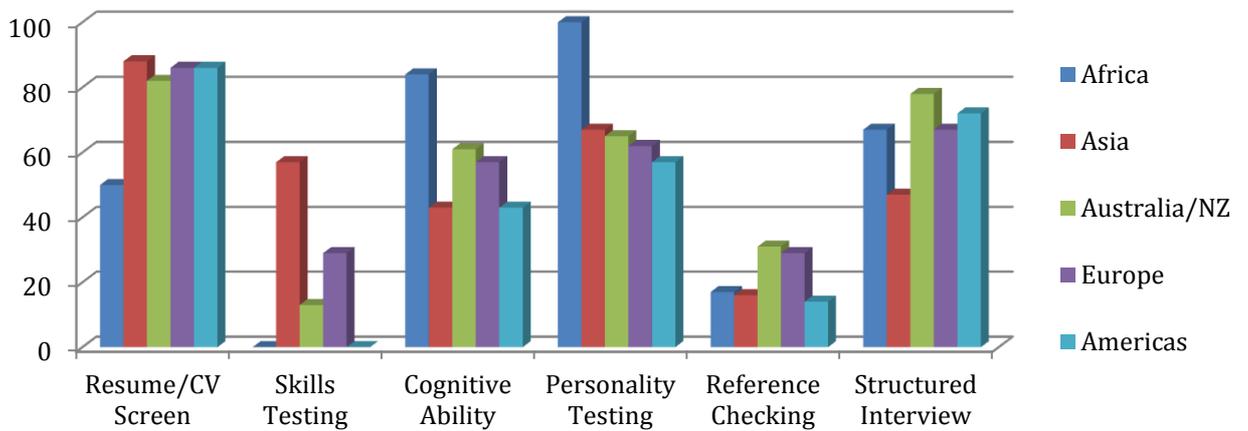
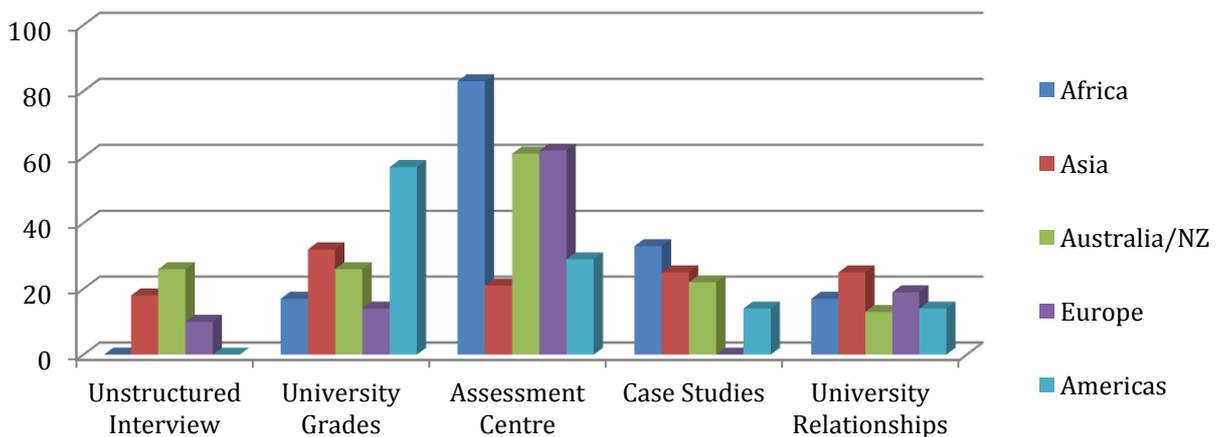


