

# AlmaLaurea Surveys

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Among the institutional activities undertaken by the ALMALAUREA Interuniversity Consortium special mention should be made to the system of surveys developed by the Consortium in order to monitor the characteristics and the job market impact of young graduates from the Universities that are members of the Consortium. The study which we intend to carry out aims at further investigating the tools and methods used for data collection and statistical processing as well as presenting the main results so far obtained.

All this aims at filling the gaps found in the official statistics and provide full, accurate and reliable documentation to the University governance bodies to meet their need for proper information. Such need is even more marked in a situation like the present one where the progress of the reform started at the beginning of the current decade in the direction pointed out by the Bologna process should be continuously monitored. It is thus necessary to verify and assess the characteristics and performance of the graduates who have completed their degree courses after the reform and evaluate their placement in the labour market. The surveys which ALMALAUREA has conducted on an annual basis for more than a decade are as follows:

### 1.1 Graduate Profile

This survey is about the analysis and interpretation of a large amount of data collected by ALMALAUREA and contained in the graduates' database. Such abundant information is collected by means of a complex IT system which combines the documentation held by the administrative services of the Universities that belong to the Consortium with the information obtained from the questionnaires administered to the students via the Web at the end of their University career.

The most recent Graduate Profile Survey - carried out this year - covered a total of 185.000 graduates (105,000 first-level graduates) who completed their studies in 46 Universities (of the 51 that are members of ALMALAUREA), equalling 70 per cent of all Italian HE graduates.

This Report makes complete, reliable and updated documentation - subdivided according to the University, the Faculty, the place of study, the degree course/class and the study area - entirely available to the Universities on the Web. The reported documentation spans from the personal data to the social background of the graduates but also covers their University achievements, the study conditions at the University, any working experiences when studying, an assessment of the University experience and of the University facilities.

### 1.2 Survey of Graduate Employment

This is an analysis of the effectiveness of the University system by investigating the placement of graduates in the labour market at one, three or five years from graduation. It also relies on the information collected by ALMALAUREA and contained in its graduates' database, with the progressive adoption and testing of combined data collection techniques based on CATI (*Computer Assisted Telephone Interview*) and CAWI (*Computer Assisted Web Interview*). The most recent Survey of Graduate Employment - carried out in Autumn 2007 - depicts a very interesting picture of the current employment condition (type of contract, participation in post-graduate training activities, channels used for job-seeking, main business areas vs. the completed degree course, geographical and gender differences, etc.) given the large number of universities and graduates involved (almost 93,000 graduates from 45 Italian universities) and the graduates' interest (response rates: 88% of graduates one year after graduation, 84% after three years and 76% after five years).

Also for this type of Survey the Consortium makes all the documentation - subdivided according to the University, the Faculty, the place of study, the degree course/class and the study area - entirely available on the Web for the benefit of the Universities involved.

## **2. INTRODUCTION**

### **2.1 Background**

AlmaLaurea is an innovative service that puts graduate CVs and résumés online, so as to provide a meeting point between Graduates, Universities and Corporations. At the beginning of year 2008 the number of CVs reached 1,000,000, from 51 Italian Universities. Every year about 180,000 new CVs are added to the database.

Founded in 1994 on the initiative of the Statistical Observatory run by the University of Bologna, AlmaLaurea grown exponentially and today collects every almost 70% of Italian graduates.

Managed by a consortium of Italian universities with the support of the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research, AlmaLaurea was set up with the aim to put businesses and graduates in contact each other and establishing itself as a reference point within the university system for everyone involved (scholars, operators, etc.) in university education, employment and the development of young people generally.

The institutionalisation as an Inter-University Consortium and the growing voluntary membership of an ever more substantial number of universities has made ALMALAUREA a nearly indispensable point of reference for the universities' governance bodies, for analysts, students, teachers, and for businesses seeking qualified personnel.

### **2.2 Main Objectives**

The establishment of AlmaLaurea responded to several needs raised in the academic debate starting by the nineties and became today main issues.

First of all the need to deeply assess and verify the effectiveness and the quality of the university courses and degrees nowadays put under national and global competition and also to overwhelm gaps in official statistics often based only on descriptive statistics unable to report relevant and useful information for policy making.

Secondly the graduates availability is of great value in order to facilitate the access of graduates on the job markets by consolidating relationships between Universities and Companies, exploiting the available database as basis for the creation of a job online marketplace.

Third, the creation of an Interuniversity tool representing the majority of the Italian academic world has been (and will be) a successful channel of promotion of the Italian HE system as a whole increasing its value and visibility at international level.

Nevertheless AlmaLaurea objectives are in line with the wide European Policy priorities such as The Lisbon Strategy to make Europe "the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and respect for the environment by 2010"<sup>1</sup> or the more recent London Priorities indicated by the European Council of Ministers of Education in 2007 where it has been agreed to include the data collection issue as priority for 2009.

