

# Placements: The impact of unknowns on the total picture

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In a recent *Colloquy Online* article, [What a difference a decade makes: As seminars reverse a 10-year enrollment decline, what does the future hold?](#) (March 2016), we reported on placement rates for recent graduates at ATS schools.

The article reflected average positive placement rates across ATS schools in the last four years by degree category, ranging from a high of 81% last year for the MDiv to a low of 70% for the academic MA, with an overall placement rate of about 75% for all degrees.

When reporting data to ATS, schools are asked to report placements in the following categories: (1) vocational placement (paid or unpaid); (2) non-vocational placement (e.g., personal enrichment); (3) further study; (4) seeking placement; (5) other; and (6) unknown. In our recent analysis and in the percentages reflected above, categories 1–3 were deemed positive placements and categories 4–6 were considered non-positive placements.

Upon further analysis, on average, ATS schools reported just below 20% as “unknown” in regard to placements. This level of unknown outcomes will be undesirable in the long run, and ATS schools will be strongly encouraged to tighten up their placement data collection



and reporting through the normal accreditation monitoring process.

In the meantime, given the large proportion of unknown outcomes, we felt it would be advantageous to recalculate the averages of the last four years, eliminating the impact of the unknown outcomes. Below are the average positive placement rates for ATS schools by degree category for the last four years. The higher placement rates in the first row exclude unknowns and the lower placement rates in the second row include unknowns as a non-positive placement.

	All degrees	MDiv	Prof MA	Acad MA	Adv Prof	Adv Acad
Positive Placement— Unknowns Excluded	92%	92%	90%	89%	96%	93%
Positive Placement— Unknowns Included	77%	81%	71%	70%	71%	71%



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