

<b>Student Counsellor</b>	<b>New South Wales (NSW)</b>
ASCO Code: 2513-19	June 2007
Labour market rating:	Regional recruitment difficulty
Comment: <i>Recruitment difficulties are evident in some locations in rural NSW.</i>	

### **Occupational demand**

The underlying demand for student counsellors (also known as school counsellors) has grown strongly in recent years due to the increasing prevalence of disabilities such as autism and mental health problems in the student population, improved diagnosis of these disabilities, and increased emphasis on student support and the management of student behavioural problems in government and non-government schools. Employment of student counsellors, however, has been limited by funding constraints in government and non-government schools and by school policies in relation to the allocation of resources towards various support services. The NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) advised that there were 790 schools counsellors in government schools and that this figure had been fairly stable in the past few years. The consensus of contacts in the Catholic school and independent school sectors was that employment of student counsellors had grown only moderately in recent years. Many non-government schools use counselling services provided by agencies such as Centacare or other providers.

### **Occupational supply**

School counsellors in government schools are required to have a teaching qualification, at least two years of teaching experience, an accredited qualification in psychology and a post-graduate qualification in school counselling. Non-government schools are more flexible in their requirements although most have a strong preference for counsellors with accredited qualifications in psychology and these qualifications are mandatory for those engaged in psychological testing and referrals to other specialist services. There are a number of bachelor degree and post-graduate courses in teaching and psychology which are specifically aimed at providing training as schools counsellors. For example, 60 to 70 students commence the combined Bachelor Teaching / Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology) at Charles Sturt University each year. School counsellor is also a target area for DET retraining programmes for existing teachers. Other post-graduate courses in psychology and counselling also provide appropriate training acceptable to many non-government schools and therefore exact data on supply from university completions is not available.

### **Employer and industry comments/current labour market**

A survey of non-government schools which had recently advertised for school counsellors found that almost all positions were filled within six weeks of the surveyed vacancies. Advertisements typically attracted between three and ten applicants of which one or two were considered suitable.

The NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) reported an adequate supply of school counsellors to fill substantive vacancies in the metropolitan area with occasional recruitment difficulties in some regional areas and in covering counsellor leave.

### **Labour market outlook**

Employment of school counsellors in government schools is expected to remain stable over the short term and any demand growth in non-government schools is likely to be only modest. Nevertheless, problems attracting school counsellors with specialist qualifications to specific geographic areas of need are likely to persist over 2007-08.

<b>Student Counsellor</b>		<b>Victoria</b>
<b>ASCO Code:</b> 2513-19	April 2007	
<b>Labour market rating</b>	No shortage	
<b>Comment:</b>		

### **Occupational demand**

Student counsellors are responsible for providing guidance to students, parents and teachers over a wide range of matters, including students' personal problems, learning difficulties, careers advice and special requirements. With the increase in overseas students, demand has risen for student counsellors. In 2004, the Victorian Department of Education and Training introduced the first of three phases of the Primary Welfare Officer Initiative, a four year \$49.5 million program which provides support to students who are at-risk of disengagement from school and who are not reaching their educational potential. Through this initiative, the equivalent of 256 full time primary welfare officer positions have been funded in 450 Victorian schools identified as having high needs. This initiative will also be extended for an additional four years, at a cost of \$80 million.

### **Occupational supply**

ABS Education and Work figures suggest approximately 36 per cent of employed counsellors nationally have bachelor degrees. DEEWR estimates the number of persons who completed tertiary education in the field of counselling in 2005 fell significantly, approximately 22 per cent compared to completions of 2004. Supply to the profession from net immigration has decreased by almost half compared to last year. Net immigration to Victoria during 2005-06 was approximately seven student counsellors.

### **Employer and industry comments/current labour market**

The Survey of Employers who Recently Advertised (SERA) found all of the vacancies were filled. The average number of suitable applicants per vacancy was 3.8 and approximately 5.1 applicants per vacancy were deemed unsuitable. The majority of employers surveyed stated the main reasons applicants were considered by employers to be unsuitable were a lack of suitable experience, and inadequate qualifications. Most employers were looking for candidates with practical experience in a school environment and degree qualifications in either psychology or counselling. According to employers, there is a lack of suitable student counselling courses offered at tertiary institutions, leading to fewer qualified people entering the profession.

Approximately 80 per cent of employers commented that there is a fairly low turnover of existing employees in the occupation due to long term stability and job satisfaction. Many employers are able to retain staff for long periods by offering good conditions and a good working environment. Employers commented that while the demand for student counsellors is increasing, the ageing workforce is not being replaced by younger candidates.

