

Iscah Migration Newsletter



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Hiya

Welcome to the latest edition of our monthly newsletter detailing all the changes we have seen in the last few weeks

If you want subscribe permanently email us to newsletter@iscah.com. Or if you have any suggestions drop us a line as well

On to this month's news...



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1) 485 visa duration under new rules

How long can you stay?

This is a temporary visa. The length of your stay in Australia will depend on the level of your Australian study qualification and if you have a select degree.

Bachelor degree (including honours) - 2 years

Bachelor degree (first class honours) in STEM including ICT for Indian passport holders - 3 years

Bachelor degree (including honours) in select degree - 4 years

Masters by research and masters by coursework - 3 years

Masters by research and masters by coursework in select degree - 5 years

Masters (extended) - 3 years

Masters (extended) in select degree - 5 years

Doctoral degree - 6 years

Hong Kong and BNO passport holders who successfully complete a bachelor, masters or doctoral degree - 5 years.

The visa starts on the date we grant the visa. If you already hold a Post-Study Work visa and are eligible for the additional 2 years with a select degree, lodge your application via ImmiAccount. Applicants with a select degree are only eligible to be granted the extended 2 years once and further applications for the extension will be made invalid.

For applications lodged from 29 December 2023, first Post-Study Work visa applicants with a bachelor degree with first class honours in STEM, including ICT, who hold an Indian passport may be eligible for an additional 1 year on their first Post-Study Work visa under the Australia-India Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (AI-ECTA). These applicants are only eligible for this additional year on their first Post-Study Work visa if they are not eligible for the extended 2 years under select degree. Applicants are only eligible for one extended period and will be granted the most beneficial grant period. Any further applications for extensions will be made invalid.

Source - Home Affairs website

2) VETASSESS - common questions

1. How can I find out whether my qualifications are equivalent to Australian qualifications?

We assess all qualifications against the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), which is a set of guidelines published by the Australian Government's Department of Education. We will assess how the qualification you obtained compares with the AQF. You can find out about the AQF [here](#)

2. I am applying for the occupation of Graphic Designer. How can I present my portfolio of drawings and artwork?

You can provide us with online access to your digital portfolio through your CV. Please also refer to the specific information sheet on our website for other important tips if lodging an assessment against Graphic Designer. You can find it [here](#)

3. Do I need to provide verified copies of my qualification and transcript from my university?

This applies in some cases. A second set of qualification documents that have been verified are required for qualifications achieved in China and there are additional requirements for Europe, the Philippines and Lebanon. Sometimes we may request clarification about documents from other regions.

You can find out more about qualification requirements on [this page](#)

4. Are unpublished research papers accepted for the occupation of University Lecturer?

Only published research is accepted for this occupation. Please refer to our information sheet for more details about the research component requirement for this occupation.

5. Is it mandatory to have continuous job experience, or can we submit experience with different organisations/positions?

Employment does not have to be continuous or only with one employer, but combined employment period/s must meet the minimum duration requirements. You also need to show the employment was at the required skill level of the nominated occupation.

6. What do we need to provide for an nec occupation? Are general tasks acceptable for these occupations?

NEC (not elsewhere classified) applies to occupations that do not exist as stand-alone ANZSCO Code occupations. NEC codes have a common set of tasks and duties as the other occupations within the ANZSCO Unit Group, but at the same time specialise in an occupation not covered elsewhere in ANZSCO.

We conduct a case-by-case assessment to determine whether your employment can be considered highly relevant to this classification. We encourage you to provide a cover letter that justifies the rationale for choosing an 'nec' category and documents to support your application. This evidence must identify and clearly describe the circumstances by which you fall under your chosen nec category.

(Source – VETASSESS)

3) NSW News

Nominations now open for the Skilled Work Regional visa (subclass 491) Pathway 1 in NSW
From NSW state government -

We are pleased to announce that applications for New South Wales nomination for the Skilled Work Regional (subclass 491) visa under Pathway 1 are now open. In the following sections, we will provide a detailed explanation of the nomination process and the essential guidelines applicants must follow. This opportunity is designed to support skilled individuals already contributing to New South Wales' thriving community and economy.