### **2.3 Information availability and target users**

ALMALAUREA's uniqueness lies in having created an integrated system capable of guaranteeing documentation which is complete (universities are accepted into the Consortium on condition that they make available information on their entire graduates body), periodic (the surveys are taken at regular intervals), well-timed (year after year, a 'snapshot' of the universities' internal and external performances may be obtained) and updatable (the databank is kept 'alive' to the extent that the curricula vitae are updated by the graduates themselves and therefore kept up with the graduates' professional pursuits). The outcomes of this monitoring activity became in time a reference point for

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<sup>1</sup> meeting of the European Council in Lisbon (March 2000), the Heads of State or Government launched a "Lisbon Strategy". Lisbon Strategy is being updated given the recent signing of the Treaty of Lisbon (13 December 2007).

those who are employed in Universities governing bodies, National and local education assessment committees. The core of the system is the graduates' database which is accessible by different users via the World Wide Web thanks to the functions offered by the Website [www.almalaurea.it](http://www.almalaurea.it). Through the Website ([www.almalaurea.it](http://www.almalaurea.it)) one can access all the available functions directly.

The interactive menus available on the Website - containing some of the main data processed by AlmaLaurea - can be an extremely useful tool not only for the teachers and academic bodies but also for those who have just completed high school and are about to choose their future university studies since they can have access to data on the quality of the courses and the success rates of their predecessors comparing faculties, universities and degree courses. Universities and researchers have all the processed documentation available on-line with the possibility of free access to it: the annual surveys on the graduates' profile and the surveys on the graduates' occupational conditions, with the possibility of obtaining this information also by university, faculty or degree course.

### **3. DATA COLLECTION METHOD**

The centre of the AlmaLaurea system and the main reason of its existence is the graduate, his need to be accompanied in the complex transition from University to work and the need to in-depth knowledge on his characteristics and features, ultimate proof of quality and effectiveness of the education processes.

The graduate, enters into contact with the AlmaLaurea system when he/she is near to leave University after reading the relevant documentation provided by the students secretariat and the information available on the University Website.

The first operation required is registration which is possible thanks to an integration between the University Website and the ALMALAUREA Website. The Websites of the Universities which are part of the Consortium provide the authorized users with the specific functions for registration in the ALMALAUREA services: the University portal indeed provides the personal data of the final-year students and the basic information about the University degree which is about to be obtained. At the end of the registration procedure, completed directly on the ALMALAUREA Website, the final-year student will be given the credentials required to access the functions available on the Website.

The final-year student can thus fill in the questionnaire by supplementing the information provided during registration with the additional information required to compile the CV and to make a statistical analysis: contact address for being contacted by the companies or by the ALMALAUREA staff for interviews and surveys, further description of the H.E. studies (previous degrees, study experiences abroad, details on the degree which is about to be obtained), self-assessment of his/her language and IT skills, intentions and future prospects (intention to continue studying or entering the job market), economic and social family background.

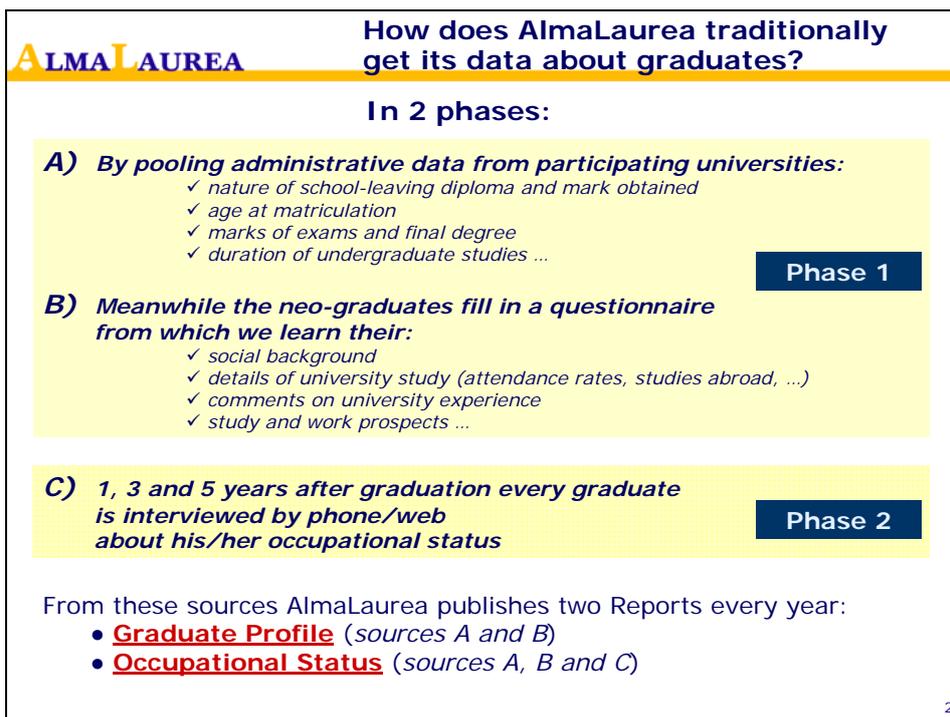


Figure 1. How does AlmaLaurea traditionally get its data about graduates

This information - only used for statistical purposes - is, of course, not accessible through the database and is disseminated only in the aggregate form under strict protection of the graduates' privacy.

