

EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION AND COMPETENCIES OF QUR'ANIC STUDIES AND EXEGESIS GRADUATES: EVIDENCE FROM ALUMNI AND EMPLOYER SURVEYS

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INFO ARTIKEL	ABSTRAK
<p>Diterima: 16 Juni 2026 Direvisi: 30 Agustus 2026 Disetujui: 30 September 2026 Tersedia Daring: 30 Oktober 2026</p> <p>Kata Kunci: Employability; Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir; Kompetensi Lulusan; Pengguna Lulusan; Tracer Study</p>	<p>Penelusuran lulusan diperlukan untuk menilai keterkaitan antara kompetensi yang dibentuk program studi dan pengalaman kerja lulusan, tetapi kajian pada program studi Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir (IAT) jarang membaca suara alumni dan pengguna lulusan secara berdampingan. Penelitian ini menganalisis transisi kerja alumni IAT STAIN Sultan Abdurrahman Kepulauan Riau lulusan 2022–2025 serta penilaian pengguna terhadap kinerja dan kebutuhan kompetensi lulusan. Desain survei deskriptif menggabungkan frekuensi, persentase, dan rerata dengan pengelompokan tematik atas jawaban terbuka dari 33 alumni dan enam institusi pengguna. Sebanyak 26 alumni (78,8%) bekerja dan empat (12,1%) berwirausaha; 22 (66,7%) memperoleh pekerjaan pertama kurang dari tiga bulan, tetapi 21 (63,6%) telah bekerja sebelum lulus. Sebanyak 21 alumni (63,6%) memberi skor tinggi untuk kesesuaian pekerjaan dengan bidang studi dan 25 (75,8%) untuk kontribusi keilmuan IAT, sedangkan tafsir paling sering disebut perlu diperkuat. Pengguna menilai integritas, komunikasi, dan penggunaan teknologi 4,83 dari 5, sedangkan empat indikator akademik-keislaman memperoleh 4,17. Lima dari enam pengguna sangat puas, tetapi lima juga meminta penguatan bahasa asing. Pembacaan berdampingan kedua survei menunjukkan bahwa penilaian baik terhadap kompetensi kerja umum berjalan bersama kebutuhan pendalaman tafsir, kemampuan bahasa, praktik profesi, dan layanan karier, sehingga menjadi dasar peninjauan capaian pembelajaran lulusan.</p>
ABSTRACT	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: Employability; Employer Assessment; Graduate Competencies; Qur'anic Studies; Tracer Study</p>	<p><i>Graduate tracer studies help programmes judge how the competencies they build relate to graduates' experiences at work, yet studies of Qur'anic Studies and Exegesis (IAT) programmes rarely read alumni and employer evidence side by side. This study examines the employment transition of the 2022–2025 IAT graduates of STAIN Sultan Abdurrahman, Riau Islands, together with employers' assessments of graduate performance and competency needs. A descriptive survey design combined frequencies, percentages, and means with a thematic grouping of open-ended responses from 33 alumni and six employing institutions. Twenty-six alumni (78.8%) were employed and four (12.1%) self-employed; 22 (66.7%) obtained their first job within three months, although 21 (63.6%) had already worked before graduation. Twenty-one (63.6%) rated the match between job and field highly and 25 (75.8%) rated the contribution of IAT knowledge highly, while exegesis was most often named for strengthening. Employers rated integrity, communication, and use of technology at 4.83 out of 5 and four Islamic-academic indicators at 4.17. Five of the six employers were very satisfied, yet five asked for stronger foreign language skills. Read together, the surveys show that favourable judgements of general workplace competencies coexist with a need for deeper exegetical training, language skills, professional practice, and career support, offering a basis for reviewing the programme's learning outcomes.</i></p>



1. Introduction

Universities are increasingly judged not only by how many students they graduate but also by what their graduates are able to do after leaving. Higher education contributes to the quality of a nation's human resources through the quality of learning and through graduates' ability to apply what they have learned (Abdillah, 2024). Employability, however, is broader than employment. It involves the gradual formation of a professional identity (Tomlinson & Jackson, 2021) and the accumulation of human, social, cultural, identity, and psychological forms of capital that graduates bring to the labour market (Tomlinson et al., 2022). Work experience, extra-curricular activities, and university-based learning each contribute to these resources in different ways (Jackson & Bridgstock, 2021; Jackson & Tomlinson, 2022), and careers and employability learning is increasingly framed as a pedagogical task within higher education (Healy, 2023). For this reason, a graduate tracer study needs to separate indicators of academic preparation from indicators of the transition to work (Schomburg, 2016).

For a Qur'anic Studies and Exegesis programme (*Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir*, IAT), the relationship between education and work is especially complex. The graduate profile of the IAT programme at STAIN Sultan Abdurrahman Kepulauan Riau describes a novice exegete, an academic in Qur'anic and exegetical studies, and a research assistant in Qur'anic, exegetical, and socio-religious studies. These profiles point to capacities that can be exercised in many institutions rather than to a single occupation. Core Qur'anic knowledge, the reading of Arabic sources, research, religious communication, and integrity are used in schools, religious services, community organisations, and jobs outside the religious sector. Qur'anic knowledge is also increasingly integrated into other fields, such as child development and education (Syahmil & Sa-U, 2024), while local religious leaders expect IAT graduates to strengthen religious and social life despite a competitive job market (Hafiz et al., 2024). Employment status therefore has to be read together with the match between job and field, the use of competencies, and the judgement of employers.

