



Coming to the UK as a skilled worker

Since January 1st the UK has seen big changes in the immigration system. With the end of freedom of movement for European citizens, the UK's new immigration system was developed to be more accessible to migrants from Europe who want to work in the UK. There are more low-skilled jobs eligible for visas and the minimum salary has been reduced, benefitting both EU nationals and visa nationals coming to work in the UK. More skilled jobs are eligible because the skill level of the role is reduced from a degree level to A-level or equivalent. There are also concessions in fees for some roles in shortage, in particular the health care and public sectors.

The most popular route to the UK for migrants with a job offer is using the Skilled Worker Visa, previously known as the Tier 2 General visa. This visa forms part of the points-based system that awards a specific number of points to migrants for having a job offer with a registered sponsor in an eligible role at the appropriate salary.

The migrant must have 70 points to qualify for this visa, 50 of the points are mandatory and 20 are tradeable. The mandatory points must come from a job offer with a registered sponsor (20 points), the skill level of the role (20 points) and English language skill level (10 points). The English language points must come from an approved course or a

degree taught in English. For many, proving English language skills could require additional checks and fees with Naric, an organisation that compares overseas qualifications against UK qualifications.

The remaining 20 tradeable points are based on the migrant's salary and other criteria, including their academic qualifications. For example, a migrant with a PhD in a relevant subject, or a doctor with a job offer, can receive a lower salary for their job by trading points for their qualification or skills shortages in the UK.

Skilled workers and their family members can obtain up to five years on a single visa. After the five-year term, they may apply to settle permanently in the UK, provided they meet the residence and other requirements in place at the time.

The costs associated with a Skilled Worker Visa can be considerable and should be borne in mind before an application is made. The visa fee is from £610 to £1,408, depending on the length of the visa. There is also a health-care surcharge of a further £624 per person per year of the visa. In some instances, migrants must also show personal savings held for 28 days before the visa application, to cover the first month of stay in the UK. The amount of personal savings required will depend on

how many people are applying, for example a family unit of two parents and two children would require total savings of £2,385 (£1,279 for the main applicant, £600 for the partner, £315 for first child and £200 for the second child).

Many employers will assist migrants with the visa costs using a loan or recoupment agreement to lessen the burden.

Once in the UK, it is important that migrants remain within the conditions of their stay and update their employers when circumstances change. Employers are under strict obligations to maintain accurate records for their sponsored employees and may be liable to sanctions for failing to comply, including revocation of the sponsor licence.

Since January, there are more eligible jobs and wider opportunities to come to the UK as a Skilled Worker, but there are also many pitfalls and associated costs with the process that can be an expensive exercise if not conducted correctly. Be sure to research everything before applying for a visa and, if needed, contact a lawyer who may be able to work with both the employers and individuals and ensure the process from application to visa grant is seamless. Moving to another country is stressful enough without having to worry about the visa paperwork.



For advice on the Skilled Worker Visa or any other immigration enquiry, please contact **Imelda Reddington**, head of immigration at Field Seymour Parkes on imelda.reddington@fsp-law.com, call on 0118 951 621, or message on LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/irefsp. Visit their website at www.fsp-law.com/business/immigration.