



Expatriate Talent in Indian Academia

Emerging Trends and Institutional Readiness

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ODGERS 

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1. Overview



Indian higher education is entering a phase where global faculty mobility (including returning Indian leaders) and international academic leadership are becoming central to institutional strategy. Universities are increasingly exploring expatriate hiring not just as a symbolic marker of internationalisation, but as a practical lever to strengthen research output, build global partnerships, and accelerate institutional development. At the same time, the ability to attract talent is only one part of the equation; long-term success depends on whether institutions can integrate expatriates effectively through clear governance, a robust research ecosystem, credible role design and reliable operational support. Most importantly, a structured cultural integration plan is essential for successful integration within the academic community and the local context.

1.1 BACKGROUND AND KEY OBJECTIVES

This whitepaper combines a mixed-methods research design to develop an evidence-based view of expatriate academic talent in Indian universities. It integrates:

- **Qualitative, In-depth Interviews** to capture lived experiences of expatriate academics and academic leaders, including the full arc: from opportunity identification to appointment and assimilation. ([Annexure 3.1](#))
- A **Pulse Check Survey** to identify and prioritise hiring considerations among academic leaders in Indian universities. ([Annexure 3.2](#))



- A **Qualitative Roundtable Discussion** to incorporate institutional perspectives and to test, validate, and challenge emergent themes from the earlier phases. We invited **9 academic leaders**, including Presidents (Chancellors), Vice-Chancellors, Pro Vice-Chancellors, and Deans from leading universities and standalone institutes, selected through deliberate expert sampling, who have had first-hand experience of recruiting, managing, and integrating expatriate faculty or leaders, and for their ability to speak about institutional policies, constraints, and best practices. ([Annexure 3.3](#))

The findings from pulse check and expatriate interviews were then taken into the roundtable to refine interpretations and understand organisational constraints and practices.

Note on interpretation: The insights and inferences in this whitepaper reflect the perspectives gathered from a sample set of senior academic leaders and expatriate faculty across selected Indian institutes and universities. The findings summarise patterns from this sample to support institutional discussion and decisions; they are not intended to represent a definitive or exhaustive view of the wider Indian higher education system.



2. Themes and Highlights

2.1 WHO ARE THE EXPATRIATES: RETURNING INDIANS AND FOREIGN NATIONALS

Expatriate talent in India typically falls into two cohorts, returning Indians and foreign nationals, and each cohort tends to encounter different integration challenges.



Foreign national expatriates who come to India often arrive without fixed expectations and with a higher degree of openness. By contrast, senior Indian expats may bring strong preconceived ideas about the university and the changes or impact they expect to make. When these expectations do not align with reality, the mismatch can create friction.

Prof. Rudra Pratap, Vice-Chancellor, Plaksha University

Returning Indians are often assumed to adapt quickly, yet senior returnees can face significant re-entry friction, especially after decades in governance systems where decision rights and timelines are more explicitly codified.

Their integration often hinges on role authority, institutional alignment, and whether expectations set during recruitment translate into workable execution on the ground.



We tend to assume that returning Indian talent will naturally understand the system and assimilate quickly. In practice, assimilation takes time, and we must be very patient.

Prof. Gurdaman Sharma, Vice-Chancellor, SRM University Sikkim



Foreign nationals often need stronger administrative and bureaucratic enablement and may also need more structured cultural navigation support. That said, foreign nationals with prior exposure to India, collaborations (through research or academic endeavours), or family links can integrate faster because they arrive with practical anchors and a more realistic mental model of the operating environment. ([Annexure 3.1.2](#))

A single onboarding and integration pathway therefore creates an avoidable mismatch, particularly for mid-level and senior-level appointments where accountability is high. Differentiated integration, aligned to cohort needs and seniority, is more likely to protect performance and retention.

2.2 INSTITUTIONAL READINESS: OPERATIONAL AND STRUCTURAL

The Odgers India pulse-check survey suggests that all surveyed academic leaders reported at least some readiness to integrate expatriate faculty, with 50% describing their institutions as “very ready” and 50% as “somewhat ready”. However, this operational confidence does not yet translate into broad near-term hiring plans. Only 25% of leaders said they are actively looking to hire expatriates, while 50% said they will consider such hires selectively. ([Annexure 3.2](#))

This gap between readiness and hiring intent can be attributed to practical constraints rather than a lack of strategic interest. Leaders referenced factors such as:

- Limited access to suitable global candidates
- Budget limitations
- Regulatory complexity as potential barriers

In other words, institutions may be increasingly prepared in principle, but still cautious about execution at scale. When institutions do pursue expatriate hiring, the rationale is relatively consistent. Survey respondents most frequently linked expatriate appointments to

- Global partnership development (87%)
- Strengthening research rankings and output (62%)



In India, expatriate hiring is not just about adding faculty; it is a lever for global connectivity and stronger research performance.



At the same time, post-appointment experience highlights where implementation remains uneven. Reported friction after hiring is concentrated in **governance and decision rights**, and **academic culture and norms** (44%), followed by **operational pace and processes** (33%) (as evidenced from the Odgers Pulse Survey) ([Annexure 3.2](#)). Both expatriate faculty and academic leaders acknowledge and recognise these challenges. Many institutions are clear on why they want expatriate talent but are less consistent in how they support that talent once appointed.