Tracer studies have become a standard instrument for evaluating study programmes in Indonesian Islamic higher education. Nurkholidah and Muttaqin (2022) traced the 2018–2019 graduates of the IAT programme at IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon and reported positive stakeholder responses to graduates working in their institutions. Umayah et al. (2024) applied a cross-cohort design to alumni and user satisfaction in a Hadith Studies department, Salabi et al. (2024) used alumni data to assess the effectiveness of an Islamic Education Management programme, and Putri et al. (2024) found a close match between the fields of work and the discipline of Sharia Business Management graduates. Fitriana et al. (2026) reported that just over half of the graduates of a faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab, and Da'wah were employed, while employers rated their attitudes and work ethic favourably. Haryanta and Dihadjo (2026) framed tracer studies as feedback on the quality

of institutional services, and Nurwardani et al. (2023) called for more standardised tracer systems across Islamic higher education institutions.

Studies in other fields and countries show similar uses of tracer evidence. Tracer studies in vocational, teacher education, and psychology programmes have examined employment rates, the relevance of programmes to jobs, and the bases for programme improvement (Balah, 2023; Pardo & Relon, 2023; Selda & Galicia, 2025; Sichombe, 2022). Wobse et al. (2022) showed that modelling the waiting time to a first job requires a clearly defined starting point for the waiting period, and Saki et al. (2023) combined alumni profiles and user assessments in health education. Research on employers' views adds a further layer. Reviews of global employability skills place communication, teamwork, and adaptability among the skills most valued in the workplace (Tushar & Sooraksa, 2023), employers' expectations of English proficiency often exceed what Indonesian graduates can demonstrate (Hidayat, 2024), and the relevance of Islamic education curricula has been examined directly against the needs of graduate users (Ali et al., 2022).

Despite this growing body of work, three gaps remain. First, most Indonesian tracer studies in Islamic studies report alumni outcomes and employer satisfaction as separate findings, so the points at which the two sources agree or diverge are seldom analysed. Second, alumni ratings of relevance are often treated as if they could stand in for employers' judgements, although employers and graduates may prioritise different competencies (Tushar & Sooraksa, 2023). Third, little is known about the employment transition of IAT graduates in the Riau Islands, a regional context that is not represented in the comparable studies cited above. The analytical problem of this study is therefore not the absence of alumni statistics as such, but whether alumni's views of the relevance of their education are consistent with employers' assessments of graduate performance, and where differences in emphasis can be translated into curriculum improvement.

This study aims to describe the characteristics of the respondents, the timing of the employment transition and the occupational profile of the alumni, the relevance of their competencies and learning experiences, and employers' assessments of graduate performance and of the competencies that need strengthening. The context is the IAT programme of STAIN Sultan Abdurrahman Kepulauan Riau and its 2022–2025 graduates. The units of analysis are the individual responses of alumni and the institutional responses of employers, which are kept distinct throughout. The contribution of the article lies in reading two survey sources from one programme side by side, including the potential tension between favourable general assessments and requests to strengthen core academic competencies. The conclusions are limited to the 33 alumni and six employing institutions that took part, and causal relationships between the curriculum and employment outcomes are not tested.

The remainder of the article is organised as follows. Section 2 describes the research design, data sources, respondents, instruments, and analysis. Section 3 presents the results of the alumni and employer surveys. Section 4 discusses these results in relation to previous research and draws out their implications for the curriculum and for the programme's graduate tracking system. Section 5 concludes the article.

2. Method

This study used a descriptive survey design with quantitative summaries and a thematic grouping of open-ended responses. The design follows the function of tracer studies as a means of mapping the outcomes of higher education and providing institutional feedback (Schomburg, 2016). In survey research, the choice of the unit of analysis, the definition of variables, and the reporting of limitations are essential for accurate interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The quantitative results and the thematic material were presented side by side following the principle of joint displays (Guetterman et al., 2021), without claiming that the study is a full mixed-methods design.

The empirical data were limited to two reports produced from the processed questionnaires of the IAT programme in 2026, namely the alumni report (Program Studi Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir STAIN Sultan Abdurrahman Kepulauan Riau, 2026a) and the stakeholder report (Program Studi Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir STAIN Sultan Abdurrahman Kepulauan Riau, 2026b). The unpublished Litapdimas research report, Chapters I–III, was used as the conceptual basis of the study and not as a source of results (Ikhlas et al., 2026). The comparable article by Nurkholidah and Muttaqin (2022) was consulted only for its strategy of presenting survey results; none of its data were used.

The alumni survey comprised 33 responses from graduates of 2022–2025, received between 16 and 23 April 2026. The employer survey comprised six responses from three educational institutions and three government agencies, received between 3 and 9 August 2026. The six institutions reported that at least eight IAT alumni worked or were active in them. The total number of graduates in the 2022–2025 cohorts and the total number of institutions employing IAT graduates were not available. The respondents were therefore those graduates and institutions that chose to respond, and the response rate and statistical representativeness could not be calculated.

Both surveys used questionnaires. The alumni report recorded 40 substantive questions and the stakeholder report 24 substantive questions. The alumni questionnaire covered the respondents' profile, employment status, time to the first job, the channels used to obtain it, type of occupation and workplace, income category, the match between job and field of study and the contribution of IAT knowledge on a 1–5 scale, the competencies used at work and those needing strengthening, ratings of learning quality and career support, internship experience, connection with the programme, and open suggestions. The stakeholder questionnaire covered fifteen competency indicators rated on a 1–5 scale, overall satisfaction, willingness to recruit IAT graduates again, the competencies that need strengthening, and open suggestions.

