

Working Holiday Makers

The Working Holiday Maker (WHM) program provides for the temporary entry and stay of young people wanting to combine holidaying in Australia with the opportunity to supplement travel funds through incidental employment, and consequently experience closer contact with the local community.

The program is an integral part of Australia's tourism industry and provides not only economic benefits, but also significant other benefits, such as enhancing the cultural and social development of young people, and promoting mutual understanding between Australia and other nations. It also supports the Australian economy by providing supplementary labour for industries requiring short-term casual workers.

In 2004-05, new Working Holiday arrangements were finalised with Taiwan and Estonia. Australia now has 19 reciprocal Working Holiday arrangements in effect as follows:

- Belgium
- Denmark
- France
- Ireland
- Malta
- Republic of Korea
- United Kingdom
- Canada
- Estonia
- Germany
- Italy
- Netherlands
- Sweden
- Cyprus
- Finland
- Hong Kong
- Japan
- Norway
- Taiwan

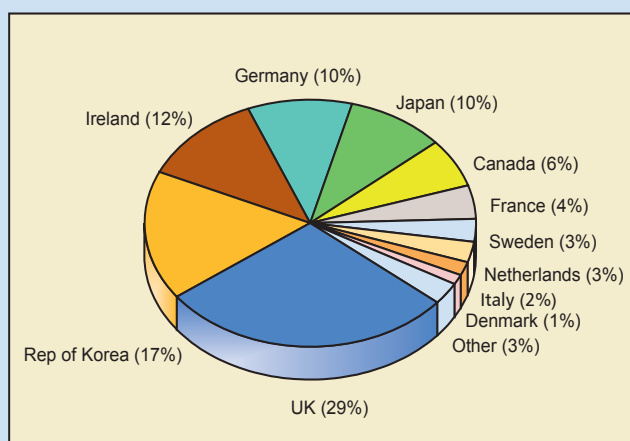
The WHM program has enjoyed steady growth in the past ten years due to a combination of increased demand among existing arrangement nationals and the signing of new arrangements.

In 2004-05, 104,353 Working Holiday visas were granted - an 11.2 per cent increase over 2003-04. The main nationalities for Working Holiday visa grants in 2004-05 were:

- United Kingdom 30,092
- Republic of Korea 17,706
- Ireland 12,585
- Germany 10,646
- Japan 9,975
- Canada 6,656
- France 4,550

In 2004-05, 111,376 Working Holiday Makers arrived in Australia, a 1.73 per cent increase over 2003-04 (109,485 arrivals) and a 9.58 per cent increase over 2002-03 (101,640 arrivals).

Fig. 5-10: Working Holiday Maker Grants by Country of Citizenship 2004-05



Source Data: IMIRS

Criteria for Visas

Working holiday visa applicants need to be aged between 18 and 30 years, without dependent children, and from countries and locations with which Australia has a reciprocal WHM arrangement. WHMs are permitted a stay of 12 months from the date of initial entry to Australia, regardless of whether or not they spend the whole period in Australia. They can study or train for up to three months. They can also work for up to three months with any one employer.

Work Conditions

The WHM program benefits industries that rely heavily on casual labour at peak times, particularly the hospitality, horticultural and rural industries.

WHMs are permitted to work on a temporary or casual basis provided that the period of employment with any one employer does not exceed three months. Although permitted to stay in Australia for up to 12 months, WHMs should not work for the full period of their stay but rather use incidental employment to supplement their travel funds. The wages and conditions of WHMs should be consistent with Australian standards.

WHM Initiatives

Since 1 July 2002, WHM applicants have been able to lodge their visa application electronically over the Internet. This “eVisa” initiative is part of the overall streamlining and improving of visa service delivery.

Of the total number of Working Holiday visas granted in 2004-05, 102,276 (98.0 per cent) were lodged electronically over the Internet and 2,077 (1.9 per cent) were lodged at overseas posts (compared with 93.3 per cent electronic lodgement in 2003-04 and 47 per cent in 2002-03). The continuing increase in electronic lodgement of Working Holiday visas during 2004-05 is an important development, indicating better client servicing and greater operational efficiency.

