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International Education
Association of Australia



employing

international
students &
graduates

information and guidelines for employers

International students and diversity hiring

International students and graduates represent an important talent pool who are highly skilled, qualified and motivated to pursue career development opportunities in Australia. Misinformation and misconceptions, however, around their working rights and visa sponsorship often arise. This can lead to resistance or refusal on behalf of employers to hire international students or post-study visa holders. The purpose of this resource is to assist Australian employers understand the broad range of options to hire and retain international talent.

With unemployment at record low levels, many employers across a wide range of industries are facing acute skills and labour shortages. International students can help bridge these gaps in sectors such as management and commerce; information technology; engineering and related technologies; natural and physical sciences; health; education; and society and culture, amongst others.

Australian businesses and organisations that have hired international students have seen the benefits translate into the following tangible results:

- Enriched cultural diversity and language capability in workplaces provides greater global awareness, broader perspectives and enhanced cross-cultural communication abilities.
- Harnessing cultural diversity also allows organisations to better understand, service and represent their diverse customer bases in Australia and globally.
- Small businesses that have engaged international students and graduates have been able to expand into and access new export markets for their products and services.
- International students and graduates have helped employers in regional Australia sustain and diversify their businesses.
- Areas such as science, engineering and technology, provide opportunities for international students and graduates to work in high-end research and commercialisation to enhance Australia's global competitive advantage.

Many international students and graduates who are offered permanent employment demonstrate a long-term commitment to their employers.

Further information about the benefits international students and graduates bring to Australian workplaces is outlined on IEAA's website: <https://www.ieaa.org.au/research/employability>.

When do international students and graduates seek employment in Australia?

International students may seek employment during their studies or upon graduating. Taking on a part-time job whilst studying can provide international students with important opportunities to become part of our broader community – not only do they develop transferable skills, they also improve a range of proficiencies and cultural awareness as they build critical career capital. Hands-on, practical experience allows international students to put their learning into action and enhances their understanding of Australian workplace culture, behaviours and norms. International students are also afforded the opportunity to develop strong networks which helps them stay connected to Australia, long after they have returned home.

Do cultural and language differences impact an international student's 'fit' with Australian organisations?

Like Australian students and new permanent residents, employers can expect international students and graduates to be motivated to understand and learn about their organisational culture.

While studying in Australia, international students and graduates experience multicultural classrooms, where they interact with other students who come from diverse backgrounds and have diverse ideas. Through employability seminars, networking opportunities and other services offered by their education provider, they are exposed to and gain an understanding of Australian workplace culture, behaviour and norms.

International students must demonstrate their English language proficiency as a part of the admissions process to their education provider and, for some students, as a part of their student visa application. Australia's Department of Home Affairs also sets a minimum requirement for English language proficiency for the employer-sponsored 482 work visa for any

occupation. Most Australian universities, however, set higher requirements than the Department of Home Affairs to meet their academic entry criteria. In addition, most Australian education providers also offer additional English language support to international students throughout their studies.

What visa options allow international students to work?

Part-time work while studying

Prior to COVID-19, once international students who hold a valid student visa have commenced their course in Australia, they could work up to 40 hours a fortnight during teaching and exam periods. When their course was not in session, for example, during university vacation periods, there was no restriction to the hours they could work. Some international students enrolled in postgraduate research programs, that is Masters by Research and PhDs, were able to work full-time for the entire duration of their studies. As a result of COVID-19, these restrictions were removed in 2021 and international students have been able to work 'uncapped' hours. It is expected that there will be further developments in relation to this and employers should check the Department of Home Affairs websites for updates.

Post-study roles, including for graduate and entry-level positions

Many international students qualify for the subclass 485 Temporary Graduate visa that provides full working rights for a specified number of years. Subclass 485 visa holders have full working rights from the end of their studies, on their bridging visas (which bridge the gap between their student visa and their temporary graduate visa) and for the duration of their temporary graduate visa. From an employers' perspective, these visa holders can be treated the same as other entry-level or graduate employees and do not represent any additional expense or administration requirements to employers. It is expected that there will be changes to the duration of this visa subclass in the second half of 2022, which will be favourable to both visa holders and their existing and prospective employers.

Australian employers can utilise the free 24 hour online service, Visa Entitlement Verification Online (VEVO), to check information on work entitlements of various types of visa holders including student visas, bridging visa and working holiday visas.

VEVO is available here: <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/already-have-a-visa/check-visa-details-and-conditions/check-conditions-online>.

Many international students are able to stay in Australia permanently after their post-study visas via skilled migration programs. These allow eligible visa holders to apply for permanent residence independently or employers may opt to sponsor their employees temporarily or permanently via employer-sponsored visa programs.

Enabling the employment of international students

- ✓ I am interested in harnessing the potential of diversity to power my business or organisation
- ✓ I have the capacity to provide professional development for young graduates
- ✓ I am willing to work with education providers to recruit international students and graduates
- ✓ I am willing to use the following website to check work rights: <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/already-have-a-visa/check-visa-details-and-conditions/check-conditions-online>



A number of visa options are available that enable international students and graduates to work in Australia

STUDENTS WHO SEEK TO WORK POST-GRADUATION

Hold a relevant qualification (from Australia or overseas) and have at least two years of work experience

Have completed their studies in Australia

Temporary Skill Shortage visa (482)

Temporary Graduate visa (485)

STUDENTS WHO SEEK TO WORK WHILST STUDYING

Student visa (500)

Some students studying English language programs (ELICOS)

Working Holiday (417 or 462) visa

LONGER-TERM OPTIONS

Employer-sponsored

Regionally-based

Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional (Provisional) visa (494)

Employer Nomination Scheme visa (186)

No employer sponsorship

Skilled Nominated visa (190)

Skilled Independent visa (189)

Permanent Residence (Skilled Regional) visa (191)

Skilled Work Regional (Provisional) visa (491)

Australia has a range of visas for non-citizens.

The full list is available here: <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-listing>

The visa information here is general in nature and advice was taken from a registered migration agent. We recommend referring to the Office of the Migration Agents Registration Authority (<https://www.mara.gov.au>) to seek advice from a registered migration agent should employers have further enquiries. Alternatively, employers can also seek advice directly from the Department of Home Affairs.

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