Frequencies and percentages were used for categorical variables, and means on the 1–5 scale were presented as reported in the source documents. For multiple-response questions, each option was counted by the number of mentions, so that percentages may total more than 100%. One grade point average entry of 6.4, which is invalid on the 0–4 scale, was excluded from the calculation of the mean. Open suggestions were read according to the themes already grouped in the reports, and edited summaries were not presented as verbatim statements of respondents. The two surveys were compared

descriptively, not inferentially, and the points at which they converge were organised in a joint display (Table 6). Open-ended survey questions can yield rich qualitative material when their limits are acknowledged (Braun et al., 2021), and the themes were read as patterns of meaning rather than as counts of quality (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Several steps were taken to protect the validity of the interpretation. The analysis was carried out on the aggregated data as reported, without adding respondents or reconstructing individual answers. Each employer assessment was treated as an institutional response, not as eight independent ratings of individual alumni. Indicators that describe the same graduates from different angles, such as type of occupation and type of workplace, were not added together. Surveys that rely on voluntary participation, such as online surveys, often obtain modest and uneven response rates (Wu et al., 2022), so the limits of the sampling frame and the absence of follow-up of non-respondents are reported as constraints on generalisation. The research procedure is summarised in Figure 1.

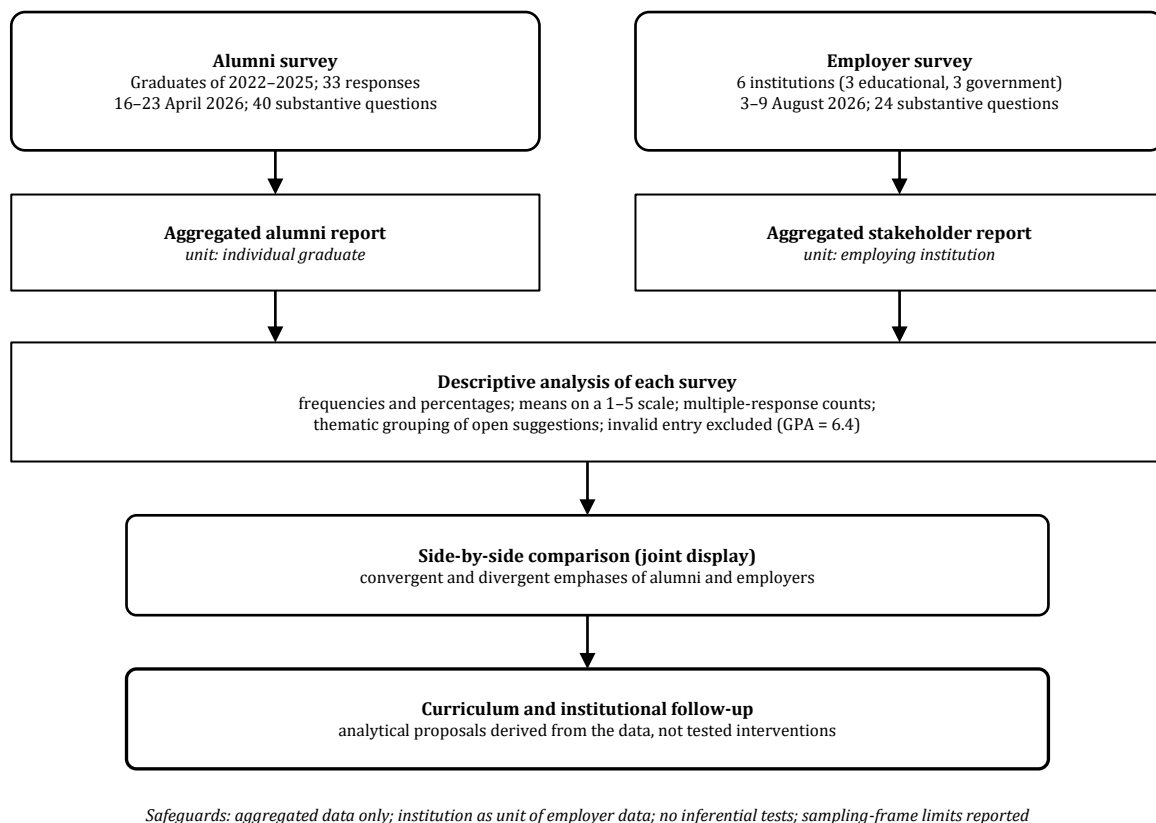


Figure 1. Research procedure of the alumni and employer tracer surveys

Source: Authors' elaboration (2026).

Figure 1 shows that the study moved from two separate data collections to a single comparative reading. The left and right branches represent the alumni and employer surveys, which differ in respondents, timing, and unit of analysis. Both branches pass through the same descriptive analysis, but they meet only at the stage of side-by-side comparison, where convergent and divergent emphases are identified. The final stage translates these points into curriculum and institutional follow-up, which is presented as a set of proposals derived from the data rather than as tested interventions.

3. Results

3.1. Respondent coverage and structure of the evidence

The alumni dataset included graduates of 2022 (14 respondents), 2023 (11), 2024 (5), and 2025 (3). This composition does not reflect the proportion of graduates in each year because the size of each cohort was not available. Of the respondents, 69.7% were women. By place of residence, 13 alumni lived in Tanjungpinang City, nine in Bintan Regency, and seven in Karimun Regency; these three areas accounted for 29 of the 33 respondents (87.9%). The remaining respondents lived in Batam, Lingga, DKI Jakarta, and Sukabumi. The evidence therefore comes mainly from graduates living near the institution and elsewhere in the Riau Islands.

The grade point average (GPA) data showed 29 responses in the 3.50–4.00 range and three in the 3.01–3.49 range. One entry of 6.4 was invalid on the 0–4 scale and was excluded, leaving a mean of 3.64 for the 32 valid entries. These academic indicators describe the respondents during their studies and are kept separate from the indicators of their situation after graduation.

