

## **HEQCO Report - Outcomes of Doctoral Program Graduates: Pilot test of a strategy to measure outcomes using exit and alumni surveys**

### **Report summary**

The purpose of this project was to pilot test two surveys focused on career outcomes of doctoral graduates at Western University. One survey was administered to graduating students (Graduate Studies Exit Survey); the other was sent to alumni who graduated between 2008-2013 (Graduate Studies Alumni Survey). Response rates for the surveys were modest and suggest that findings should be interpreted cautiously: 16% for the Exit Survey, and 9% for the Alumni Survey.

Exit Survey results indicated that about 40% of respondents had secured employment related to their area of study at the time of the survey. Respondents also agreed that the learning outcomes of their program had been achieved. However, respondents noted a lack of preparation for entrepreneurship.

Alumni Survey results indicated that most doctoral alumni were employed (95%). Ninety percent of survey respondents indicated that they are “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their employment; 95% reported that their employment is related to their graduate education. The majority (58%) indicated employment at a university and 25% noted “Assistant/Associate/Tenure-Stream professor” as their job title. Alumni respondents indicated that their graduate programs supported the development of important career related-skills, including presentation, writing and collaboration skills. Like Exit Survey respondents, however, alumni respondents noted that they were not well prepared in terms of entrepreneurial skills.

Overall, the results suggest that the surveys provide a relevant method of gathering employment outcome data for graduates. A recommendation is made for the exit survey to be conducted continuously for students completing graduate studies and for the alumni survey to be conducted every two to three years to include alumni who graduated within the past three years to allow for a sufficient sample size. Additional data—and better response rates—will provide important information about graduate career paths and labour market outcomes.