



AUIS Undergraduate Alumni Survey Summary 2013

AUIS graduates are in high-demand and employed in careers in which they are generally satisfied and well prepared, according to an alumni survey conducted by the Office of Communications and Institutional Development in August and September of 2013.

The survey, conducted this summer with 57 respondents out of a total undergraduate alumni body of 92, aimed to assess the current employment, education, and life statuses of AUIS graduates.

Demographics

Survey respondents are 88 percent Kurdish, 7 percent Arab and 7 percent Turkmen. Unsurprisingly, therefore, 88 percent live in Erbil and Sulaimani. The survey revealed a large gender gap, with only 26 percent being female.

Where Graduates Work

While 60 percent of jobs in the KRG are in the public sector, all but one respondent works in the private sector. Many AUIS graduates work in large, well-respected companies, including Lafarge, Qaiwan, Huawei, Bahar, Bayad, Rudaw, Asiacell, and Asia Insurance. Five graduates are the CEOs of their own businesses, and three hold management positions in family businesses.

Wages

Respondents' wages average \$1380 per month, ranging from \$500 to \$5700. This compares favorably to GDP per capita of approximately \$4000 in Iraq and \$4500 in the KRG. No statistical information is available for the average income of newly minted college graduates in the KRG, but anecdotal evidence suggests that AUIS graduates' wages are above market average. According to the Erbil Chamber of Commerce, the average monthly wage in Erbil is \$1100.

Significantly, female graduates are also successful in entering the labor market. According to the KRG Ministry of Planning, the Region suffers from a low female labor participation rate of 13.7 percent and female unemployment of about 15 percent in the 16-29 age group.

However, out of 15 female AUIS respondents, 12 (80 percent) are employed full-time, while the remaining three female graduates are either working part-time or



pursuing graduate studies. The average monthly income of female respondents is \$1150.

Job Skills and Satisfaction with AUIS

Significantly, 98 percent of respondents said their current employment is “directly” (42 percent) or “somewhat related” (56 percent) to their field of study. Similarly, 88 percent said AUIS prepared graduates “very well” (46 percent) or “more than adequately” (42 percent) for their current career. Many graduates mentioned that AUIS teaches students to be responsible, on-time, respect deadlines, and have a strong work ethic – all traits desired by employers. These responses, combined with high rates of employment (see below), suggest that the education offered at AUIS closely matches demand in the labor market.

By field of study, graduates with IT degrees find their jobs most related to their major, with 60 percent saying their job is “directly” related. Many IT graduates work in telecommunications.

By contrast, only 40 percent of Business graduates find their studies “directly” relevant to their employment and 60 percent “somewhat related.” As reasons for the their studies being somewhat related to their current position, business respondents mentioned that much of the curriculum was focused on global business and theory which was not directly applicable to their jobs. Respondents indicated marketing and management as more helpful.

The small sample size (9) of international relations respondents makes it difficult to make an accurate assessment at this time.

Graduates in Demand

The survey indicates AUIS graduates are in high-demand and able to find employment. Nearly 80 percent are employed full-time, 7 percent part-time, and the remainder is pursuing graduate studies. This means that by official definitions of employment 100 percent of graduates are employed. Many students commented that companies and employers showed preference for AUIS students over graduates from other universities.

The employment prospects of AUIS graduates stand in stark contrast to the dim picture of youth employment in the KRG and Iraq as a whole. The official unemployment rate in Iraq is 11 percent and in the KRG 14 percent. But those numbers don’t include workers who have dropped out of the work force, nor



account for the increasing number of youth entering the working age population who are not integrated into the labor force.

In Iraq as a whole, even university graduates struggle to find employment. The unemployment rate for youth aged 15-24 with tertiary education is nearly 25 percent, according to the World Bank. According to Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Salah al-Mutlaq, there are 500,000 unemployed university graduates in Iraq.

Once employed AUIS graduates are satisfied with their future career path, which indicates graduates believe that their career options will only get better with the time. Eight-five percent said they were “very satisfied” (22 percent) or “generally satisfied” (63 percent) with their career path.

The Job Search

Graduates found their jobs through different channels. Nearly 80 percent mentioned personal connections and family as a “helpful resource in their job search,” but that does not mean personal connections and family got them the job.

Several students said they had friends working in companies who helped them apply, while others are working in family businesses where they are general managers.

Although 42 percent of respondents participated in an internship, only 15 percent indicated the experience was helpful in finding a job. A few students were offered jobs at graduation after being interns at the company. Those with negative experiences with internships noted that they did not learn much during the internships, because as students they were not given substantive work.

Although 67 percent of graduates started looking for jobs before graduation—and 35 received job offers before or upon graduation—many students did not avail themselves of Career Services and AUIS support to find jobs. Almost 60 percent of students never used Career Services and only 28 percent used it once or twice. Only one respondent found Career Service job postings helpful.

Meanwhile, the AUIS Career Fair held last year helped students learn more about companies. Yet only two of the graduates found the fair helpful in the job search. Despite these low numbers, it should be noted last year was Career Services’ first year, and many of the respondents therefore wouldn’t have had the opportunity to use it.