

Visallogic – UK Immigration update

Proposed changes to UK immigration

We are aware that there are a variety of rumours currently circulating regarding the introduction and impact of the new points based system for UK immigration. Unfortunately some of these rumours have been circulated by less reputable immigration related agencies who themselves are not yet fully aware of the impact the changes will have.

At Visallogic we have been fortunate to have the opportunity to consult with a number of government departments involved in developing the new points based system. The most visible change will see the majority of the UK's current immigration routes streamlined to fall within one of five new visa tiers, plus an increased emphasis placed on the responsibilities of all employers who recruit from the foreign labour market.

Points based system timetable

To date we can confirm that tier1 of the new system (developed for entrepreneurs, highly skilled individuals and investors) will commence in March 2008. This will be closely followed by the introduction of the tier 2 category, designed to cater to skilled workers with a job offer who can help to fill labour gaps in the UK. Tier 2 will be introduced in the third Quarter of 2008.

We are expecting the Home Secretary to release a statement of intent outlining precisely when the new system will come into force and what impact the changes will have for new and existing foreign nationals who are subject to immigration control. The statement was due to be published in the third quarter of 2007, however this was delayed due to a possible general election being called.

English language requirements

According to the points based system one of requirements for entry will be the ability to demonstrate an acceptable knowledge of the English language. The level of English language ability accepted will depend on the tier under which an applicant is attempting to immigrate. We can however confirm that this requirement will only be applicable for those applying under tier 1 and 2 of the new five tier structure. Applicants needing to verify their English language ability will be required to provide evidence showing that they have passed an English language test.

The Border and Immigration Agency (BIA) will only accept tests that have been assessed as meeting their requirements. A list of acceptable tests will be published in future guidance - soon to be released regarding the points based system.

Home Office application delays

The UK's Border and Immigration Agency (BIA) has advised that after recently clearing their backlog of applications, they are now processing 70 per cent of work permit applications within five working days of receipt and 88 per cent of work permit applications within 15 working days. This is great news for employers looking to recruit quality talent from abroad.

Unfortunately, review requests are currently taking up to five weeks to decide, however we are informed that steps have been taken to reduce the backlog cases under review. It is anticipated that the backlog of review cases will be resolved by the end of November. We will keep you informed of any further updates as they come to hand.

We will continue to keep you informed of all new developments as they come to hand, however if you would like further information regarding any of the above information, please feel free to contact Shazmeen Ali on 020 7610 8210 or via email at shazmeen.ali@visallogic.net