Since July 2002 “eHealth 1” has been linked with eWHM so that applicants undergoing x-ray, physical and/or blood tests for their visas can download their own forms and have these results accepted for clearance at the nearest post. “eHealth 1” enables an electronic record of the resulting clearance to link with the person’s eVisa application for swift and on-line visa finalisation.

Research carried out by the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economics and Social Research in 2002 indicates that Australia benefits from the money WHMs spend and from the net addition to full year employment they create in the labour market. On average the WHMs surveyed stayed in Australia for 9 months and spent \$16,000 during their stay, or an estimated A\$1.3 billion annually based on 80,000 arrivals. In addition the report estimates that 80,000 WHMs take up the equivalent of about 41,000 full-year jobs, but about 49,000 full-year jobs are created through their expenditure, i.e. a net gain of 8,000 full-year jobs.

WHM Visa Compliance

Of the 111,376 Working Holiday maker arrivals, 110,609 (99.3 per cent) fully complied with Australian visa legislation - with 105,579 (94.8 per cent) departing while their initial Working Holiday visa was still valid.

5,030 (4.5 per cent) WHMs applied for further substantive visas in 2004-05 (compared with 4,252, 4.2 per cent, in 2003-04):

- 2.7 per cent remained in Australia, having been granted another type of visa;
- 1.5 per cent were still in Australia, having applied for another type of visa in Australia but still awaiting the outcome of that application (i.e. holding a Bridging visa).

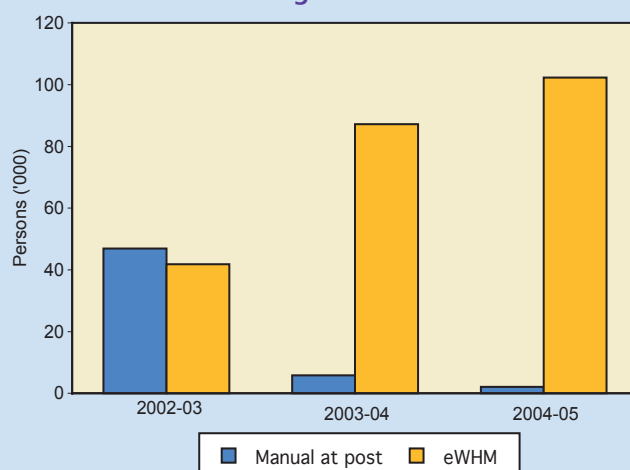
Another 0.3 per cent had obtained another visa but had departed Australia before 30 June 2005.

Very few WHM visa holders overstay their visa or depart Australia on an expired visa. In 2004-05, 270 (0.2 per cent) WHMs left Australia after their visa had expired - down from 303 (0.3 per cent) in 2003-04. 497 (0.5 per cent) overstayed their visa and remained in Australia unlawfully.

Fig 5-11: Current Working Holiday Arrangements and Year Commenced

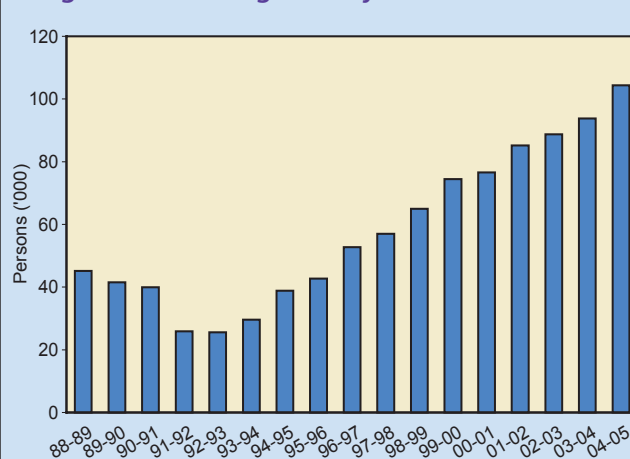
UK	1975	Hong Kong (SAR of China)	2001
Canada	1975	Finland	2002
The Netherlands	1980	Cyprus	2002
Japan	1980	Italy	2004
Ireland	1985	France	2004
Korea	1995	Taiwan	2004
Malta	1996	Belgium	2004
Germany	2000	Taiwan	2004
Denmark	2001	Estonia	2005
Sweden	2001		
Norway	2001		