The employer survey represented six institutions, divided equally between educational institutions and government agencies. One institution, Pondok Pesantren Idris Bintan, reported three alumni, while each of the other five reported one. At least eight graduates were thus covered at the institutional level. The two surveys therefore offer two different windows on the same programme: alumni reported their own experiences, whereas employers gave organisational assessments of the graduates they employed. Table 1 summarises the coverage of the two surveys.

Table 1. Coverage of the two surveys and boundaries of the unit of analysis

Indicator	Alumni survey	Employer survey
Responses received	33 alumni	6 institutions
Survey period	16–23 April 2026	3–9 August 2026
Coverage	Graduates of 2022–2025	3 educational institutions, 3 government agencies
Basis of analysis	Individual alumni responses	Assessments by employing institutions
Target population	Not available	Not available

Source: Alumni and stakeholder tracer study reports of the IAT programme, STAIN Sultan Abdurrahman Kepulauan Riau (2026a, 2026b), processed.

Table 1 shows that the two surveys differ in the number and type of respondents, the period of data collection, and the basis of the answers. The alumni survey rests on individual responses, whereas the employer survey rests on the judgement of institutions. Because neither target population was available, the table also makes clear that both sets of results describe the respondents rather than all graduates or all employers.

3.2. Employment transition: waiting time, employment status, and access to information

Of the 33 alumni, 26 (78.8%) reported being employed and four (12.1%) self-employed, while one respondent each reported not yet working, being a homemaker, or

continuing their studies. Taking employment and self-employment together as forms of economic activity, 30 respondents (90.9%) fell into this category. Because the survey had no population denominator and no sampling procedure that ensured representativeness, this figure cannot be treated as the employment rate of all IAT graduates.

Twenty-two respondents (66.7%) reported obtaining their first job less than three months after graduation, six (18.2%) within three to six months, and five (15.2%) after more than a year. At the same time, 21 respondents (63.6%) stated that they had already worked before graduating. The waiting time therefore cannot be read as the length of unemployment after graduation for all respondents. The two questions overlap but measure different things: one describes the timing of the first job, the other records work experience before graduation. Because the data are aggregated categories without individual event histories, no analysis of duration or of its determinants was carried out.

In obtaining their first job, 22 alumni (66.7%) mentioned personal relations, nine (27.3%) social media, four (12.1%) job vacancy websites, two (6.1%) information from the campus, and one (3.0%) an alumni organisation; a single response could include more than one channel. Asked separately what had helped them obtain work, alumni mentioned academic competence 26 times (78.8%), communication 18 times (54.5%), relations or networks 16 times (48.5%), and organisational experience 10 times (30.3%). These answers show that respondents linked their recruitment to a combination of information sources, academic capacity, and social skills, although they do not show that personal relations caused their recruitment. Table 2 and Figure 2 summarise the main transition indicators.

Table 2. Main indicators of the employment transition and status of alumni (n = 33)

Indicator	Number	Percentage
Employed	26	78.8%
Self-employed	4	12.1%
First job in less than 3 months	22	66.7%
First job in 3–6 months	6	18.2%
First job after more than 1 year	5	15.2%
Already working before graduation	21	63.6%
Obtained work through personal relations*	22	66.7%
Job information from the campus*	2	6.1%

*Source: Alumni tracer study report of the IAT programme (2026a). *Multiple answers allowed.*

Table 2 indicates that most respondents were economically active and that a large share had started work early, either before graduation or within three months of it. It also shows the contrast between the two channels of information: personal relations were mentioned by two thirds of the alumni, whereas information from the campus was mentioned by only two.

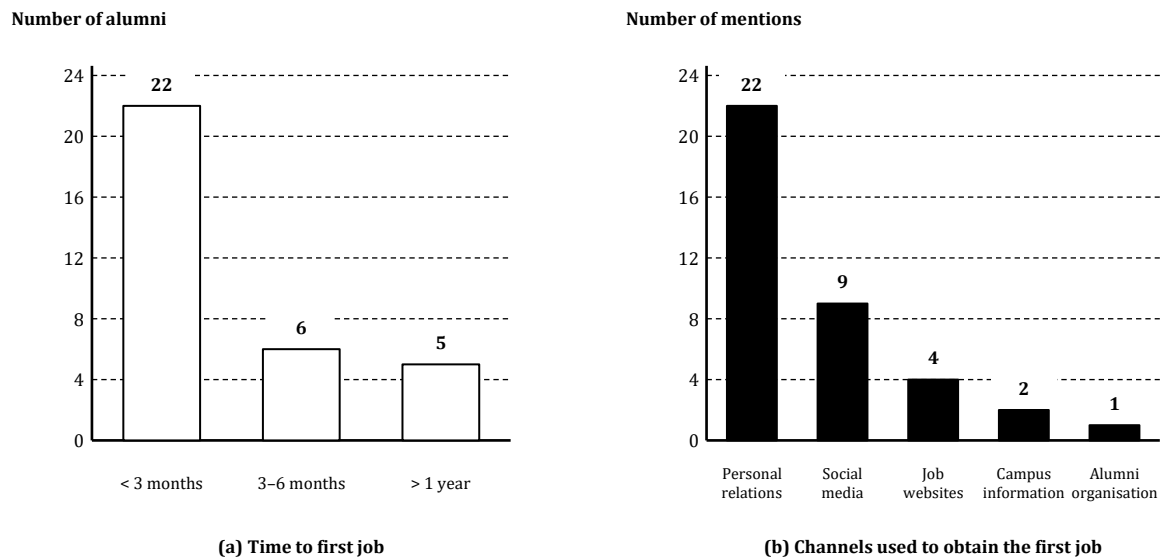


Figure 2. Time to first job and channels used to obtain it among alumni (n = 33)

Source: Alumni tracer study report of the IAT programme (2026a). Panel (b) allows multiple answers.

