



Frequently Asked Questions



Changes to General Skilled Migration (GSM): English Language Requirement for Trade Occupations and JobReady Test

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English language requirement

What are the changes?

There are two separate changes, Vocational English and Concessional competent English.

The Minister for Immigration and Citizenship announced on 12 May 2009 that the English language requirement for all GSM applicants who nominate a trade occupation will be increased to a minimum of 6.0 (Competent English) in each of the four components of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test and will remove the threshold of Vocational English.

The current requirement for those GSM applicants who have nominated a trade occupation is a minimum of 5.0 (Vocational English) on each component of the IELTS test. This change will affect offshore GSM visa subclasses (175, 176 and 475) from 1 July 2009 and onshore GSM visa subclasses (885, 886, 485 and 487) from 1 January 2010.

Secondly, for provisional GSM visa subclasses, the threshold English language standard for applicants with Concessional Competent English who are sponsored and have enrolled in an English language course will be raised from an average of 5.5 to an average of 6.0. The change will affect applicants for the offshore Skilled – Regional Sponsored (Subclass 475) visa from 1 July 2009, and the onshore Skilled – Regional Sponsored (Subclass 487) visa from 1 January 2010.

Who will it affect?

The increased language requirements will apply to all new offshore GSM applications lodged after 1 July 2009 with Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO) Level 4 nominated trade occupations, and those applying on the basis of meeting the Concessional Competent English requirement.

The increased English language requirement for onshore GSM applicants will apply from 1 January 2010.

Applicants who have applied for a GSM visa before the dates these changes commence will not be affected.

Are provisional regional visas affected?

Concessional Competent English

The change will affect applicants for the offshore Skilled – Regional Sponsored (Subclass 475) visa from 1 July 2009, and the onshore Skilled – Regional Sponsored (Subclass 487) visa from 1 January 2010

For the provisional GSM visa subclasses, the threshold English language standard will be raised from an average score of IELTS 5.5 to an average score of IETLS 6.0 for those applicants claiming Concessional Competent English.

All new applications for the offshore Subclass 475 visa lodged from 1 July 2009 will be affected. The onshore Subclass 487 visa will be changed from 1 January 2010.

In recognition of the increased language requirements, when the change is introduced for applicants for the Subclass 475 visa on 1 July 2009, they will not be required to enrol in an English language training course if they are claiming concessional competent English as is currently the requirement.

From 1 January 2010, Subclass 487 applicants will not be required to enrol in an English language training course if they are claiming concessional competent English as is currently the requirement.

Vocational English

Vocational English is being removed from all GSM visas. Offshore GSM applicants will not be able to nominate vocational English from 1 July 2009. Onshore GSM applicants will not be able to nominate vocational English from 1 January 2010.

This means that even those applicants who nominate a trade occupation will need to meet the requirements for either concessional competent or competent English. Note that concessional competent English is only available for those applicants sponsored under the conditions of either Subclass 475 or Subclass 487.

Further information about all visa requirements is available on the department's website.

See: [Visa Options](#)

Why is the English language requirement changing?

The aim of the GSM Program is to select migrants who, because of the skills they possess, are more likely to find skilled employment shortly after they arrive in Australia. A high level of English language ability is recognised as being essential for achieving this objective.

The *2006 Evaluation of the GSM Categories* recommended that English language ability was an important determinant of skilled migration selection, and as a result, the threshold level of English language ability for GSM visa applicants was raised from Vocational English to Competent English when the new GSM visa structure came into effect on 1 September 2007. A higher level of English is required for certain occupations where it forms part of the skills assessment.

Furthermore, in recognition of the importance of English language skills, since 1 September 2007, the GSM Points Test has been adjusted to award more points to applicants with very strong English language skills. Those applicants who demonstrate proficient English are awarded 25 points, while applicants who meet the English language threshold are awarded 15 points. The allocation of these extra points means that most applicants who achieve the higher English language standard will be eligible for a permanent GSM visa.

This increase in the threshold English language standard for trade occupations brings it into line with the standard that applies to other occupations under GSM. Trade occupations were previously exempt from GSM changes introduced in September 2007.

Will there be transitional arrangements for overseas students?

There will be no transitional arrangements for overseas students enrolled in trade courses.

Applicants who apply for a student visa to study a Certificate III trade course are expected to have an English language level of an IELTS 5.0 if they enrol in a preliminary 20 week ELICOS course, or 5.5 with no preliminary ELICOS course.

Given that overseas students must have studied for a total of two years in Australia before being eligible to apply for GSM, it is reasonable to expect that most students should improve their English to IELTS 6.0 over this period.

Why do the requirements for skilled migration keep changing?

The migration program is one of the tools the Australian Government can use to assist industry to address skills shortages and to meet the needs of the economy. The migration program is continually reviewed and assessed for its relevance and outcomes in light of the economic and social needs of Australia. The Government routinely adjusts migration levels and requirements according to the economic circumstances of the day.

The global economic situation has continued to deteriorate, and this has impacted on Australia's economy including an increase in unemployment.

The Government is committed to ensuring that skilled migration continues to meet the needs of the economy, particularly in the wake of the global economic crisis. Combined with the Government's *Nation Building and Jobs Plan*, a responsive skilled migration program will help Australia emerge sooner from the global economic downturn.

Current and Future GSM Reforms

Recent reforms to GSM were introduced to ensure that the skilled stream of the Migration Program is driven by the needs of industry and targets skills in critical need across a number of sectors, particularly those skills in shortage and which contribute to the health of the economy.

These changes included priority processing with preference to:

- employer-sponsored permanent migration applications, where skilled migrants are sponsored to go into jobs unable to be filled locally.
- applicants nominated by state and territory governments, who were also given greater scope to meet critical skill shortages in their jurisdiction; and
- applicants who had nominated an occupation identified as in critical shortage.

The Government will continue to monitor the skilled migration intake and has set the 2009-10 Migration Program, including priority processing arrangements and the Critical Skills List, to reflect the economic climate.

Introduction of a JobReady Test

JobReady Test

What is it?

The JobReady Test is a part of the assessment process to ensure that people who wish to migrate are able to participate in the labour market in the area of their skills and knowledge. The test is currently being developed by the Government in consultation with industry and unions.

The test will initially be applied to trade occupations.

Why do I have to do it?

A key aim of the GSM program has traditionally been to achieve the migration of “job ready” applicants to supplement the labour market. Employers are looking for employees who are “job ready” and can hit the ground running.

Job ready migrants are more likely to find employment quickly, which leads to improved settlement outcomes for migrants.

The JobReady test will also ensure consistency of skills and competency across migrants.

I have already applied, will it affect me?

No, it will not affect you if you have already applied.

I started my study this year and won't finish until next year, will it affect me?

If you apply for a GSM visa, other than the 485 visa, and your nominated occupation is a trade occupation, you will have to meet the Job Ready requirement.

When will JobReady Test become effective?

The JobReady Test will come into effect from 1 January 2010. Applicants who nominate a trade occupation for migration purposes after this date will have to meet the Job Ready test requirement.

Is the testing process for onshore applications the same as offshore applications?

Yes. The test may vary from occupation to occupation and from one country to another. The Government may target particular cohorts and occupations from time to time.

Is JobReady Test the same for all trade occupations?

No, the test may take slightly different forms depending on the occupation, but could be applied to any trade occupation.

How much will it cost?

The cost is yet to be determined.

Is there an expiry date for a JobReady test?

This is yet to be determined.