

Electronic Engineering Associate Professionals		Queensland
ASCO Code: 3124	March 2007	
Labour market rating	Shortage	
Comment:		

Occupational demand

Electronic engineering associates and technicians perform tasks below the level of a tertiary qualified engineer and above that of a tradesperson in areas including telecommunications, hardware and systems design, electronics manufacturing and equipment maintenance. Recent years have seen large increases in consumer demand for mobile telephony and data communications infrastructure and services, which have added to demand for these occupations. As an indicator, recent data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that the proportion of households in Queensland with access to the internet grew from 15 per cent in 1998 to 61 per cent in 2006. These trends are expected to continue and, combined with the State's rapid population growth, should see increasing demand for electronic engineering associate professionals over coming years.

Occupational supply

Electronic engineering associate professionals comprise both electronic engineering associates and electronic engineering technicians. Many workers in this field have upgraded their skills from a trade or similar background in the industry, which they may formalise with appropriate studies. The most common post-school qualifications held by associates in Queensland are at Diploma or Advanced Diploma level, while Certificate III or IV level qualifications are much more common among technicians. Approximately nine students are expected to graduate from Diploma or Advanced Diploma level courses offered by Queensland's public sector training providers in 2007. Associate degree courses are also available at two universities in Queensland. Overseas arrivals and departures data indicate that there was a net gain of six self-identified electronic engineering associate professionals to Queensland in 2005-06.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

Approximately 75 per cent of the vacancies included in this year's survey were filled within six weeks of advertising, and about one third of all applicants were regarded as suitable. Among the reasons applicants were considered unsuitable were both a lack of experience and too much specialised experience. Some vacancies required workers with a good level of general competence across a wide range of occupational skills, while some applicants for these positions were experienced in a more specialised environment and to a high standard. Employers felt that applicants of this kind would be unlikely to remain in the position for long, and preference was given to other suitable applicants, if available. Employer contacts indicated that the conditions and security offered by some public sector employers might make them 'employers of choice' for these occupations. One employer commented on a perceived lack of interest in careers in this area among younger people, and others said that some positions require a level of experience that is generally only found in older applicants. Several contacts remarked that the practical experience provided through apprenticeships, traineeships and cadetships is invaluable and that many recent graduates of higher level vocational courses do not have the practical skills required in many positions.

Labour market outlook

With growing reliance on communications and information technology by households, businesses and governments, and the continuing development of communications infrastructure, demand is expected to increase for electronic engineering associate professionals. Supply to these occupations from local workplace-based and formal training, and from interstate and overseas migration, presently falls short of meeting demand in Queensland and this is unlikely to change over coming months. The present State-wide shortage is therefore expected to continue at least through 2007.