

Many university grads overqualified for their current positions

[Drishti Kataria](#), [westerngazette.ca](#), Jan 7, 2016

Ben Baxter completed his undergrad from Western in kinesiology in April 2013, intending to become a teacher. He completed his bachelor's in education the following year and currently works as a client advisor at Royal Bank of Canada.

“Trying to find a teaching job, I didn’t find anything within Canada,” he said. “I had a few offers outside of Canada but nothing that was that appealing.”

He discovered that if he wanted his ideal scenario with his own classroom, it would take him 10 to 12 years, and until then he would be working as a substitute teacher.

Baxter's not alone among university graduates finding it tough to get a job in their field. As many as 40 per cent of grads are overqualified for their jobs, as reported by a recent labour market assessment.

The federal parliamentary budget office discovered that the proportion of workers aged 25 to 34 with a university degree who were overqualified for their current position has been on the rise since the early 1990s.

In 2014, 56 per cent of university graduates aged 24 or younger were overqualified.

Jeff Watson, associate director employer relations at Western's Student Success Centre, believes this statistic places a real priority on contextualizing the skills gained in university.

“In my mind it points me to think that it's imperative that students, when they're in their university experience, are putting a major focus on the skills set they're developing,” he said, “and are able to articulate the transferable skills they're gaining and how they add value to their employer.”

Donna Moore, director of career counselling at the Student Success Centre, said when she attended the Cannexus conference in 2013 there was a presentation on how the number of entry-level jobs were growing faster than knowledge-level jobs.

“If we are graduating many university grads but the jobs aren't out there that really match with their skill, many of these individuals are ending up in entry-level jobs and they're finding it's almost like a glass ceiling,” she said. “They're finding it difficult to then move into knowledge-level jobs.”

Furthermore, overqualified workers face lower levels of job satisfaction and attachment, increasing turnover rate for employers as a result.

Watson emphasized the importance of job descriptions and why employers need to be more precise in articulating a job's criteria.

“It's not a great thing for employers to lose talent," said Watson. "It might require them to be very specific in what their needs are and really justifying why they might need an advanced degree holder for a specific position.”

According to the market assessment, the most popular answers for why people are not working in their choice of occupation was because they couldn't find the job they wanted or because they couldn't wait for their job of choice.

Watson advises that for students to obtain jobs in their field, they should be taking advantage of their career centre.

“It's all about the preparation," he said. "The more energy they can put into it the more advantage they'll have when they go into the marketplace.”