Nomination Process

To successfully apply for NSW nomination for the Skilled Work Regional visa (subclass 491) under 'Pathway 1', follow these essential steps:

1. **Confirm Eligibility:** Confirm that you meet all visa requirements set by the Department of Home Affairs, as well as the specific NSW nomination criteria.
2. **Submit your EOI:** Lodge your EOI through SkillSelect. Ensure your EOI is for the Skilled Work Regional visa (subclass 491) only and seeking nomination from NSW only. Important: your EOI cannot be amended after you apply. Therefore, ensuring its accuracy and completeness before applying is highly important.
3. **Apply:** Complete the application form provided below. Attach ALL required supporting documents in a single .zip file for submission.
4. **Assessment:** Once your application is submitted, our office will assess your application against our nomination criteria. This may take up to six weeks.
5. **Outcome:** If your application meets our criteria, you will receive an invitation to apply for the Skilled Work Regional visa (subclass 491) from the Department of Home Affairs. This invitation will be sent to the email address provided in your SkillSelect EOI.

Key Guidelines for NSW Nomination

Before proceeding with the application form for NSW nomination, it's crucial to understand and adhere to the following guidelines:

1. **Previous NSW Nomination:** If you have already been nominated by NSW for any skilled visa, you are ineligible for further NSW nomination.
2. **Single Active Application Rule:** You may only have one active NSW nomination application at any time.
3. **Validity of Supporting Evidence:** Ensure that all supporting evidence is valid for at least 5 business days from the date of you apply for NSW nomination.
4. **Accuracy of Information:** It is imperative that the information provided in your application is accurate and truthful. Incorrect or misleading information may cause delays in the assessment process or lead to your application being declined.

4) International student visa numbers fall amid migration squeeze

The number of international student visa holders approved to come to Australia is on track to plummet by more than 90,000 this financial year, as the federal government rejects an increasing number of applicants to curb the high levels of temporary migration.

The number of visas granted to offshore students dropped to 139,132 in the first half of the financial year, figures from the Department of Home Affairs reveal, with nearly 20 per cent of all applicants rejected. If the approval rate continues 91,715 fewer overseas students will arrive in 2023-24 compared with the past year.

International Education Association of Australia CEO Phil Honeywood said the figures were part of the government crackdown on giving visas to applicants who were more interested in work rights than study, which the government refers to as "non-genuine students".

"The focus has been on winding back a large number of diploma-level vocational students doing courses such as diploma of leadership, and instead the primary focus is on students who can add skills to the Australian economy," he said.

The total number of student visas approved – including for non-residents already in Australia – was 195,934, which is also on track to fall below the record 577,295 visas granted in 2022-23.

The change in the numbers is being driven by the number of rejected applicants, with 81 per cent of student visa requests being granted in the past six months.

This is down from 86 per cent of applicants being approved in 2022-23, 91.5 per cent in 2021-22 and 89.9 per cent in the pre-Covid year of 2018-19.

A Department of Home Affairs spokeswoman said visa approvals needed to be "balanced against upholding the integrity of the student visa program".

"The department has seen increasing levels of integrity concerns across the student visa program," she said.

"The department received higher levels of fraudulent documents, fraud related to English language testing, non-genuine claims and non-genuine subsequent marriages being presented in student visa applications.

"The department will refuse a visa application to non-genuine applicants who do not meet regulatory requirements and where fraud is present."

Education Minister Jason Clare said Labor was committed to improving the standing of the nation's higher education sector and combating exploitation.

"The Albanese government's migration strategy and the other integrity measures we've put in place send a clear message that we will act to prevent the exploitation of students and protect Australia's reputation as a high-quality international education provider," he said.

A global push is under way to limit student migration, with Canada seeking to curb its numbers by announcing a two-year cap on foreign students that will cut numbers by 35 per cent, and Britain barring foreign students from bringing dependants.

