**The Social Characteristics and Demographics of Australian Vice-Chancellors,
1960 - 2000.**

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The Social and Demographic Characteristics of Australian Vice-Chancellors in 1960 - 2000.

ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to identify the key demographics and social characteristics of Vice-Chancellors of Australian universities so that an accurate profile of vice-chancellors can be established. At present there is no contemporary profile of incumbents despite the high level of responsibility associated with these roles.

Methodology: A qualitative approach was used in the research that required the collation and analysis of public domain material regarding vice-chancellors. Multiple sources were used in order to ensure depth, breadth and accuracy of data collected. A questionnaire that was used as part of the PhD research allowed new data to be accessed and existing data verified. Finally, interviews with various incumbents allowed pertinent information to be discussed where applicable.

Findings: The research outlines the changes in the roles of vice-chancellors that have occurred since 1960. The changes in the role reflect changes in government policy and social trends. Further, the research demonstrates that incumbents are now chief executive officers and require a broader range of business competencies and academic experience compared to their predecessors in order to meet contemporary challenges. These changes are reflected in the demographics and social characteristics of incumbents.

Value: The research addresses this gap in knowledge and provides information about the people who are appointed vice-chancellors. The research gives an insight into all incumbents between 1960 and 2000 and where possible, examples of post-2000 trends have also been given. The creation of this profile will allow further and more in-depth research to be undertaken.

Key words: Demographics, Higher Education, Management, Social Characteristics, Universities, Vice-Chancellors

Type of article: Research

Introduction

The role of the vice-chancellor (VC) in Australian universities has changed dramatically since the first university was established in 1850. By 2003 there were 929,952 students studying at 39 Australian higher education institutions, representing growth of 70% over the previous decade. In 2004 the Federal Government announced it was allocating \$2.6 billion dollars to the sector over five years and that a further \$11 billion would be spent over the next ten years (DEST, 2004).

The growth in universities meant that there has been a need for more vice-chancellors. There has also been significant growth in the number of deputy vice-chancellors (DVCs) and pro vice-chancellors (PVCs). Another trend has been for VCs seeking to be reappointed at other universities, and the role has been attractive to international applicants as well. The role of Vice-Chancellor is now an established career path for senior academics, not just the final destination for those nearing retirement.

Surprisingly, there has been relatively little research into the role and background of VCs. The research which has been done (Chadwick 1994: Gallagher 1994: Marginson, 2000) has not included contemporary data, unlike the US (Demerath, 1967: Cohen, 1974: Birnbaum, 1981: Kaufman, 1984: Trow, 1985: Kerr, 1987: McLaughlin, 1996a: McLaughlin, 1996b) where much more research gives clear insights into the role of the university president over a long period. The data contained in this paper attempts to fill the gap in Australian research by outlining selected social characteristics of VCs over a 40-year period in five-year increments since 1960.

Research methodology

Material analysed by David Sloper (1985, 1994) provided essential background detail on VCs for the years 1963, 1973, 1983 and 1993. The present study reviewed all known public domain material about VCs from 1960 to 2000 in five-year intervals. In order to maintain comparability, similar data to those of Sloper were gathered, which provided an overview of relevant pathways used by incumbents to obtain their positions as well as details of their backgrounds, previous roles, age and tenure, discipline base and related matters.

The data was collected from a variety of public domain sources, listed in the bibliography, supplemented by contact with relevant universities to fill gaps.

A survey instrument was constructed and administered to current and former vice chancellors, existing and former chancellors and selection panel members.

The questionnaires forwarded to incumbent and previous VCs and Chancellors asked for details such as age, gender, country of birth and discipline base. The remainder of the questionnaire was divided into sections in relation to the position, the recruitment and selection processes used, and a blank section for comments from respondents.

The questionnaires were followed up by interviews with respondents (mainly former VCs and chancellors) who were willing to discuss the matters raised further.

The survey instrument was distributed to present and former chancellors and vice chancellors, and selection panel members as the key players involved in the recruitment and selection process. The responses obtained are summarised in Table I.

Table I. Summary of research methodologies involving interviews and questionnaires

	Number of questionnaires sent out	* Number returned but not completed	Number returned and completed	Number interviewed
Vice-Chancellors	39	6	15	8
Former VCs	38	6	15	12
Chancellors	39	3	13	7
Former Chancellors	37	9	7	2
Selection Panel Members	100	25	23	0
Consultants	0	0	0	2
AVCC	0	0	0	2

* A number of universities returned questionnaires as their Councils considered the topic too sensitive. While the overall response rate was only 28.85% the key responses received from the first three groups was 37% and this was considered acceptable given the sensitivities of the research. The 23% response rate from selection panel members was better than expected.