The database is further enriched with information about training and working experiences after graduation collected by CAWI/CATI (Computer Assisted Web/Telephone Interview) technologies (phase 2; see Figure 1).

Phase 2 is characterized by a typical phone/web survey usually undertaken in the social research field. In the AlmaLaurea case, the graduates sample to involve in the survey is extracted by the database where updated addresses and phone numbers are available thanks to the frequent personal data management actions graduates undertake on their own data also beyond the graduation date (for instance graduates interested to make visible their CV to recruiters normally add further study or job experiences on their CVs and, in parallel, they keep update their contact data). Surveys are collected 1, 3 and 5 years after graduation and the main outcome of this integrated process is to reach average response rates around the 84%.

#### 4. THE ALMALAUREA SURVEYS

The wide and totally open availability of the information on Italian graduates completely free on the web site is a very important feature of AlmaLaurea. All the collected information can be easily accessed by users simply selecting the type of indicator and the reference population of interest. Before go in depth to the on line consultation of data we'll summarize the two main reports features.

##### 4.1 The Graduate Profile

The Graduate Profile is an annual survey that seeks to trace the main characteristics of the graduates who awarded their degree in the course of a same calendar year. The collected and processed data are a useful source of information for assessment and government bodies that deal with training processes (department of education, scientific research, academic senates, board of directors, faculty boards, education committees, etc.) in their efforts to improve quality standards. The provision of relevant information on graduates becomes more and more important in the lights of the current Italian Education environment where the university reform (DM 509/99), implemented by most of the Italian universities in the academic year 2001/02, underway a transition process from

a one-level education system with just one qualification at the end of study courses lasting 4, 5 or 6 years to a multiple structure which comprises first level degrees (three-year courses), second-level degrees (more specialized and obtained after an additional two-year course), single cycle 5/6 years course (mainly in Medicine and Law).

These transition years have made also more difficult for AlmaLaurea to deliver meaningful information and we are dealing with a universities system close to a real open yard where old and new degree are coexisting: old system degrees are progressively disappearing while new degrees are progressively increasing and replacing the old ones.

The most recent investigation examined a total of 185.000 graduates who completed their degrees in 2007 from 46 universities (members of the AlmaLaurea Consortium since one year at least). Almost 105,000 of them have been awarded with a first level post-reform degree (3 years Bachelor's degree), 30,000 of them hold a second level degree programme (2 years Master programme), 7,700 are graduates in single cycle courses, the residual (but still numerous) 42.000 graduates awarded an old system degrees of 4, 5 or 6 years.

The data collected from administrative sources deals with the students' personal information (such as gender, age at graduation, and address), their academic performance at the university (such as exam results, obtaining a degree, and time spent to complete the study programme), and information on their high school education (type of high school and final grades at high school).

All the other components derive from the questionnaires answered by students who are about to graduate the day before their graduation and address their social backgrounds, educational experiences -including study abroad- and work experience, evaluation of the institution and of their degree course, language and information technology, (IT) skills, plans to continue studying, and employment prospects.

All the statistics shown are then processed in the checked and corrected database and are mainly presented in tables for the annual report. Part of the publication is in printed form, while the entire document is available online on the AlmaLaurea Consortium's website. (<http://www.almalaurea.it/eng/universita/profilo/>).

## 4.2 The Occupational Condition of Graduates

The AlmaLaurea survey on the occupational condition of graduates, which started in experimental form at the University of Bologna in 1995 and was expanded in 1997 to cover a growing number of Italian universities, was designed to investigate the training and employment experience of graduates after gaining their university qualifications.

The exercise is grounded in the belief that analysing the effectiveness of the university system necessarily means evaluating the "success" of a degree in terms of the participation of graduates in the labour market.

For the purpose of achieving greater accuracy when investigating the multiple aspects linked to the process of entering the labour market, the graduates are contacted on repeated occasions, i.e. after one year, then after three years and again after five years from the date of graduation. Accordingly, it is possible to reconstruct both reliably and promptly the employment history of the graduates during the first five-year period following graduation. To make the most of this opportunity, several longitudinal studies have been conducted (to assess, for example, the graduates' occupational conditions and job security and the effectiveness their degree qualification), by isolating the graduates who were interviewed in each of the three periods under examination.

In the most recent survey, carried out between September and November 2007, all the 45.000 graduates from the summer session of 2006 (from 45 Italian universities), the 28.000 graduates from the 2004 summer session (from 34 universities) and the 21.000 graduates from the 2002 summer session (from 25 universities) were contacted.

Survey were always circumscribed to a graduates (large) sample composed by those who graduated in the summer session graduates (May to August). The above sampling method has been implemented by AlmaLaurea since its first graduates job conditions survey and widely used on pre-reform graduates surveys.

