

SIAST
Employer Survey
of 2007-08 Graduates



SIAST

SASKATCHEWAN INSTITUTE OF
APPLIED SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Acknowledgements

The Institutional Research and Analysis unit at SIAST would like to thank those who responded to the SIAST Employer Survey.

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Availability

This report is available in electronic format and can be found on the SIAST Web page at:
http://www.siastr.sk.ca/about/reports_statistics/institutional_reports.shtml

The on-line version of the report is in Adobe Acrobat pdf format and available free for download from the Adobe Web page (will require the Adobe Acrobat Reader software).



SASKATCHEWAN INSTITUTE OF
APPLIED SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Employer Survey is conducted annually to measure employer satisfaction with the skills and training of SIAST graduates and to identify areas for improvement in SIAST's curricula and mix of programs. Employers are surveyed each spring as a follow-up activity to the Graduate Employment Survey (GES). The survey is administered over the telephone to all employers for which graduates have provided their employer's contact information.

This report summarizes the key findings to a series of rating questions regarding the preparedness of graduates for training related and overall employment, and more specifically their job-related knowledge, skills and general employability skills.

- Based on feedback from graduates in the 2007/08 academic year, a list of 765 unduplicated employers was compiled. Four hundred seventy two (472) employers representing 96 programs participated in the 2007/08 Employer Survey, a response rate of approximately 62% (2006/07: 66%, 519 of 784).
- 93% of employers (438 of 472) indicated the SIAST graduate employed by their organization was working in a training-related occupation, down 2% from the previous year (2006/07: 95%, 494 of 519).
- 96% of employers (410 of 429), who employed graduates working in their field of training, felt SIAST's ability to prepare the graduate for employment in his/her field was "good" to "excellent", down 2% from the previous year (2006/07: 98%, 486 of 494).
- 89% of all employers (415 of 464) were either "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the overall preparation of the SIAST graduates they had hired, up 3% from the previous year (2006/07: 86%, 445 of 518).
- Overall, 83% of all employers (389 of 468) indicated they were "satisfied" to "very satisfied" with the job-related knowledge of the graduates they hired, up 6% from the previous year (2006/07: 77%, 396 of 515).
- 84% (391 of 466) of all employers reported they were "satisfied" to "very satisfied" with graduates' job-related skills, up 5% from the previous year (2006/07: 79%, 409 of 517).

- 79% (363 of 464) of all employers indicated they were “satisfied” to “very satisfied” with the general employability skills of SIAST graduates, a 3% increase from the previous year (2006/07: 76%, 391 of 512).
- 97% (456 of 472) of all employers indicated that, should they require employees with similar training in the future, they would hire a SIAST graduate again, approximately a 3% decrease from the previous year (2006/07: 99.6%, 511 of 513).
- A summary of the divisions that had the two highest proportions of satisfied employers for each key rating are as follows:
 - Preparedness for employment in their field of training: Nursing (100%) and Science and Health (97%).
 - Overall preparation for employment: Business & Entrepreneurial Studies (96%) and Nursing (92%).
 - Job-related knowledge: Community Services (89%) and Science and Health (89%)
 - Job-related skills: Business and Entrepreneurial Studies (90%) and Science and Health (90%).
 - Employability skills: Business & Entrepreneurial Studies (85%) and Community Services (84%) and Nursing (84%).
 - Would hire a SIAST graduate again: Business & Entrepreneurial Studies (100%) and Technology (98%).
- On a divisional basis, employers of Industrial Training division graduates consistently reported a lower level of satisfaction relative to the other academic divisions. While still receiving a good rating overall, the distribution of results for the Industrial Division ranged from a low of 66% (general employability skills) to a high of 95% (would hire a SIAST graduate again).

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1.0 Introduction

SIAST is committed to ensuring its graduates have the training, skills and knowledge to meet the labour market needs of Saskatchewan employers. The Employer Survey is designed to measure employer satisfaction and to identify areas for improvement in SIAST's curricula and mix of programs. Beginning in 2007, the Employer Survey has been conducted yearly.

1.1 Methodology

In the fall of 2008, SIAST's Institutional Research and Analysis Office (IR&A) sent invitations to participate in a Graduate Employment Survey to 3,621 graduates who completed their programs between July 2007 and October 2008. Of these, 1,640 graduates from 132 distinct programs completed the survey. Respondents to the survey were asked to provide employer contact information for the purposes of conducting an employer survey. Based on the information provided by the graduate respondents in the GES 2008, a list of 765 unduplicated employers was compiled (Note: Some graduates declined to provide their employer information). These employers were used as the sample for the Employer Survey conducted in the spring of 2009. Where many students were employed at the same organization and so provided the same employer contact, those employers were contacted only once. In May 2009, Norsask Consumer Interviewing Services Limited (Norsask) of Saskatoon contacted the identified employers and conducted one-on-one computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATIs).