Data was sourced on all Vice-Chancellors and classified according to the university clusters presented in Table II. This allowed for variations between older universities and those more recently founded to be analysed and this was consistent with the clusters developed by Sloper (1994).

Table II. Classification and List of Australian Universities

Group	Current DEST Classification	Universities	Foundation Date
19th Century institutions			
	Group of Eight	Sydney	1850
	Group of Eight	Melbourne	1853
	Group of Eight	Adelaide	1874
	Regional -Unaligned	Tasmania	1890
Early 20th Century institutions			
	Group of Eight	Queensland	1910
	Group of Eight	Western Australia	1913
Post War institutions			
	Group of Eight	New South Wales	1949
	Regional-Unaligned	New England *	1954
	Group of Eight	Monash	1958
	Group of Eight	ANU*	1960
New institutions			
	Innovation & Research Uni	La Trobe	1964
	Innovation & Research Uni	Macquarie	1964
	Innovation & Research Uni	Flinders*	1965
	Innovation & Research Uni	Newcastle*	1965
	Regional-Unaligned	James Cook*	1970
	Innovation & Research Uni	Griffith	1971
	Innovation & Research Uni	Murdoch	1973
	Regional-Unaligned	Deakin	1974
	Regional-Unaligned	Wollongong*	1975
Post 1988 institutions			
	Private	Bond	1987
	Aust Technology Network	Curtin#	1987
(Northern Territory 1988)	Regional-Unaligned	Charles Darwin *	2004
	Aust Technology Network	UTS#	1988
	Regional-Unaligned	Charles Sturt#	1989
	Aust Technology Network	QUT#	1989
	New Generation	Western Sydney#	1989
	New Generation	Canberra#	1990
	New Generation	VU#	1990
	New Generation	Australian	1991

		Catholic#	
	New Generation	Edith Cowan#	1991
	Aust Technology Network	South Australia#	1991
	New Generation	Central Queensland	1992
	Aust Technology Network	RMIT#	1992
	New Generation	South Queensland#	1992
	Regional-Unaligned	Swinburne#	1992
	New Generation	Ballarat#	1993
	New Generation	Southern Cross#	1994
	New Generation	Sunshine Coast	1994
	Private	Notre Dame	1994
* Inaugurated earlier as an affiliated college of another University. # Established earlier as one or more colleges of advanced education. Source: Adapted from Sloper, 1994, p 14.			

Background

The 1960s and 70s were an era of expansion of higher education, with the creation of a binary system of vocationally oriented colleges of advanced education (CAE) and technical colleges, as well as the addition of 4 new universities.

The 1980s saw a decline in the economy yet enrolments in higher education continued to increase. In 1987 when John Dawkins became Minister for Education and Youth Affairs he introduced a radical new policy, abandoning the binary system and shifting to a unified system. Performance criteria were introduced (sustainable EFTSU base of 2000) which allowed universities to compete for federal resources, based on a common yardstick. These criteria also encouraged mergers. The outcome was a reduction in the number of CAEs and the creation of an additional 20 universities, no fewer than 16 of which had previously been established as CAEs. (Dawkins, 1987: NBET, 1989).

The period 1960 to 2000 was therefore characterized by substantial change in Australian higher education and the role of the VC. The VC now required sophisticated business competence as well as excellent academic credentials to play the role of CEO of the university.

Results

The mean age of VCs at the time of appointment has not changed much – in 1960 it was 50 years, which had increased to 52.8 years in 2000.

Table III shows the mean age of incumbent Vice-Chancellors in the year of the survey. The increase and decrease of mean age shown in Table IV varies as new universities are created and a mix of existing VCs and other applicants are appointed to the role. However, the opportunity for VCs to hold positions successively at two or more universities has tended to increase the mean age overall.

The impact of the creation of additional universities is evident in Table IV in the years 1965 and 1970. In this period the age of incumbents drops in the 19th Century, Early 20th Century and Post War universities, but increases in the New Institutions when four new universities were created.

Table III.

The mean age of incumbent vice-chancellors in the year of survey.