A useful way to frame this finding is to distinguish between the value proposition and the delivery infrastructure:

- **Value proposition** is strongest when the institution can clearly articulate the academic opportunity, research priorities, and the candidate's scope of influence.
- **Delivery infrastructure** is strongest when decision-making, approvals, procurement, grants administration, finance processes, and onboarding are predictable, resourced, and owned.

Retaining top expatriate talent requires a shift towards transparent and meritocratic systems. In India, where titles do not always reflect actual authority, establishing a clear and consistent professional framework is essential.

Prof. Rishiksha T. Krishnan, Vice-Chancellor, Ashoka University

Where delivery infrastructure is inconsistent, responsibility shifts to the faculty member to navigate internal systems.

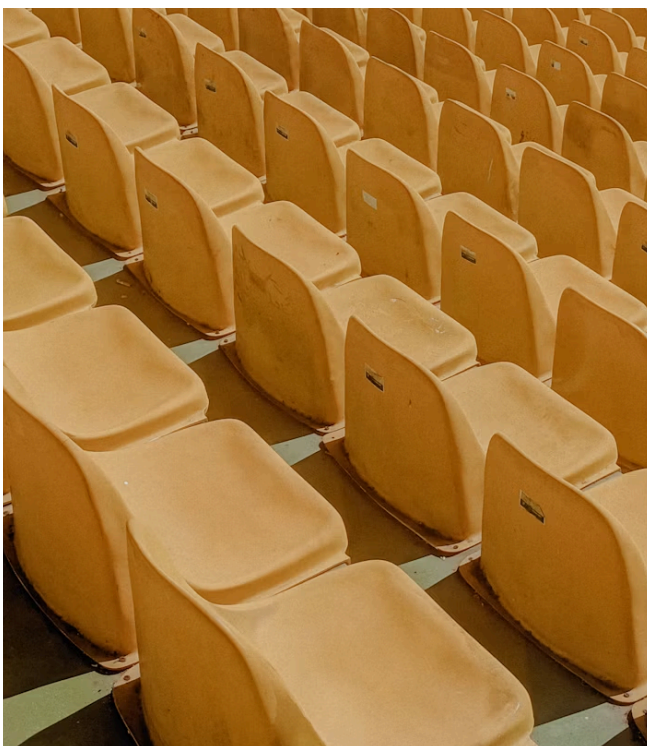
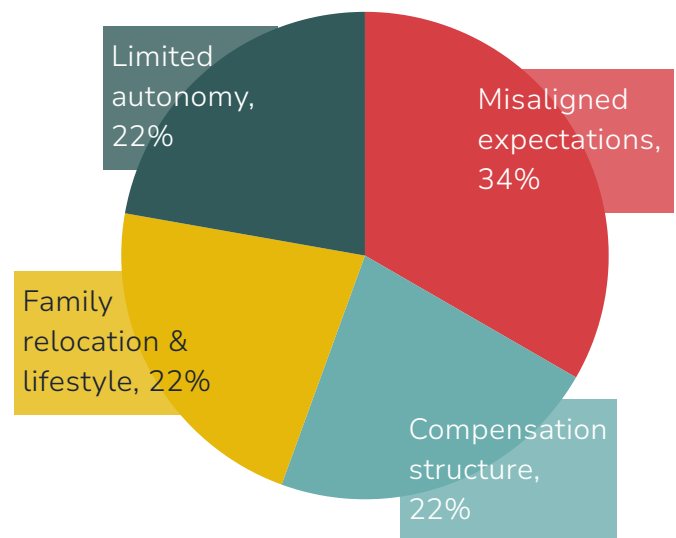


This can slow research execution, create avoidable administrative burden, and increase the risk of expectation mismatch. These dynamics align with the retention risks identified in the pulse survey.

Several of these risks therefore stem not solely from compensation or institutional prestige, but from role clarity, governance design, and operational reliability.

(Annexure 3.1.4)

What Academic Leaders See As Biggest Retention Risk



Leadership capability is a differentiator in how this strategy is received by the expatriate faculty. Interviews and qualitative inputs indicate that expatriate academics place particular value on senior leaders who have meaningful international exposure and who demonstrate a clear commitment to building research and maintaining academic excellence. Leaders who have studied or worked abroad often bring clearer reference points for internationally trained faculty expectations, including research enablement, transparent processes, and well-defined role scope. While this does not remove structural constraints, it can reduce early ambiguity and improve confidence in the institution's operating model.



When I worked overseas, there was strong trust in people. When autonomy is limited, it shows up in routine approvals for leave and research spending. These small frictions add up to create unnecessary frustration.