Fig 5-12: Electronic and Manual WHM visa lodgements



Source Data: IMIRS

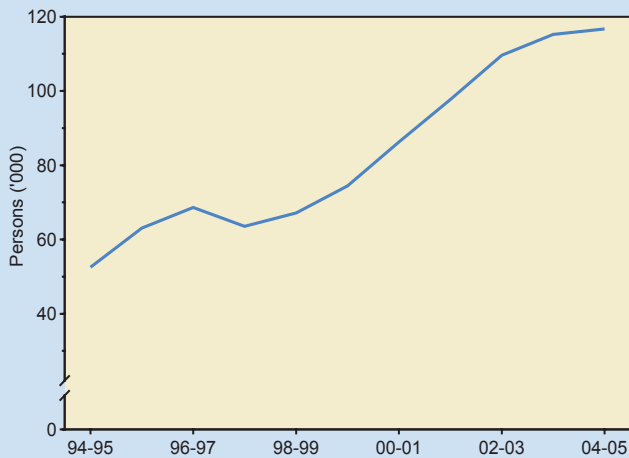
Fig. 5-13: Working Holiday Maker Visa Grants



Source Data: IMIRS

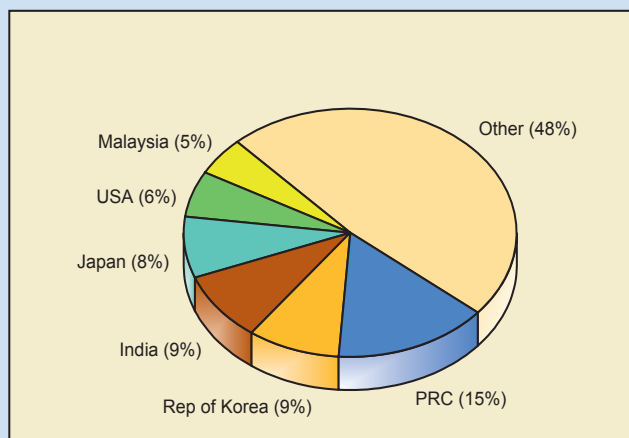
Student Visa Program

Fig. 5-14: Student Visas Granted Offshore by Major Source countries 2004-05



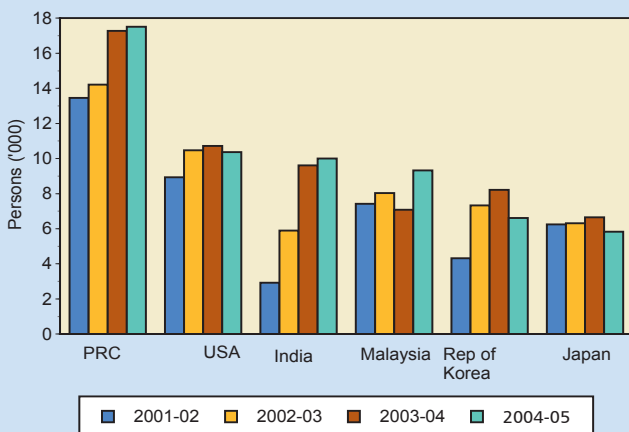
Source Data: IMIRS

Fig. 5-15: Student Visas Granted Offshore by Country of Citizenship 2004-05



Source Data: IMIRS

Fig. 5-16: Student Visas Granted Offshore by Country of Citizenship



Source Data: IMIRS

The Student Visa Program enables people who are not Australian citizens or Australian permanent residents to study in Australia (generally as full-fee paying students) in full-time accredited and registered courses. The Program aims to streamline entry procedures for genuine students whilst maintaining the integrity of Australia's immigration programs.