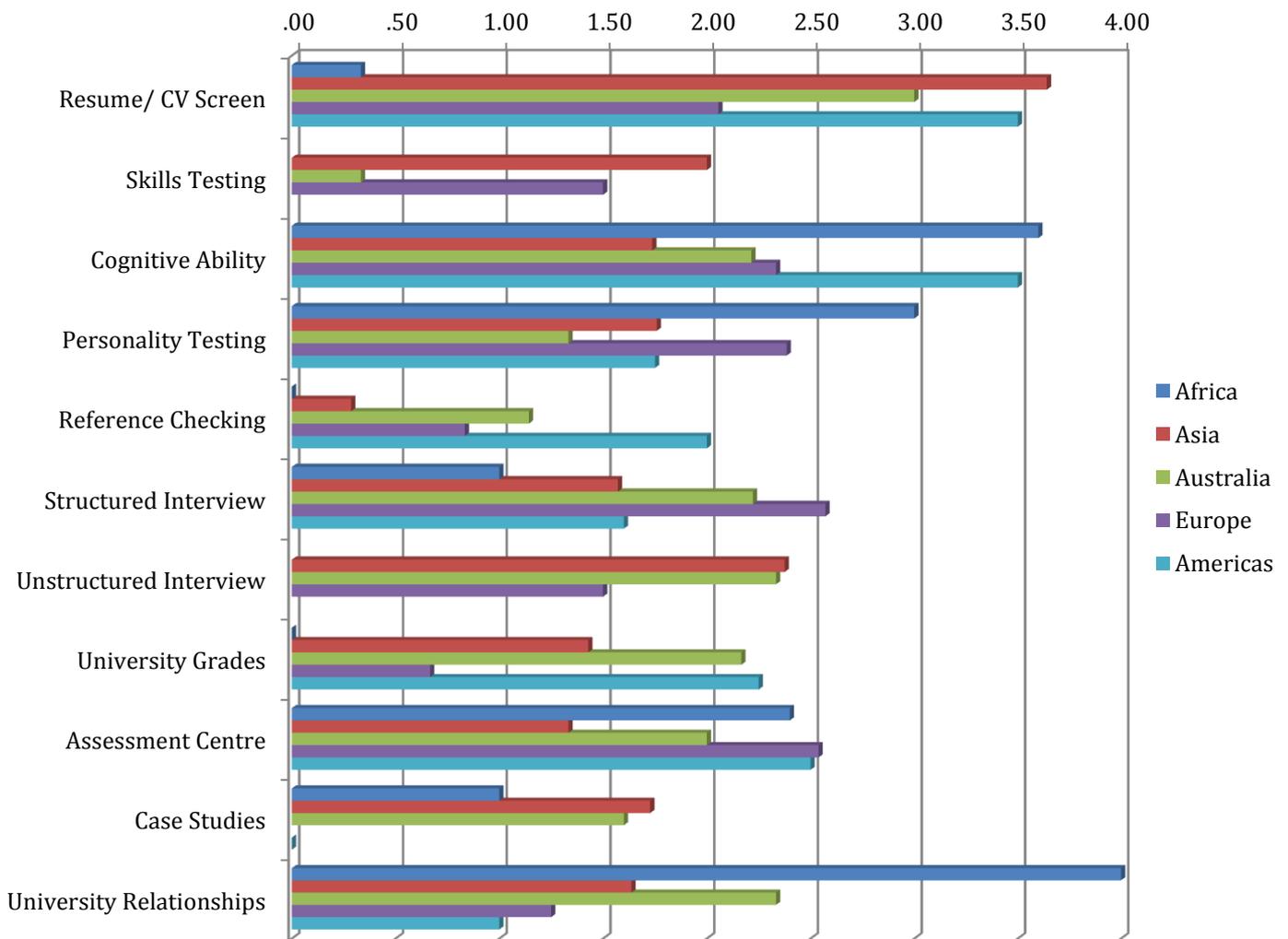
Table 2
Frequency of Assessment Tool Usage by Region (continued)



Difference scores were computed to determine which region differs from the rest of the group most notably. Africa is the most divergent in which assessment tools are used with an average difference of 19.4% from the group average whereas Europe was closest to the group average with a difference score of 7.4%. Respondents were given the opportunity to list additional selection tools not provided on the ranking list; however, there were no new tools added that were not in the initial list suggesting that graduate recruiters in most regions are using the same set of tools, just with different frequencies.

Respondents were asked to rank their perceived effectiveness and impact of each of the graduate selection tools. These rankings were made on a 0 to 4 scale with 4 being the highest ranking.

Table 3
Perceived Effectiveness of Graduate Assessment Tools



Africa notably deviates from the other regions in both frequency of use of perceived effectiveness of the assessment tools indicating the strongest preference for cognitive ability tests, personality tests and university relationships but rather low actual usage of university relationships. Resume/CV screens and cognitive ability testing are perceived as the most effective tools overall.