The need to rapidly assess the impact of the University Reform on the graduates employability for every discipline and study course, the need to provide the Ministry of Education with the foreseen indicators of effectiveness, persuaded AlmaLaurea to extend in 2008 for the first time the analysis to all post-reform graduates of the year 2007, one year after the study conclusion. Such choice

multiplied the survey population three times and involve 215,000 graduates of 48 universities (140,000 of them are post-reform graduates).

Interviews are conducted with a mix of CAWI/CATI methodologies. These well-known procedures allow the system to deal directly with the questionnaires and related filters. In the CATI case questions are asked by the interviewers as they appear on the screen, in case of CAWI questions are directly visualized on the PC by the user himself. In both cases answers are recorded directly in the system, checked for consistency are at the time of recording, with a resulting save of time in the subsequent quality control stages. The opportunity of using CATI/CAWI technologies has also enabled the formulation of a highly-structured questionnaire with a wealth of filter-questions and conditioned questions. The detailed information can be found online on the AlmaLaurea Consortium's website: <http://www.almalaurea.it/eng/universita/occupazione/>.

## 5. LOOKING INTO DATA

In this chapter we'll give a practical overview on the availability of data on the AlmaLaurea web site focusing on the user point of view, namely how the professor, the policy maker or the students can access to data and find the fitting information. The entry point of the system is always the AlmaLaurea Home page (see Figure 2).

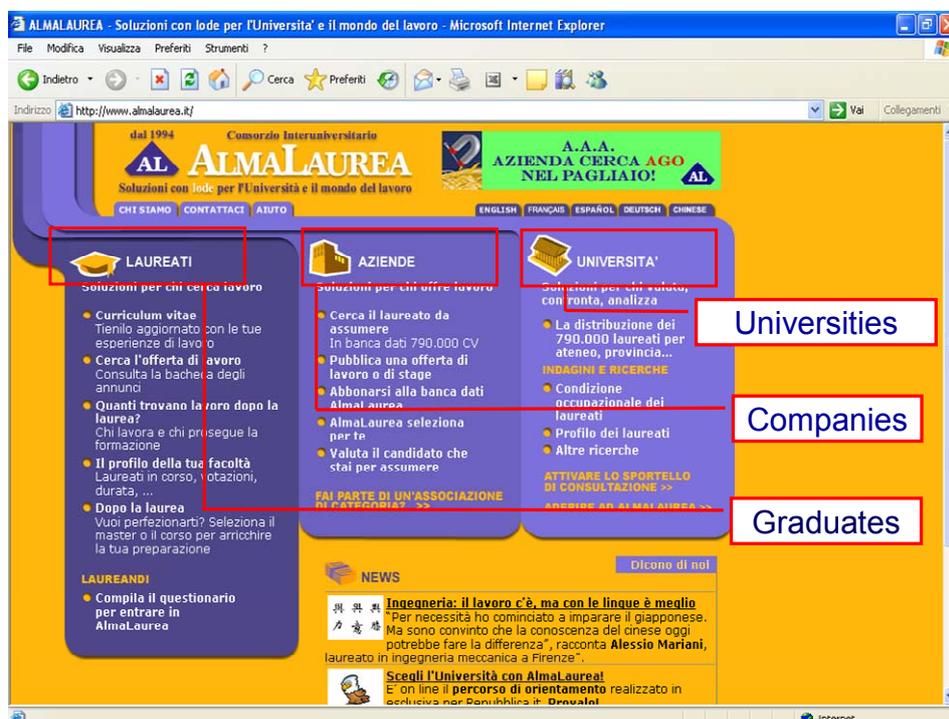


Figure 2. The AlmaLaurea home page

### 5.1 The Graduates Profile

As we have said on chapter 4.1 the Graduates profile is the picture of the Human Resources assets created by the University according to every solar year of graduation. The Survey is related to every University, Faculty and Degree Course and consists of the integrated use of the documentation given by administrative records of the partner universities and information provided with AlmaLaurea questionnaire. The choice of variables used in the report is dictated by the need to provide a synthetic yet comprehensive picture of the national university system. The indicators identified and shown in the report are organized in ten subgroups: *personal details*, *academic performance at university*, *social background*, *high school education*, *student's university experience* (i.e. frequency of class attendance, study grants or scholarships held, experiences abroad, training periods), *working experiences during their university career*, *graduate's level of satisfaction with the academic experience*, *language and computer skills*, *prospects for further study*, *job prospects and expectations*.

We suppose to have the need to check for data of a particular grouping of graduates (in the example the 2006 graduates with a post-reform 3 years degree in humanities have been selected). Once get access to the "Graduate Profile 2006" page I can input my query in the search interface in Figure 3. As result of the search the complete set of the available indicators is obtained. The selected collective indicators are reported in their comparison with the control group composed by the overall 2006 graduates population.

In our example the selected collective is composed by 1,345 students graduated in the AlmaLaurea universities (1,158 of them have fulfilled the questionnaire). The control group is composed by

13,834 graduates in humanities (all AlmaLaurea universities). We report below some of the indicators available: graduates social background<sup>2</sup> and study conditions. (Figures 4 and 5).