A copy of the questionnaire is attached as Appendix A. Employers were instructed to answer the questions based on the training and skills the employees (former SIAST graduates) received while studying at SIAST, rather than on the actual work performance of the employee. The survey results were checked by SIAST's Institutional Research and Analysis Office for accuracy and analyzed utilizing the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

1.2 Response Rate

Every effort was made to contact all the employers on the generated list in order to provide the highest possible response rate. Of the 765 employers identified in the Graduate Employment Survey, 472 employers of graduates from 96 programs were successfully contacted and interviewed, a 62% response rate (2006/07: 66% response rate, 519 of 784). Note: Larger employers with multiple locations around the province and different managements (i.e., health regions) may be counted more than once in the 472 total.

Table 1 shows the number of completed responses overall and by division. The largest portion of responses came from employers of graduates from the Science and Health division (116 of 472, or 24.6%), many of whom had been enrolled in the Continuing Care Assistant (61) and Primary Care Paramedic (11) programs. The Industrial Training had the second largest number of respondents (97 of 472, or 20.6%), and within that division the largest number of reporting employers were for Welding graduates (19).

Table 1: Number of Responses, SIAST Overall and by Division

DIVISION	# OF RESPONSES	% OF TOTAL RESPONSES
Business and Entrepreneurial Studies	61	12.9%
Community Services	89	18.9%
Industrial Training	97	20.6%
Nursing	25	5.3%
Science and Health	116	24.6%
Technology	84	17.8%
SIAST Overall	472	100%

1.3 Reporting of Results

This report provides a summary of results for a series of rating questions regarding the preparedness of graduates for training related and overall employment, and more specifically their job-related knowledge, skills and general employability skills.

The results are reported for SIAST overall and by SIAST's six academic divisions: Business and Entrepreneurial Studies; Community Services; Industrial Training; Nursing; Science and Health; and Technology. For comparative purposes of SIAST's overall results, the findings from the previous 2006/07 employer survey have been provided in brackets and italics at the end of each respective section.

Only valid responses have been included in the analysis of results. For quality and satisfaction rating questions (questions 3 and 4a to 4d), valid responses are considered to be those where the employer provided a specific rating of the graduate's skills, training or preparedness for employment. If an employer did not provide a response or was not sure of their answer to a particular question, they were removed from the analysis of that question. Note: Due to rounding (no decimals), percentages may not equal 100%.

Comments and open-ended responses are not included in this report but were grouped into themes and forwarded to the deans for review. Program pages were developed, summarizing survey results by program. These were also distributed internally to the respective division offices.

Note: The Graduate Employment and Employer Surveys do not survey students who have completed basic education, apprenticeship or the Nursing Education Program of Saskatchewan or related NEPS Second Degree Entry Option programs, as students from these programs are credentialed or receive industry designations from other credit granting bodies.

2.0 Results

2.1 Graduates Employed in Training Related Occupations

SIAST places an emphasis on training its graduates to work in occupations related to their fields of study. Ninety-three percent of employers (438 of 472) indicated the SIAST graduate employed by their organization was working in a training-related occupation (2006/07: 95%, 494 of 519).

Table 2 provides a breakdown of training-related employment by division. The divisions of Community Services (98%, or 87 of 89) and Science and Health (97%, or 113 of 116) had the highest proportion of graduates employed in training related occupations.

Table 2: Employers with Graduates Working in Training-Related Occupations, SIAST Overall and by Division

DIVISION	YES	No	YES AS A % OF DIVISION TOTAL
Business and Entrepreneurial Studies	53	8	87%
Community Services	87	2	98%
Industrial Training	90	7	93%
Nursing	22	3	88%
Science and Health	113	3	97%
Technology	73	11	87%
SIAST Overall	438	34	93%

2.2 Employer Satisfaction with Graduates' Preparedness for Employment, Skills and Training

2.2.1 Employer Satisfaction with Graduates' Preparedness for Employment in Their Field of Training

Employers, whose employees were working in a position related to their field of training, were then asked to rate how well SIAST prepared the graduate for employment in their field of study. Overall, approximately 96% of employers (410 of 429), who responded to this question, felt SIAST's ability to prepare the graduate for employment in his/her field of study was "good" to "excellent" (2006/07: 98%, 486 of 494).

As shown in figure 1 and table 3, the divisions of Nursing (100%, or 22 of 22) and Science and Health (97%, 109 of 112) had the highest proportion of employers who reported the graduates' preparedness for employment in their field of study was 'good to excellent'. However, the divisions of Business and Entrepreneurial Studies (80%, or 41 of 51) and Community Services (75%, or 63 of 84) had the highest proportion of employers who gave a rating of 'very good to excellent'.

While still receiving a very good overall rating, employers of Industrial Training division graduates had the lowest proportion of employers among the six SIAST academic divisions who were satisfied with their employee's training-related preparedness (93% stating 'good to excellent'; 51% stating 'very good to excellent').