Migration expert and former immigration department official Abul Rizvi said the decline in student visa approvals reflected a bid from the government to lower net migration and ease the pressure on infrastructure and the housing market.

"The reason I think the government is targeting students right now is to get net migration down to a more sustainable level," he said. "And in our history, whenever net migration has hit or approached around 300,000, problems have occurred in terms of congestion, inadequate infrastructure and housing, but also many government services start to strain at that level of net migration.

"And of course last year, we hit over 500,000, which is the highest in our history and not surprisingly, all of those things are under strain as a result."

Mr Rizvi said the Australian, Canadian and British governments' different approaches to bringing down student numbers were all poorly designed, arguing that the Albanese government's strategy of upping refusals wasted resources. "Australia's approach has been to crank refusal rates," he said. "I personally think all three countries have got it wrong; they're just doing it badly.

"Not letting dependants come is poor practice, student visa capping in an arbitrary way and it's also chaotic ... and Australia's approach is subjective refusal rates.

"That's not very good either, it's just a waste of resources."

Opposition immigration spokesman Dan Tehan has accused Labor of pursuing a "Big Australia policy" and allowing a record intake of international students to help "drive overseas migration to a record 518,000 people as Australians endured housing shortages, rent hikes, and a cost-of-living crisis exacerbated by population growth".

"Labor says they're not running a Big Australia policy but they also said they would deliver the stage 3 tax cuts," he said.

The rate of visas being granted to international students in the university education sector alone dropped to 82.5 per cent since July, from 87.5 per cent in 2022-23 and 96 per cent in 2021-22. In the past six months 98,198 student visas have been granted for study in the higher education sector showing a trend downwards from 2022-23 when 261,317 visas were granted through the course of the year, the highest in more than a decade.

While the rate of overseas Chinese university students being granted visas offshore remained steady at about 97 per cent, grant rates for offshore higher education students from India, Australia's second-biggest market, dropped from 74.2 per cent in 2022-23 to 60.8 per cent this financial year. Grant rates for the third-biggest market, Nepal, went from 65.2 per cent to 48.8 per cent in the same period.

(Source; The Australian Newspaper

5) WA Migration News

Closure of the WA State Nominated Migration Program applications for 2023-24. Fri, 02/02/2024 - 16:00

The number of WA applications received under the State Nominated Migration Program (SNMP) has now exceeded the available allocations for the 2023-24 program year.

WA Migration Services will stop accepting new SNMP applications from close of business on 2 February 2024.

Existing applications that have already been lodged prior to this time will continue to be assessed under existing eligibility criteria, and eligible applicants will be issued nominations (subject to availability of allocations).

Some eligible applications lodged prior to the program closure date will not be considered as part of the 2023-24 program year. Applicants will be contacted if this applies to their application.

Those who have visas expiring should seek professional advice from a Registered Migration Agent (RMA) and ensure that they remain lawful during their stay in Australia. A comprehensive list of RMAs is available at www.mara.gov.au (opens in a new tab).

The State Government continues to advocate for nomination allocation numbers that meet the needs of the State.

6) Natural Disaster Recovery Work

From 2 February 2024, Working Holiday Makers are able to count paid or volunteer work for natural disasters recovery work. This includes work in declared areas affected by cyclone or other severe weather, as 'specified work' to apply for a second or third WHM visa. Working holiday makers must have carried out this work from 31 December 2021 in declared disaster affected areas. We will continue to recognize bushfire recovery work carried out since 31 July 2019 and flood recovery work carried out since 31 December 2021.

Further details on the new extended specified work arrangements for Working Holiday (subclass 417) and Work and Holiday (subclass 462) visa holders are available under Specified work and conditions.

For more information, see Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs' media release.

7) Vetassess update

We will resume taking new skills assessment applications for the occupation of Plumber (General), ANZSCO code 334111, on Monday, February 12. We continue discussions with Trades Recognition Australia (TRA) on when we can resume skills assessments of the 7 other trades we suspended last year and will advise you as soon as we have an update.