Figure 3. Graduate collective selection

PROFILO DEI LAUREATI 2006		Collettivo Selezionato	Totale di Confronto
<b>Numero dei Laureati</b>		1.345	13.834
<b>Hanno compilato il questionario</b>		1.158	12.079
<b>2. ORIGINE SOCIALE</b>			
<b>Titolo di studio dei genitori (%)</b>			
entrambi con laurea		9,2	9,4
uno solo con laurea		13,9	15,7
scuola media superiore		36,2	42,7
titoli inferiori o nessun titolo		36,2	29,0
<b>Classe sociale (%) <sup>(1)</sup></b>			
borghesia		21,9	23,2
classe media impiegatizia		27,3	31,0
piccola borghesia		18,3	20,1
classe operaia		25,5	21,8

Figure 4. Figures on social origins

<sup>2</sup> Also the belonging "social class" is indicated and defined considering the *socio-economic position* of both the father and mother of the graduate, and selecting the one of the parent whose position is the higher of the two. (Cobalti, Schizzerotto 1994)

5. CONDIZIONI DI STUDIO	Connettivo Selezionato	Totale di Confronto
<b>Hanno alloggiato a meno di un'ora di viaggio dalla sede degli studi (%):</b>		
più del 50% della durata degli studi, o sempre	78,3	71,0
meno del 50% della durata degli studi o mai	21,3	27,9
<b>Hanno frequentato regolarmente (%):</b>		
più del 75% degli insegnamenti previsti	48,7	62,2
tra il 50% e il 75%	22,0	24,0
tra il 25% e il 50%	13,6	8,5
meno del 25%	5,5	4,8
<b>Hanno usufruito del servizio di borse di studio (%)</b>	<b>20,9</b>	<b>27,3</b>
<b>Hanno svolto periodi di studio all'estero nel corso degli studi universitari (%)</b>		
hanno studiato all'estero con Socrates/Erasmus o altri Programmi dell'Unione Europea	9,1	8,4
altra esperienza riconosciuta dal corso di studi	2,0	1,2
iniziativa personale	3,5	3,6
<b>non hanno compiuto studi all'estero</b>	<b>84,9</b>	<b>85,0</b>
<b>1 o più esami all'estero convalidati (%)</b>	<b>10,8</b>	<b>8,5</b>
<b>Hanno preparato all'estero una parte significativa della tesi (%)</b>	<b>7,3</b>	<b>6,7</b>
<b>Hanno svolto tirocini o stage riconosciuti dal corso di studi (%)</b>		
presso l'università	4,4	8,3
al di fuori dell'università	34,3	48,9
<b>Mesi impiegati per la tesi/prova finale (medie)</b>	<b>3,7</b>	<b>4,6</b>

Figure 5. Figures on graduates study conditions

## 5.2 The graduates employment

The survey on graduate occupational conditions has been carried out thanks to graduates personal information kept in the in the data base. Graduates are interviewed on their employment by telephone 1,3 and 5 years after their graduation. The survey intends, on one hand, to assess the ability of the labour market to take advantages of the Human Resources assets created by the University and, on the other hand, the ability of the university to respond to society's requirements. The survey is produced for every University, Faculty and Degree Course.

The structure of the survey makes it possible to measure not only the graduate's occupational status but also other significant attributes such as the type of job contract, participation in postgraduate training schemes, the routes chosen for the job search, the dominant areas of economic activity in relation to the completed course of study, and geographical and gender differences.

In its survey on graduate professional employment, AlmaLaurea has used a restrictive definition which excludes from the employed category those graduates who claim to be employed in paid qualification activities (apprenticeships, traineeships, postgraduate training, PhD research, scholarships and fellowships. The adopted definition of employed however, has the advantage of clearly identifying the career paths chosen by graduates since completing their degrees, since it makes a clear-cut distinction between those who decide to proceed directly to employment in the labour market and those who continue their professional education by studying for further qualifications.

The survey is composed by many other indicators like the examination of timeframes and modes of entry into the labour market, the current professional situation (including references to professional position and the characteristics of the graduates' employment contracts), the process of entering the labour market and the way it evolves in the course of time, the field of economic activity, links between field of education and type of job.



Figure 6. Access point on data on graduates employment data

Also in this case the survey information is completely available on the web site after a couple of clicks starting by the home page (Figure 6). The web site make available a data panel where is possible to choose among different sets of data: general data organized in tables with aggregated collectives, Graphs presenting specific indicators for single Universities, Tables on singles universities, Tables for specific Faculties inside one University, Tables for specific collective interviewed at a gives timeframes (1, 3, 5 years after graduation), Tables on specific faculties.