Figure 1: Summary of Employer Satisfaction with Graduates' Preparedness for Employment in Their Field of Training

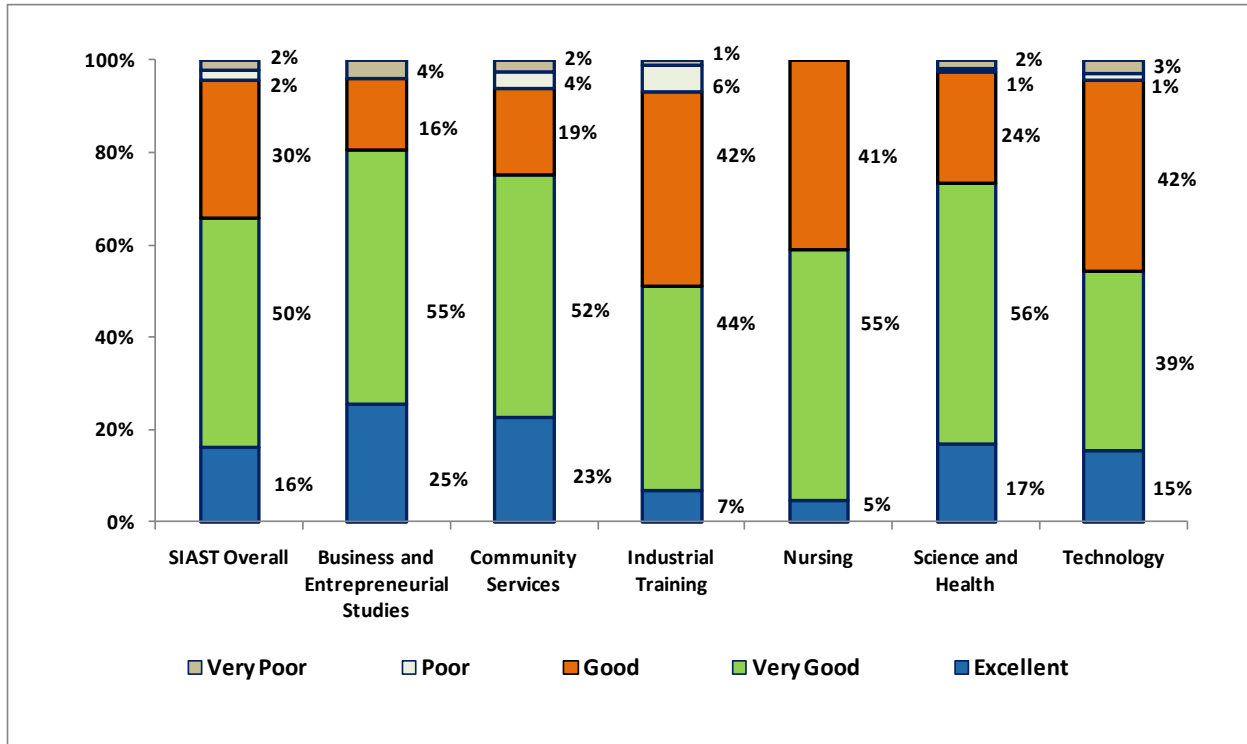


Table 3: Employer Ratings of SIAST Preparation of Graduates for Employment in their Fields of Study

DIVISION	EXCELLENT	VERY GOOD	GOOD	POOR	VERY POOR	TOTAL
Business and Entrepreneurial Studies	13	28	8	0	2	51
Community Services	19	44	16	3	2	84
Industrial Training	6	39	37	5	1	88
Nursing	1	12	9	0	0	22
Science and Health	19	63	27	1	2	112
Technology	11	28	30	1	2	72
SIAST Overall	69	214	127	10	9	429

2.2.2 Employer Satisfaction with Overall Preparation of Graduates

All employers were asked to rate the overall preparation for employment of SIAST graduates. Overall, approximately 89% of employers (415 of 464) were either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the overall preparation of the SIAST graduates they had hired (figure 2 and table 4) (2006/07: 86%, 445 of 518).

On a divisional basis, the majority of employers from all divisions indicated they were “satisfied” to “very satisfied” with the graduates’ overall preparation, ranging from the high of 96% (57 of 59) of employers of Business and Entrepreneurial Studies division graduates to 85% (80 of 94) of employers of Industrial Training division graduates.

Figure 2: Employer Satisfaction with Overall Preparation of Graduates, SIAST Overall and by Division

