



---

# **FINDINGS FROM THE TRACER SURVEY OF UWI GRADUATES, CLASS OF 2022**

OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING  
AND ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT

**SEPTEMBER 2024**

## Introduction

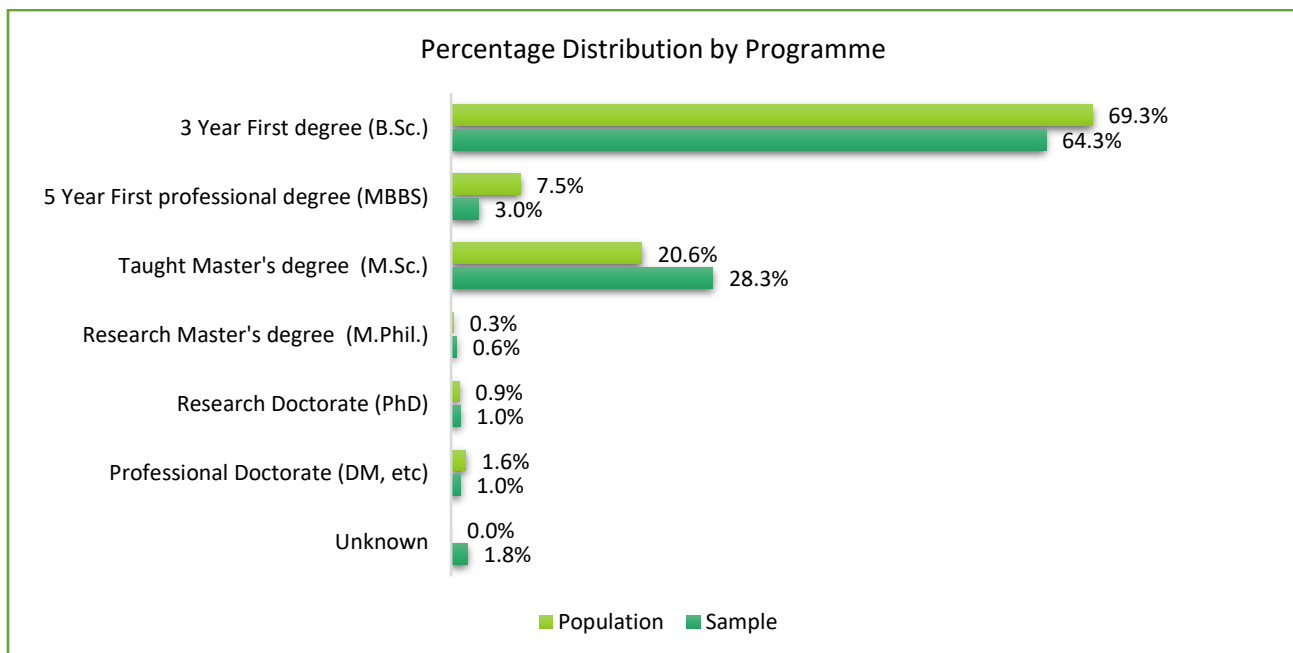
In keeping with the mission of the Office of Strategic Planning and Enterprise Management (OSPEM), graduates from the Class of 2022 were invited to take part in a survey. The survey targeted first- and higher-degree graduates who were asked about their programme of study, employment opportunities, job satisfaction, earlier work experience, further education, and UWI's influence on knowledge and intellectual abilities. The survey was conducted June 12 to August 1, 2024, and was administered using the online survey platform, Qualtrics<sup>XM</sup>.

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, parents, employers, government agencies and others are interested in knowing *the returns* to a university education.