Figure 2 presents the same pattern visually. Panel (a) shows that the first job was concentrated in the shortest waiting-time category, with smaller groups in the three-to-six-month and over-one-year categories. Panel (b) shows that personal relations far exceeded every other channel, while campus information and alumni organisations played only a minor role in the respondents' first employment.

3.3. Occupation, sector, and income categories

The occupations of the alumni were concentrated in teaching: 19 respondents (57.6%) reported working as teachers or educators. Other occupations included private employees (three), freelancers (three), entrepreneurs (three), civil servants (two), and one each in private tutoring, homemaking, and further study. By type of workplace, 19 respondents (57.6%) worked in educational institutions, four (12.1%) in religious institutions, two (6.1%) in government agencies, and two (6.1%) in private companies, with the remainder spread across other organisations or businesses. These two variables describe the same people from different angles and are therefore not added together.

The reported income was distributed across categories rather than recorded as individual wages. In their first job, 25 of the 33 respondents were in the category of less than IDR 2 million per month; at the time of the survey, this category included 15 respondents. The number in the IDR 2–3 million category changed from six to ten, the IDR 3–5 million category from two to four, and the highest category reported as "IDR 5 million" from zero to four. Because the data are category distributions rather than paired individual wages, they show only a shift in the composition of income categories.

3.4. Field match and use of core knowledge

The mean rating of the match between job and field of study was 3.67 on a 5-point scale. Twenty-one alumni (63.6%) gave a score of 4 or 5, four (12.1%) a score of 3, and eight (24.2%) a score of 1 or 2. On a separate question, the contribution of IAT knowledge

to their work received a higher mean of 4.21, with 25 respondents (75.8%) giving a score of 4 or 5. The difference between the two means is descriptive and was not tested statistically. Among respondents who rated their jobs as less relevant, several mentioned administrative work, non-religious sectors, or the teaching of general subjects, while also stating that organisational experience, communication, or the ability to teach the Qur'an remained useful.

For the competencies used at work, *Ulum al-Qur'an* (the Qur'anic sciences) received 23 mentions (69.7%), exegesis (*tafsir*) 13 (39.4%), research methods seven (21.2%), and schools of exegesis (*Mazahib Tafsir*) five (15.2%). Among the courses considered most useful, *Ulum al-Qur'an* again ranked first with 15 mentions, followed by Qur'an memorisation (*tahfiz*) with seven, and exegesis, recitation and pronunciation (*tahsin, tajwid, and tilawah*), and Islamic history and civilisation with six each. When asked which competencies needed strengthening, 12 alumni (36.4%) chose exegesis, six (18.2%) Arabic, four (12.1%) each research methods and *Ulum al-Qur'an*, and three (9.1%) da'wah and communication. Table 3 brings these indicators together.

Table 3. Relevance Of Education And Competencies Needing Strengthening According To Alumni

Indicator	Result	Basis
Job-field match: score 4–5	21 (63.6%)	33 alumni
Contribution of IAT knowledge: score 4–5	25 (75.8%)	33 alumni
Ulum al-Qur'an used at work	23 (69.7%)	Multiple responses
Exegesis used at work	13 (39.4%)	Multiple responses
Exegesis needs strengthening	12 (36.4%)	33 alumni
Arabic needs strengthening	6 (18.2%)	33 alumni

Source: Alumni tracer study report of the IAT programme (2026a). Relevance and contribution scale: 1–5; competency questions use the number of mentions.

Table 3 shows that the alumni rated the contribution of IAT knowledge more highly than the match between their jobs and their field of study. It also shows that exegesis appears twice: as a competency used at work by about two fifths of the alumni and as the competency they most often wished to see strengthened.

3.5. Learning quality, internships, career services, and alumni connection

The respondents rated the quality of lecturers at a mean of 4.39 out of 5, the quality of learning at 4.36, and facilities at 4.30. Career support from the campus received a lower mean of 4.03. When asked whether career training was available, 16 respondents (48.5%) answered that they did not know, 11 (33.3%) that it was available, and six (18.2%) that it was not. This question measured respondents' perceptions of availability rather than the actual existence of the service.

Thirty-one alumni (93.9%) reported having taken part in field practice or an internship. On its usefulness, 19 respondents (57.6%) chose very helpful, 12 (36.4%) helpful, and two (6.1%) less helpful. Because the report recorded 33 answers on usefulness while 31 respondents reported taking part in an internship, the usefulness ratings cannot be treated as an analysis of internship participants alone.

The alumni also remained connected to the programme. Of 32 valid answers, 26 respondents (81.3%) were still in contact with the programme, 25 (78.1%) were willing

to take part in programme activities, and 31 (96.9%) were willing to join an alumni network.

3.6. Employer assessments of graduate competencies

Six employers rated fifteen competency indicators on a 1–5 scale, and all means were above 4.00. The highest ratings were given to integrity and honesty, communication, and use of technology, each at 4.83. Discipline, work ethic, independent work, and teamwork were rated at 4.67, responsibility at 4.50, and problem solving and adaptability at 4.33. Four Islamic-academic indicators, namely mastery of Qur'anic and exegetical knowledge, analysis of religious issues, reading of Islamic literature, and report writing, each received a mean of 4.17. Mastery of Qur'anic and exegetical knowledge received all of its scores in the 4–5 range, whereas the other three indicators had 83.3% of their scores in that range. With six respondents, one answer changes a percentage by 16.7 points.

Five employers (83.3%) stated that they were very satisfied and one (16.7%) satisfied with the performance of the alumni. Five also answered that they were willing to recruit IAT graduates again, and one answered "maybe". The willingness to recruit again is a hypothetical answer to a survey question rather than a record of actual recruitment. Table 4 summarises these ratings.