Open-Ended Feedback

Three open-ended questions were included in the survey. Below is a summary of the feedback. There were no notable differences between region or industry in the open-ended feedback. Recruiters were asked about the biggest challenges faced during the selection process.

1. Volume of Similar Candidates – “Recruiters want to find the most efficient way to only invite the best potential candidates to an assessment centre”

Working with vast numbers of applications and CVs was the most listed challenge particularly as many candidates look similar in terms of grades and attributes making it difficult to pinpoint inherent and ‘true’ potential that will add value to the organisation. Furthermore, the lack of work experience makes it even more difficult to identify outstanding skills and job and cultural ‘fit’. Recruiters also reported the following challenges:

- Working with global recruitment volumes to implement a consistent yet culturally sensitive recruitment process
- Ensuring that all documents are authentic
- Finding good quality candidates willing to relocate to hard to staff locations
- Identifying candidates who will cope with the new environment, culture and job responsibilities
- Balancing the needs of a ‘one size fits all’ versus finding graduates with a particular interest in a sector/unit rather than just trying to get onto a graduate program
- Eliminating unsuitable candidates early on (as well as those with poor communication skills, no residency)

2. Competing in the War for Talent – “Competition is fierce for the best graduates and thus you need to get your program up and running with offers out before the competition”

Time is of the essence and recruiters feel a sense of urgency to sift through large volumes of candidates to find the high calibre candidates before the competition snaps them up. Recruiters felt they were competing in the following ways:

- Competitors being able to out-compete on salary and location
- Trying to stay one step ahead of the competition

3. Lack of Awareness - “Candidates are young and don’t exactly know what they want to do”

Their lack of work experience not only makes it difficult to predict future performance but it also means that many graduates are unsure of their career path or which program to enrol for resulting in a number of subsequent changes post-hire. Some come with unrealistic expectations of job responsibilities and salary whilst others know little about the organisation or role that they are applying for. It seems it is not just the graduate who needs to have their expectations managed as recruiters reported the need to manage the manager’s expectations of what a graduate is and define what ‘potential’ looks like.

Recruiters were asked about the most important characteristics they look for in newly recruited graduates. The top five most important were:

1. **Positive attitude:** engaged, motivated, proactive, passionate, hard-working, strong work ethic
2. **Ability:** cognitive and/or technical ability, academic qualifications, clever, smart
3. **Willingness to learn quickly:** learning new skills, being able to practically apply learning
4. **Achievement orientation:** ambition, drive, initiative
5. **Social competence:** relating well to others, interaction skills, emotional intelligence, relationship building, working well in teams

Recruiters were asked what factors contribute to graduates staying with an organisation for the long term:

1. Culture Fit
2. Opportunities for Graduates to learn and Grow
3. Career Path/Upward Mobility/Career development
4. Good Supervision/Coaching/Mentoring/Management
5. Salary/Package/Remuneration

Summary

The results of the global graduate survey showed that graduate selection programs are quite similar across regions. Graduate recruiters face similar difficulties and have common procedures and perceptions about the field of graduates. They are likely to be using resume/CV screens and personality tests to narrow down their graduate candidate pools. The primary difficulty is identifying potential in graduates when the graduates themselves are unsure of their future work direction. While we expected to see large differences by region in assessment tools, what characteristics were being sought in new recruits and challenges in setting up the processes, these differences do not exist and, in fact, most graduate programs across the world are similar to ours in Australia.

Personality Characteristics of Australian Graduates

Research Overview

In 2010 PBC approached organisations around Australia to take part in a longitudinal research piece looking at the personality characteristics of Australian graduates. The objectives of this study included identifying:

- the personality characteristics and values common among graduates compared to a working population sample,
- the key challenges graduates face, and
- the personality differences between high performing graduates and not so high performing graduates.

Instruments Used

The instruments used to collect data for the current research included:

- Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI) – day-to-day personality, positive job fit
- Hogan Development Survey (HDS) – derailers, negative job fit
- Motives, Values, Preferences Inventory (MVPI) – values, drivers and culture fit
- Qualitative questions – challenges, difficulties and learnings
- Supervisor criterion rating questionnaire

Please refer to Appendix A for a description of the scales measured by the HPI, HDS and MVPI, and Appendix B for the four qualitative questions.