### **Labour market outlook**

The relatively balanced labour market for student counsellors in Victoria is expected to continue over the next six months.

<b>Student Counsellor</b>		<b>Queensland</b>
ASCO Code: 2513-19	April 2007	
Labour market rating	No Shortage	
<b>Comment:</b>		

### Occupational demand

Student counsellors provide counselling assistance to students in areas such as planning their studies and future careers, dealing with their personal and family problems, and overcoming learning-related and behavioural issues. They can be employed in public or private schools, government departments, and vocational or higher education institutions and are employed as consultants in some cases. Industry contacts indicate that demand for student counsellors has grown in recent years, along with increasing community expectations of support for students. Information from government sources and Independent Schools Queensland indicates that there are more than 1800 education institutions at all levels operating in the State. The number of employed student counsellors is considerably less than that, with the 2001 Census recording a total of 772 in Queensland, 74 per cent of whom were employed in the public sector. Census data also show that 60 per cent of Queensland's employed student counsellors were aged 45 years or more, indicating that demand may increase sharply in coming years as retirees need to be replaced.

### Occupational supply

There are several entry paths to this occupation. Some student counsellors have formal qualifications in psychology, social work or other social welfare and have subsequently specialised in counselling students. More commonly, student counsellors have a bachelor degree qualification in education and an appropriate postgraduate qualification in counselling. Given this situation, new supply to the profession through local education is hard to quantify. Direct international migration to Queensland does not appear to be a significant source of supply, with overseas arrivals and departures data indicating a net gain to the State of only seven self-identified student counsellors in 2005-06. Student counsellors who perform any teaching activities in Queensland are required to be registered with the Queensland College of Teachers, and the College advises that some schools consider only candidates who are registered teachers.

### Employer and industry comments/current labour market

Very few vacancies for student counsellors were advertised in Queensland within the target period for this year's survey. Employers stressed that recruitment often relies on internal staff development, 'word of mouth' and attracting student counsellors from other employers. Among those vacancies that were included in the survey, one third were filled within six weeks of advertising. More than 70 per cent of the applicants for these vacancies were considered unsuitable, mainly because of their lack of specific skills or workplace experience needed to undertake the role properly. However, general canvassing of potential employers indicated a much more positive outlook, with nearly all contacts confident of meeting any need for skilled student counselling through a combination of recruitment, staff allocation and the use of external resources. Industry contacts said that experienced teachers who have additional qualifications in student counselling are especially valuable in schools.

### Labour market outlook

Student counsellors form a small but growing occupation in Queensland. The number of students in the Queensland education system should continue to increase over the next few years, especially as Queensland's population is expected to continue growing strongly. Demand for student counsellors is expected to increase in line with this, and demand growth may pick up in coming years as more retiring counsellors need to be replaced. However, shortages in this profession are not apparent at present and are unlikely to emerge over the coming year.

<b>Student Counsellor</b>		<b>South Australia</b>
<b>ASCO Code:</b> 2513-19	March 2007	
<b>Labour market rating</b>	No Shortage	
<b>Comment</b>		

### **Occupational demand**

Student counsellors are employed in selected government and non-government primary and secondary schools across the state. Employment levels may fluctuate depending on need and available funding. Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data indicate a workforce size of around 300 persons. In the government sector, all schools can choose to appoint a counsellor or increase counsellor hours through special funding made available for this. There is considerable flexibility on how schools manage their individual counselling needs, and not all government schools have a dedicated counselling resource. Similarly, some non-government schools appoint full-time student counsellors, while others combine a teaching role with that of a part-time counsellor. Recent demand for student counsellors appears to be low, apart from a small number of contract positions in SA government primary schools.

### **Occupational supply**

There are no mandatory qualification, licensing or registration requirements for student counsellors in South Australia. It is common in both the government and non-government school sectors for student counsellors to be registered teachers who hold additional post graduate qualifications in counselling or education psychology. However, some schools may choose to appoint professionals from outside the school system, such as psychologists or social workers. Given the variety of mechanisms available for entry into the occupation, supply trends are unknown.