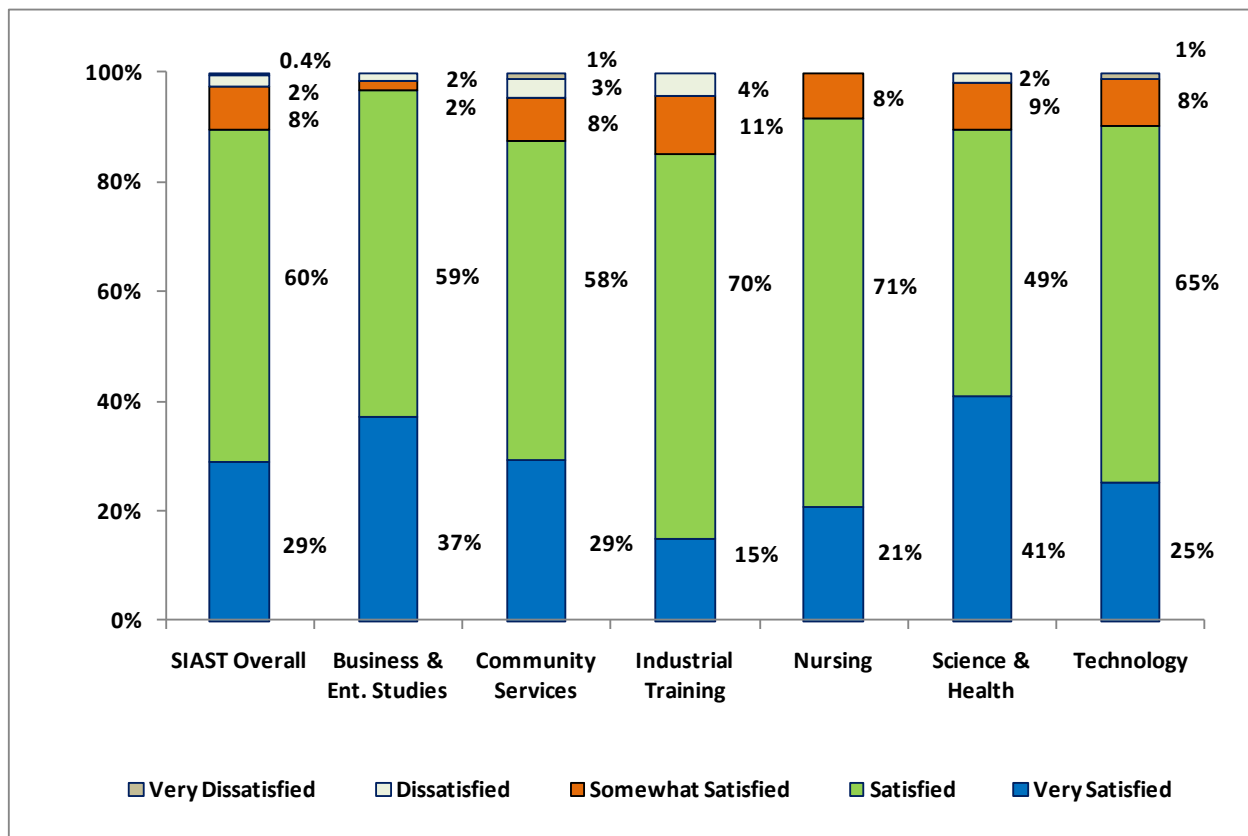


Table 4: Employer Satisfaction with Overall Preparation of Graduates, SIAST Overall and by Division

DIVISION	VERY SATISFIED	SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED	TOTAL
Business and Entrepreneurial Studies	22	35	1	1	0	59
Community Services	26	52	7	3	1	89
Industrial Training	14	66	10	4	0	94
Nursing	5	17	2	0	0	24
Science and Health	47	56	10	2	0	115
Technology	21	54	7	0	1	83
SIAST Overall	135	280	37	10	2	464

Note: Respondents who gave less than satisfactory ratings were asked to comment on what aspects of graduates' overall preparation, job-related knowledge, job-related skills and general employability or essential skills they were dissatisfied with (Questions 5 to 8). These comments were combined with the respective program pages and were made available to the deans.

2.2.3 Employer Satisfaction with Graduates' Job-Related Knowledge

All employers were asked to indicate their satisfaction with the graduates' job-related knowledge. Overall, 83% of employers (389 of 468) indicated they were "satisfied" to "very satisfied" with the job-related knowledge of the graduates they hired (figure 3 and table 5) (2006/07: 77%, 396 of 515).

The divisions of Science and Health (89%, or 104 of 116) and Community Services (89%, or 78 of 88) had a relatively higher proportion of employers who indicated they were "satisfied" to "very satisfied" with the graduates' job-related knowledge. Comparatively, approximately 70% (67 of 95) of employers of Industrial Training division graduates were "satisfied" to "very satisfied".

Figure 3: Employer Satisfaction with Job-Related Knowledge of Graduates, SIAST Overall and by Division