The broad objectives of the Program are to increase export revenue by promoting Australia's education services overseas, to develop trade and commercial links and to promote goodwill and understanding of Australia. According to the Department of Education, Science and Training, overseas students contribute around \$7.5 billion in export earnings annually. Education is Australia's third largest service export after tourism and transportation. It directly and indirectly contributes about 48,000 jobs for Australians.

There are seven student visa subclasses, which are specific to the sector of study: ELICOS, Schools, Vocational Education, Higher Education, Postgraduate Research, Non-Award and AusAID/Defence. Separately, the Student Guardian visa enables a parent or relative to accompany young students to Australia to provide for their day-to-day welfare.

Growth in the Overseas Student Visa Program

As at 30 June 2005 there was a record number of 190,400 people on student visas in Australia, which represents a 7.4 per cent increase compared to the number at 30 June 2004.

The demand by overseas students to study in Australia remains very strong. A record number of 174,787 visas, excluding student visa grants for permission to work or change of education provider, were granted in 2004-05. This was a 1.85 per cent increase over the 2003-04 figure of 171,618.

The offshore Student Visa Program has grown from 39,529 visa grants in 1991-92 program year, to 116,716 grants in 2004-05 (see figure 5-14).

Offshore grants in 2004-05 showed an increase of 1.3 per cent on the previous year's figure. The major source countries were the People's Republic of China (PRC) with 17,506 student visas granted (up 1.3 per cent), the United States of America with 10,367 (down 3.3 per cent), India with 10,000 (up 4 per cent), the Republic of Korea with 9,328 (up 13.6 per cent), Malaysia with 6,609 (down 6.7 per cent) and Japan with 5,829 (down 12 per cent).

Onshore student visas granted (excluding permission to work and change of provider visas) increased by 3.3 per cent during 2004-05 compared with the previous year. The major source countries for onshore student visa grants were the People's Republic of China with 12,886 student visas granted (up 22 per cent), Japan with 5,470 (down 12 per cent), the Republic of Korea with 5,447 (down 11.6 per cent) and Hong Kong with 3,869 (down 16.5 per cent).

At the sectoral level, the Non-award sector continued to experience significant growth with visa grants up 25.6 per cent (to 17,688) during 2004-05 when compared with the previous year. The Non Award sector covers study abroad, foundation, bridging and other courses that do not lead to an award. One of the factors contributing to the increase in the Non-award Sector is prior to 1 July 2002, study abroad students were counted against the Higher Education sector but these students are now counted against the Non-award sector.

There was a marginal increase (1 per cent) in student visa grants for university education including higher education and post-graduate research (from 92,256 to 93,124) and also in the ELICOS sector with 22,642 grants (up 1.2 per cent). The vocational education and training sector also experienced an increase in the 2004-05 period (up 2 per cent to 25,187).

Recent Developments

A growing number of international students, both in and outside Australia, are able to apply for a student visa via the internet. The student eVisa initiatives enable DIMIA to offer international students a more efficient and timely service when processing their visa applications

Outside Australia

In July 2001 new arrangements were initiated enabling certain Assessment Level 1 (low immigration risk) students outside Australia to apply for and be granted a student visa via the Internet. In July 2002 these arrangements were expanded to all Assessment Level 1 students who were over 18 years of age and who did not include family unit members in their application. There were 34,801 student visas granted in 2003-04 using this facility. Figure 5-18 depicts the eVisa take up rate since its inception in 2001. On 1 November 2004, the service was further expanded to allow students to include members of their immediate family in their visa application, and to enable students between 6 and 18 years of age to apply online for the first time.

Additional countries were added to the countries eligible to lodge applications over the internet in April 2005 (Bahamas, Barbados, Estonia, Hungary, Poland and the USA).