Prof. Saravanan Kesavan, Dean, BITS School of Management (BITSoM)



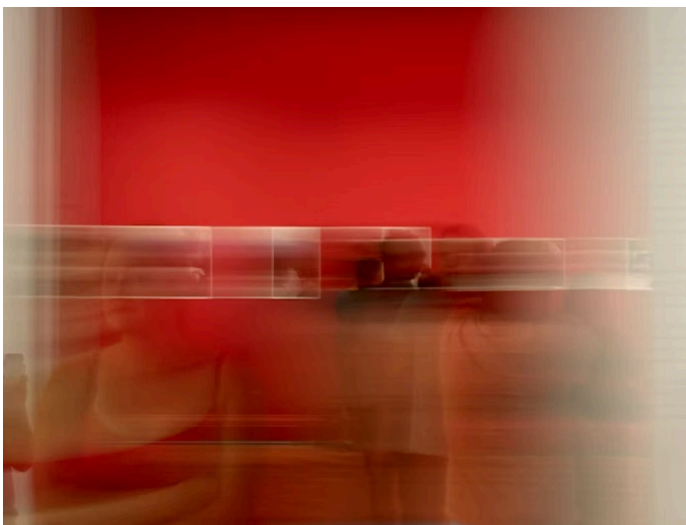
2.3 AUTONOMY AS A PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENT



Autonomy functions as a governance variable that directly affects whether expatriate roles can deliver outcomes. Many expats come from systems where authority is defined by role and reinforced through process. In parts of the private university ecosystem, decision-making boundaries can be less formal, more centralised, or dependent on institutional maturity and leadership style. In such settings, responsibilities are often entrusted to individuals rather than to the roles, which can create ambiguity around authority and accountability.

The first six months are always the most challenging. Transitioning from one system to another is never easy, but moving into a private university with strong cultural underpinnings is particularly demanding. Expecting output too quickly, without first aligning individuals with the system, seldom works.

Prof. M.A. Venkataramanan, Pro Vice-Chancellor, FLAME University



The highest-friction scenario is predictable: expatriate leaders are held accountable for outcomes without control over the levers required to deliver them, such as faculty hiring, budgets, compensation frameworks, workload allocation, or resource deployment. This is also one of the most addressable issues, because it can be resolved through clearer role design, written decision rights, and transparent operating mechanisms at the appointment stage.

2.4 RESEARCH ENABLEMENT MATTERS MORE THAN RESEARCH AMBITION



Research ambition is rising, and many institutions are investing in research capability through R&D offices, setting up research incentive policies, enabling seed funding for early-career academics, setting up ethics committees, and encouraging mentorship by senior professors. Yet expat retention and productivity are often determined less by academic intent and more by the practicality of executing research consistently.

To drive proactive research, we must move beyond departmental silos and embrace multidisciplinary collaboration, with a clear system's overview. By providing the necessary guidance and integration, we can achieve more impactful outcomes in policy, strategy, and business including Intellectual property enabled self reliant technologies seamlessly linked with the global value chains for a win-win growth for all.

**Prof. Bukinakere Satyanarayana, Vice-Chancellor,
Dayananda Sagar University**

Globally mobile academics assess whether the institutional “research engine” works: from intention to practicality - research orientation, approval process, grants administration, availability of funding for international research conferences, teaching versus research load, and the responsiveness of support functions.

When these systems are slow, unclear, or under-resourced, research timelines become fragile and the administrative load shifts onto faculty. This does not merely frustrate expatriates; it constrains output and amplifies perceived career risk. In that context, compensation alone rarely offsets weak enablement.





Building research excellence requires much more than hiring outstanding academics. India needs a stronger professional support cadre across administration, finance, research management, and operations. We may recruit world-class researchers, but if the support infrastructure lacks the required quality and capacity, it is like fitting a Rolls-Royce engine into an 800cc chassis. Researchers then spend too much time on paperwork and operational matters rather than research and innovation. Salaries alone cannot offset these constraints. Sustained investment in support systems, laboratories, research groups, and teaching assistance is critical for both research productivity and talent retention.

Prof. Ram K Sharma, President (Chancellor), UPES

2.5 ODGERS' PERSPECTIVE

India's higher education sector is still at an early stage in its journey towards attracting and retaining global academic talent. While many leading international universities have long depended on globally diverse faculty populations, Indian institutions are only beginning to build mature systems for expatriate hiring. Encouragingly, our research and Odgers' direct experience indicate that there is a defined, though limited, pool of globally mobile academics who are actively open to opportunities in India, influenced by the push and pull factors outlined in [Annexure 3.1.2](#). However, hiring intent and institutional enablement do not always evolve at the same pace.

In a market where globally mobile academics may compare India with destinations such as China and the UAE, attracting talent is only the first milestone. The ability to deliver on the institutional promise is what determines long-term success.

One important context point is that Indian universities do not operate to a single uniform set of academic priorities or operating models. Institutions are defining their own goals and motivations, with different playbooks for attraction and assimilation of expatriate faculty. Their approaches are further shaped by varying levels of experience with expatriate hiring, with some institutions having mature models while others remain at an early stage. This can be a strength, but it also raises the risk of misaligned expectations, particularly when the role scope is ambitious, but the on-ground support systems are still developing.



Institutions are making these investments for clear outcomes, most commonly stronger research rankings and output, deeper global partnerships, and strengthened academic leadership capability. Some universities have already invested meaningfully in research support, onboarding, governance clarity, and leadership accessibility, creating conditions where expatriate talent can contribute and thrive. Others are still building these capabilities.



