

Moldova's Higher Education Graduate Tracer Study

Methodological approach, key findings and use of results

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STUDY BACKGROUND

THE MAIN QUESTION

◆ Moldova Higher Education Project

2020–2025

A national initiative to strengthen the quality and labour-market relevance of higher education.

Project coordination

Ministry of Education and Research

With World Bank support

To what extent does higher education prepare graduates for employment and respond to labour market needs?

🎯 Graduate Tracer Study (GTS)

A survey-based study of graduates' study experience, competencies and programme relevance, employment pathways, job search, education–job match, job quality, income and satisfaction.

➤ Evidence for policy and improvement

Evidence to inform higher education policy, improve study programmes and strengthen their alignment with labour market needs.

WHAT GTS PROVIDED

- **Comparable evidence**
Across institutions and fields of study.
- **Graduate-level insights**
On study experience, competencies and programme relevance, as well as employment pathways and early career outcomes.
- **A common basis for dialogue**
Between the Ministry, universities and labour-market stakeholders.

METHODOLOGY

A survey-based national graduate tracking approach for Bachelor and Master graduates

◇ Coverage

2020 cohort · Bachelor and Master
19 Higher Education Institutions · all
fields of study

☰ Survey instrument

Standardised bilingual questionnaire
Contact data from HEIs; outcomes
collected by survey

↔ Data collection

Mixed mode: ≈70% online; ≈30% telephone
QuestionPro platform

🕒 Timing

Pilot: Oct 2022–Jan 2023 (4 fields)
Main: Apr–Jul 2023 (remaining fields)

TWO GRADUATE COHORTS

Bachelor graduates

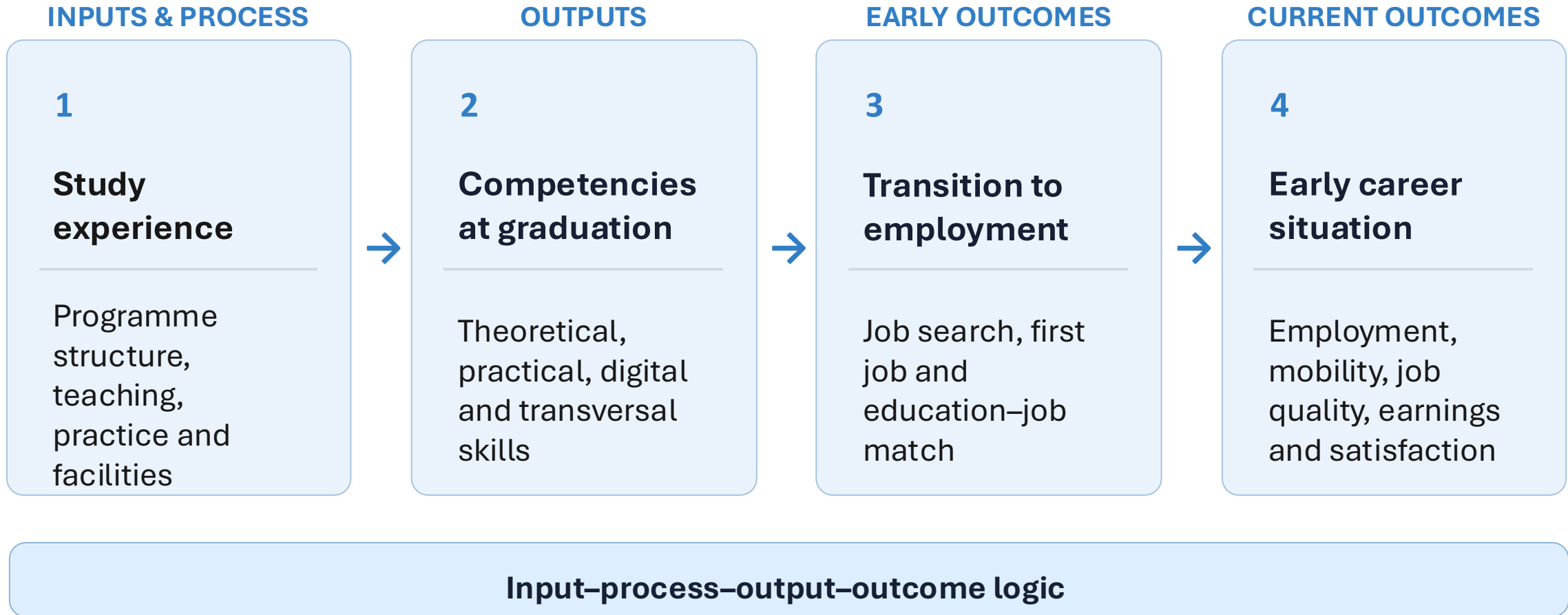
8,098 graduates • 2,009 respondents • **24.8%**

