

# VISAS AND THE POINTS BASED SYSTEM



## WHAT

The Points Based System (PBS) is the biggest change to the United Kingdom Immigration system for 45 years, replacing over 80 different routes to work and study in the United Kingdom with just 5 separate tiers. The system is based on that used by the Australian government which has been found to be successful.

Border and Immigration Minister Liam Byrne said at the time of its introduction:

“The UK is a fantastic place to work and develop for those with the skills we need. A points system has worked well in Australia and I think it will work well for Britain. This is a key part of the huge shake-up to our border security this year.”

This is seen by the UKBA (United Kingdom Borders Agency) as an opportunity to streamline what has been up until now a complex system with myriad different categories for entry to the United Kingdom. The system will consist of 5 tiers each with different points requirements.

- Tier 1: Highly skilled workers, for example scientists, investors and entrepreneurs.
- Tier 2: Skilled workers with a job offer, for example teachers and engineers.
- Tier 3: Low skilled workers filling specific temporary labour shortages, for example construction workers for a particular project.
- Tier 4 : Students
- Tier 5: Youth mobility and temporary workers for example staff in diplomatic households.

The number of points the migrant needs and the way that the points are awarded will depend on the Tier under which they are applying. Points will be awarded to reflect the applicant's ability, experience, age and where appropriate, the level of need within the sector the applicant will be applying in.

## WHY

Under the Points Based System applicants will need to pass a points based assessment before they are given permission to enter or remain in the United Kingdom. The system gives the United Kingdom government the flexibility to adjust numbers according to the

needs and circumstances of the times.

## WHEN

Tiers 1, 2 and 5 are now fully operational both in the United Kingdom and at all visa-issuing posts overseas. Tier 3 is currently suspended indefinitely and Tier 4 is expected to go live early in 2009.

## WHAT WILL IT MEAN FOR APPLICANTS IN THE KINGDOM

The main category that will impact on applicants in the Kingdom is Tier 4 Students. Under the new rules, universities and colleges will be required to take greater responsibility for their international students by, for example, reporting students who fail to attend courses, and to obtain a special license if they wish to recruit students from overseas. These arrangements will protect students from bogus colleges who attempt to abuse the system and exploit students. Any education providers who fail to follow the new rules risk a ban on recruiting international students in the future and bogus colleges will be shut down.

Under the new rules, students will need to be sponsored by a licensed education institution and obtain an identity card in advance, have a good academic track record and demonstrate they can financially support themselves and any dependants. They will also need to apply for a course that leads to an approved level of qualification. All students wishing to apply to study in the UK will be required to submit their applications on line. One of the key benefits is that students will be able to work out whether they have sufficient points to qualify before they make a visa application.

The UK is a popular destination for students from Saudi Arabia and we are delighted that so many Saudi students already choose to study here. The number of visas issued to Saudi students is increasing year on year. In 2007 over 6,000 student visas were issued in Saudi Arabia, representing a 29% increase on 2006.

Further press releases will be put out nearer the time of introduction with full information on how to apply.

**Andy Tinney**  
**Visa Services Manager (Saudi Arabia)**