Table 4. Employer ratings of graduate competencies and satisfaction (n = 6)

Aspect or indicator	Mean or number	Note
Integrity and honesty	4.83/5	100% score 4–5
Communication	4.83/5	100% score 4–5
Use of technology	4.83/5	100% score 4–5
Mastery of Qur'anic and exegetical knowledge	4.17/5	100% score 4–5
Analysis of religious issues	4.17/5	83.3% score 4–5
Reading Islamic literature	4.17/5	83.3% score 4–5
Report writing	4.17/5	83.3% score 4–5
Very satisfied with alumni	5 (83.3%)	Category choice
Willing to recruit again: yes	5 (83.3%)	Statement of intention

Source: Stakeholder tracer study report of the IAT programme (2026b). Figures are assessments by six institutions, not individual ratings of eight alumni.

Table 4 shows a consistent pattern in which behavioural and general workplace competencies received the highest means, while the four Islamic-academic indicators shared a lower, though still favourable, mean. The table also shows that satisfaction and willingness to recruit again were expressed by five of the six institutions.

3.7. Competencies employers want strengthened

In a multiple-choice question on the competencies that needed improvement, five of the six employers (83.3%) chose foreign languages, three (50.0%) organisational management, two (33.3%) Qur'anic and exegetical knowledge, and one each (16.7%) communication, leadership, and information technology. These proportions represent the number of institutions that named a competency, not low scores on the 1–5 scale. Foreign

languages ranked first even though the fifteen-indicator rating did not include a separate item on language proficiency. The stakeholder questionnaire grouped these needs under "foreign languages" without distinguishing Arabic from English. In the alumni survey, by contrast, Arabic was named six times and English once as competencies needing strengthening. Table 5 lists the competencies named by employers.

Table 5. Competencies that employers want strengthened

Competency	Number of institutions	Percentage (n = 6)
Foreign languages	5	83.3%
Organisational management	3	50.0%
Qur'anic and exegetical knowledge	2	33.3%
Communication	1	16.7%
Leadership	1	16.7%
Information technology	1	16.7%

Source: Stakeholder tracer study report of the IAT programme (2026b). More than one answer was allowed, so percentages total more than 100%.

Table 5 shows that the requests of employers were concentrated on two areas outside the fifteen rated indicators, namely foreign languages and organisational management. Requests for stronger Qur'anic and exegetical knowledge were less frequent but present in one third of the institutions.

3.8. Open-ended suggestions

In the alumni report, the themes of an applied curriculum, research, and critical thinking appeared in ten responses (30.3%), while the strengthening of recitation, memorisation, and exegesis (*tahsin*, *tahfiz*, *tilawah*, and *tafsir*) appeared in nine responses (27.3%). The suggestions of employers asked for more practicum aligned with graduate targets, broader educational insight, greater contribution of graduates to society, and stronger Qur'an memorisation. These themes indicate recurring concerns and opportunities in the open answers and are not used as scores of learning quality.

4. Discussion

4.1. Employment transition beyond waiting time

The high share of respondents who were economically active and found their first job within three months appears favourable, but the finding that almost two thirds had already worked before graduation changes its meaning. For many IAT graduates, the transition to work did not begin at graduation; it overlapped with their studies. This pattern supports the argument of Wobse et al. (2022) that waiting time must be defined from a clear starting point before it can be interpreted, and it cautions against comparing the present figures directly with tracer studies that report employment rates only. Fitriana et al. (2026), for example, found that just over half of the graduates of a faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab, and Da'wah were employed, and Putri et al. (2024) reported a close field match among Sharia Business Management graduates, but neither distinguished work started before graduation from work obtained afterwards. Tracer studies in other countries have

likewise focused on employment status and programme relevance (Balah, 2023; Pardo & Relon, 2023; Sichombe, 2022), so the overlap of study and work identified here deserves attention in future instruments.

The dominance of personal relations as a channel to the first job, set against the small role of campus information, reflects the distinction between the knowledge graduates bring and the social resources that give them access to work. In the graduate capital model, social capital operates alongside human capital and can shape who learns about which opportunities (Tomlinson et al., 2022). Alumni in this study credited their academic competence with helping them obtain work, yet the route to the job ran mostly through relationships. Similar findings on the value of work experience and extra-curricular involvement (Jackson & Bridgstock, 2021; Jackson & Tomlinson, 2022) suggest that the early work experience of IAT students may itself have created the relationships through which they were later recruited. The institutional implication is not to replace informal networks with a single campus channel but to make access more equitable through open job information, careers guidance, and an alumni system. Whether access to information differs between groups of graduates remains a question for further data collection.

4.2. Field match and the transferability of competencies

The difference between the rating of field match (mean 3.67) and the rating of the contribution of IAT knowledge (mean 4.21) is one of the most informative results of the study. Alumni who worked in administration, non-religious sectors, or the teaching of general subjects judged their jobs to be less relevant, yet still found their knowledge, communication, and organisational experience useful. This supports the view that employability cannot be captured by the label of an occupation alone and that graduates carry capacities that transfer across settings (Healy, 2023; Tomlinson & Jackson, 2021). It is also consistent with the global emphasis on communication, teamwork, and adaptability as employability skills (Tushar & Sooraksa, 2023), and with tracer studies that distinguish employment from the relevance of the programme to the job (Selda & Galicia, 2025).

The concentration of alumni in teaching has a substantive link to the ability to read and teach the Qur'an, but the precise nature of the work cannot be inferred from the label "teacher". A graduate may teach general subjects as well as Qur'anic and exegetical material. Field match should therefore be measured through job tasks and the actual use of knowledge, not through occupational titles. This is in line with the expectation of local religious leaders that IAT graduates contribute to religious and social life beyond formal religious posts (Hafiz et al., 2024), and with the integration of Qur'anic values into fields such as child development and education (Syahmil & Sa-U, 2024). The income results call for the same caution. The shift in the composition of income categories cannot be taken as evidence of the size of individual wage increases or of a causal effect of education on income.