### **Employer and industry comments/current labour market**

In the government sector, recruitment of student counsellors has been devolved to individual schools. Vacancies are advertised on the Department of Education and Children's Services website, where prospective applicants may obtain details of positions available. Several vacancies were advertised in late 2006 for primary school counsellors in locations around South Australia. A number of schools were contacted to ascertain whether vacancies had been filled, and there were no reports of recruitment difficulties. The Catholic Education sector also employs student counsellors and vacancies are usually advertised online via the Horizons website. Whilst there were no specific examples of recently advertised counsellor vacancies, the Catholic school sector indicated that there were no unfilled positions and there appears to be a plentiful supply of appropriately trained/qualified applicants when vacancies arise. Most counsellor positions in Catholic schools are part-time and therefore applicants wanting full-time hours are expected to combine teaching and counselling in a shared role. A high proportion of counsellors are therefore dual qualified as registered teachers with relevant post-graduate counselling qualifications, although some Catholic schools employ specialist psychologists or social workers in student counsellor positions.

### **Labour market outlook**

Demand for student counsellors may increase due to greater focus on detecting students' personal problems, learning difficulties and special requirements. Due to the complex nature of many of these problems, some industry representatives suggest the counselling role would be better filled by specialist professionals (such as psychologists or social workers) rather than registered teachers. Whilst this approach has already been adopted by some schools, a large-scale shift in attitude is unlikely to occur in the short-term. In the meantime, overall supply and demand conditions for student counsellors are likely to remain stable over the next twelve months.

<b>Student Counsellor</b>		<b>Western Australia</b>
ASCO Code: 2513-19	June 2007	
<b>Labour market rating:</b>	No Shortage	
<b>Comment</b>		

### **Occupational demand**

Western Australia's economy is forecast to experience continued low rates of unemployment and high participation rates, with anticipated economic growth of six per cent for the remainder of 2007. Since 2000-01, WA has experienced a 39 per cent increase in real economic terms. This economic growth has been accompanied by significant population growth and increased numbers of students in WA's primary and secondary schools and TAFE colleges. Demand for student counsellors has increased commensurately and also in conjunction with programmes designed to encourage school students to complete their secondary education and training.

Student counsellors include: guidance officers who assist students to develop their personal, social, educational and career planning skills; career advisers who help students make career planning decisions; and school psychologists who develop psychological techniques to foster development and skills of individuals and groups in educational settings. School psychologists may also make educational and psychological assessments of students.

### **Occupational supply**

Guidance officers complete an undergraduate degree or postgraduate diploma in psychology or educational counselling. Student counsellors need not be qualified teachers, although many are. Psychology and social welfare graduates, as well as other people with suitable welfare and social services experience and who communicate effectively with students can be recruited as student counsellors or school chaplains. All of the five universities in WA offer relevant courses that attract adequate student enrolments.

### **Employer and industry comments/current labour market**

A small sample of non-government schools surveyed in 2007 indicated they have no difficulty filling vacancies for student counsellors with trained psychologists and that they also tend to retain their student counsellors. Alternatively, some schools refer mental health and personal issues concerning students to school chaplains or outsource them to schools counselling services. Their teachers provide career information and planning counselling to students.

### **Labour market outlook**

There is growing demand for student counsellors in response to population growth, educational and social issues, and encouragement for school students to complete their education and training. Schools currently experience little difficulty finding and retaining their student counsellors or referring to outsourced schools counselling services. There is unlikely to be any change over the next six to twelve months and the labour market for student counsellor is assessed as no shortage.

<b>Student Counsellor</b>		<b>Tasmania</b>
<b>ASCO Code:</b> 2513-19	May 2007	
<b>Labour market rating</b>	Shortage	
<b>Comment</b>		

### **Occupational demand**

In Tasmania guidance officers perform the role of student counsellor. Guidance officers, who are usually educational psychologists and social workers are employed to provide counselling services to students and their families on a range of issues. It is difficult to estimate the number of people engaged in these activities due to the number of different terms used to describe them. For example, at the 2001 Census, there were 27 educational psychologists recorded, 54 student counsellors, 230 social workers, and 32 education professionals not further defined. It is possible there are people working as student counsellors in all these occupations, and perhaps others as well.

### **Occupational supply**

In the public education system, student counsellors are employed under the teaching award, and therefore require a teaching qualification. Until quite recently it was possible to study education and psychology in the one degree. Following changes to the psychology degree, however, students must complete at least a 4 year psychology degree, then a two year teaching degree, followed by 2 years work under supervision before becoming a student counsellor. An alternative is to do a masters degree in clinical psychology, a six year course which means graduates are eligible for registration as a psychologist. However, those who go down this path are paid \$15,000 per year less than teachers, as they lack a teaching qualification, and most pursue more lucrative careers elsewhere. In the private system, there is less emphasis on teaching qualifications, and requirements can vary from school to school.