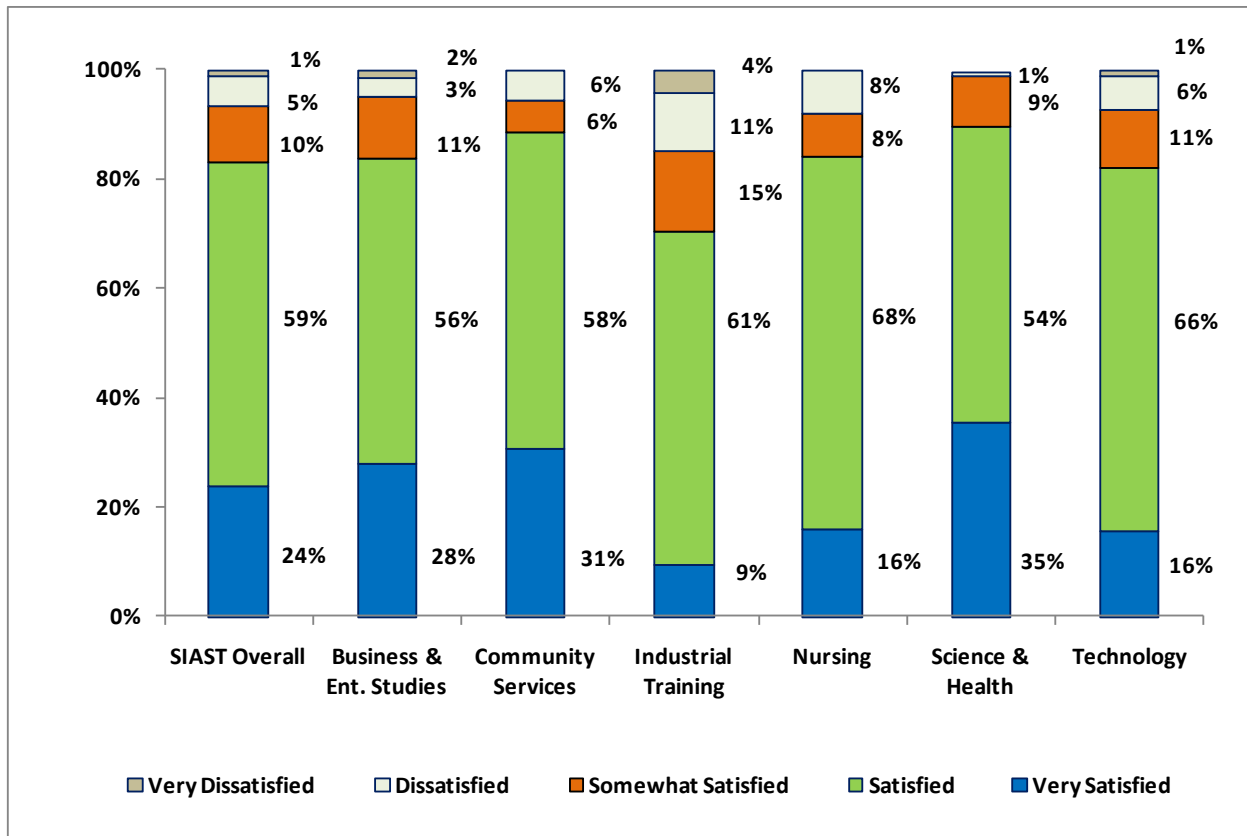


Table 5: Employer Satisfaction with Job-Related Knowledge of Graduates, SIAST Overall and by Division

DIVISION	VERY SATISFIED	SATISFIED	SOME-WHAT SATISFIED	DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED	TOTAL
Business and Entrepreneurial Studies	17	34	7	2	1	61
Community Services	27	51	5	5	0	88
Industrial Training	9	58	14	10	4	95
Nursing	4	17	2	2	0	25
Science and Health	41	63	11	1	0	116
Technology	13	55	9	5	1	83
SIAST Overall	111	278	48	25	6	468

2.2.4 Employer Satisfaction with Graduates' Job-Related Skills

All employers were asked to rate their satisfaction with the job-related skills displayed by the SIAST graduates they hired. As shown in figure 4 and table 6, approximately 84% (391 of 466) of employers indicated they were “satisfied” to “very satisfied” with graduates’ job-related skills (2006/07: 79%, 409 of 517).

The divisions of Business and Entrepreneurial Studies (55 of 61) and Science and Health (103 of 115) had the highest percentage of employers (90%) who were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with graduate preparation in the area of job-related skills. As with job-related knowledge, employers of Industrial Training division graduates reported a relatively lower level of satisfaction with their job-related skills (approximately 74%, or 69 of 94, were “satisfied” or “very satisfied”).

Figure 4: Employer Satisfaction with Job-Related Skills of Graduates, SIAST Overall and by Division