Year	19th C	Early 20th	Post War	New	Post 1988	Mean
2000	55.25	58.0	60.5	58.3	59.2	58.6
1995	56.25	64.0	58.4	55.1	58.3	57.7
1990	56.0	59.0	56.75	55.56	0	55.4
1985	60.75	60.0	59.25	55.6	0	57.9
1980	57.5	55.0	55.75	53.1	0	54.8

1975	58.2	54.5	53.2	53.4	0	54.5
1970	53.25	55.5	52.5	54.4	0	53.7
1965	63.3	60	59.0	51.75	0	57.9
1960	58.3	55.0	54.0	0	0	55.7

This trend is not as clearly evident in the period 1985 to 1995 when the 20 new universities were created. In part this is explained by older DVCs and PVCs in the older institutions seeking appointment as VCs in the New Universities cluster. This explains why the age of incumbents in this cluster is higher than the overall mean age.

The most stable universities in terms of mean age are the 19th Century and Early 20th Century universities. In an interview one respondent suggested that these Universities tend to attract the widest range of applicants due to their prestige and reputation.

A clear trend is that while incumbents are being appointed at a slightly older age than previously, overall, incumbents are either staying for the full term of their appointment or seeking re-appointment at the same or another institution. An example of this is that between 1995 and 2000, 7 VCs sought a second appointment, four of whom were already in their sixties.

Sloper (1994) found that newer universities tend to appoint younger Vice-Chancellors and this appears to be supported by Table III up till 1985. Sloper also noted that persons under the age of 45 could not be expected to have acquired the knowledge and experience to be an effective VC. Table III also supports this finding.

In 2005 the mean age of incumbents upon appointment as VC was 53.56 and the mean age of incumbents was 58.75 years. These figures indicate a continuation of earlier trends.

However, while there has been an overall increase in the age of incumbents, the mean tenure of incumbents has dropped in the first three institutional categories. The correlation between the growth in universities and decline in tenure is apparent in Table IV. This correlation can be identified in the tenure rates from 1985 to 1990 and from 1990 to 1995 when more universities were established.

Table IV.

Mean tenure of incumbent Vice-Chancellors (years)

Year	19th C	Early 20th	Post War	New	Post 1988	Mean
2000	5.0	6.0	6.5	9.2	6.8	7.2
1995	5.0	12.0	6.55	8.2	6.8	7.2
1990	7.2	12.0	7.7	10.4	7.8	8.9
1985	8.5	14.0	10.0	12.6	0	11.3
1980	10.5	14.0	10.5	10.4	0	10.8
1975	11.7	6.0*	10.7	9.8	0	10.1
1970	11.7	12.0	10.2	10.2	0	11.0
1965	14.0	13.5	12.5	8.75	0	12.0
1960	14.0	13.5	12.5	0	0	13.3

* New appointments lowered the actual tenure rate substantially.

In this case the most significant decline has occurred in the 19th Century group of universities as the number of eligible VCs increased. This band of universities is the oldest and most prestigious of Australian Universities and attracts Vice-Chancellors from other universities. In 1995, 50% of incumbent VCs came from the 'Post War' cluster.

As the number of universities has increased so too has the potential number of applicants for the role of VC. These come from existing VCs, DVCs, PVCs and from applicants overseas. The number of PVCs in 1960 was less than ten but had increased to 90 in 2000. Similarly the number of DVCs in 1960 was less than five but had

increased to almost 60 in 2000. Gallagher (1994) viewed these trends as likely to continue in the future.

The larger applicant pool, changing higher education, and the emerging role of the VC as a CEO, have combined to allow universities to demand higher standards from incumbents, and in some instances to change VCs more frequently. It is noteworthy that between January 2000 and June 2005 a review of the AVCC membership listing showed that only 14 (36%) of VCs continued to hold the same position at the same university. The other 25 VCs (64%) were new to that role at their current university and, in some instances, such as at RMIT, there were three changes in VCs in quick succession (AVCC, 2005). These statistics show the greater turbulence and rate of turnover in the sector in recent times. The drop in VC tenure rates reflects the shorter tenure rates of CEOs globally in the private sector. In Australia the average tenure for CEOs according to a Booz Allen Hamilton survey is 4.4 years (Haigh, 2003).

