

# The Australian

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## Red tape hurts hopefuls

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### **VISA categories should be introduced to ease the paths of potential international candidates for research degrees and jobs in Australian universities.**

This is according to the Australian Technology Network of universities.

The suggestion, in a paper about meeting Australia's research needs, is among several that aim to attract and retain overseas talent in the shadow of concerns about moves towards decreasing immigration as a whole.

"Relaxing entry regulations and reforming the visa process for these staff and students would greatly increase the attractiveness of Australia as a destination," the ATN paper says.

For example, under the present system, some immigrant researchers strike trouble when they try to arrange for dependents to join them.

"Given the relatively small numbers, as well as the high value to the Australian economy of such researchers, this process should be greatly streamlined."

The paper also calls for the age threshold for permanent residency to be lifted above 45 years, "an age at which many academics are in their research and teaching prime".

Any delay in effecting these reforms "risks reputational damage that we cannot afford in a global environment of strong and increasing competition", not just from other international markets but from countries such as China and India that are raising wages in an attempt to retain their best people.

The paper argues such measures are critical in light of the ageing academic workforce, of which 40 per cent is over 50 years old.

The ATN paper also proposes a national industry innovation scholarship program to fund up to 500 PhD scholarships over four years at \$30,000 annually, in areas designated as important for the future of Australian industry.

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