### **Employer and industry comments/current labour market**

The only employer to advertise a position for a student counsellor was unable to fill their position. Other industry sources confirmed that it was difficult to recruit people to these positions. Incentive packages and relocation assistance have been used to persuade people to relocate to the State, or particular areas of the State. Rural and regional areas have particular difficult recruiting. Better career options and remuneration available elsewhere are the main reasons cited for these difficulties.

### **Labour market outlook**

There are ongoing discussions among the relevant stakeholders to address the inequities in the public sector which act as disincentives for people with relevant qualifications to work as guidance officers. This may alleviate shortages in the longer-term, but it is unlikely to have an effect for at least a couple of years.

<b>Student Counsellor</b>		<b>Northern Territory</b>
<b>ASCO Code:</b> 2513-19	March 2007	
<b>Labour market rating</b>	Regional Shortage	
<b>Comment</b>		

### **Occupational demand**

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data show that there were 15 student counsellors employed in the Northern Territory (NT) in 2001. Employment for the occupation is too small in the NT for the ABS labour force data to provide a meaningful indicator of employment growth for the period following the 2001 census. The NT Government increased their funding allocation for school counsellors by 19 positions for the beginning of the 2006 school year. This increase has been the main influence on demand for this small occupation in the NT.

### **Occupational supply**

Although employers of school counsellors in the NT would like applicants to have teaching experience, psychology or social work qualifications are the core requirement. Charles Darwin University does offer courses in both psychology and social work, however attracting interstate applicants tends to be the key supply source.

### **Employer and industry comments/current labour market**

Few employers of student counsellors had recently advertised vacancies, but only half of those who did were able to fill their vacancies. The urban vacancies attracted numerous applications with a choice of potentially suitable candidates, however remote vacancies did not attract interest from suitable candidates. Although employees would like to recruit people with a teaching qualification, it was rare for successful applicants to have teaching experience in addition to their other qualifications.

Employers filled all but two of the additional NT Government roles by the start of the programme last year. A remote schools position has, so far, not been filled and has remained vacant for the entire period. Turnover is not considered to be a problem for the profession, with employees tending to be quite stable in their roles.

### **Labour market outlook**

Demand for student counsellors is expected to remain reasonable stable (following the significant increase in 2006). The few vacancies that arise (due to job turnover or gradual demand growth) are expected to be filled, but with the difficulties in remote areas expected to remain. The occupation is therefore expected to remain in regional shortage over the coming year.

<b>Student Counsellor</b>	<b>Australian Capital Territory (ACT)</b>
<b>ASCO Code:</b> 2513-19	June 2007
<b>Labour market rating</b>	Shortage
<b>Comment</b>	

### **Occupational demand**

The ACT Department of Education and Training, School Census February 2007 states there are 59 970 students attending schools in the ACT. Government and non government schools in Canberra employ student counsellors. Catholic Systemic Schools contract student counsellors from the catholic organisation Centacare, while some other non government schools employ teachers with postgraduate counselling qualifications.

### **Occupational supply**

School counsellors employed by ACT Department of Education and Training must have teaching and psychology qualifications and be eligible for registration with the ACT Psychology Board. Student counsellors employed by the ACT Department of Education and Training are often recruited as part of the department's annual recruitment round. Selection is based on merit considering the applicant's qualifications, response to the selection criteria, interview and referee checks, however the process for student counsellors is currently under review by the department.

Centacare is the primary employer of student counsellors for Catholic schools in the ACT. Counsellors at Catholic schools are not required to be qualified teachers but must be either qualified psychologists or social workers. Centacare currently employs about 20 student counsellors usually on a part time basis working up to a maximum of 60 hours per fortnight.

### **Employer and industry comments/current labour market.**

A survey of employers who had recently advertised for student counsellors was undertaken for this report. As only a small number of vacancies were identified during the survey period, employers in non government schools were cold canvassed. Recent vacancies advertised did not attract any response from qualified student counsellors or psychologists. Employers noted that vacancies can be difficult to fill when the positions are part time, although part time working hours appeal to some women with childcare responsibilities.

Employers commented that positions for student counsellors are rarely advertised as most counsellors are valued long term members of staff and so turnover is low. Some employers also noted the majority of student counsellors are in their 50s and many are approaching retirement. The ACT Department of Education and Training currently has vacancies for between six to eight student counsellors.

### **Labour market outlook**

It is unlikely that the labour market for student counsellors will change significantly over the next six months.