4.3. Where alumni and employers converge

Reading the two surveys side by side reveals three points of convergence, which are summarised in Table 6. Each row combines evidence that was collected separately and

with different categories, so the table does not produce joint figures; it shows where the emphases of the two groups point in the same direction.

Table 6. Joint display of the points of convergence between the alumni and employer surveys

Area	Alumni survey (n = 33)	Employer survey (n = 6)	Reading for follow-up
Core academic competence	Exegesis named for strengthening by 12 (36.4%); used at work by 13 (39.4%)	Qur'anic and exegetical knowledge named by 2 (33.3%); four Islamic-academic indicators at 4.17	Review how exegesis is taught, practised, and assessed, not only its course load
Language	Arabic named 6 times and English once for strengthening	Foreign languages named by 5 (83.3%), without distinguishing languages	Two connected strands: Arabic for sources, English for academic and professional use
Practice and management	31 (93.9%) took part in internships; 31 of 33 answers rated them helpful or very helpful	Organisational management named by 3 (50.0%); suggestions for practicum aligned with graduate targets	Placements and projects with measurable competency targets
Access to work	Personal relations 22 (66.7%); campus information 2 (6.1%); 16 (48.5%) did not know about career training	5 of 6 very satisfied and willing to recruit again	Open job information, employer partnerships, and an alumni network

Source: Authors' synthesis of the alumni and stakeholder reports of the IAT programme (2026a, 2026b).

The first point concerns core academic competence. Alumni named exegesis as the competency most in need of strengthening, two employers named Qur'anic and exegetical knowledge, and the four Islamic-academic indicators received lower ratings than several behavioural indicators. This convergence supports a review of how exegesis and Islamic literature are taught and practised, but it does not show that the volume of exegesis courses should be increased. The principle of constructive alignment between intended outcomes, learning activities, and assessment (Biggs et al., 2022) helps to distinguish a problem of content from a problem of implementation. Outcome-based information systems can trace whether graduate learning outcomes are actually achieved (Bintoro et al., 2026), and the relevance of Islamic education curricula has been examined in a similar way against the needs of graduate users (Ali et al., 2022). Competency-based curriculum development in an Islamic school has been constrained when teachers had limited means to vary their methods (Azizah et al., 2025), and pedagogical approaches such as deep learning have been applied to enhance the effectiveness of Islamic religious education curricula (Idham et al., 2026). For IAT, deeper exegetical training may mean more practice

in applying interpretive methods to contemporary questions, as illustrated by contextual readings of Qur'anic verses on interfaith relations (Mukmin & Rahmat, 2026).

The second point concerns language. Alumni distinguished Arabic from English, whereas employers chose the general category of foreign languages, so the relative priority of the two languages cannot be calculated from the employer survey. The results are better used to build two connected strands: Arabic based on reading exegetical sources and English based on academic literacy and professional communication. Methods that combine grammar and translation have improved students' ability to read classical Islamic texts (Shalihah et al., 2024), while Indonesian graduates see English as essential for career advancement but often fall short of employers' expectations (Hidayat, 2024). The relative priority of each strand should be set through diagnostic assessment of students and focused discussion with employing institutions rather than by adding percentages that are not comparable.

The third point concerns practical training and management. Most alumni found field practice helpful, and employers asked for more practicum aligned with graduate targets and for stronger organisational management. Work-integrated learning contributes to employability in different ways depending on its type (Jackson & Dean, 2023), and alumni data have been used elsewhere to redesign field experience and partnerships (Salabi et al., 2024). In the IAT context, placements could be organised in schools, pesantren, religious affairs offices, Qur'anic institutions, and workplaces that require research or religious communication, each with measurable competency targets rather than attendance requirements alone. Possible tasks include preparing exegetical material for a particular audience, applying research methods to community issues, reading annotated Arabic sources, and documenting institutional projects. These examples are analytical proposals derived from the data, not programmes that have been implemented or shown to be effective.

4.4. Career services and the tracer system as institutional infrastructure

The reliance on personal relations and the uncertainty of almost half of the alumni about career training point to an institutional issue that does not depend directly on changes to the curriculum. The good performance of graduates in the eyes of employers does not guarantee an easy transition for graduates without social networks. Employer engagement events have been shown to raise students' perceived employability more than university workshops without employers (Martini et al., 2026), and careers and employability learning can be designed as part of teaching through explicit pedagogical principles (Healy, 2023). The programme could therefore test improvements such as an alumni database, open publication of job opportunities, internship partnerships with employing institutions, and regular evaluation of the reach of career services.

The willingness of almost all respondents to join an alumni network offers a practical resource for such improvements. Web-based tracer systems have been developed to manage alumni data more efficiently and to support accreditation (Nurwardani et al., 2023; Sidqi & Marsehan, 2025), and tracer studies have been framed as an instrument for

evaluating the quality of institutional services (Haryanta & Dihadjo, 2026). Recent efforts to design and validate quality assurance frameworks in low-resource educational settings point in the same direction, since data collected for quality purposes need validated indicators before they can guide improvement (Haditia et al., 2026). The choice of platform and budget, however, requires a separate feasibility study. Figure 3 brings these strands together in a model of how the survey findings can feed curriculum and institutional follow-up.

