

Executive Summary

In November 2021, the Graduate Campus, with the support of FORS, launched the first annual survey on the professional situation of UNIL PhDs three years after the public defence. This survey (“2018+3”), was conducted among the 2018 doctoral cohort and follows on from a survey conducted in 2018-2019 on the 2,448 individuals awarded the doctorate by UNIL between 2007 and 2017

The objectives of the annual survey centre on two areas of reflection and action by the Graduate Campus: on the one hand, the quality of the training of doctoral students during their doctorate in terms of preparation for their future professional careers; on the other hand, raising awareness (among early career researchers and supervisors) of the diversity of post-doctoral career options and promoting the value of the doctorate among employers. The annual survey thus contributes to the mission of the Graduate Campus to accompany and support doctoral and post-doctoral researchers in their professional development, and to support the university in its efforts to raise awareness, both internally and externally, of the professional potential of the next generation of researchers trained by the University. The annual survey thus forms the basis of the Graduate Campus' response to points 2.1.2 and 4.1.1 of the UNIL Rectorate's 2021-2026 Statement of Intent.

This report presents a descriptive analysis of the 2018+3 survey results. It provides a portrait of the 2018 cohort of UNIL doctorate holders three years after the public defense, in terms of their current professional situation, the relevance of the doctorate in their professional activity, and their expectations and satisfaction with their professional life after the doctorate. The report also suggests avenues of reflection for future actions to be undertaken, by the Graduate Campus and in collaboration with other UNIL units, in connection with the UNIL 2021-2026 Statement of Intent. Finally, as this is the first edition of the annual survey, this report briefly presents the improvements envisaged for the next editions, 2019+3 and following.

Key Figures

Of the 290 doctoral graduates who defended in 2018 (PhD, MD-PhD or MD) in one of the seven UNIL faculties, 255 were contacted and 103 participated in the survey. The participation rate is thus 40%. The sample of participants is composed of 46% women and 56% men. Almost half (48%) of the participants obtained their doctorate in FBM, 15% in SSP, 15% in GSE, 10% in HEC, 8% in Lettres, 5% in FDCA and 1% in FTSR.

- **Unemployment rate similar to that of Switzerland:** At the time of the survey, 92% of the participants were gainfully employed, while 3% of the participants responded that they were registered as unemployed, which corresponds globally to the results of the surveys conducted by the Swiss Federal Statistics Office (FSO)⁴. However, more than one third of professionally active individuals had experienced a period of unemployment between obtaining their doctorate and their current employment.

⁴ See <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/fr/home/statistiques/education-science/integration-marche-travail/tertiaire-hautes-ecoles.html> (accessed 28.09.2022).

- **A diversity of employment sectors:** As other surveys have shown, doctorate holders work in different employment sectors and in a variety of professional roles. The public sector and the higher education sector each employ about one third of professionally active participants (34% and 32% respectively), the private sector slightly less (27%) and the private non-profit sector 7%.
- **The academic path:** Nearly 60% of professionally active participants are pursuing an academic career (entirely or in parallel with other activities), and five people are employed as professors (assistant or associate) in a university in Switzerland or abroad. A quarter (26%) of those working in a professional sector other than academia are considering (possibly) returning to an academic career at a later date.
- **Fixed-term contracts in academic positions:** Across all sectors, half (49%) of professionally active individuals are employed on the basis of a permanent contract (CDI) and 44% on the basis of a fixed-term contract (CDD), while 5% are self-employed. Nearly three-quarters (73%) of those employed in the higher education sector are employed on a fixed-term contract, while this type of contract is relevant for only 12% of those employed in the private sector, and 44% in the public sector.
- **Job satisfaction:** 81% of participants who are currently working are fully or somewhat satisfied with their current role. Slightly fewer of those currently pursuing an academic career are completely satisfied with their position.
- **Regionally anchored:** Nearly three-quarters (74%) of professionally active participants work in Switzerland and 15% work in Europe.
- **Continuing in the same field:** Almost half (47%) of the professionally active participants claim to be working in the same field as the one in which they obtained their doctorate, and 39% say they are in a similar or broader field.
- **The importance of transversal skills:** While half (48%) of the professionally active participants felt that they were mobilizing the theoretical knowledge acquired during their doctorate and 52% the technical skills, two-thirds (64%) said that they are taking advantage of the transversal skills acquired during their doctorate.

Perspectives

- **Awareness and promotion (Statement of Intent 2.1.2)**

The strong regional roots of the participants show the importance of the local economic fabric in the professional integration of doctorate holders, and, in terms of valorisation of their qualification and skills, reminds us of the importance of developing initiatives to highlight these skills with employers in the region and facilitate the efforts of doctorate holders during their professional transition towards new employment sectors.

The academic career has a strong attraction for UNIL doctorate holders, while the employment conditions in the field lead to a certain dissatisfaction with the long-term perspectives (see for example the report carried out by FORS (2022) on behalf of the SNSF⁵). One of the responses

⁵ SNSF Early Career researcher Survey. Lausanne : FORS, 2022.

https://www.snf.ch/media/fr/dUHC9D1PqYBUbJv8/Report_Early_Career_Researcher_Survey_FORS.pdf (accessed on 27.09.2022).

to be provided in terms of career preparation and professional transition for researchers is to make the various actors concerned (researchers, supervisors and employers) aware of the diversity of these possible trajectories.

- **Career preparation (Statement of Intent 4.1.1)**

Overall, these results echo those of other surveys (e.g. SFO, Vitae 2016)⁶ which show that doctorate holders are professionally present in the different employment sectors and that they occupy diversified and globally satisfying professional roles. The important mobilisation of transversal skills in the current role, including compared to theoretical and technical skills, show the importance of a doctoral training that takes into account and encourages the development of this type of skills.

- **Further development of the annual UNIL + 3 doctoral survey**

This first annual survey allows us to identify different lines of analysis and action for the future. First, changes will be made for future editions of the survey to improve participation and the questionnaire. The next annual survey, 2019+3, will be launched in the autumn of 2022.

Secondly, this survey collected new contacts of doctorate holders interested in participating in initiatives organised by the Graduate Campus. These new contacts will be mobilised in the framework of webinars organized in collaboration with the Alumni Office, and in updating the doctoral portraits presented on our website.

Finally, in the medium and longer term, the annual survey will allow for a longitudinal and/or aggregate analysis of the results of the successive surveys and will provide material with which to develop initiatives to raise awareness and inform the various audiences concerned (early career researchers, supervisors and employers).

⁶ OFS : <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/fr/home/statistiques/catalogues-banques-donnees/graphiques.assetdetail.6166647.html>; Vitae : <https://www.vitae.ac.uk/vitae-publications/reports/vitae-what-do-research-staff-do-next-2016.pdf> (accessed 27.09.2022).