Master graduates

3,663 graduates • 1,294 respondents • **35.3%**

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Linking higher education experience to graduates' early career outcomes



Conceptual framework adapted from Schomburg (2003)

STUDY LIMITATIONS

What should be considered when interpreting the findings

Contact frame

Outdated or missing contacts reduced reach; invalid phones affected $\approx 34\%$ of Bachelor and $\approx 20\%$ of Master records.

Fieldwork constraints

Technical issues caused some questionnaire dropouts; telephone follow-up was used to complete interrupted responses.

Voluntary participation

Participation depended on willingness and availability, creating a risk of non-response and self-selection bias

Coverage and response patterns

Migration may partly explain non-contact, although this could not be verified. Fieldwork observations suggested lower willingness to participate among unemployed graduates and those working outside their field.

IMPLICATION FOR INTERPRETATION

Without access to administrative data, employment outcomes could not be independently verified, nor could survey findings be benchmarked against the full graduate cohort.

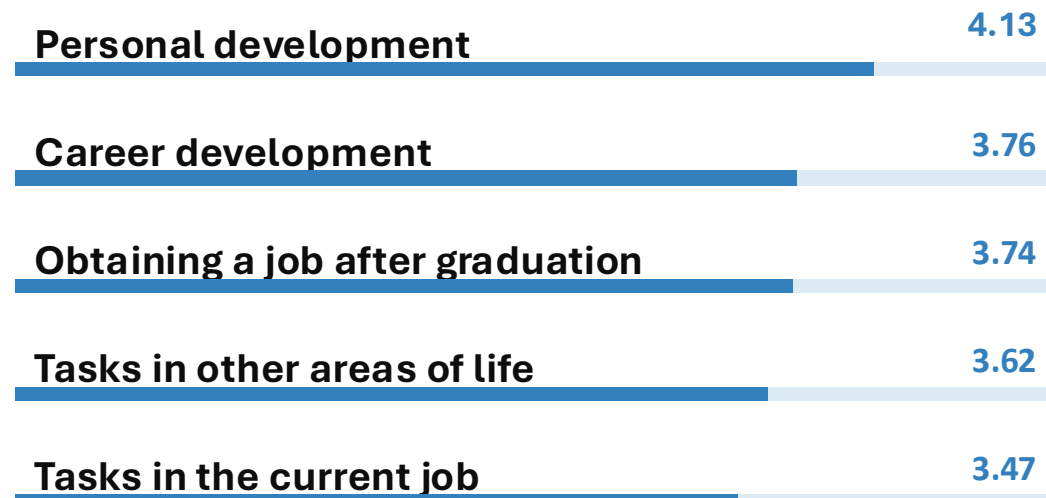
Programme usefulness and self-assessed competencies

Selected findings: Bachelor graduates

Mean 1–5 · Self-reported

PERCEIVED USEFULNESS OF THE PROGRAMME

All five overall scores



SELF-ASSESSED COMPETENCIES

Three highest and three lowest overall scores



EDUCATION SCIENCES

High scores across both dimensions:
career development 4.23 · current job tasks 4.12
teamwork 4.36 · practical skills 4.15