Alongside these enablers, our research has surfaced three underlying factors that can work against successful integration if not addressed deliberately:

- **Low-trust operating environments:** Where systems assume misuse by default, governance tends to add layers of approvals and controls. This can reduce autonomy in practice, slow decision-making, and make it harder for academic leaders to execute. Over time, it weakens confidence in institutional reliability, even when leadership intent is strong.
- **Change capacity that lags ambition:** Many institutions have clear aspirations for research and global positioning. The constraint is often implementation capacity in non-academic functions such as HR, finance, procurement, and research administration. When support systems are under-resourced or slow, faculty time shifts away from teaching and research towards navigating processes. This is especially visible in the first six to twelve months, which often determines retention.
- **Unspoken cultural norms and unclear integration expectations:** Culture is not only about values. It is also about how decisions are made, how quickly issues are resolved, and what behaviours are rewarded. If these norms are not made explicit, expatriate hires can spend months testing boundaries and interpreting informal rules. Institutions that succeed tend to be clear about what they will preserve, what they will modernise, and how faculty will be supported through the transition. This requires alignment not only at the top, but also across academic leaders and administrative teams.

Institutions often hire expatriate talent with the expectation that they will bring global best practices and help elevate existing systems. Yet successful transfer of those practices requires more than hiring the right individual. It depends on clearly defining the change being sought and providing the organisational support needed to adapt global learnings to the Indian context. Without that alignment, even well-intentioned appointments can struggle to meet expectations.

Amrita Dutta, Principal - Education & Social Sector, Odgers India

The most effective institutions will be those that combine global academic practices with the cultural and organisational realities of the Indian context, particularly around cultural integration, academic autonomy, research enablement, and leadership accessibility. Equally, expatriate academics and leaders must undertake thoughtful due diligence on institutional culture, leadership, role scope, and family considerations before relocating.

At Odgers India, we believe sustainable expatriate hiring requires openness and adaptation from both sides. The institutions and individuals who view this relationship as a long-term partnership, rather than a transactional hire, are most likely to create enduring impact.

2.6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS



The roundtable reinforced that Indian universities are becoming more confident in recruiting expatriate and returning Indian talent, and that India's proposition is increasingly compelling for research-aligned global academics. The core constraint is not hiring intent, but institutional readiness to convert recruitment into sustained impact. Readiness requires alignment between ambition and execution, clarity of autonomy, and a research enablement system that reduces non-academic friction. Leaders converged on three priority recommendations.



2.6.1 COMMUNICATE EMPLOYMENT TERMS, COMPENSATION, AND TAXATION IN GLOBALLY LEGIBLE FORMATS



Institutions should treat offer communication as a formal enablement step, not an administrative hand-off. This includes providing a clear remuneration summary (fixed pay, variable elements, allowances, benefits, retirement contributions, and insurance), sharing an illustrative monthly net pay view, and offering upfront guidance on Indian taxation and the professional support available for compliance. Candidates should have a single point of contact who can translate local terminology into internationally comparable terms.

When making an offer, it is important to provide a clear picture of what an affordable lifestyle looks like in India. Salary slips in India often look very different from those in other countries, so they should be explained carefully and in plain language. This enables informed decision-making for a life-changing move.

Prof. Ananya Mukherjee, Vice-Chancellor, Shiv Nadar University

2.6.2 PROVIDE STRUCTURED RELOCATION AND BUREAUCRATIC ENABLEMENT

Universities should implement a formal support pathway covering visa and FRRO processes, documentation requirements, PAN and banking facilitation, and housing support, including interim accommodation and institution-vetted options. ([Annexure 3.1.4](#))

Family enablement signposting, including schooling and healthcare access, should be treated as part of onboarding. Participants noted that this is particularly important outside major metropolitan areas where settling in can materially affect retention.





Expats consider children, spouses or partners, and the social and cultural realities of the city, from schools and housing to everyday life. Success requires a supportive ecosystem across campus and community, including residential options and day-to-day quality of life.

Prof. Dwarka Uniyal, Pro Vice-Chancellor, RV University

2.6.3 DEFINE DECISION RIGHTS AND AUTONOMY AT THE APPOINTMENT STAGE

For expatriate leaders and research faculty, institutions should set out in writing the scope of authority and operating mechanisms, including budget authority and approval thresholds, hiring and academic influence, teaching load norms and research time protection, research funding access and conference support, and criteria for tenure or advancement. Not all aspects will remain static but defining them at the outset helps minimise ambiguity and align expectations early. Aligning authority to accountability reduces ambiguity, improves execution, and strengthens the conditions for long-term retention.



If an institute chooses to hire an expatriate academic, retention must be designed in from day one. Otherwise, the hire becomes an expensive story, not a lasting capability. India can attract global talent through primary research opportunities, field access, societal relevance, and the chance to influence institutional direction. That advantage holds only when universities execute consistently, in an environment that is not always predictable.

