



Review of the Student Visa Assessment Level Framework - Terms of Reference

The assessment level framework is used to determine and manage the immigration risk posed by Student visa applicants according to their country and education sector. There are five risk tiers within the assessment level framework which impose greater visa requirements on applicants as the level of risk increases.

The assessment level framework was introduced on 1 July 2001. In his report of the Strategic Review of Student Visas, the Hon Michael Knight AO noted that, ten years on, the assessment level framework has not kept pace with changes in the scale and complexity of the Student visa program and recommended the government review the assessment level framework. In addition, the Australian National Audit Office recommended, in its audit report of the Management of Student Visas of May 2011, that the department review the process for determining country and education sector assessment levels.

This review responds to those recommendations.

The Review will recommend, with input from an External Reference Group, measures to reform the current Student visa risk management framework to enhance the integrity of the Student visa program while facilitating the competitiveness of Australia's international sector. In particular, the Review will consider:

- The merits of applying an education provider-based risk management approach, particularly an approach that recognises and rewards high quality, low risk education providers.
- The efficiency of the current system of distinguishing risk by country and education sector, for example rather than by differences within countries and between individual education providers.
- Simplifying the number of risk categories, for example collapsing the existing five assessment levels into three risk categories of 'low', 'medium' and 'high'. Particular consideration will be given to other approaches to risk management applied within the immigration portfolio.
- Whether eligibility requirements for a risk management framework should include current assessment level eligibility thresholds of English language, financial capacity and educational qualifications.
- The data and methodology used to determine immigration risk, including consideration of the relative significance placed on each risk factor.
- An ongoing review mechanism that is appropriately responsive to current and future immigration risks.

On the completion of the Review in mid-2012 the government will consider options for the interim implementation of its findings, to apply to a small number of high quality training and education providers, ahead of the full implementation of the Review's findings by 2013.