Method

Graduates were sent an invitation to complete the HPI, HDS and MVPI. After they had completed all three assessments, each graduate was sent a second email invitation to complete an online questionnaire consisting of four qualitative questions.

Six months after the graduates had completed the HPI, HDS and MVPI, the supervisors of the graduates were sent a 35 item criterion rating questionnaire measuring behavioural characteristics, demonstrated work performance, relationship management, and culture and values fit.

Graduate HPI, HDS and MVPI data were compared to an Australian working population sample to assess whether any differences existed between the two groups.

Demographic Information

Sample Sizes

	Graduates	Australian General Population
Sample Size	478	5453
Average Age	22.46	36.81

Graduate Specific Data

- Female: 45.8%, Male: 49.6%, Unreported: 4.6%
- Public: 122, Private 355, Unreported: 2
- Data representing 20 different Australian organisations
- Top 10 industries represented: Legal, Banking & Finance, Engineering, Accounting, Healthcare & Medical, IT & Telecommunications, Retail & Consumer Products, Building & Construction, Sales & Marketing and Manufacturing/Operations.

Research Findings

Personality Data

In the graphs below, the blue line with the triangle represents the graduate sample while the red line with the diamond represents the general population sample. There were a number of significant differences between the graduates and the Australian general population which are indicated by the green circles around group averages on some of the HPI, HDS and MVPI scales.

Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI) Findings

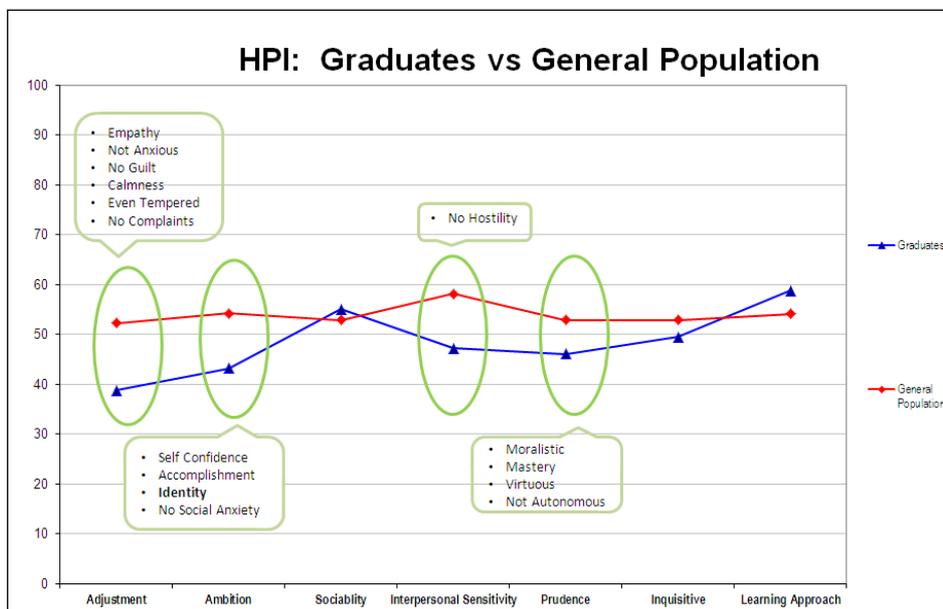
1. Compared to the general population, graduates are likely to feel stress and pressure more quickly than the general population. Namely, graduates:
 - are more irritated by the faults in others,
 - worry about both future and past decisions and mistakes,
 - don't maintain a sense of calmness,
 - are more likely to lose their temper, and
 - have a more complaining disposition.

2. While they are just as competitive and leader-like as the general population, they are:
 - less confident,
 - more questioning of their educational choices,
 - less comfortable presenting or speaking in public, and
 - less sure about what career or industry they should be working in.

3. Graduates are more likely to take a direct approach when interacting with others. They are also more likely to hold grudges and be less forgiving of those who do them wrong.