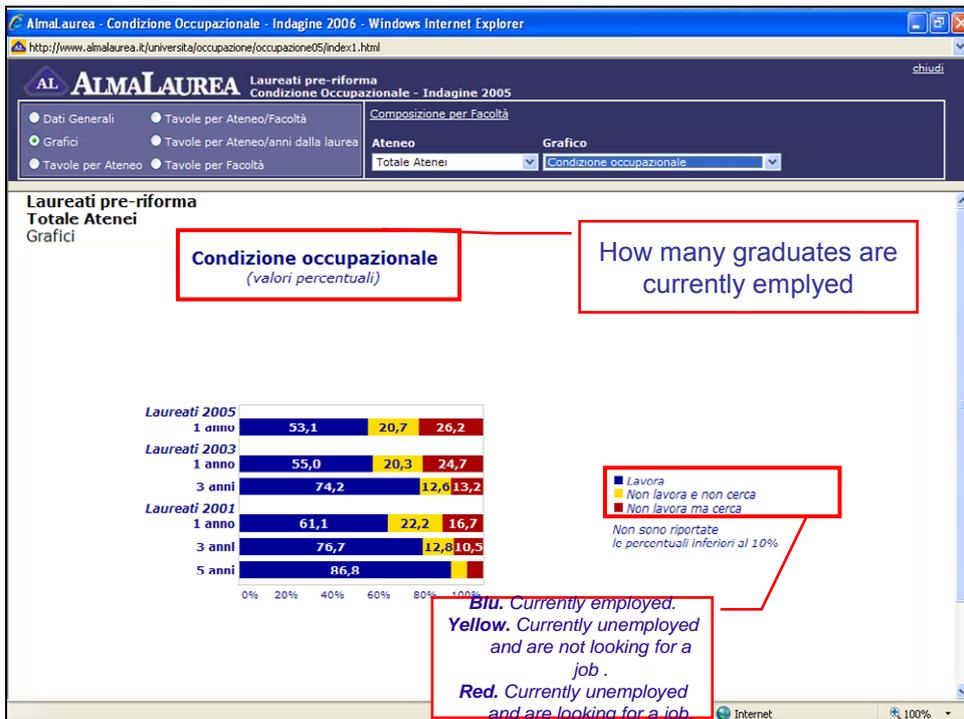


Figure 7. Graduates employment rate graph

The example above show a graphs on the employment conditions after one, three, five years after the graduation (Figure 7). The same indicator can be obtained for the overall sample population or for single University. Looking at the selected example, blue bars indicate the rates of graduates currently employed, the yellow one unemployed inactive people that are not looking for job, the red bar represents the real unemployed (active people without a job).

In the second example (Figure 8) a set of indicators for a particular Study discipline has been shown. We considers faculties of Mathematical, Physical, Biological Sciences (all AlmaLaurea Universities are considered). How many graduates in these disciplines have a permanent job? The table show data at 1, 3, 5 years after graduation on types of contracts (including permanent contracts) and Covered professional position.

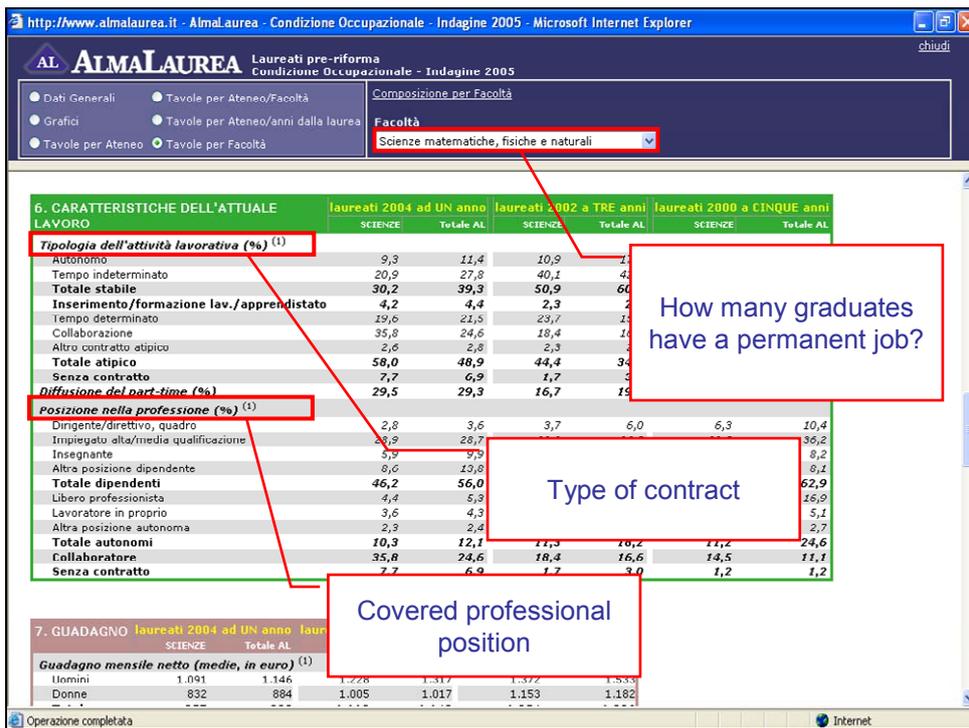


Figure 8. Type of contract and professional position covered by employed graduates

## 5. STATISTICS AS SUPPORT TO STUDENT GUIDANCE

As well as the extensive documentation described above, two further reports are available on the Internet deriving from the Graduate Employment and Graduate Profiles surveys<sup>3</sup>.