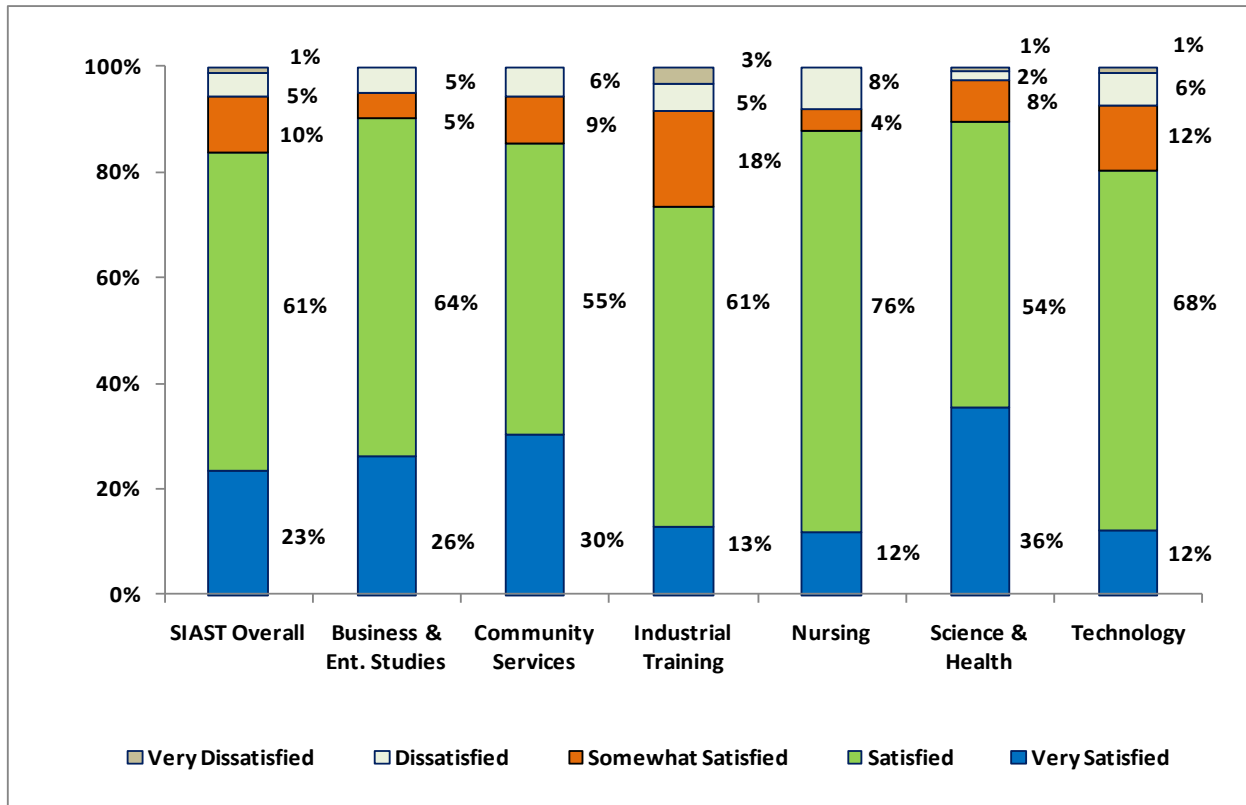


Table 6: Employer Satisfaction with Job-Related Skills of Graduates, SIAST Overall and by Division

DIVISION	VERY SATISFIED	SATISFIED	SOME-WHAT SATISFIED	DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED	TOTAL
Business and Entrepreneurial Studies	16	39	3	3	0	61
Community Services	27	49	8	5	0	89
Industrial Training	12	57	17	5	3	94
Nursing	3	19	1	2	0	25
Science and Health	41	62	9	2	1	115
Technology	10	56	10	5	1	82
SIAST Overall	109	282	48	22	5	466

2.2.5 Employer Satisfaction with Graduates' General Employability or Essential Skills

As shown in figure 5 and table 7, approximately 79% (363 of 464) of all employers rated the general employability or essential skill preparation of SIAST graduates in the range of "satisfied" to "very satisfied" (2006/07: 76%, 391 of 512). Only 6% (30 of 464) of employers were "dissatisfied" to "very dissatisfied" with the general employability or essential skills of SIAST graduates.

As with the other ratings, the Business and Entrepreneurial Studies division had the highest proportion of employers who were satisfied with graduates employability skills (85%, or 50 of 59); while the Industrial training division had a relatively lower percentage of employers (66%, or 62 of 95) who indicated they were "satisfied" to "very satisfied" with the graduates' employability skills.

Note: The Conference Board of Canada defines employability skills as a set of general fundamental, personal management and teamwork skills that are critical for the workplace and include things such as communication, problem

solving, positive attitudes and behaviours, adaptability, working with others, and technology and mathematics skills. Further details can be viewed at http://www.conferenceboard.ca/libraries/educ_public/emskill.sflb.

Figure 5: Employer Satisfaction with General Employability or Essential Skills of Graduates, SIAST Overall and by Division