4. Graduates are more comfortable with change and ambiguity, and may also;
 - be more flexible and open minded,
 - not be as hardworking, preferring to focus on work/life balance,
 - be less perfectionistic, and
 - be more independent of thought.

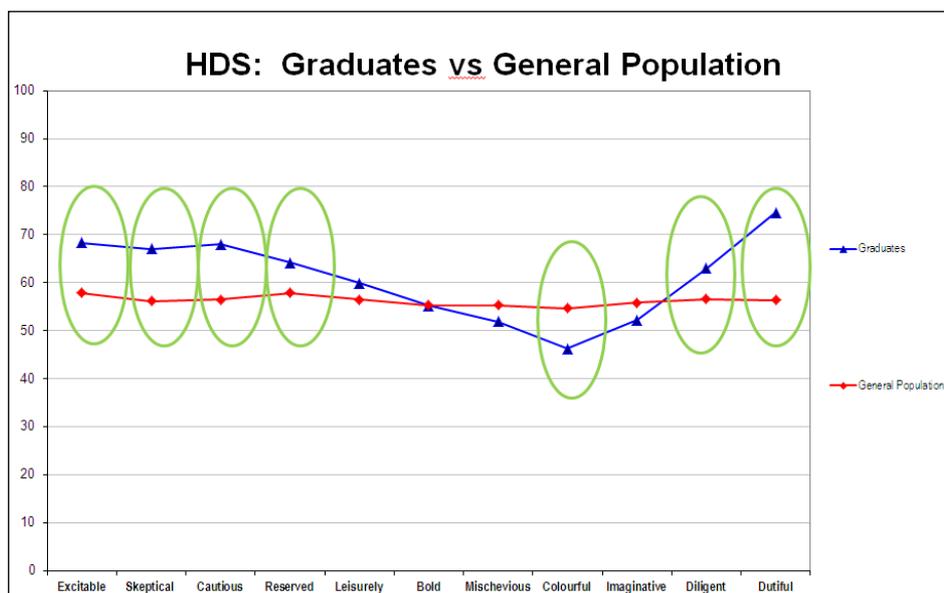
Graph 1
Graduate and Working Population Comparisons on HPI



Hogan Development Survey (HDS) Findings

When under stress and pressure, graduates are likely to become more emotionally volatile, sceptical, cautious and distant than the general population. They are less likely to draw unnecessary attention to themselves but appear to become more perfectionistic, detail oriented and ingratiating. The graduates as a cohort have both the 'moving away' cluster which is characterised by behaviours associated with moving away from people in terms of becoming distant, detached and withdrawn, as well as the 'moving towards' cluster which is characterised by behaviours of moving towards people in terms of being hardworking, loyal, dedicated and eager to please.

Graph 2
Graduate and Working Population Comparisons on HDS

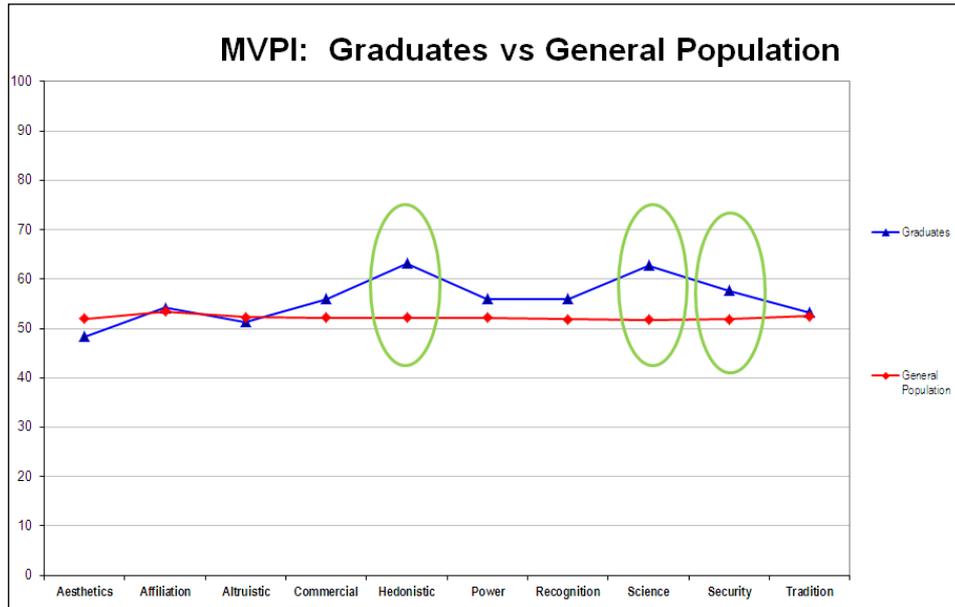


Motives, Values, Preferences Inventory (MVPI) Findings

Compared to the general population, graduates are driven by and value:

- fun and excitement,
- working with data, numbers and statistics, along with using an analytical approach to decision making, and
- working and living in a secure and stable environment.

Graph 3
Graduate and Working Population Comparisons on MVPI



Supervisor Performance Ratings Findings

Performance data were received for 108 of the 478 graduates. Overall, the graduates generally had high ratings across the 35 performance criteria. The lowest scoring criteria, with a mean of 3.35, was *Behaves in a manner appropriate for the culture and values of the organisation*. The highest scoring criteria, with a mean of 4.51, was *Acts with honesty and integrity*.

The four culture and values fit items were generally rated the lowest of all of the 35 criteria which hints at the idea that perhaps some of the graduates are not fitting into the culture of an organisation. This may be one of the reasons why graduates may leave an organisation after the completion of their graduate program.

Correlations between HPI, HDS and MVPI scales and the 35 performance criteria revealed that Sociability was positively related to a number of performance criteria whereas Learning Approach, Bold, Mischievous, Colourful, Power and Recognition were negatively related to a number of criteria. This indicates that the graduates who were outgoing and sociable were rated well by supervisors, while those who were perceived as academic, overly confident, risk taking, dramatic, controlling and needing recognition were rated more negatively.

Qualitative Questions Findings

In terms of the challenges that graduates face and the difficulties with transitioning into the organisations, graduates mentioned the following points.

1. Adapting/adjusting/acclimatising to:

- New work culture – environment (working with older peers/generation gap/ team dynamics/ office politics)
- Full-time hours and workload (managing tight deadlines, new responsibilities)
- Work/life balance (how to work long hours but still keep up extra-curricular commitments)
- Fitting into the overall business
- Different training styles
- Work styles/personalities of others
- A steep learning curve

2. Learning:

- How to apply theoretical skills taught at university in a practical context
- Policies, practices, procedures, products, tools, computer systems of the organisation
- How to manage a team
- How to manage time and competing priorities
- The group structure, understanding roles and functions, and who to go to for advice/assistance
- How to ask the right question
- How to communicate professionally (by phone, email and face-to-face) with clients, other professionals and people you haven't met
- How the business and market operates
- To understand the technical language used and professional euphemisms/acronyms
- To complete work in the allocated time
- How to deal with difficult clients

3. Needing to prove oneself:

- Being taken seriously
- Trying to appear capable and competent
- Having confidence around older, more experienced team members
- Gaining the respect of colleagues
- Establishing oneself
- Having to sell yourself with very little experience
- Living up to expectations

4. Organisational blocks:

- Not getting adequate training and supervision (particularly at the start of the program)
- Not being given meaningful/enough/varied work
- Feeling frustrated at starting at the bottom again with every new rotation
- Changing managers frequently/poor management style

5. The learning and take home messages that graduates reported included:

- Having the confidence to ask questions or ask for help as an important aspect to learning
- Quality/impact of work
- Networking and creating/maintaining positive relationships to get ahead
- Communicating effectively
- Working hard
- Support and advice
- Demonstrating a positive 'can do' attitude

Overall Research Summary

There are personality differences between graduates and the working population which should be taken into consideration when selecting, on-boarding and developing graduates. From the HPI, HDS and MVPI data and the qualitative comments it was evident that graduates who are more prone to stress and lack confidence require more of a hands-on approach to on-boarding when entering their graduate program. Some of the comments made by graduates can form the basis of training programs so that these perceived challenges and difficulties can be reduced. For example, teaching the graduates some of the technical language used in the organisation or how to communicate professionally can be a cost effective and practical way of reducing some of the reported challenges.