## About the Target Population

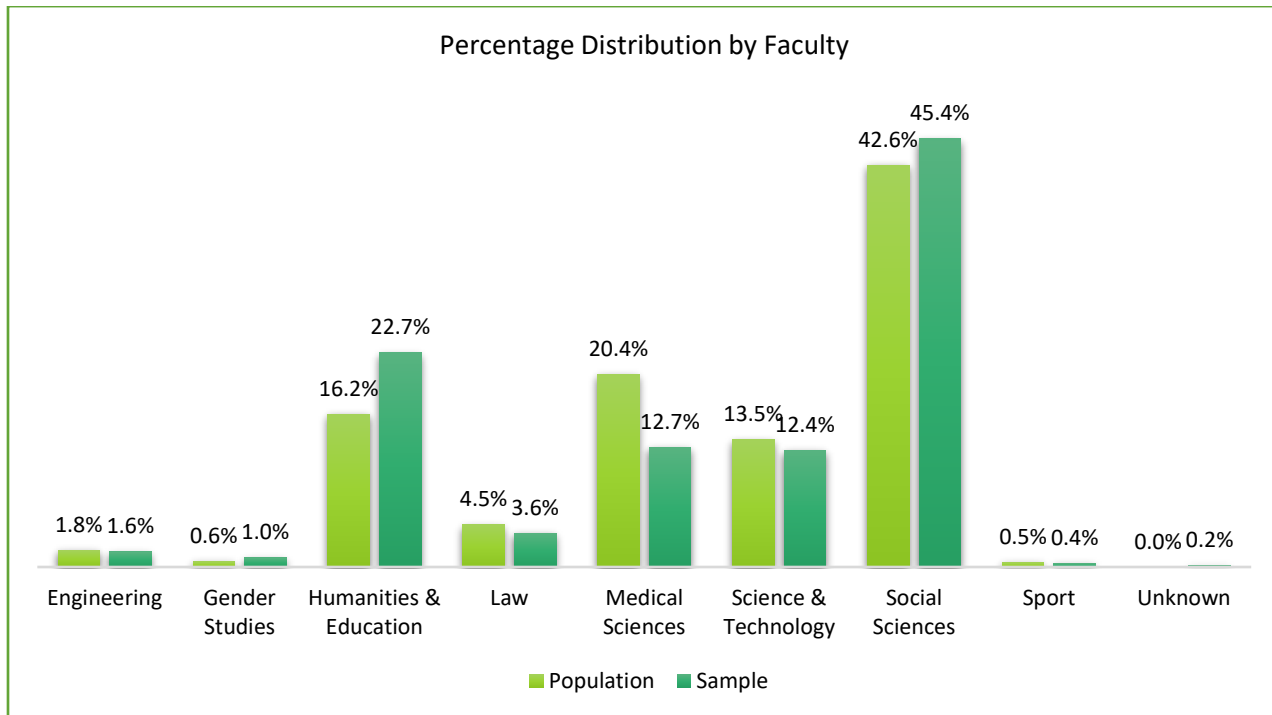
For the Class of 2022, there were 4,239 graduates, 78% of whom were first degree and 22% of whom were higher degree. Among the 498 respondents, 68% were undergraduates while 32% were postgraduates. The overall response rate was 12% with 11% of undergraduates responding and 17% of postgraduates responding. The population and sample distributions were fairly proportional with some under-representation in the five-year degree programmes and over-representation in the Taught Master's programmes (Graph 1). By faculty, there was over-representation in Humanities and Education and under-representation in Medical Sciences (Graph 2). Further tests were conducted comparing early and late respondents by age, sex, faculty, and degree programme. There were no statistically significant differences between early and late respondents which suggests that the survey findings are generalizable to the wider cohort of UWI graduates in 2022.<sup>1</sup>

Graph 1



<sup>1</sup> See Lindner, J. R., Murphy, T. H., & Briers, G. E. (2001). Handling nonresponse in social science research. *Journal of Agricultural Education* 42(4), 43-53.

Graph 2



### Profile of Respondents

Among those who responded to the survey (n=498), 68% were First-degree while 32% were Higher-degree graduates. Eighty-three percent (83%) of undergraduates were in the age group 19-29 while 70% of postgraduates were in the age group 25-44. Just over three-quarters of respondents (76.7%) were female and 88% of all respondents were Jamaican.

