



Recent Key Initiatives in the Student Visa Program

November 2011

A number of changes were introduced to the student visa program:

- introduction of an upfront 'genuine temporary entrant' requirement for assessing any Student visa application, which covers both a genuine temporary entrant and a genuine student
- removal of the English language test requirement for Independent ELICOS (subclass 570) visa applications subject to Assessment Level 4 or Assessment Level 5
- providing a visa extension for up to six months after thesis submission for Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students
- inclusion of pre-paid home stay fees in financial assessments on the same basis as pre-paid boarding fees
- cessation of Pre-Visa Assessment
- reductions in financial requirements for Assessment Level 3 and Assessment Level 4 Student visa applicants
- introduction of the Fraud Public Interest Criteria which will allow decision-makers to refuse a visa if the applicant provides false, misleading and/or bogus documentation and/or information to the department
- implementation of alternative English language tests for Student visa purposes. The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Pearson Test of English Academic, and Cambridge English: Advanced (CAE) will be accepted as alternatives to IELTS for Student visa purposes.

May 2011

The Minister for Immigration and Citizenship announced that the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the Pearson Test of English Academic (Pearson) and the Cambridge English: Advanced (CAE) from Cambridge ESOL (Cambridge) would also be acceptable tests for Student visa application purposes. To date, the main English language test accepted by the department for Student visa purposes is the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the Occupational English Test (OET) is also accepted for specified countries where IELTS is not available.

These additional English language test options will help to increase competition in the English language testing market, while creating more test places for student visa applicants.

April 2011

Student visa assessment levels for 38 countries across one or more visa subclasses were reduced.

January 2011

Student applicants who want to study a diploma or advanced diploma course that is accredited under the higher education sector on CRICOS can be assessed for a Higher Education (subclass 573) visa.

December 2010

A strategic review of the student visa program was announced to ensure that the program is well positioned to respond to current and future challenges.

A package of measures to ease the pressure on the international education sector was announced.

See: [What's New for Students and Sponsored Training?](#)

July 2010

Student visa applicants are required to demonstrate they have Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) for themselves and any accompanying dependants for the duration of their visa. Previously, applicants were required to show evidence of cover with an OSHC provider for 12 months, or the duration of their student visa, whichever was shorter.

March 2010

Student visa applicants who want to study a course package need to meet the highest assessment level applicable of any of the courses in the package (with the exception of ELICOS courses).

Decision makers were given greater discretion to cancel a student visa where investigation by the department show the circumstances for deferment were for reasons other than compelling or compassionate circumstances. Assessment levels for postgraduate research (subclass 574) visas were reduced to Assessment Level 1 and Assessment Level 2. This change reduced the level of evidence required in support of applications and made it easier for prospective students and their dependents to apply for their visas. This change meant that the assessment level was reduced for applicants from 14 countries, giving them the ability to lodge their applications through the eVisa system and facilitating faster processing times.

January 2010

Changes were made to allow student visa holders who were affected by the closure of their education provider in the preceding 12 months to lodge an application for a further student visa to continue their studies and be entitled to a nil visa application charge. The provisions also apply to student guardian applicants where the nominating student was affected by the closure of their education provider.

The living cost component of financial requirements for student visas was increased to better reflect the real cost of living in Australia. The minimum requirement, which had not been reviewed since 2001 was increased from:

- \$12 000 to \$18 000 per year for the main applicant
- \$4200 to \$6300 per year for the student's partner
- \$2400 to \$3600 per year for the student's first child
- \$1800 to \$2700 per year for every other child.

Decision makers must be satisfied that the funds which the applicant demonstrates or declares that they have access to will be genuinely available to the applicant for the purposes of studying and living in Australia.

August 2009

To provide greater levels of assurance that student visa applicants are genuine students, increased numbers of applicant interviews and enhanced document checking for high risk applicants from India, Nepal, Brazil, Zimbabwe and Mauritius were implemented.