A specific search field allows the user to select a university and faculty and obtain a summary chart containing some of the graduate profile and employment status variables. This tool has been designed with prospective university students in mind to help them choose a university and department after secondary school. As a result, the data from the graduate profile report included in this summary sheet indicate achievement rates (examination marks, final degree mark, percentage of graduates keeping within the expected timeframe, average length of university studies expressed in years) and provide an idea of what it's like to study at university (frequency of classes, study abroad, internships or work experience offered during the university years, degree of satisfaction expressed by recent graduates). Information is also given on the number of graduates in employment and those who opt for further training after 1, 3 and 5 years after graduating.

It must be underlined that this synthetic statistics allows users (and particularly prospective university students) to easily compare the performances of its predecessors in single faculties and singles Universities getting access for free to a powerful tools. On this field has been possible on the Italian background to do what seem still hard to do in other realities, universities have recognised benefits offered by the construction of a transparent, unitary and competitive system at international level more than protect their own prerogatives thus hampering every kind of comparison with direct internal competitors.

Figure 9 shows a search examples where summary data on graduates belonging to Faculty the Medicine of the University of Bologna have been selected.

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the ALMALAUREA website. The page title is "ALMALAUREA - Che profilo ha il laureato della tua facoltà". The main heading is "Che profilo ha il laureato del tuo Ateneo, della tua Facoltà, della tua area di studio ...?". Below the heading, there is a section for selecting a collective of graduates. The selected options are: "Seleziona il collettivo di cui vuoi analizzare il profilo, scegliendo il tipo di corso, l'ateneo, la facoltà". The selected options are: "Tipo di corso [4]: tutti", "Ateneo [1]: Bologna", "Facoltà [23]: Medicina e chirurgia", and "gruppo disciplinare [2]: tutti". The page also shows a sidebar with navigation links and a footer with "The European Researcher's Mobility Portal".

Figure 9. Graduate profile in synthesis. Selection of a specific collective

<sup>3</sup> At the websites: <http://www.almalaurea.it/lau/sondaggi/profilo.shtml> and [http://www.almalaurea.it/lau/sondaggi/perc\\_che\\_lavora.shtml](http://www.almalaurea.it/lau/sondaggi/perc_che_lavora.shtml)

The system reports in real time a summary table with the most meaningful indicators (referred to Italian environment): Average marks, duration of university experience, regularity in attending lectures, Foreign study and apprenticeship experiences and satisfaction for the studies done.

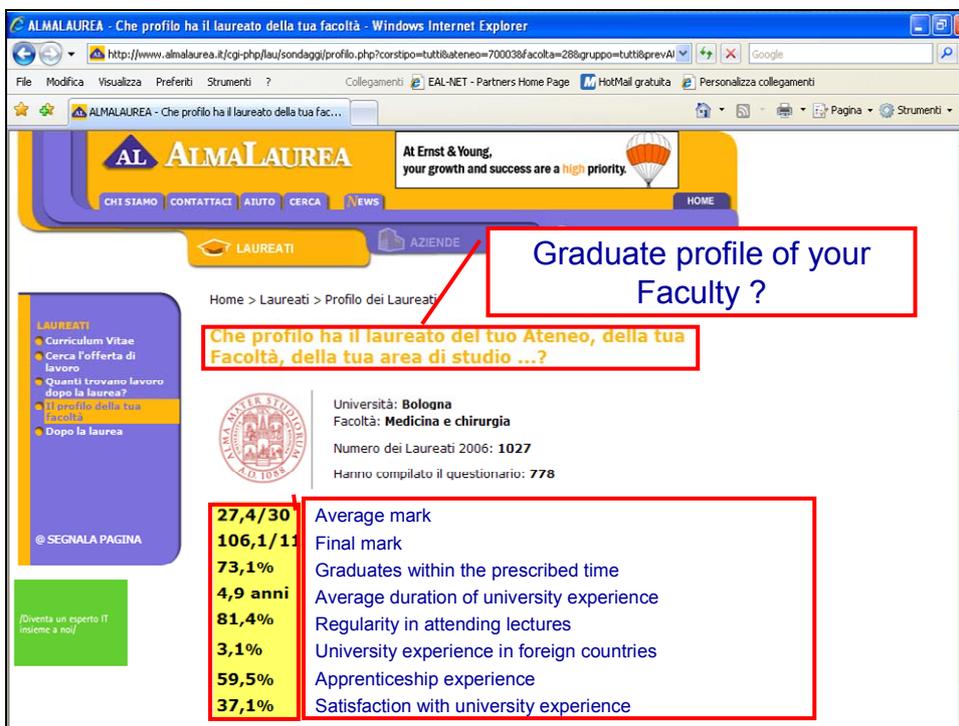


Figure 10. Graduate profile in synthesis. Available figures

These tables can be easily compared each other obtaining an immediate quantitative outline of similar graduates collective belonging to different universities. Figure 10 show graduates in Medical disciplines coming from the universities of Bologna, Padua and Rome.

