ANZSCO 2523-12  
Dentist  
Australia  
June 2017

Current labour market rating  No Shortage
Previous labour market rating (June 2016)  No Shortage

Applicant fields for dentist vacancies have fallen over the past few years, but there continue to be adequate numbers of dentists to meet employers’ needs and most vacancies are filled without marked difficulty. There is, though, evidence from the research to suggest that it is harder to fill full-time vacancies than it is for part-time positions and that employers in regional locations have a relatively limited choice of applicants compared with their metropolitan counterparts.

Survey results

- In 2017, there were fewer applicants (an average of 7.6 per vacancy) than there have been since 2011 (Figure 1). Despite this, employers generally attracted multiple qualified and suitable candidates.
  - On average, there were 7.0 qualified applicants per vacancy, of whom 2.1 were regarded by employers as suitable.
- Vacancies were generally readily filled regardless of the location and seniority.
- In 2017, 71 per cent of surveyed vacancies were filled. This is a similar result to those recorded in most years since 2010 (when the labour market started softening following a period of persistent shortages).
- There was some variation in employers’ recruitment experiences across metropolitan and regional areas and for full-time and part-time vacancies, although there were no identifiable shortages.
  - Employers in metropolitan areas attracted 10.4 applicants per vacancy compared with 4.6 for regional employers, and regarded more than twice as many applicants per vacancy as suitable (3.0 compared with 1.2).
  - Around 60 per cent of regional vacancies were filled, some 20 percentage points lower than the proportion in metropolitan locations.
  - Employers consistently, though, suggested that there is a sufficient supply of graduate dentists in regional areas.
- Part-time vacancies generally attracted larger candidate fields and were more readily filled than those for full-time hours.
  - There were 2.6 applicants on average for each part-time vacancy compared with 1.9 for full-time vacancies.
  - A markedly larger proportion of full-time vacancies remained unfilled.

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1 The methodology underpinning this research is outlined at Skill Shortage Research Methodology | Department of Employment - Document library, Australian Government and can also be accessed by the QR code.
Employer requirements and unsuitable applicants

- Dentistry qualifications and registration are mandatory. In addition, nearly all employers sought dentists with a minimum of one to four years of experience.
  - The remaining employers were seeking graduates or senior dentists (with five or more years of relevant experience).

- Communication skills and particular technical skills were often additional requirements and a number of employers noted that applicants who had skills and experience in areas such as crowns, bridges or orthodontics would be valued.
  - A small number of employers invited applicants to undertake a short work trial to assess their skills and suitability.

- The main reason applicants were considered to be unsuitable was a lack of experience within the occupation, but poor communication skills was also highlighted as a factor in applicants’ unsuitability.

Demand and supply trends

- Demand for this occupation has grown strongly over recent years.
  - Vacancies for dentists are advertised using a number of different methods, including on the Australian Dental Association website. In terms of those advertised on major Internet sites, though, there were around 30 per cent more vacancies advertised for dentists over the year to May 2017 than there were in the same period to May 2017.²
  - Entry into this occupation is through the completion of a bachelor or postgraduate qualification in dentistry and registration.³ Although postgraduate entry-level training is available, bachelor degree courses continue to be the main pathway to this profession.

³ Australian Dental Association, *Dentist*, accessed 15 August 2017
Completions have increased strongly over the last decade for bachelor degree level courses (Figure 2). As of March 2017, there were 16,684 registered dentists, an increase of 17.3 per cent since March 2012.

Figure 2: Higher education commencements and completions, Dentist, Bachelor degrees, 2005 to 2015

Source: Department of Education and Training, Higher Education Student Data Collection, domestic students

Around 82.3 per cent of undergraduate dentistry students found full-time employment in 2016, well above the average for all bachelor degree graduates at 70.9 (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Proportion of undergraduates in full time employment, Dentistry, 2006 to 2016

Source: Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching, Graduate Outcomes Survey, Graduate Destinations, custom tables

4 Department of Education and Training, Higher Education Student Data Collection, 2015, customised tables.
5 Australian Health Practitioners Registration Agency: Dental Board of Australia, Dental Practitioner Registrant Data, various issues
6 Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching, Graduate Outcomes Survey, 2016, customised tables. Data are for the proportion of undergraduates available for full-time employment, in full-time employment four months after graduation.