MEDICAL SCIENCES

Highest rating for usefulness in
obtaining a job: 4.20
Career development was also
rated highly: 4.17

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (ICT)

Lowest job-related usefulness ratings:
obtaining a job 3.29 · current job tasks 2.79
Digital competencies were rated 4.07

Employment status and time to first job

Selected findings: Bachelor graduates

IMMEDIATELY AFTER GRADUATION

43.4%

Continued an existing job

34.1%

Took up a job

5.0%

Started a business or became self-employed

2.1% business · 2.9% freelance / own-account

Other reported situations: 17.5%

AT THE TIME OF THE SURVEY

74.4%

Reported being in work

66.5% salaried employees
7.9% self-employed or business owners

TIME TO FIRST JOB AFTER GRADUATION

Overall 4.64

Men 3.90

Reported mean · months · n=740 (first job after graduation)

Women 4.97

BY FIELD OF STUDY · MEAN MONTHS

ICT	2.52	Education sciences	4.88
Urbanism & architecture	3.63	Medical sciences	4.97
Law	4.27	Engineering	5.01
Economics	4.77	Humanities	5.07
Other fields	4.77	Social & political sciences	5.17

Job mobility, field-of-study match and professional satisfaction

Selected findings: Bachelor graduates

1 • FIRST-JOB RETENTION

55.7% still worked in their first job **44.3%** had changed jobs



Women were more likely to remain in their first job than men: 59.7% vs 49.0%

2 • CURRENT JOB MATCH AMONG THOSE WHO CHANGED JOBS



72.1% worked in the same or a related field

3 • SATISFACTION WITH THE CURRENT PROFESSIONAL SITUATION



Dissatisfied / very
dissatisfied

DIFFERENCES BY FIELD OF STUDY

ICT

First-job retention **40.7%**
Satisfied / very satisfied **82.3%**

MEDICAL SCIENCES

First-job retention **84.9%**
Satisfied / very satisfied **62.7%**

Categories 4–5 combined as satisfied; categories 1–2 combined as dissatisfied.

Graduates' recommendations for improving study programmes

Selected findings: Bachelor graduates

TOP RECOMMENDATION

55.3%

Revise study plans and programmes

Graduates specifically pointed to:

- updating core course content
- removing courses perceived as less relevant
- diversifying electives
- modernizing curricula
- expanding project-based learning
- introducing foreign-language courses

OTHER PRIORITIES

Share of respondents mentioning each recommendation

Career guidance and combining study with work 14.9%

Teaching quality and employers involvement 14.9%

Modern learning conditions and digitalisation 7.6%

More opportunities for practical experience 3.3%

More financial resources for institutions 2.1%

POLICY READING

The recommendations point to three connected levers: relevant programme content, stronger teaching and employer engagement, and better support for the transition into work.

Multiple recommendations could be coded for the same respondent; percentages therefore do not sum to 100%.

Dissemination and use of study findings

01

EVIDENCE PRODUCTS

Two detailed reports

Separate analytical reports were produced for Bachelor and Master graduates, presenting methodology, results and field-level differences.

Delivered to the Ministry of Education and Research

02

DISSEMINATION

Findings shared with stakeholders

Results were presented and discussed at round tables and other stakeholder events, including activities within the Moldova Higher Education Project.

MEC · universities · other key actors

03

EVIDENCE USE

Support for dialogue and learning

The evidence informed discussions on programme relevance, graduate competencies, labour-market transition and the further development of graduate tracking.

A baseline for future monitoring and decisions

WHAT THIS ENABLED

A shared evidence base for discussing how higher education responds to graduates' transition into work — and for strengthening future graduate tracking.

Graduate surveys provide useful evidence for programme improvement and policy dialogue. Better access to administrative data and regular graduate surveys would strengthen future monitoring.

Thank you for your attention!