The decline in tenure also reflects changing government policies. The change in government policy towards a refocus on higher education, was most marked in the Dawkins era (1987-1991). It was also during this period that managerialism appeared, prompted by reduced recurrent funding and competitive bidding processes used as incentives to achieve compliance. This was underscored by neo-liberal philosophies embraced both by the federal Labor and Coalition Governments since 1983 (Bradley, 1995: North, 1994: Trow, 1994).

Managerialism and corporatisation continued with the change of federal government in 1996. Reduced staffing numbers and the introduction of economic rationalism in the form of performance/funding formulae placed greater stress on incumbent VCs.

It could be argued that once shorter-term contracts were introduced for VCs, councils could afford to seek VCs more frequently with the growing range of qualities required for success in the role. The decline in tenure continued beyond 2000.

In 2000, 21% of incumbents had held the role of VC at another university, while 31% had held the post of deputy vice-chancellor before being appointed VC. In line with the increase in the number of universities and declining tenure (Table IV) there has been a steady overall increase in the number of VCs seeking a second appointment at another university.

Table V illustrates the growth in the number of appointments coming from the ranks of PVCs and DVCs. There has been a corresponding decline in the appointment of candidates with other academic roles or senior administrators. In 2000, 41% of incumbent Vice-Chancellors held one of these positions immediately prior to being appointed VC.

Table V.
Role of incumbents immediately prior to current appointment (%).

	2000	1995	1990	1985	1980	1975	1970	1965	1960
VC	21	3	15	16	0	6	7	0	0
DVC	31	30	8	11	16	6	7	8	0
PVC	10	21	23	16	16	17	13	0	0
Other Academ ic	23	25	31	41	52	54	40	71	50

Senior Admin	10	18	19	11	16	17	33	21	40
Govt	0	0	4	5	0	0	0	0	10
UNK	5	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
N=	39	39	26	19	19	18	15	14	10

The growth in size and complexity of universities, as well as the decline in Government funding and the need to attract private funds have made it necessary to appoint a larger number of competent deputies (PVCs and DVCs) to oversee specialist areas such as international operations, business development, research and innovation. These deputies therefore have the chance to become “VCs in waiting.” This trend has continued beyond 2000. In 2005, 18% of incumbent VCs had held a similar position previously at another university, 41% were previously DVCs and 10% were PVCs.

Discipline Base.

In 1960 vice-chancellors were primarily drawn from two academic fields – Science and Business (30 each). However, in 2000 VCs were drawn predominantly from Arts (31) Science (13) and to a lesser extent from Business (13) and Education. (15). By 2005, this situation had not changed materially.

This appears paradoxical. As universities become more like private enterprise organizations, one could expect more VCs to come from the Business discipline. However respondent current and former chancellors and vice-chancellors (O’Meara 2002) believed that the roles of DVC and PVC adequately developed incumbents to cope with the role of VC, regardless of academic background. It appears that the only

relevance of the discipline base is that larger faculties are better training grounds for VCs because of the need for broader managerial skills.

The present research also attempted to determine if contemporary organizational theory applied to the higher education sector as well. One theory, developed by Datta and Guthrie (1994), suggests that organizations seeking change are more likely to appoint an external CEO. However organizations seeking to maintain stability tended to appoint from within (Datta, 1994: Guthrie,1997). This theory was also ‘tested’ in the research.

In terms of the impact of the appointment of a new vice-chancellor on the strategic direction of the university, 58% of former chancellors, 69% of chancellors and 74% of selection panel members reported that prior to the appointment their respective universities were pursuing a growth strategy. Eighty-six per cent of former chancellors reported that to further the growth strategy, they chose to appoint an external candidate. Overall, the link between growth strategy and external appointments appears clear.

Thus the data in Table VI can be viewed from different perspectives. A new type of incumbent appeared as some directors of CAEs were appointed to the role of VC when university status was granted. However there has also been a steady growth in the number of VCs being appointed from other universities.

Table VI

Which universities incumbent Vice-Chancellors came from prior to appointment (%).

	2000	1995	1990	1985	1980	1975	1970	1965	1960
Same	23	18	19	11	11	22	33	50	60
Different	62	67	77	89	89	78	67	50	40
Directors	10	10	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

At least a part of this growth can be accounted for by the number of incumbent VCs appointed to similar positions at another institution. Another explanation is that university councils may seek an external change agent in the form of a new VC. The growth in external appointments may also be a reaction by universities to environmental changes, requiring VCs with different areas of expertise and knowledge than in the past. The trend portrayed in Table VI continued up to 2005, when 67% of VCs were externally appointed.