In November 2004 DIMIA launched a trial of a new Internet lodgement facility for Assessment Levels 2 to 4 (medium to very high immigration risk) students in India, the People's Republic of China and Thailand. Unlike the Assessment Level 1 model, access to the new facility is only available through education agents who have entered into a facility access agreement with DIMIA. This facility is also available to students under 18 years of age, as well as students who want visas for their family members to accompany them to Australia. The Perth Offshore Student Processing Centre is the processing centre for Thai student Assessment Levels 2 to 4 eVisas and the Adelaide Offshore Student Processing Centre is the processing centre for Chinese and Indian student Assessment Levels 2 to 4 eVisas.

Fig. 5-17: Student Visas Granted Offshore by Educational Sector, 2004-05

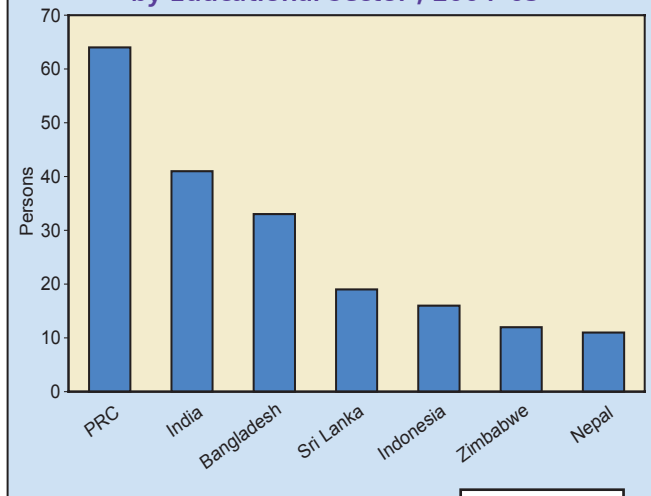
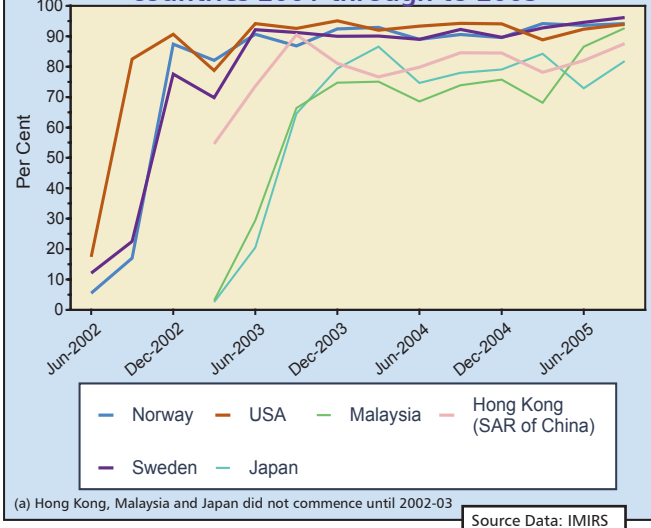


Fig 5-18: eVisa take-up rates for selected countries 2001 through to 2005



In the period 1 November 2004 to 30 June 2005, 27.19% of new student visa applications in the PRC have been lodged online. In the same period 11.66% of new applications from India and 5.9% from Thailand were also lodged online.

As at 30 June 2005, 3,117 student visa applications had been lodged online in the PRC, as well as 1,229 in India and 267 in Thailand.

As at 30 June 2005, a total of 137 education agents have been registered to lodge eVisa applications across the three trial countries; 82 in the the People's Republic of China, 26 in Thailand and 29 in India.

In addition to education agents operating in-country, Australian Registered Migrations Agents (RMAs) have recently also been included in the Assessment Levels 2 to 4 trial. DIMIA provided training to interested RMAs from late April 2005. As at 30 June 2005, 59 RMAs have been registered to participate in the trial.

Inside Australia

Since February 2002 international students have been able to lodge visa applications via the internet for initial and further stay student visas and for student visas that include permission to work.

