Impacts of post-study work rights policy in Australia

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91,776
number of temporary graduate visa holders in Australia as of June 2019 [1]

76%
overall rate of importance given to access to the temporary graduate visa among the participants

80,903
number of international commencements in Masters by coursework programs in 2018

+15%
compared to 2017 [2]

More than double compared to 2013 [2]

66%
satisfaction rate for the temporary visa reported by participants

7.4/10
mean score on how likely participants to recommend the 485 visa to other students

Current employment status for those staying in Australia

Still looking for a job Working, in field of study Working, not in field of study Full time Part time Casual

Past and present 485 visa holders

11% 36% 9% 9% 15% 6% 7%

Past holders of 485 visa

11% 6% 4% 4% 17% 52% 7%

Current holders of 485 visa

21% 28% 11% 14% 7% 7% 10%
A pathway to permanent residence
Enhanced my employability
Enhanced my professional network in Australia
Enhanced my social network in Australia
Offered me a chance to secure a job in my field of study

For those who returned to home countries

For those who remained in Australia

A pathway to permanent residence
Enhanced my employability
Enhanced my professional network in Australia
Enhanced my social network in Australia
Offered me a chance to secure a job in my field of study

Median annual income
For those who work full-time in Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visa Status</th>
<th>Median Annual Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current visa holders</td>
<td>$55,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those with a Masters by coursework degree</td>
<td>$60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those with a Bachelor degree</td>
<td>$60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian graduates with postgraduate coursework</td>
<td>$83,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian undergraduates</td>
<td>$61,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key factors impacting employment status

- **English proficiency level**
  - Impact positively: 68%
  - Impact negatively: 6%

- **Work experience in Australia**
  - Impacts positively: 49%
  - Impacts negatively: 23%

- **Job seeking skills**
  - Impacts positively: 54%
  - Impacts negatively: 23%

- **Professional networks in Australia**
  - Impacts positively: 43%
  - Impacts negatively: 21%

- **Networks of friends**
  - Impacts positively: 47%
  - Impacts negatively: 18%

- **Familiarity with the Australian market**
  - Impacts positively: 23%
  - Impacts negatively: 21%

- **Cultural background**
  - Impacts positively: 28%
  - Impacts negatively: 49%

- **Visa status**

For those who returned to home countries:

- **Still looking for a job**
- **Working, not in field of study**
- **Working, in field of study**
- **Full time**
- **Part time**
- **Casual**

Three sectors providing more than half of the employment opportunities available for 485 visa holders who remained in Australia and who worked outside their field of study:

- Retail
- Restaurants and cafes
- Education and training

REFERENCES:

[See the Report for full references]
What the PSWR policy has achieved:

- creating destination attractiveness for Australia.
- decoupling the direct link between international education and migration.

There is little evidence of negative impacts of temporary graduate visa holders on the Australian labour market or on creating competition with local workers.

There is a risk of deskilling, precarity, financial stress and vulnerability of temporary graduates who could be exploited because they really need work experience to enhance their employability and achieve their career objectives, cover the costs of staying in Australia post-graduation, pay back their study loans or fulfill their permanent residency goal.

International graduates who remain in Australia experience a higher risk of education-job mismatch than those who return to their home country. Only 36 per cent of current and past visa holders who stayed in Australia secured full-time employment in their field of study, compared to 49 per cent who returned to their home country.

Many Australian employers either prefer international graduates with a permanent residency visa than those on the temporary graduate visa or are unclear about what the latter entails.

The study shows that even though international graduates do not see the 485 visa as directly and immediately helping them secure a job in their field of study, it gives them the benefits of “buying time” and extending their stay in Australia to enhance their English language proficiency, acquire different forms of work experience, develop professional and social networks, earn and pay back their loans and in some cases, secure PR.

The study shows the transformation from the education-migration nexus to education-work-migration nexus for international students, following the introduction of the PSWR policy.

There are critical gaps and loopholes in managing international students’ and graduates’ expectations and the roles of universities, education and migration agents and other stakeholders in the provision of advice and support for temporary graduates in relation to PSWR, visa application and career pathways.

How to create a balance between gaining destination attractiveness, ensuring genuine entrants, retaining talent and maximising international graduate employment outcomes through post-study work rights policy is a crucial question for host countries.

Small to medium-size companies and international companies are benefiting from a highly-skilled pool of talent who are really determined to gain employment.

Graduates’ chance of securing a full-time job in their field of study improves with further stay in Australia post-graduation and with the transition to PR status.

Temporary graduate visa is a possible but not easy pathway to PR. There seems to be a ‘chicken or egg’ situation around the nexus between temporary graduate visa, employment and PR.

Small and medium-size companies and branches of international companies provide up to 68 per cent of employment opportunities for the current and past visa holders.

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It is urgent to establish a dedicated website providing information about post-study work rights, temporary graduate visa and post-485 visa pathways. It is important that this website is created in consultation with key stakeholders and hosted by a recognised organisation or regulatory body.

State governments through their respective initiatives such as Study Sydney or Study Adelaide, should strengthen support for international graduates staying in their state through study/post-study centres and run services that provide information sessions, advice and consultations on:

- post study work rights and pathways
- temporary graduate visa application
- developing professional connections, acquiring local work experience and enhancing employability

It is critical that best practices need to be shared across the states and better promotion of these services is needed.

Universities should provide international graduates with continuing access to career guidance resources and career support and more investment is needed to ensure career and employability support services are adequately resourced to cater for international students beyond graduation.

Universities should have staff who is trained and qualified to provide information on the 485 visas and post-study pathways.

Universities should work in tandem with related stakeholders to establish specialist support groups to create a sustaining community of support for temporary graduates such as International Graduate Talent or International Graduate Achieve. This could be connected to state-based initiatives.

There should be a partnership between University’s Student Association/Student Union and community Legal Centres (for example Eastern Community Legal Centre) to provide international students and graduates with guidance and advice on temporary graduate visa and post-study work rights.

There is a need to educate employers and raise their awareness about the intent and nature of the temporary graduate visa and the potential contributions of international graduates on this visa and on visa options post 485.

It is urgent to have a coordinated approach involving different key stakeholders: Government sector, professional organizations, university, communities, employers, and student associations; for example, Austrade, state government initiatives (i.e. Study Melbourne, Study Sydney), IEAA, Victorian Working Group on International Student Employability (VicWISE), ISANA, AMES Australia, City and local Councils and Council of International Students (CISA) and Asia Society Australia.