

Press Release

Wednesday 13th August, 2003

Salaries for Science and Engineering Graduates are Competitive – ICSTI

In its Statement published today, (Wednesday, 13th August, 2003), entitled “**A Comparison of Starting Salaries for Science and Engineering Graduates**”, the Irish Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (ICSTI) found that average starting salaries for science and engineering graduates are competitive with those graduating in other disciplines. This finding was in contrast to anecdotal evidence.

The Statement, conducted in the context of the findings of the recent Task Force on the Physical Sciences, examines salary as a possible inhibitor to the selection of science subjects at school and in science and engineering courses at third level.

Speaking at the launch, Dr. Edward M. Walsh, Chairman, ICSTI said “Salary, although rated less important by students than interest in the subject area and perceived job availability, is a significant factor when selecting a profession and career. We hope that the findings of this study will go some way towards correcting the misconception that science graduates earn less than their counterparts in other fields.”

The Statement also reviewed postgraduate stipends and how they compare with starting salaries in industry. It was found that the stipend does compare favourably to starting salaries in industry. However, the deduction of postgraduate registration fees from the stipend means that when disposable incomes between postgraduate students and recent graduates employed are compared, the postgraduate student has a disposable income of 7% to 33% less than the industry-employed recent graduate.

The Statement also found that up to 50% of science graduates with a primary degree are leaving science to pursue employment in the business and finance sectors and in engineering. However, no specific reasons for this migration were identified. This migration trend was very much lower for engineering graduates.

Dr. Walsh commented that this migration highlights the transferability and adaptability of the skills-set that those who pursue a science, engineering and technology qualification acquire.

ICSTI makes the following recommendations:

- That the findings on the competitiveness of the postgraduate stipends and average starting salary for science and engineering graduates be proactively promoted by all stakeholders, in line with the nation's endeavour to increasing take-up and retention in the science and engineering subjects;
- Research funding agencies in conjunction with the third level research institutions should ensure that postgraduate stipends and post doctorate salaries are competitive with the relevant net starting salaries offered by industry in Ireland and those offered by research institutions in competitor countries. Consideration should also be given to the payment of postgraduate fees and support subventions directly to the third level institutions;
- Acknowledging market forces, industry recruitment policy should reflect the level of academic qualification attained in starting salaries for science and engineering graduates and to ensure that any gender-based differential is negated;
- The Higher Education Authority should take action to develop a database of information on Irish graduate destination and that they should, in conjunction with other relevant agencies, conduct a feasibility study on the collection of such data in order to monitor and promote the uptake and retention of science and engineering skills.

Ends.