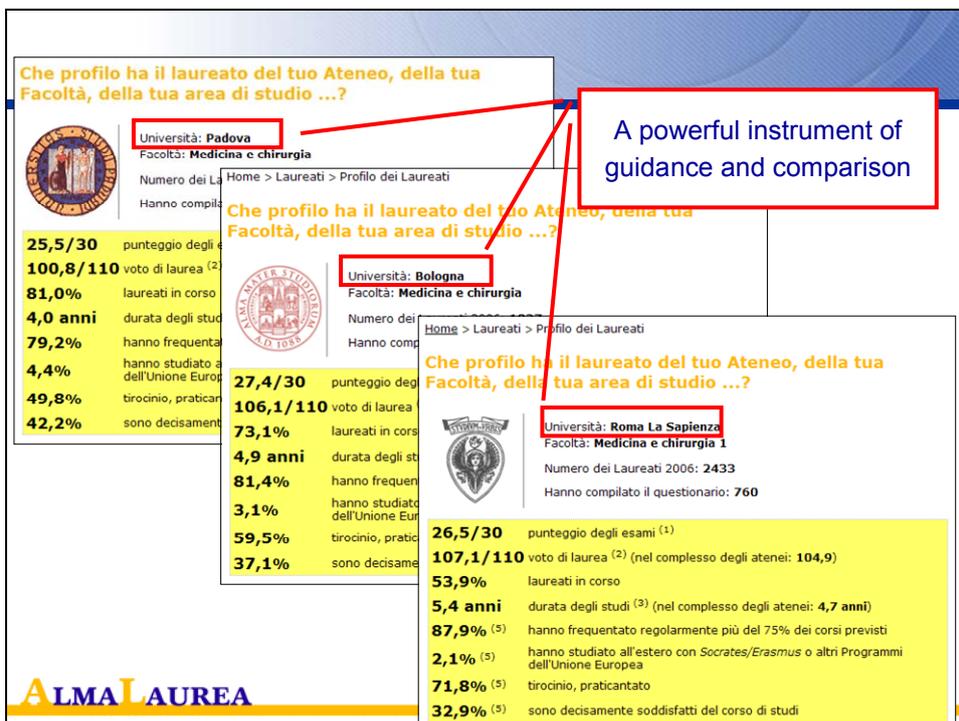


Figure 11. Graduates summary profiles comparison

Rapid comparisons are also possible on graduate occupational conditions. The available tool is based on the same principles. Figure 11 shows occupational condition of University of Bologna Graduates in engineering.

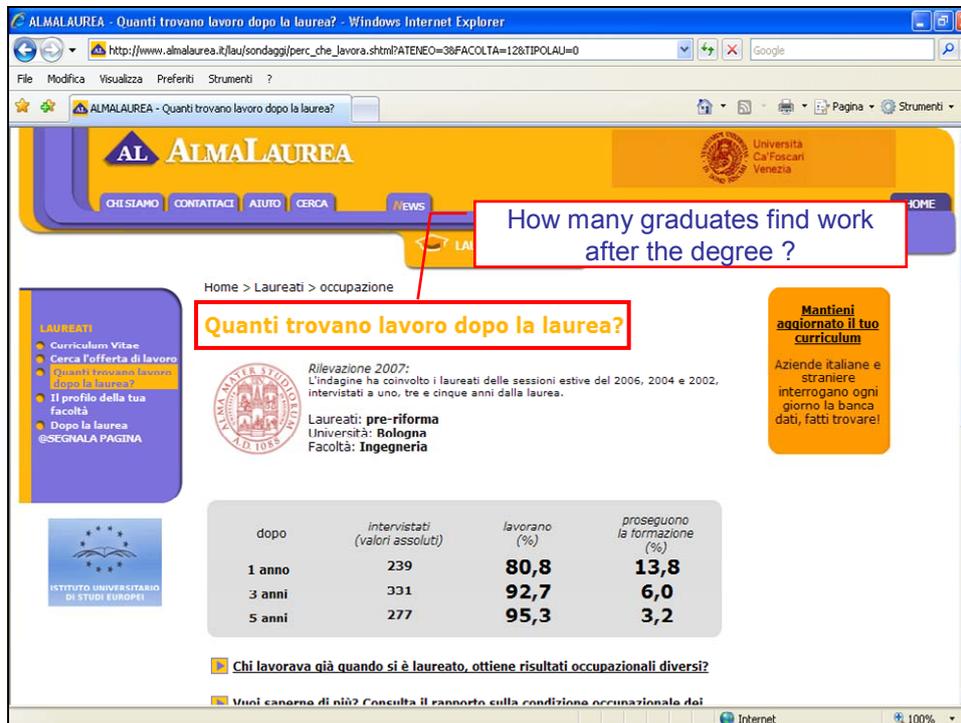


Figure 12. Graduate occupational condition in synthesis

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