

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

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.