While the majority of respondents (45%) graduated from the Social Sciences, a higher percentage of undergraduates (33%) than postgraduates (13%) studied in the Sciences (Engineering, Medical Sciences, and Science and Technology) while a higher percentage of postgraduates (40%) 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 72% 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* (56%) and the *Students' Loan Bureau* (31%) while postgraduates were more likely to rely on *earnings from employment* (66%), *parents* (19%) and *bank loans* (16%) to finance their studies.

### Mobility and Migration of Respondents

Approximately 6% of respondents at the time of the survey indicated that their country of residence was different from their country of origin. Of the 28 respondents, 20 were Jamaican nationals and 8 were non-Jamaican nationals. The countries of residence among Jamaicans were the United States (n=12), followed by the United Kingdom (n=3), Canada (n=2), Cayman Islands (n=1), Germany (n=1), and St. Kitts and Nevis (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 perception. In a recent publication by the International Organization for Migration (Thomas-Hope, 2018),<sup>2</sup> 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.

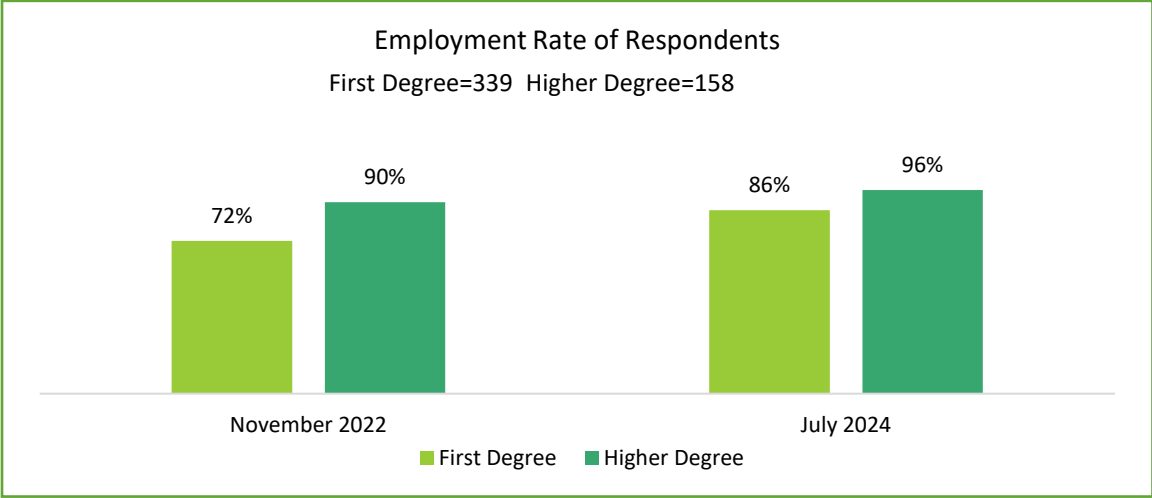
What is known about Jamaican emigrants to the United States and Canada, is that the majority are admitted under family-related reasons compared to economic ones (Thomas-Hope, 2018). In addition, 40% of emigrants to the United States comprised the prime working age group of 25-44 and in 2012, 45% of Jamaicans 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=20), 90% reported employment. For the 18 employed, 7 were attached to the *Education* sector, 3 to *Community, Social, and Personal Service Activities*, 2 to the *Health* sector, 2 to the *Financial services* sector, 1 in *Manufacturing*, 1 in *Public Administration*, and 2 unreported. There is some evidence here to support the perception of the continued exodus of teachers and other professionals as a means of upward mobility.

**Graduate Outcomes**

*Employment*

Most graduates who responded to the survey were employed at, or shortly after, graduation. One and a half years later, in 2024, employment increased more among First-degree than Higher-degree graduates (Graph 3).