Supervisors generally rated the performance of graduates as reasonably high which indicates that the graduates who were selected using a number of different methodologies performed well within their first 12 months with the organisation. The culturally related performance indicators which had lower ratings associated with them suggest that while graduates may have the capacity to perform their jobs, they may not be fitting into the culture and value-set of the organisation. This disconnect between values fit may be reduced by placing a values assessment into the graduate selection process along with the commonly used cognitive, personality, academic performance and skills assessment techniques.

The graduates who presented as more confident, tenacious, dramatic, risk-taking and academic were rated lower by supervisors, which is ironic given that these graduates are likely to have performed better at the interview stage given their stronger, more dominating presence. There is a disconnect here too as often in organisations the employees who are seen as ambitious, driven, clever and who leave a lasting impression on others are flagged as future 'high potentials' who are groomed and developed by the organisation for senior management positions. Therefore, it is important for the supervisors of graduates to gain a better understanding of the graduate(s) they are managing through feedback from the graduate recruiter who should outline the qualities that ensured the graduate was hired, their strengths and opportunities, and how to best manage them going forward.

Appendix A

HPI, HDS and MVPI Scale Names and Definitions

Table 1: HPI Scale Definitions

Scale Name	Definition
Adjustment	Composed, even-tempered, handles pressure well or anxious, worried, moody and easily irritated
Ambition	Competitive, leader-like, self-confident, career focussed or laid back, socially retiring, lacking confidence and struggling
Sociability	Needs or enjoys social interaction, outgoing, talkative, easily approachable or independent, withdrawn and socially reactive
Interpersonal Sensitivity	Perceptive, tactful, warm, sensitive, agreeable or cold, tough, critical, socially withdrawn and task focussed
Prudence	Conscientious, conforming, rule-compliant, reliable or flexible, open-minded, impulsive, non-conforming and risk-taking
Inquisitive	Creative, inventive, full of ideas with a broad range of interests or has very focussed interests, is pragmatic, detail focussed
Learning Approach	Takes pleasure in learning, enjoys staying up to date on business/technical matters or prefers hands on, practical learning

Table 2: HDS Scale Definitions

Scale Name	Definition
Excitable	Concerns seeming moody and hard to please, being enthusiastic about new persons or projects and then becoming disappointed with them
Sceptical	Concerns seeming cynical, mistrustful, and doubting the true intentions of others
Cautious	Concerns the tendency to be conservative, careful, concerned about making mistakes, and reluctant to take initiative for fear of being criticised or embarrassed
Reserved	Concerns the tendency to keep to oneself, to dislike working in teams or meeting new people, and to be indifferent to the moods and feelings of others
Leisurely	Concerns seeming independent, refusing to be hurried, ignoring other people's requests, and becoming irritable if they persist
Bold	Concerns seeming unusually self-confident, having strong feelings of entitlement, and being unwilling to admit mistakes, listen to advice, or attend to feedback
Mischievous	Concerns seeming to enjoy taking risks and testing the limits, being easily bored, and seeking excitement
Colourful	Concerns seeming lively, expressive, dramatic, and wanting to be noticed
Imaginative	Concerns seeming to act and think in creative and sometimes unusual ways
Diligent	Concerns seeming meticulous, precise, and critical of the performance of others
Dutiful	Concerns seeming eager to please, ingratiating, and reluctant to take independent action or go against popular opinion

Table 3: MVPI Scale Definitions

Scale Name	Definition
Recognition	A need to be recognised, visible and famous
Power	A desire for success, accomplishment, challenge and career status
Hedonism	Producing an orientation for fun and pleasure
Altruistic	Involving concerns about others' welfare and making a difference
Affiliation	A desire for and enjoyment of social interaction
Tradition	A dedication to ritual and old-fashioned virtues
Security	A desire for certainty and predictability in life
Commerce	An interest in business and finance gains
Aesthetics	Creative/artistic self-expression and quality
Science	Values analysis and the pursuit of knowledge and new ideas

Appendix B: Qualitative Questions

1. What have been the challenges you've encountered as a new graduate entering the workforce?
2. What single thing has been most difficult in transitioning to your organisation as a recent graduate?
3. What is the most important thing you've learned in adapting to professional employment as a recent graduate?
4. What three things do you think will ensure your success in your graduate program?