

Quality Assurance Manager		South Australia
ASCO Code: 2294-15	February 2007	
Labour market rating	Recruitment Difficulty	
Comment <i>The majority of positions were filled without difficulty. However, professionals with experience in a food manufacturing environment and those with high level skills in developing and implementing project quality management systems were difficult to source.</i>		

Occupational demand

A high proportion of quality assurance managers are employed in the manufacturing industry, and therefore occupational demand is strongly influenced by activity levels in this sector. Conditions in the SA manufacturing industry have declined due to increased competition from low cost import replacement items, the loss of existing contracts to off-shore companies, and the persistently high Australian dollar. The effect on the automotive manufacturing sector has been especially severe, with significant numbers of retrenchments occurring in the past two years. Manufacturing firms with exposure to the mining industry have been less affected by these developments, benefiting from the strong global demand for mining commodities. The Engineering Employers Association of SA's monthly survey of *Engineering Business Trends* shows a flattening-out in activity levels over the second half of 2006, although the general trend over the past two and half years has been one of decline.

Occupational supply

There is no specific educational qualification for quality assurance managers. ABS Census data show that around 23 per cent of those employed in the occupation have a trade-level qualification, a further 21 per cent have a diploma, while 30 per cent have a bachelor degree or higher. Formal qualifications may vary, depending on the individual organisation and/or industry sector of employment. Given the lack of a standard career path into the occupation, overall supply trends cannot be quantified.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A survey of employers who had recently advertised for quality assurance managers showed that two thirds of vacancies were filled within six weeks. There was an average of 24 applicants per vacancy, although the number of suitable applicants was low, at around two per position. The major reason for rejecting applicants was lack of relevant experience. The survey results were based on a small number of recently advertised vacancies, all of which required differing levels of experience and qualifications. Vacancies in general manufacturing were filled with little or no difficulty, while the most difficult to fill positions were in the business services and food manufacturing industries. Therefore, the overall labour market rating is 'recruitment difficulty' in respect of the latter specialisations only.

Labour market outlook

Activity levels in the major employing industry sector – manufacturing – are likely to remain variable over the short-term. Conditions in the automotive sector are expected to remain subdued, while niche sectors such as defence, mining, and food manufacturing should be reasonably buoyant. Major projects, including the Air Warfare Destroyer project and the expansion of BHP-Billiton's Olympic Dam mine may result in higher demand for quality assurance managers over the medium term. Recruitment difficulties for experienced professionals may therefore persist.