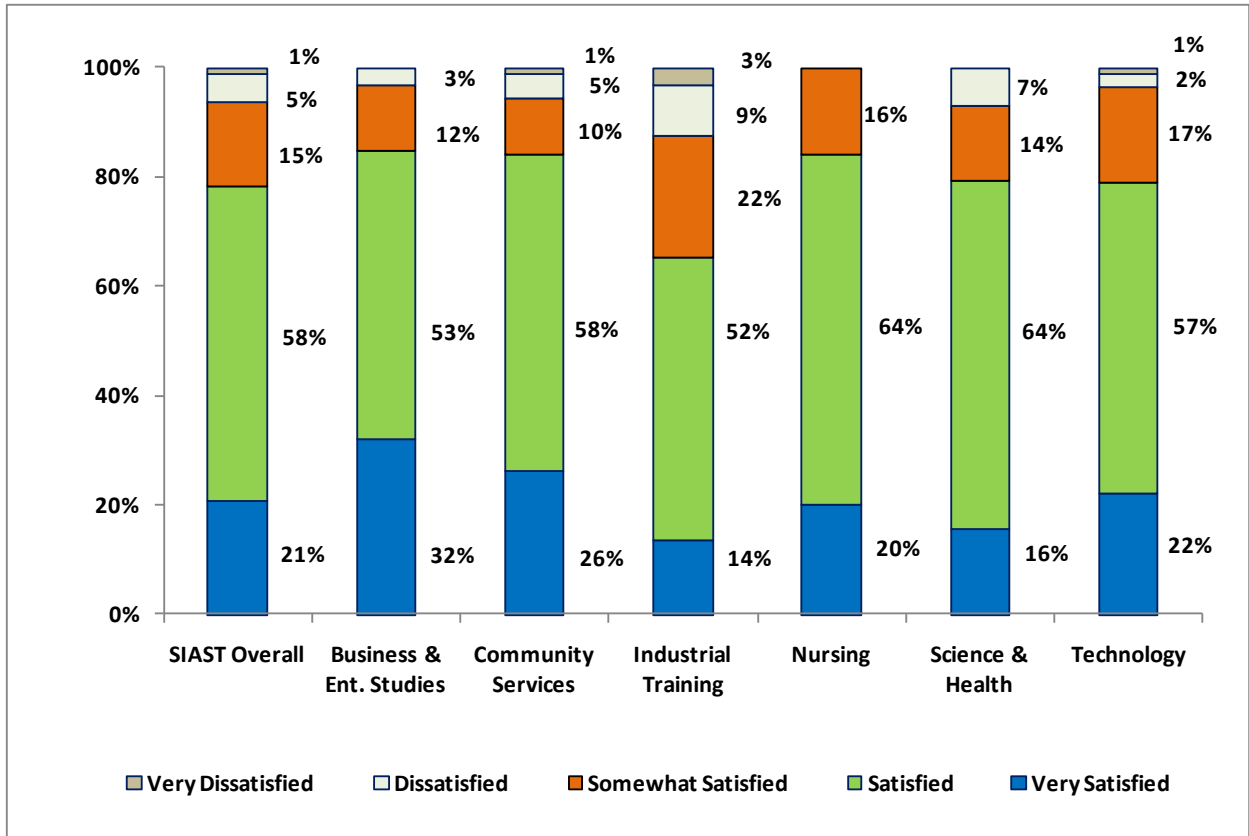


Table 6: Employer Satisfaction with General Employability or Essential Skills of Graduates, SIAST Overall and by Division

DIVISION	VERY SATISFIED	SATISFIED	SOME-WHAT SATISFIED	DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED	TOTAL
Business and Entrepreneurial Studies	19	31	7	2	0	59
Community Services	23	51	9	4	1	88
Industrial Training	13	49	21	9	3	95
Nursing	5	16	4	0	0	25
Science and Health	18	74	16	8	0	116
Technology	18	46	14	2	1	81
SIAST Overall	96	267	71	25	5	464

2.3 Future Hiring of SIAST Graduates

Employers were asked to indicate whether they would hire a SIAST graduate with similar training at their organization in the future. Of the 472 employers who responded, approximately 97% (456) indicated that they would hire a SIAST graduate again (2006/07: 99.6%, 511 of 513), while 15 (3.2%) were undecided about future hiring of SIAST graduates.

As shown in figure 6 and table 8, all employers of graduates from the Business and Entrepreneurial Studies division indicated they would hire SIAST graduates again in the future. Approximately, 94% to 98% of employers from the remaining divisions also agreed they would hire a SIAST graduate.

Figure 6: Percent of Employers Who Would Hire SIAST Graduate with Similar Training in the Future, by Division