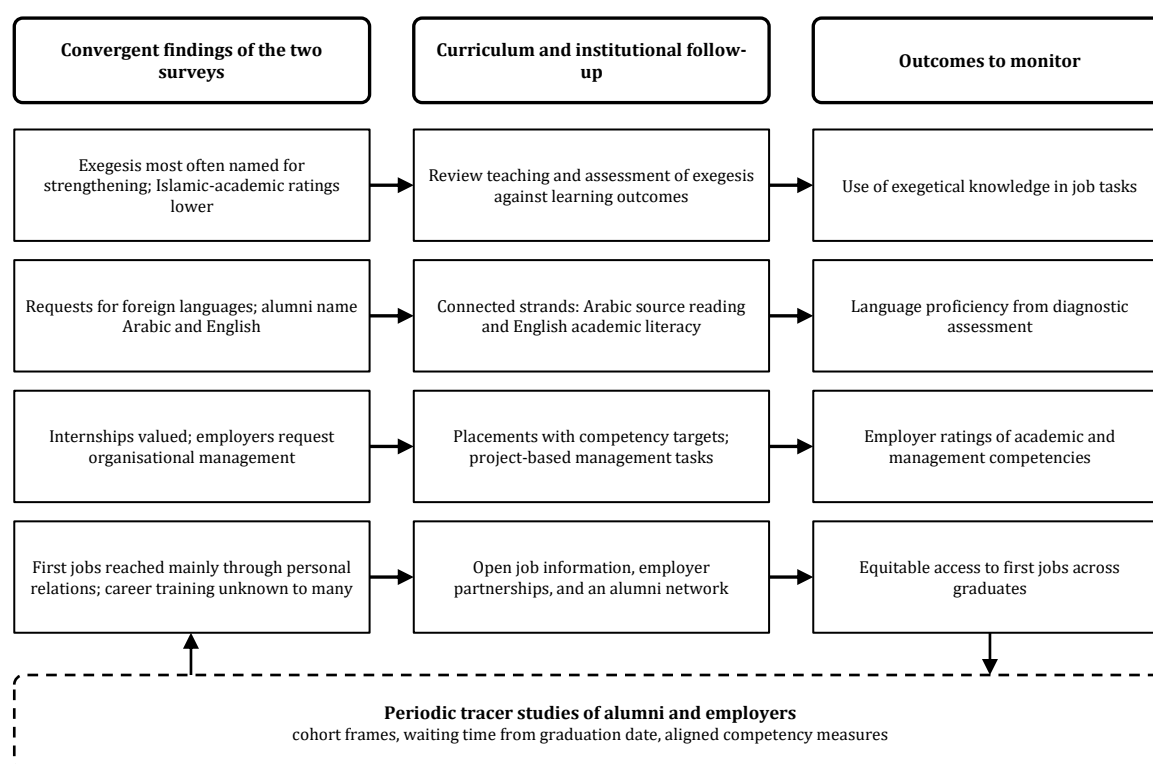


Figure 3. Conceptual model linking tracer study findings to curriculum and institutional follow-up

Source: Authors' elaboration based on the survey results (2026).

Figure 3 should be read from left to right. The first column lists the points of convergence identified in the two surveys, the second column lists the corresponding follow-up actions in the curriculum and in institutional services, and the third column names the outcomes that the programme would seek to monitor. The feedback arrow at the bottom indicates that the next round of tracer studies should test whether these actions are associated with changes in graduate outcomes. The graduate capital framework (Tomlinson et al., 2022) helps to interpret the model as a combination of knowledge, professional behaviour, and social capital, but the study did not measure these forms of capital with a validated instrument, so the framework is used for interpretation rather than for testing a model.

4.5. Limitations and directions for future research

The study has several limitations. First, the total number of 2022–2025 graduates and of employing institutions was not available, so the response rate could not be calculated and response bias could not be tested. Surveys that rely on voluntary participation often

face low and uneven response (Wu et al., 2022), and the results should be read as describing the respondents only. Second, the two surveys were conducted at different times and with different respondents, which prevents direct matching of employer assessments with individual alumni. Third, some alumni questions used multiple responses or normalised free-text answers, and categories such as income and length of employment were not detailed enough for econometric analysis. Fourth, with six employers, a single response has a large influence on percentages, and tests of difference or generalisation to a population are not appropriate.

Future studies need a population frame for each cohort, a secure way of linking employing institutions to alumni, a definition of waiting time from the date of graduation, measures of the type and quality of work, and competency assessments that are aligned between alumni and employers. Repeated tracer studies in later years would make it possible to examine whether follow-up in the curriculum and in career services is associated with changes in graduate outcomes (Schomburg, 2016). For the IAT programme, improving the accuracy of graduate lists and the quality of the instruments is a precondition for stronger inferences.

5. Conclusion

This study shows that the employment transition and competencies of IAT graduates are best understood by reading alumni and employer evidence together rather than separately. The main conclusions are as follows: (1) most of the 33 responding alumni were economically active and many found their first job within three months, but because almost two thirds had already worked before graduating, the waiting-time indicator cannot be read as the duration of unemployment, and access to work ran mainly through personal relations rather than campus channels; (2) alumni rated the contribution of IAT knowledge more highly than the match between their jobs and their field, which indicates that their competencies are often transferred to work outside narrowly defined religious occupations, while exegesis was the competency most often named for strengthening; (3) the six employing institutions rated integrity, communication, and use of technology most highly and were largely very satisfied, yet they rated the Islamic-academic indicators lower and most of them asked for stronger foreign language skills and organisational management; and (4) the two sources converge on the need to deepen exegetical training, build connected Arabic and English strands, structure field practice around competency targets, and make career services and alumni networks more visible. These findings apply only to the respondents and do not demonstrate a causal effect of the curriculum on employment. In the future, the programme can use these points to review its graduate learning outcomes and to build a tracer system with complete cohort frames, aligned competency measures, and regular feedback from employers, so that later rounds of tracer studies can test whether curriculum and service improvements are associated with better graduate outcomes.

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