In March 2004, DIMIA implemented system enhancements to enable automatic visa grant where all requirements are met, for Internet-lodged applications for permission to work and initial student visa applications by Assessment Level 1 students.

The Adelaide and Perth onshore processing centres report regularly on eVisa uptake rates, processing times and the proportion of cases referred to overseas posts for integrity checking. These reports inform the ongoing evaluation of electronic lodgement in the student visa program. The reports are also used to identify opportunities to improve the eVisa functionality and business processes.

Student Visa Compliance Activity

Applicants for a student visa must meet requirements that are determined by the sector of study and the corresponding 'assessment level'. Assessment levels (ALs) reflect five immigration risk indicators: visa cancellations, fraud, protection visa applications, application refusals and the overstay rate of different nationalities. The higher the assessment level, the greater the evidentiary requirements that must be provided in order to be eligible for a visa.

During 2004-05, over 91 per cent of student visa applications processed offshore were approved which is a slight increase in approval rates from the previous year (89%). Onshore approval rates have remained static at 96 per cent over the last two years.

Applications for Protection Visas from student visa holders declined by almost 32 per cent in 2004-05 compared to 2003-04 (from 296 to 202). The number of overseas students remaining unlawfully in Australia also decreased 33 per cent from 2,257 to 1,514, compared with 2003-04. The proportion of cancellations compared with grants has also declined from 2003-04 (from 4.8 per cent to 4.6 per cent) - an indication of improving compliance levels.

Figure 5-19 shows the trends in approval rates and student visa non-compliance.

Student Guardian Visa

The Student Guardian visa was introduced on 1 January 2004. The purpose of this visa is to:

- ensure that international students under 18 years of age have appropriate care and welfare arrangements during their stay in Australia, or until they turn 18 years of age;
- allow, in limited circumstances, a student aged 18 years or older to be accompanied by a student guardian.

When first introduced, applicants were required to apply for their first Student Guardian visa outside Australia. They were also not permitted to include any dependants in their visa application. This meant that their children could not accompany them to Australia unless they travelled as international students in their own right.

In 2004-05, 1,253 Student Guardian Visas were granted, with 43 per cent being to Korean nationals.

These restrictions were relaxed on 27 August 2004. In limited cases, student guardians are now able to obtain their first visa in Australia. They are also allowed, in certain cases, to include children under 6 years of age as dependants on their student guardian visa.

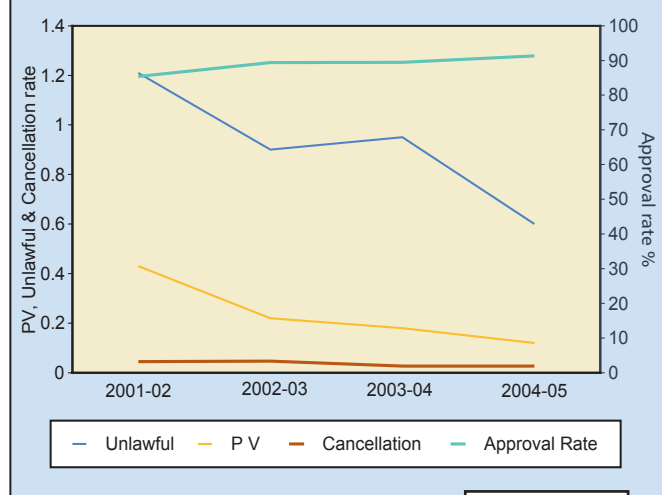
Together, these changes provide greater flexibility and more options for the care of students under the age of 18, and further assist in ensuring that their welfare is provided for while in Australia.

Assessment Level Review

The improved levels of compliance by student visa holders are a good measure of the success of the 2001 student visa reforms. As a consequence, it is possible to review the risk Assessment Levels (ALs) allocated to individual nationalities by education sector, to better reflect their current compliance levels.

Ten countries, including eight from Central Europe, joined the European Union (EU) in May 2004. This change opened up pathways to free education in many EU member states and may have adversely affected Australia's ability to attract students from these markets.