Marital status of VCs.

In 1994, Sloper reported in his research on incumbent VCs in between 1963 and 1993, that all but one had been married and only three did not have children. The current research largely confirms Sloper's findings. The main changes were a slight increase in the number of married VCs without children, and a small increase in single appointees (from none in 1960 to 5 in 2000). The heavy workload of VCs probably helps account for these trends, inasmuch as family responsibilities have become more difficult to reconcile with the demands of the job.

Gender

The increase in the number of universities and opportunities to become a VC has also been associated with an increasing number of female appointees. It is noticeable that, in the years surveyed, females were not found in the role of VC until 1990. Similar patterns have been noted in the US where it is only in recent times that women have reached the equivalent role of an Australian VC (Trent, 1994).

In 2004, 51.3% of staff in higher education were females engaged in teaching or research or both. Therefore the percentage of female VCs is still extremely low, given the proportion of women in universities. By 2005 there were still only 10 female VCs (26%) of a total of 39 VCs. Yet the same statistics show that 35% of the tenured staff are female (DEST, 2004).

It would appear that females may not have had the same opportunities as their male counterparts. However, in future a higher proportion of females may be appointed as PVCs and DVCs, thus giving them more opportunity to become vice-chancellors.

University attended

In 1960, 50% of incumbent VCs had attended one of three Australian Universities (Table VII), the University of Sydney, the University of Melbourne and the University of Tasmania. Another 40% had attended a university in the UK. The preponderance of these three Australian Universities is not surprising as they are among the oldest universities established in Australia, and enjoy the greatest prestige.

Table VII

Undergraduate University attended (%)

University	2000	1995	1990	1985	1980	1975	1970	1965	1960
Sydney	10	15	19	16	11	22	27	21	20
Melbourne	13	15	15	38	43	33	40	21	20
Adelaide	8	8	15	5	0	0	0	0	0
Tasmania	0	0	0	5	5	0	0	15	10
QLD	8	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
W.A	8	8	8	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Aust	15	10	12	5	0	0	0	0	0
Total Aust	62	59	73	69	59	55	67	56	50
Oxford	5	5	8	0	5	6	0	0	0
Cambridge	3	3	0	16	21	6	0	0	0
London	3	5	8	5	5	6	0	7	10
Other UK	10	5	3	0	5	11	20	21	30
Other O/S	17	20	8	10	5	16	13	7	0
Total O/S	38	38	27	31	41	45	33	36	40
Not listed	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	7	10
N=	39	39	26	19	19	18	15	14	10

By 2000 at least 62% of incumbent VCs had attended an Australian university for their undergraduate degree. Yet while two of these three universities dominated in 1960 and in 2000 (23%) another 39% had attended other Australian universities. It is also noticeable that in 2000, 76% of incumbent VCs who had attended an Australian university were graduates of the six oldest universities.

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that more VCs had attended an overseas university to obtain their undergraduate degree. These trends can be explained by the much larger pool of applicants in 2000 and the greater number of universities. However, as the role of VC has become that of CEO, university councils are seeking a wider range of experience in their applicants.

Thus while academic credibility is still a major requisite for any VC, increased weight is now given to strategic competence, financial management capacity, political ability and contacts. Selection panels are giving greater attention to personal qualities as well as academic background. (O'Meara, 2002).

Before 2000, it was very rare for VCs to be appointed from outside academia. Sloper (1994) found that in 1993, only one incumbent (3%) had a previous career in government as an educational planner and administrator.

But in recent times this pattern has changed somewhat. The appointments of Ruth Dunkin (DVC Resources) as VC at RMIT University, Helen Garnett (previously Executive Director of the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organization – ANSTO) at Northern Territory and Roger Dean (previously founder and Director of AustralYSIS from 1979 and Foundation Director of the Heart Research Institute) at Canberra, are examples of this. Outside Australia but within the Commonwealth the appointment of Dr. John Hood at Auckland and later Oxford, is another example.

Prior to his appointment of VC at Auckland, Dr Hood was a senior executive with Fletcher Challenge for 18 years and a member of the University of Auckland University's Council. This may be evidence of an emerging trend to “cast the net wider” in VC recruitment.

Qualifications and Academic Experience.

