Five-star ratings for “getting a job” and “positive graduate outcomes” in the latest Good Universities Guide reflect both the popularity of ACU National graduates among diverse employers, and employers’ recognition of the quality of the University's courses.

“Regular consultation with representatives of government and the professions at local and national levels inform course planning, revision and delivery,” said Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs) Professor Gabrielle McMullen.

“In both undergraduate and postgraduate studies, in education, health sciences, business and human services, we take great care to liaise with professional bodies to ensure our courses are preparing students to meet the needs of the many communities they will serve upon graduating,” Professor McMullen said.

Indeed the flow of information between students, researchers and their professions is two-way, bringing mutual benefits. “A large number of our postgraduate students are also conducting important research in their fields, while combining work and study.”

**Listening and responding to needs ‘a guiding principle’**

“Listening to the needs of our partners is always the starting point,” said Faculty of Arts and Sciences Dean Professor Gail Crossley, stressing the importance the University places on developing and nurturing diverse professional links.

“Ongoing consultation about the effectiveness of our teaching and research services is a guiding principle for us,” Professor Crossley said.

For example, the University will offer a comprehensive suite of courses in the human services sector from 2008, in response to needs identified by Catholic and government agencies.

“In youth work, child protection and leadership in the human services, students will be able to take a range of pathways to a Master of Human Services qualification,” Professor Crossley said.

The University is also offering a unique course in education law, developed by the Institute of Legal Studies for sponsored cohorts such as the Catholic Education Office Melbourne. It has attracted more than 35 students from as far afield as Dubai and London.

Faculty research activities are also linked to specific needs. For example, Institute of Business and Informatics Director Professor Adam Steen and collaborators recently evaluated a Household Organisational Management Expenses (HOME) Advice Program for the Commonwealth Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, which assists families at risk of becoming homeless.

“It is an early intervention program with the capacity to respond to the broad range of issues which may contribute to families’ housing instability,” Professor Crossley said.

“The synergies between the above examples and the Mission of the University, with its focus on the common good, are evident and all-important to the Faculty.”

**Customised courses**

ACU National social work graduates are in demand, with most employed within months of their graduation.

The School of Social Work was established on the Canberra Campus in 1995 and has grown to include the Strathfield Campus in 2004 and Brisbane Campus this year. The School's advisory board includes state and commonwealth government and non-government representatives, ensuring the courses reflect community needs.

“ACU National offers a very distinctive education, with small classes and intensive face-to-face teaching,” said Canberra Campus Rector Professor Peter Camilleri, who is also Head of the National School of Social Work. “We also offer a commitment to working closely with industry.

“The human services industry is complex, and our Mission and emphasis on ethics places ACU National in an ideal position to prepare graduates for this demanding area of practice.”

As well as the Bachelor of Social Work degree, the School offers specialist courses in response to industry requests.

“We offer a Bachelor of Social Science and Justice Studies in collaboration with the Canberra Institute of Technology, for corrective services employees including custodial officers.

“In addition, we developed Australia’s first Graduate Certificate in Child Protection, at the request of the ACT Government.” This has now been extended to a Master of Human Services with a specialisation in Child Protection.
In business

“A common first year with professional experience volunteering in a community organisation characterises the Bachelor of Business degree at ACU National,” said Business and Informatics (Victoria) Head of School and CPA Australia Director Ms Marcia O’Neill.

Students later choose their career preference, in accounting, human resources management, information services or marketing and undertake paid professional experience relevant to their chosen field.

“Our courses are designed so that our graduates are equipped to meet the needs of business when they enter the workforce,” Ms O’Neill said.

Courses are also accredited by the relevant professional bodies, including the Institute of Chartered Accountants (ICAA), CPA Australia, Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI) and Australian Computer Society (ACS).

Psychology graduates ‘quickly taken up’

ACU National psychology graduates are also in strong demand. “Our students are quickly taken up by the education, health and human services sectors, by both Catholic and other providers, often before they graduate,” said School of Psychology (National) Head of School Mr Michael McKay.

“Our graduates don’t have any difficulties finding employment. Entry to all our programs is highly competitive. Intakes are very small, as supervision of practical work and research is very labour intensive.”

Foundations set for further learning

Psychologist Dr Sesil Ozgis graduated from ACU National in 2006 and is working full-time as a psychologist for Windermere Child and Family Services in Victoria.

For her doctoral thesis, Dr Ozgis researched the effectiveness of a memory technique, “spaced retrieval”, for enhancing the everyday memory of older adults with memory difficulties. The study showed the spaced retrieval technique not only improved the everyday memory of older adults with memory difficulties, but in fact matched the memory performance of older adults without memory difficulties.

Dr Ozgis said her Postgraduate Diploma of Psychology and Doctor of Psychology (Clinical) studies at ACU National enabled her to develop as a professional and to realise that learning will be an ongoing journey.

‘A great feeling’

Third-year business student Nicholas Clement from the Melbourne Campus has already secured a part-time position with accounting and financial planning firm McGregor West Wong, as a trainee tax adviser.

Nic undertook work experience with the company, which has offered him full-time work the moment his studies are complete later this year.

Nic chose ACU National because of its professional experience program, diverse subject options including art, law units and ethics, and the fact it also cultivated communication, teamwork and time management skills.

“The course has been a lot of fun and I have met a lot of great people,” he said. “I had hoped but never expected to be offered a full-time position so soon. It is a great feeling knowing I already have a job.”

Postgraduate specialties in clinical psychology and educational and developmental psychology are accredited by the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC), and involve coursework, research and practical internship. Graduates are eligible for membership with the relevant specialist college within the Australian Psychological Society.

All students graduating with a postgraduate Master’s of Psychology or Doctor of Psychology degree are also immediately able to apply for registration as a psychologist in respective states. Alternatively, graduates who have completed a fourth year of approved study in psychology may undertake two years of internship to qualify for registration as a psychologist. Accredited fourth years of study are available at both the Melbourne and Brisbane campuses.

Courses and research tailored to meet the nation’s needs

Representatives of professional bodies sit on the University’s course planning and revision committees.

A number of the University’s academic staff also hold consultative roles within their professions and on government committees.

Courses and research are developed and adapted to meet specific needs, and courses are accredited by relevant state and national bodies.