Dr. Prasad Medury, Chairman, Odgers India

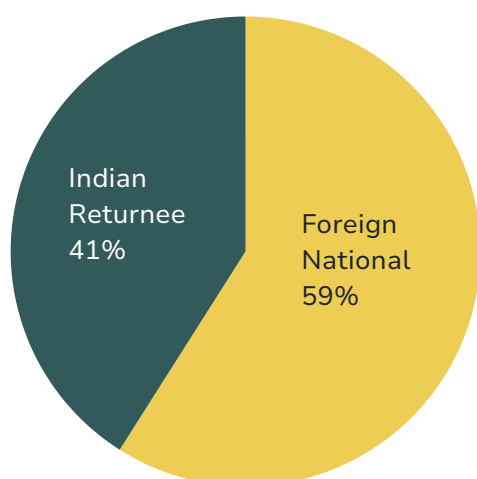


3. Annexure

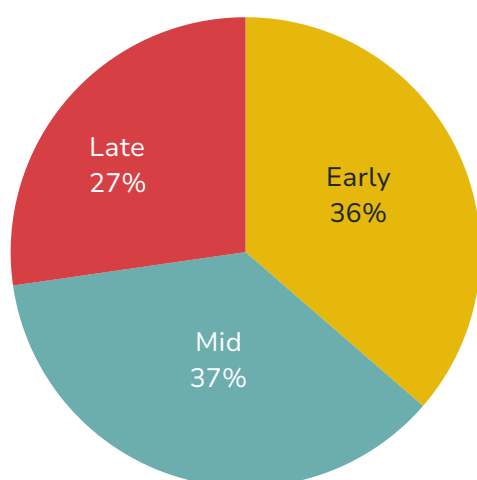
ANNEXURE 3.1 EXPATRIATE INTERVIEWS

The interview cohort comprised **22 expatriate faculty across 13 universities**. Participants were selected through purposive maximum variation sampling to ensure breadth across characteristics likely to shape experience and outcomes. Variation was sought across:

Origin Profile



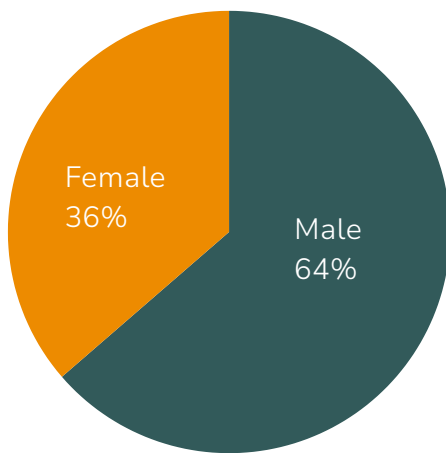
Career Stage



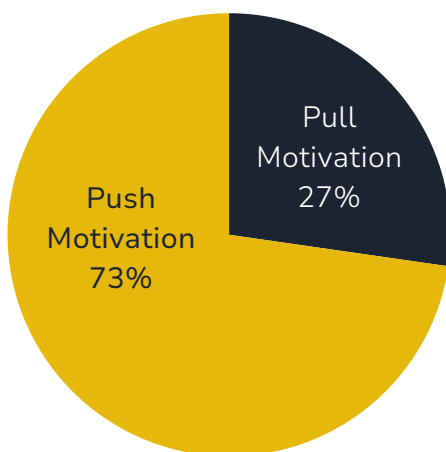
- **Institution type:** Public and private, full-service universities, standalone institutes, legacy and new-age institutions.
- **Geography:** Multiple Indian regions across different city tiers.
- **Disciplines:** STEM, Humanities, Social Sciences, Arts and Design, Entrepreneurship, Commerce and Business, and Law.
- **Seniority:** Early-career, mid-career, and senior-career academics.
- **Origin Profile:** Indian returnees and foreign nationals (across 5 continents).
- **Gender:** Diverse representation.
- **Motivations and Pathways:** Pull/push factors such as career opportunities, research environment/alignment, family considerations, and national affiliation.



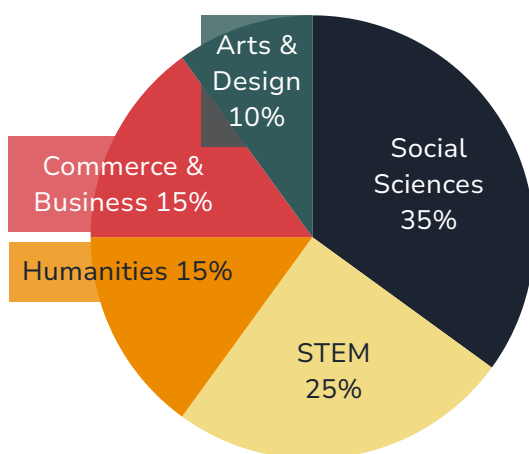
Gender Percentages



Motivation Factors



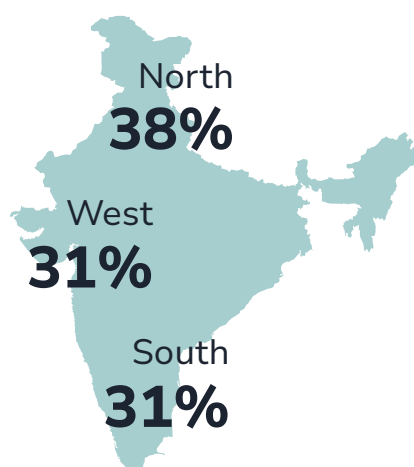
Disciplines Mix



Interview Coverage:

- Interviews explored expatriate academics' lived experiences in depth, using a structured guide to ensure consistent coverage.
- Topics included motivations for considering India (pull or push factors), recruitment and selection process, offers/negotiation and contract structures, onboarding and early integration, and academic freedom, governance, and administration.
- They also covered teaching and research infrastructure (including orientation, funding access, and collaboration opportunities), organisational culture, inclusion, and informal networks, plus family relocation and practical settling-in support.
- Interviews examined retention factors and participants' recommendations for universities.
- All interviews were confidential and anonymised to encourage candour and reduce social desirability bias.

Geography Mix



3.1.1 EMERGING PROFILES OF GLOBAL TALENT MOVING TO INDIA

Category	Sub-group	Description
Foreign Nationals	Research-aligned expatriate academics	International researchers attracted to India because it is central to their primary research and fieldwork.
	Immigrant academics in Western countries	Migrant academics in countries such as the UK facing constrained long-term prospects, especially early in their careers.
	India-connected scholars	Foreign nationals with prior academic links to India through collaborations, projects, conferences, or regional work.
Returning Indians	Early-career academics	Researchers with PhDs from leading global universities and strong publication records.
	Mid-career academic leaders	Professors or senior academics hired for leadership roles.
	Senior and late-career returnees	Returnees motivated partly by personal and family needs, while contributing to institution building and leadership.

3.1.2 PULL FACTORS: WHY IS INDIA ATTRACTIVE?

- **Research opportunity and relevance** stand out as a strong motivator. India appeals to expatriates whose work is contextually grounded in India and benefits from access to field sites and communities, distinctive datasets, and meaningful in-country partnerships. Prior collaborations with Indian scholars or institutions often increase confidence and lower perceived relocation risk.

The university offered more than a tenure-track position. It is committed to manageable teaching loads and smaller class sizes, creating the space needed for research. That is the kind of environment many academics genuinely value.



- **Institutional ambition and institution building** also feature prominently. Many private universities and fast-developing institutions are in a growth phase, with momentum to launch new schools, establish research centres, build interdisciplinary agendas, and strengthen global visibility. Where senior leadership and founders are directly accessible, communication tends to be faster, and decisions can move more quickly. This is particularly attractive to academics coming from education systems that are being scaled back and made leaner.

We are fortunate to have a Vice-Chancellor who is supportive, approachable and who brings valuable international experience that aligns well with our perspective.

Returning Indians are often willing to adjust to Indian pay standards and make a meaningful impact. However, the autonomy a Dean/Associate Dean has at these universities can sometimes be quite limited.

- **Career acceleration** is another recurring theme. For early-career expats, India can offer earlier leadership responsibilities, stronger titles, and clearer routes to influence, particularly when research support is in place and teaching loads are manageable.
- **Personal considerations** are often decisive. Marriage, childcare, elder care, and proximity to extended family shape decisions for both returnees and foreign nationals, and personal triggers can shift latent interest into a firm relocation plan.

I moved to India mainly to be closer to my spouse. I probably would not have considered it otherwise, but after spending time at the university, I genuinely like it here.

Due to work and study restrictions on dependent visas, a spouse's career can be put on hold. This needs to be taken into account when considering a position in India.



3.1.3 PUSH FACTORS: WHY IS TALENT LOOKING BEYOND TRADITIONAL DESTINATIONS?

- Tighter conditions in established academic markets, especially the UK, are pushing talent to look elsewhere. Declining public investment and constrained funding are linked to fewer stable roles and weaker research capacity, with effects felt acutely by early-career immigrant academics, senior Humanities and Social Sciences academics, and scholars in niche areas with limited global demand.
- A wider search across Asia is also evident, with expatriates often weighing India against China and the UAE. While China and the UAE are widely seen as offering more lucrative pay and a higher quality of life, India tends to compare well on intellectual openness around society, religion, and culture and the primary use of English.

3.1.4 WHAT IS WORKING WELL

- **Developing research ecosystems:** Investment in research capability is increasingly visible, particularly in leading private universities and select public institutions. Signals include dedicated R&D offices, seed funding for early-career academics, functional ethics committees, in some cases - mentorship from senior faculty and chair professors, and publication criteria that go beyond Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) Journal Quality List and extend to Quartile 1 (Q1) journals.



- **Leadership commitment to academic excellence:** Leadership quality and vision remain a key differentiator. Expatriates value senior leaders with global exposure, a clear commitment to research and academic excellence, and accessible working styles. Stronger environments also support the exchange of ideas and treat academic credibility as a long-term institutional priority.

Our Vice-Chancellor's international exposure helped them understand our needs and respond with empathy.