As would be expected the majority of incumbents establish their academic credibility by obtaining a doctorate. This is considered the minimum requirement for a person seeking a major career in academic administration or a role in research. It is therefore not surprising that the number of incumbents with a doctorate has increased since 1960 when 70% of incumbents had a PhD to 2000 when 97% had a doctoral qualification.

In all instances surveyed since 1993, incumbents had both studied and lectured at a university, contrasting with the finding of Sloper (1994), who found that some incumbents up to 1993 had experience as a teacher or a student only, or even no university experience at all.

Thus by the year 2000, incumbents were expected to have a background in academic administration and higher education. Yet as the role of VC continues to evolve in response to changing external pressures and internal complexity universities may need to appoint more VCs from external sources such as research institutes, government and industry.

Country of Birth

As there was a larger number of universities in 2000 than in 1960, it is interesting to note that the number of incumbent VCs who were born in Australia has declined (Table VIII).

Table VIII

Country of birth of incumbents (%)

	2000	1995	1990	1985	1980	1975	1970	1965	1960
Aust	67	64	73	69	58	56	73	71	70
UK	17	18	23	26	37	39	20	21	30
Other Commonwealth	10	18	4	5	5	0	7	8	0
US	3	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0
Other non Commonwealth	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
N=	39	39	26	19	19	18	15	14	10

Equally interesting is the fact that the number of incumbents born in the UK had also declined by 1995. The Australian higher education sector has grown substantially since 1960 and is attractive to potential applicants from other Commonwealth countries.

Table VIII shows that the decline in incumbents born in the UK has been offset by a corresponding increase in those coming from other Commonwealth nations.

However, the trend to draw vice-chancellors predominantly from Australia and the UK has not altered significantly, but the proportions have changed and in 2000, more UK-born vice-chancellors had lived in Australia prior to their appointment as VCs.

The increase in the number of universities and the expanded number of PVCs and DVCs in Australia since 1960 has allowed potential VCs to gain a wider range of experience without leaving the country. However the growth in complexity of Australian higher education has led to overseas academics coming to Australia in professorial roles and increasing their knowledge of our higher education before appointment as a VC.

While international experience is valued, it does not necessarily outweigh the need for in-depth knowledge of the Australian higher education system. It is also likely that many Australian VCs gained experience overseas prior to being appointed DVC or PVC but used the international experience to help position them for these roles.

Media Scrutiny.

It is clear from recent events that VCs are very much in the glare of media scrutiny, and need to be “squeaky clean” in the future. The VC of Monash University, Professor David Robinson, was forced to resign in 2002 as a result of being publicly exposed for plagiarism (Maslen 2002) while Professor Michael Osborne of La Trobe University had to quit rapidly after a 15 year reign under intense media pressure in December, 2005 after embarrassing revelations about his travel expenditures and questions about his leadership style (McNamara 2005). Ruth Dunkin was forced to resign from RMIT in August, 2004 following the collapse of the University’s IT system and resulting near financial disaster. All these cases illustrate the need for greater accountability and more transparency in university governance. They also suggest the need for VCs of probity and honesty who are able to withstand the harsh glare of media attention.

Conclusion:

The professional qualifications and experience of VCs have changed significantly since 1960. The emergence of more universities and a significantly different role for

VCs has led to the need for VCs with different skills than those previously required and created opportunities for incumbents from diverse social backgrounds. Since the 1990s women have begun to appear in the ranks of VCs but still not in proportion to the overall population.

Most VCs are still Australian or British born with a slight trend to recruit more North American appointees. The career route to VC is now mainly taken through the roles of DVCs and PVCs rather than any other senior academic role and few have a non-academic background.

The role of the VC is no longer the final destination of older DVCs and PVCs as many VCs are now seeking a second appointment. The tenure rate has dropped significantly since 1960 and mirrors trends in the private sector but this also reflects the depth and breadth of the growing applicant pool. University councils are far more selective in the personal traits, knowledge and experience that they seek in aspirants. Recent scandals and irregularities in some universities indicate that there may have been deficiencies in the selection processes.

VCs are predominantly appointed in their fifties. Despite the rise of managerialism and corporatisation, they are still overwhelmingly drawn from academic backgrounds. The VC must head an educational institution and also a large, complex business. Therefore University councils seek different attributes in VCs than previously and the role continues to be shaped, in part, by government policies, overseas trends and community pressures. As such the social characteristics and demographics of VCs will continue to evolve as new changes occur. In particular more female appointees may be expected to emerge.

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