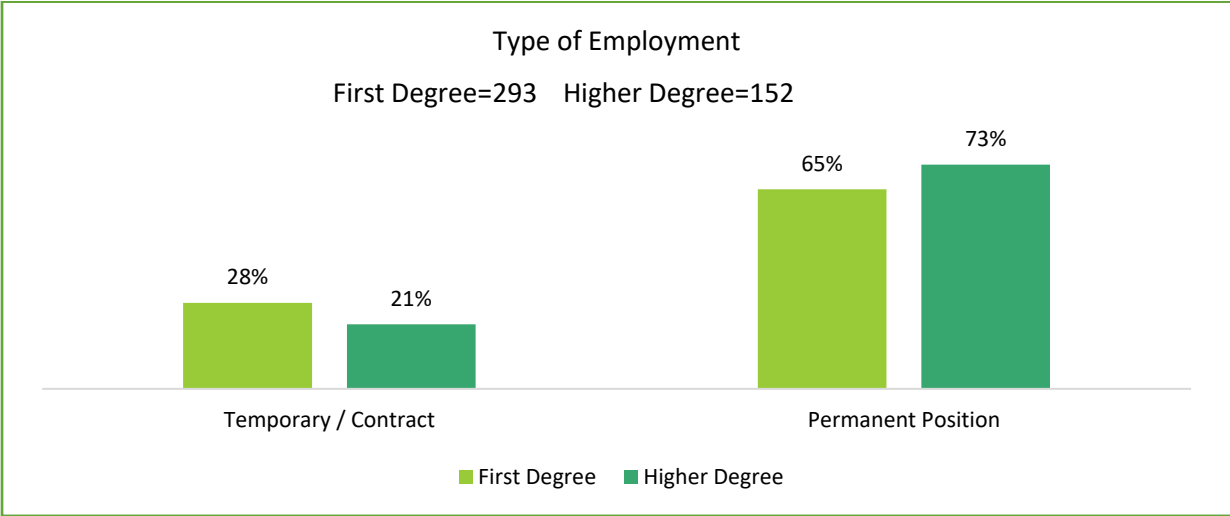
Graph 3



<sup>2</sup> 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](https://caribbeanmigration.org/sites/default/files/repository/migration_in_jamaica_-_profile_2018.pdf)

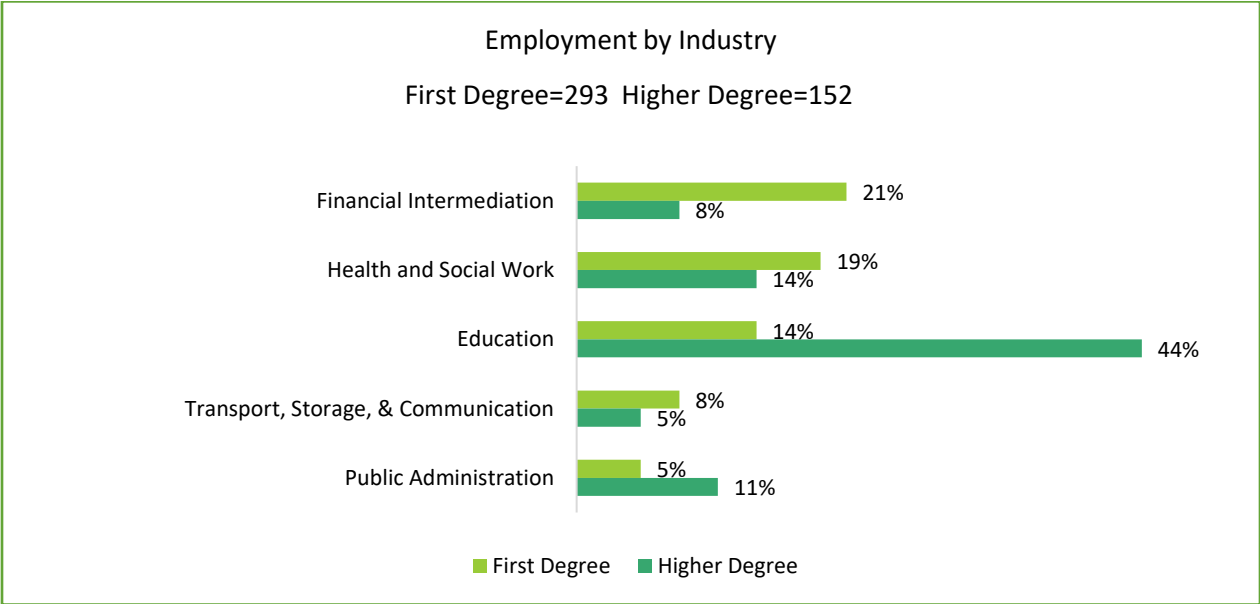
Undergraduates were more likely to report temporary or contract work than postgraduates while postgraduates were more likely to report permanent employment than undergraduates (Graph 4).