- **Student quality in leading institutions:** In tier-1 private universities, student motivation and capability are often viewed positively, with students seen as hardworking, curious, and responsive to rigorous expectations. At the same time, rapid expansion in some management and STEM programmes can dilute quality if admission standards and teaching resources do not keep pace.

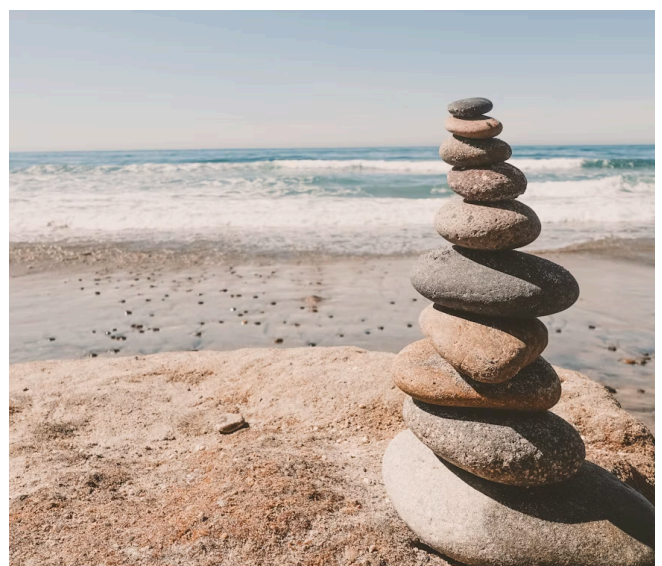
Leaders whose experience is limited to public universities can be disappointed by the quality of students in certain streams at growing private universities, which can be a discouraging revelation upon returning to India.

- **Campus-based support:** Where offered, accommodation and structured onboarding can materially improve early relocation. Housing support is particularly helpful for returning Indians adapting to urban realities and for foreign nationals navigating unfamiliar systems.

Any university bringing people back should really consider campus housing, at least for returning Indians. It doesn't need to be fancy, but it can shelter people from the realities of urban Indian life and provide a relatively good cushion for them.

3.1.5 PERSISTENT CHALLENGES

- **Uneven research culture:** Even where infrastructure is improving, research culture can lag behind stated ambition. Common gaps include limited interdisciplinary collaboration, siloed working practices, insufficient funding for international conferences, and heavy teaching loads for early-career faculty that reduce research time. In some tier-two contexts, expatriate hiring is seen as a branding signal rather than part of a serious research growth strategy.



The intent is clear, but the practical enablers for research are still developing. While the ecosystem is taking shape including talent, infrastructure, research leadership, culture, and policy it remains at a nascent stage and would benefit from leveraging on existing pockets of excellence.”

- **Gap between vision and execution:** A frequent friction point is the distance between institutional aspiration and day-to-day delivery. While expatriates may be included in strategic discussions and have access to senior leadership, implementation can be slow or inconsistent, often linked to unclear accountability, limited administrative capacity, or leadership models that set direction without sustained operational oversight.

One recurring administrative challenge in some Indian institutions is the pace and consistency of work. People may not always push as hard, whether due to compensation, norms, or a lack of systems that set clear expectations and accountability.

- **Limited autonomy in senior roles:** Some returning Indian leaders, who take up roles such as Deans, encounter constrained decision rights on faculty hiring, compensation, student intake, and resource allocation. In highly centralised institutions, this can limit the ability of expatriate leaders to deliver on their mandates.



One drawback is that senior leadership, including the founders, tends to get more involved here and may step into day-to-day details. In many American universities, top leadership usually stays out of the weeds, trusting the process and the system rather than getting involved on a daily basis.

- **Weak planning and administrative processes:** Planning and coordination can fall short of international expectations, including delayed teaching schedules and unclear student numbers, ad hoc assignment of administrative responsibilities, and limited forward communication. These issues directly affect research productivity, teaching quality, and professional confidence.

The HR department appears to be understaffed. At the moment, much of the university's HR workload falls on one person, who is highly capable, which is not sustainable or sufficient.

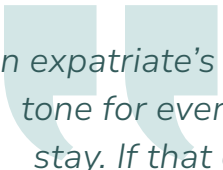
- **Onboarding, relocation, and bureaucracy as high-risk areas:** Relocation is often one of the most fragile stages in the expatriate journey. Typical pain points include the lack of dedicated relocation support, limited guidance on visas and compliance, unclear internal processes, and slow responses from support functions. Bureaucratic requirements, including visa processes and documentation such as FRRO, Aadhaar, and PAN, can add significant friction. Institutions that provide proactive administrative help, practical support on arrival, and clear ownership of tasks tend to perform better.

The transition was smooth thanks to the university's strong support. I had a dedicated contact who guided me through each step and removed much of the pressure. Support was available from the moment I arrived at the airport, including help with opening a bank account and arranging my PAN card. These may seem like small things, but they mattered.

My experience as a guest faculty member was very different from being onboarded into a permanent role. I faced particular challenges working with non-academic teams, largely due to limited guidance, a weak support system, and an inadequate induction process."

- **Early experience shapes retention:** The first on-the-ground experience sets the tone for retention; when onboarding feels chaotic or impersonal, disengagement happens faster, and expatriates are more likely to reconsider their tenure.