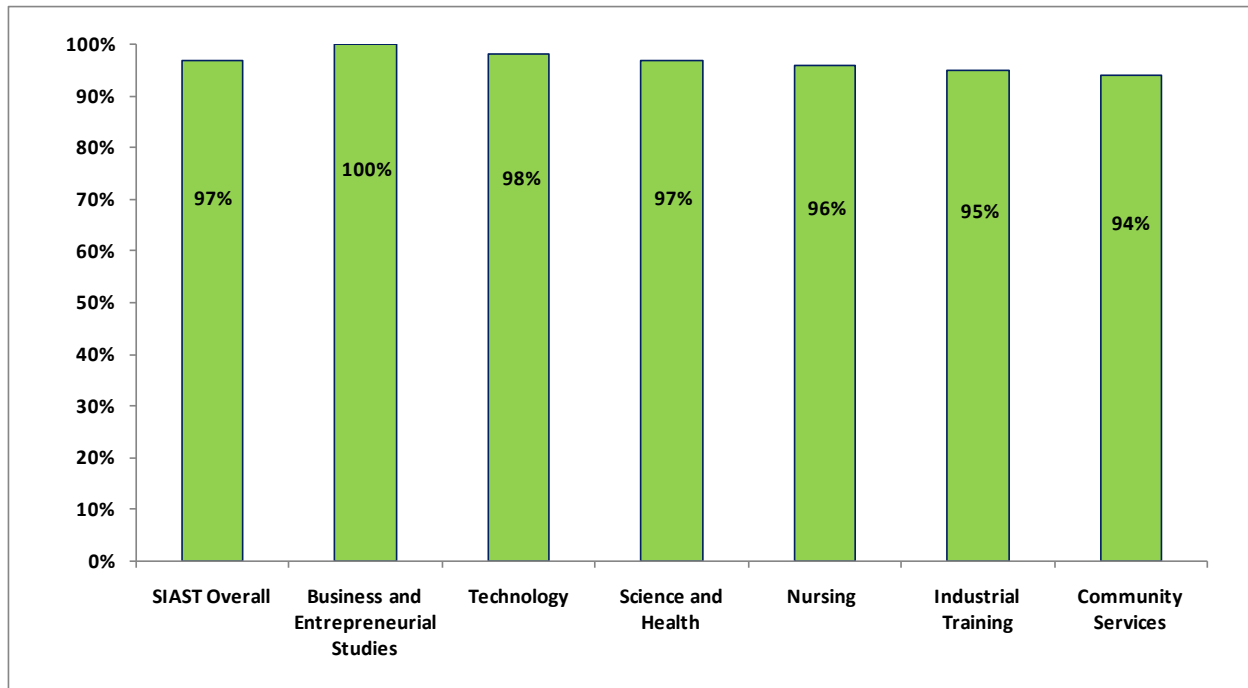


Table 7: Employer Willingness to Hire SIAST Graduate with Similar Training in the Future, by Division

DIVISION	Yes	No	UNDECIDED
Business and Entrepreneurial Studies	61	0	0
Community Services	84	1	4
Industrial Training	92	0	5
Nursing	24	0	1
Science and Health	113	0	3
Technology	82	0	2
SIAST Overall	456	1	15

Those respondents who indicated that they would not hire a SIAST graduate in the future were asked to indicate why. The responses to this question were categorized into themes and forwarded internally to the divisions.

Appendix A:

SIAST Employer Survey 2009 (Telephone Survey)

Name of employer _____

1. What is the graduate's current position title in your organization? _____

2. Is the graduate currently working in a position that is related to the (name of program) training they received at SIAST?
 _____ Yes
 _____ No (*skip to Q4*)

3. How well did SIAST prepare the graduate for employment in his/her field of study at your organization? [i.e., we are looking for the employer's opinion on the skills and training the graduate learned that are specific to the program, not general employability.]
 _____ Excellent _____ Very Good _____ Good _____ Poor _____ Very Poor

4. On a scale of 1 - 5, with 5 being "very satisfied" and 1 being "very dissatisfied," please indicate how satisfied you were with the preparation of the SIAST graduate(s) in the following areas:

	Very Dissatisfied (1)	Dissatisfied (2)	Somewhat satisfied (3)	Satisfied (4)	Very Satisfied (5)
A. Overall preparation for employment at your organization					
B. Job-related knowledge					
C. Job-related skills					
D. General employability or essential skills (communication, problem-solving, team-building, time management, leadership)					

If respondents gave a rating of "somewhat satisfied" to "very dissatisfied" in any of the areas above, ask them questions 5 to 8 where applicable; otherwise skip to Q9.

5. What aspects of the graduate's job-related knowledge preparation caused you to give a "less than satisfactory" rating?
6. What aspects of the graduate's job-related skills preparation caused you to give a "less than satisfactory" rating?
7. What aspects of the graduate's general employability skills preparation caused you to give a "less than satisfactory" rating?
8. What aspects of the graduate's overall preparation for employment caused you to give a "less than satisfactory" rating?
9. In what ways should SIAST improve the curriculum content, instruction, practicums or method of training for the (interviewer provide program name) program?
10. What other important skills or abilities are required by your organization that are not demonstrated by SIAST graduates from this program?
11. Should your organization/business need employees with similar training in the future, would you hire a SIAST graduate?
 Yes (*skip to Q13*) No Undecided
12. Why [would you not hire] OR [are you undecided about hiring] (*question would be based on response to Q11*) a SIAST graduate in the future?
13. Do you have any other comments you wish to make about SIAST graduates or programs?
14. What is the primary industry that your organization operates in?
 Agriculture
 Forestry, Fishing
 Mining, Oil, Gas
 Utilities
 Construction
 Manufacturing
 Trades (includes Retail and Wholesale)

- ___ Transportation
- ___ Retail and Warehousing
- ___ Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Leasing
- ___ Professional/Scientific/Technical services
- ___ Business and other support services
- ___ Education
- ___ Health Care, Social Assistance
- ___ Information, Culture, Recreation (includes film, video, multi-media, printing, publishing)
- ___ Accommodation and Food Services
- ___ Public Administration
- ___ Other (please specify) _____

15. May I please have your name: _____