

2019 higher education talent trends in Australia

Rohan Carr, IRC Australia | Feb 26, 2019

The higher education sector not only shapes the world in which we live but also is shaped by it. While Australian universities undoubtedly punch above their weight internationally, they remain highly susceptible to global events; be they opportunities or challenges. This will no doubt continue in 2019.

So, what do we see as some of the important factors likely to impact the search for talent in 2019?

1. Visa changes

The last two years have seen some significant change in the government's requirements for academics and professionals seeking work visas to join Australian universities. The new requirements, procedural complexities and overall uncertainty have had a noticeable impact on the capacity of Australian institutions to attract offshore talent. It seems remarkable that a so-called 'clever country' makes it difficult to attract the best and brightest in the world. Hopefully, 2019 will bring some sense, or at least more certainty to this issue.

2. Diversity

Universities are at the forefront of the promotion of gender diversity within the workforce. While much has been achieved, there remains a long way to go. For example, still less than a quarter of full professors are females. There is certainly much that can be done, not only in terms of senior appointments but also by ensuring that the academic culture is one that focuses on retention and development at all levels.

Universities are also addressing other aspects of diversity as they seek to ensure that their institutions reflect students' profiles and needs. We would expect that Australian universities will look more closely at cultural and ethnic diversity among senior academic leaders and to continue to address how they can further attract, develop and retain indigenous academics in the year ahead.

3. **International students**

With the sector's economic model highly dependent on international students, Universities are increasingly recognising that student support and differentiated service can be a significant competitive advantage. We expect to see an increased focus on the attraction of experienced talent in the international student recruitment and student service areas, as Australian universities seek to best position themselves to meet local and offshore competition.



Adding to the above three points, the overarching political environment, including an upcoming Federal election will no doubt have the potential to bring an added layer of complexity to the sector in the year ahead. Plenty for us all to ponder in 2019!