Fig. 5-19: Non-compliance Trends in Student Visas 2001-02 to 2004-05



Effective from 1 November 2004, 6 countries which acceded to the European Union had their Assessment Levels adjusted from AL3 (high risk) to AL2 (moderate risk). This change ensured that all 10 EU member states were assessed against either AL2 or AL1 (low risk) criteria.

In April 2005, following analysis of 2004/05 data on risk indicators a further review of Assessment Levels was undertaken. In all, 18 nationalities had their ALs reduced in one or more sectors, totalling 63 adjustments.

Applications for Permanent Residence by Overseas Students

A range of onshore General Skilled Migration (GSM) visa categories are available which enable overseas students to apply for and be granted permanent residence following the completion of their studies without the need to leave Australia.

Overseas students applying for one of these categories must apply within six months of completing an Australian qualification (degree, diploma or trade qualification) which has been obtained after a minimum of two years of full time study at an Australian educational institution while physically present in Australia. They must also hold a positive skills assessment for a 60 point skill level occupation, unless they have completed an Australian doctorate. Australian doctorate students must hold a positive skills assessment for at least a 50 point skill level occupation.

There are a range of extra points available under the General Skilled Migration points test for overseas students who have recently completed an Australian qualification in Australia. Holders of an Australian degree, diploma or trade certificate can be awarded five points; holders of an Australian Masters or Honours degree (at least at upper second class level) can be awarded ten points but only after completion of at least one year of Australian undergraduate study; and holders of an Australian PhD resulting from two consecutive years of study in Australia can be awarded fifteen points. Further, five additional points can be awarded to overseas students who have completed a degree, diploma or trade qualification at an Australian educational institution while living and studying for at least two years at a campus in regional Australia, or in a low population growth metropolitan area.

The number of onshore General Skilled Migration visas granted increased by over 3,300 grants in 2004-05 compared to the previous year, representing a 25 per cent increase. The 1 April 2005 increase in the passmark for the Skilled Independent Overseas Student visa from 115 to 120 points did not have an adverse effect.

For overseas students unable to meet the new passmark, it is open to them to apply for the Skilled Independent Regional (SIR) (Provisional) visa which was introduced on 1 July 2004. Applicants for the SIR (Provisional) visa only need to achieve 110

points on the General Skilled Migration points test.

While there were only 114 SIR (Provisional) visas granted to overseas students in Australia in 2004-05, it is expected that this number will increase significantly in 2005-06 as the effect of the increase in the Skilled Independent Overseas Student passmark makes the SIR (Provisional) visa an attractive option for graduates wanting to remain in Australia. More information about the SIR (Provisional) visa is available in Chapter 3 – State Specific and Regional Migration (SSRM).

Of 16,485 visa grants (including dependants) across the other three General Skilled Migration visa categories, 14,692 were in the Skilled Independent Overseas Student visa category and 1,038 were in the Skilled Australian Sponsored Overseas Student visa category. The remaining 755 grants were in the Skilled Designated Area Sponsored Overseas Student visa category.

In terms of citizenship of the persons granted a visa in one of these three Overseas Students categories in 2004-05, the top 16 countries comprised nearly 88 per cent of the total. The main countries of citizenship were the People's Republic of China (PRC) (comprising 20 per cent of the total), India (16 per cent), Indonesia (10 per cent), Malaysia (8 per cent), Hong Kong (SAR of China) (6 per cent) and the Republic of Korea (5 per cent).

Additional Information

Access to additional information and assistance for student visa applicants is available on the Department's website. Information provided includes guidance on applying for or extending a student visa, changing courses or providers, working while studying and further frequently asked questions. The Department also maintains a student visa helpdesk where students can email the Department should they require further assistance.

The Department's website has recently been enhanced to provide information to potential applicants, on a more individual basis. The website tool your student visa – step by step, was recently introduced to assist in helping students understand and meet the requirements needed for the grant of a visa. A self-help option that allows students who have lodged electronically to follow the progress of their visa via the internet has also been developed.