Applications reopen for new Plumber skills assessments

We paused acceptance of new Pathway 1 applications for Plumber (General) last October because the qualification we assessed against was superseded.

The new CPC32420 Certificate in Plumbing qualification came into effect on January 31 this year and we will now be assessing applicants against these criteria. We have a new fact sheet available and have updated our Pathway 1 Technical Assessment Guide.

8) Update from Immigration about acceptable english language tests

From 12 February 2024, only results from the paper-based Cambridge C1 Advanced test (previously known as Cambridge English: Advanced CAE) will be accepted for Australian visa and migration purposes.

Test scores for both C1 Advanced paper-based and computer-based tests, taken before 12 February 2024, within the specified validity period (see relevant eligibility pages linked below), are still accepted.

9) New ACS Migration Skills Assessment launches March 2024

<https://www.acs.org.au/msa.html>

10) Number of applications lodged for provisional/permanent Skilled visas

Visa category	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 to 31/12/2023
Employer Sponsored	34,980	41,992	19,820
Skilled Independent	7,512	49,109	3,528
State / Territory Nominated	25,578	61,186	10,575
Business Innovation & Investment	14,156	8,384	2,057
Global Talent	8,698	7,159	3,120
Distinguished Talent	336	400	207
Total	91,260	168,230	39,307

Note – the above data includes first and second stage visas
Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

The number of Skilled visa lodgements increased by 84.3 per cent from 91,260 in 2021-22 to 168,230 in 2022-23. In 2023-24 to 31 December 2023, there was a decrease by 52.7 per cent when compared to the same period in 2022-23. This decrease is mostly in visa categories where lodgements are controlled by the Department, through nomination allocations (State and Territory Nominated and Regional categories) and invitation rounds (Skilled Independent Category).

The Department has invited fewer new Skilled Independent applicants and allocated fewer state nominations this year because there are already sufficient pipelines of applicants to meet the planning levels in these categories.

12) News Articles

From language tests to age limits: The key Australian visa changes for 2024

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/from-language-tests-to-age-limits-the-key-australian-visa-changes-for-2024/7jjaidk2y>

Major "golden ticket" is quietly scrapped by the government

<https://www.news.com.au/national/politics/major-golden-ticket-is-quietly-scrapped-by-the-government/news-story/f7d028fcd706e840d201a1d08528f2a8>

Reviving Australian Citizenship: What the government needs to do

https://johnmenadue.com/reviving-australian-citizenship/?fbclid=IwAR05rWIGtsODrV6kvB61lpWf-9WYj14z8NH_u_I9ceKcGBAUsAjPp8OUVvyQ

Hordes of Irish youths flooded Australia in 2023 ... but experts say we'd be worse off without them

<https://www.news.com.au/finance/work/at-work/hordes-of-irish-youths-flooded-australia-in-2023-but-experts-say-wed-be-worse-off-without-them/news-story/f691b258027ac25a23fa316dd2f9d9ae>

Immigration rule for international students who want to call Australia home set to ease

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-13020681/Immigration-rule-international-students-Australia-rent.html>

Restricting onshore student visa hopping – harder than it looks

<https://johnmenadue.com/restricting-onshore-student-visa-hopping-harder-than-it-looks/?fbclid=IwAR0YdBNUwesURzZsB2FTD8Lhj60zslVda8hVQpNOeCyo6ula6A1vM0WfKas>

'It's a mess': migration agents cry foul after Australia clarifies 'golden visa' scheme remains active

<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3251173/its-mess-migration-agents-cry-foul-after-australia-clarifies-golden-visa-scheme-remains-active>

What's happening with covid visa holders?

<https://johnmenadue.com/whats-happening-with-covid-visa-holders/>

Australian University withdraws Confirmation of Enrolment based on students "unlikely to meet new criteria to obtain a positive visa outcome"

<https://thekoalanews.com/australia-university-withdraws-confirmation-of-enrolment-based-on-students-unlikely-to-meet-new-criteria-to-obtain-a-positive-visa-outcome/>

Ok folks

That's all for this month, stay safe

See you all on Monday 18th March 2024.



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