Graph 4



Although respondents were employed in key industries, postgraduates were concentrated in the *Education* sector while undergraduates were spread mainly among *Financial Intermediation*; *Health and Social Work*; and *Education* (Graph 5). Undergraduates were also more likely to be employed in the private sector than postgraduates.

Graph 5



Earnings can be influenced by many factors such as age, experience, education, occupation, and geographic location. What is clear from responses to the survey is that more education is associated with higher earnings. Whereas First-degree graduates are concentrated in the first four income bands (JMD\$400,000 or less), Higher-degree graduates are concentrated in the second to sixth income bands (JMD\$101,000 to \$600,000) and are more likely to earn monthly salaries in excess of \$601,000 than undergraduates.

Table 1

Gross Monthly Salary in \$JMD

	<i>First Degree</i>		<i>Higher Degree</i>	
	N	%	N	%
<i>JMD\$100,000 or less</i>	33	11	3	2
<i>\$101,000 to \$200,000</i>	114	39	23	15
<i>\$201,000 to \$300,000</i>	82	28	40	26
<i>\$301,000 to \$400,000</i>	32	11	26	17
<i>\$401,000 to \$500,000</i>	11	4	16	11
<i>\$501,000 to \$600,000</i>	7	2	18	12
<i>\$601,000 to \$700,000</i>	5	2	8	5
<i>\$701,000 or more</i>	6	2	14	9
<i>Unreported</i>	3	1	4	3
<i>Total</i>	293	100	152	100

*Job Satisfaction*

When graduates were asked to register their satisfaction with various aspects of their job, the results were somewhat counterintuitive. Despite the generally higher-earning capabilities of postgraduates, satisfaction with salary was rated equally at 54% among First-degree and Higher-degree graduates. Undergraduates also reported higher satisfaction than postgraduates on *benefits; job location; opportunities for advancement; intellectual challenge; level of responsibility; degree of independence; workplace culture; work-life balance; and opportunities for professional development*. By contrast, Higher-degree graduates reported higher satisfaction on *job security and contribution to society*. The lower satisfaction among postgraduates on many items may be explained by their concentration in the public sector (Education; Public Administration; and Health and Social Work) which offers greater levels of job security but non-competitive salaries among teaching and health professions.