An expatriate's first experience in a new country is crucial. It often sets the tone for everything that follows and can make or break their decision to stay. If that early experience is negative, many will start thinking about leaving sooner than planned.



As a foreign expatriate, I found the Indian public university system challenging to navigate as a non-Indian. The process can be complex and often takes a considerable amount of time.



ANNEXURE 3.2 ODGERS PULSE-CHECK SURVEY

Participants for the pulse check were selected using purposive sampling, targeting senior academic leaders and decision makers involved in hiring, workforce planning, and academic governance. **Inclusion criteria** included:

- Current leadership within a university or institute, such as the Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice-Chancellors, Director of standalone institutes, etc.
- Direct involvement in hiring and talent decisions for faculty and academic leadership roles.

The **survey** captured:

- Drivers for hiring expatriate talent, such as academic excellence, research output, internationalisation, rankings, industry linkage, and pedagogy.
- Perceived barriers and risks, such as compensation structures, governance, regulatory constraints, cultural fit, and retention.
- Relative prioritisation of criteria, enabling an initial mapping of what leaders' value most in hiring decisions.

Odgers India conducted a pulse-check survey, an anonymous short survey of academic leaders, to understand the key issues relating to expatriate talent, as well as participants' priorities and constraints. The key insights from the survey responses are outlined below.

- **Intent is warming up**, with demand still at a nascent stage. Among surveyed academic leaders, for the immediate future (next 12–18 months):
 - ✓ 50% will consider hiring selectively
 - ✓ 25% are looking to actively recruit expatriate leaders
 - ✓ 25% said it is not a priority
- **High confidence in university readiness** for expatriate faculty integration:
 - ✓ 50% said they are very ready
 - ✓ 50% said they are somewhat ready



- **Clear motivation:**
 - ✓ 50% will consider hiring selectively
 - ✓ 25% are looking to actively recruit expatriate leaders
 - ✓ 25% said it is not a priority

- **Hiring constraints** remain practical: The biggest barriers are candidates' willingness to relocate to India and budget constraints linked to compensation expectations:
 - ✓ 50% have limited access to feasible global talent
 - ✓ 25% face compensation limitations

- **Integration friction** is governance-led:
 - ✓ About 44% of VCs and decision-makers cite governance, decision rights, and academic culture/norms as the most common post-hire friction points
 - ✓ 33% cite operational pace and processes

- What academic leaders see as **retention risks**:
 - ✓ Misaligned expectations (34%)
 - ✓ Limited autonomy (22%)
 - ✓ Family relocation & lifestyle (22%)
 - ✓ Compensation structure (22%)



ANNEXURE 3.3 ROUNDTABLE

This roundtable convened senior academic leaders to compare approaches, challenge assumptions, and refine institutional playbooks for recruiting, integrating, enabling, and retaining globally experienced academic talent in India. Dr. Prasad Medury (Chairman, India) moderated, and Amrita Dutta (Principal, Education & Social Sector) participated.

Academic
leaders listed
alphabetically



Prof. Ananya Mukherjee

Vice-Chancellor
Shiv Nadar University



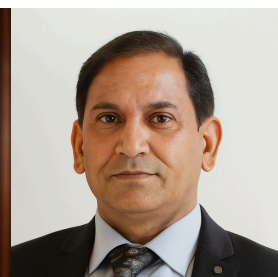
Prof. Bukinakere Satyanarayana

Vice-Chancellor
Dayananda Sagar
University



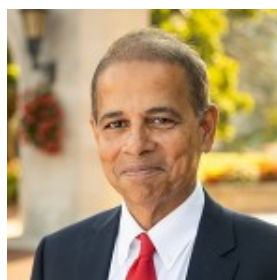
Prof. Dwarika Uniyal

Pro Vice-Chancellor
RV University



Prof. Gurdaman Sharma

Vice-Chancellor
SRM University
Sikkim



Prof. M.A. Venkataramanan

Pro Vice-Chancellor
FLAME University



Prof. Ram K Sharma

President (Chancellor)
UPES



Prof. Rishikesh T. Krishnan

Vice-Chancellor
Ashoka University



Prof. Rudra Pratap

Vice-Chancellor
Plaksha University



Prof. Saravanan Kesavan

Dean
BITSom



Dr. Prasad Medury

Chairman
Odgers India



Amrita Dutta

Principal, Education &
Social Sector
Odgers India



About Odgers

Odgers is a UK-based executive search firm with a long-standing Education Practice in India. We have over two decades of experience supporting leadership appointments across Indian and global academia. With established education practices in Australia, the UK, Canada, and other regions, we bring a broad network, sector insight, and a team focused on senior roles in education.

For over 50 years, Odgers has helped organisations all over the world find senior talent to drive their agendas. Our people are empowered to be curious, creative and agile. We are inclusive and diverse, and we encourage our people to be true to themselves. We form strong relationships with talented people between our teams and with our clients and candidates. Our strength lies in the partnerships we develop, where our clients can acquire, develop and retain their strongest leaders. This is what we promise, and we are committed to delivering it.

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