Table 2

Satisfaction of Respondents with Aspects of Their Job

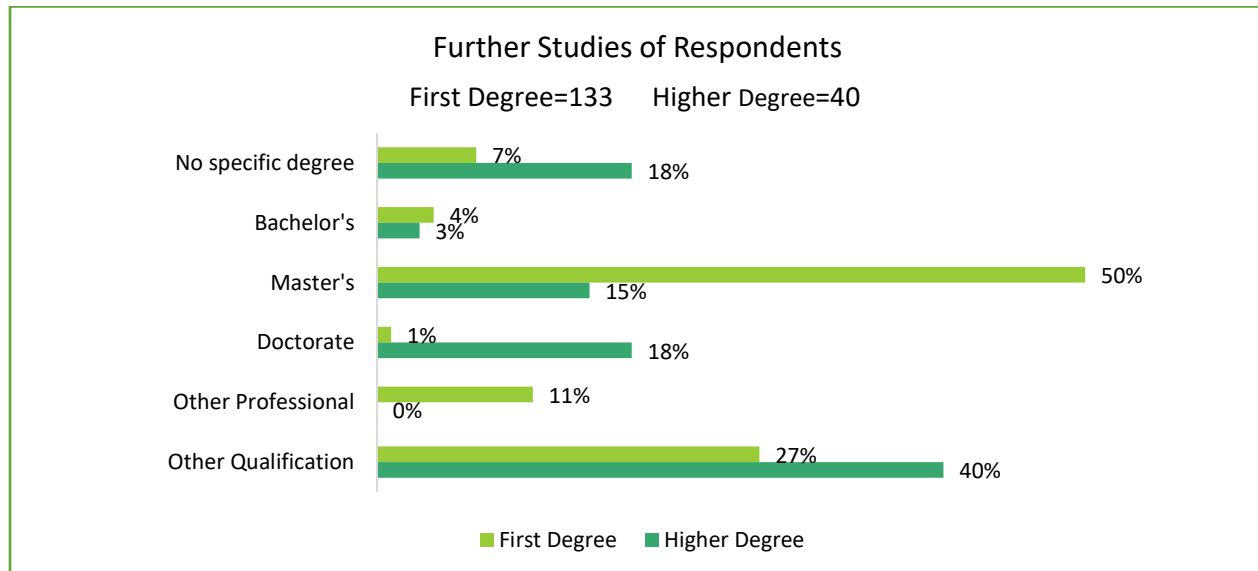
<i>Somewhat satisfied to very satisfied with aspects of their job</i>	% Distribution	
	First Degree	Higher Degree
<i>Salary</i>	54	54
<i>Benefits</i>	57	53
<i>Job Security</i>	70	76
<i>Job Location</i>	85	80
<i>Opportunities for Advancement</i>	59	53
<i>Intellectual Challenge</i>	72	64
<i>Level of Responsibility</i>	78	68
<i>Degree of Independence</i>	85	73
<i>Workplace Culture</i>	65	53
<i>Work-Life Balance</i>	69	63
<i>Opportunities for Professional Development</i>	68	61
<i>Contribution to Society</i>	78	82

Rating scale: *very dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, somewhat satisfied, very satisfied.*

*Further Studies*

Since graduating in 2022, approximately 35% (n=173) of respondents have pursued further studies as a means of personal and professional development. The majority of undergraduates pursued programmes leading to a master’s degree (50%), while 40% of postgraduates pursued *other qualifications* (short courses) for certification, credit, or non-credit.

Graph 6



### *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; socially, culturally and environmentally responsible; and strong ethical values*. By contrast, three areas in need of improvement were the development of *information technology skills; innovative and entrepreneurial skills* and, among undergraduates, *global awareness and groundedness in regional identity*.

Table 3

Development of Attributes among Respondents

	% Reporting Mostly/Fully Developed			
	Start of Programme		End of Programme	
	First Degree	Higher Degree	First Degree	Higher Degree
Critical and creative thinking skills	40	60	63	66
Effective communication and interpersonal skills	43	55	60	65
Information technology skills	41	42	53	47
Innovative and entrepreneurial skills	22	32	37	41
Globally aware and well-grounded in regional identity	40	47	56	61
Socially, culturally and environmentally responsible	45	51	59	61
Strong ethical values	56	63	62	63

Rating scale: not at all developed; somewhat developed; mostly developed; fully developed.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

For nearly two decades, the Planning and Institutional Research unit within the Office of Strategic Planning and Enterprise Management (OSPEM) has been surveying graduates beginning with the Class of 2007. Higher-degree graduates were surveyed with the Class of 2014 and have been included in the last four Tracer surveys. By comparing undergraduates to postgraduates, the returns to a university education become amplified. As illustrated in this report, postgraduates report higher employment rates and earnings, and higher development of esteemed attributes as identified in The UWI Strategic Plan.

Nonetheless, there are notable differences among undergraduates and postgraduates. Undergraduates are more likely to fund their education with the help of their *parents* and the *Students' Loan Bureau*, while postgraduates rely on *savings from employment; parents; and bank loans*. 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 aware 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.