

General Skilled Migration: Changes to the most popular visa stream from 1 July 2011

If you intend to apply for one of the GSM visas in the new financial year, below we will endeavour to summarise the changes you will have to consider.

Under the new scheme, points will no longer be awarded for your occupation however it will have to be on the Skilled Occupations List or the State/Territory Nominated Skilled Occupations list. Accordingly the pass mark was lowered to 65.

In contrast to the previous model, all GSM visas will have the same pass mark, leaving the family sponsored and State/Territory sponsored applicants disadvantaged. The new system only offers up to 10 points for such sponsorships depending on whether it is to a regional area.

Another major difference in the restructured points test is that 45 years is no longer the upper age limit in GSM visas. Despite not getting any points for their age, 45-49 year olds are now eligible to apply in case they can reach the pass mark. Less important but worth mentioning is that the youngest applicants are not in the best position anymore. Realising that applicants who are young enough to still have a long future in the Australian job market but who already have some work experience, are possibly more employable which is why the new system awards the maximum points for age (30) to 25-33 year olds.

Perhaps the most important change concerns the English competency. The regional concessions were discontinued and the points awarded have also been lowered compared to the existing GSM framework. On the other hand there is now a new category for Superior English speakers, which will clearly favour applicants from native English speaking countries.

Point will be awarded for both overseas and Australian work experience; this feature will largely benefit those applicants who have clocked up considerable work experience on a 457 visa already. On the downside, student visa holders will find it difficult to claim high points for Australian work experience for two major reasons; one) their 20-hour per week work limit would have to be fully harnessed in order to qualify for the points test, and two) the next step for them after finishing school is usually a graduate visa which gets granted for 18 months only.

By removing the points awarded for the occupations (40, 50 and 60 point occupations) the new system introduces a different kind of recognition honouring the level of qualifications. There are other subtle changes to the scheme, but the rest of it will be familiar from the earlier arrangement: points for Australian study, for partner skills, community language and sponsorship.

However there will no longer be a permanent family sponsored skilled migration visa. Permanent skilled sponsored GSM visas will need to be sponsored by a State or Territory.

immi.gov.au – [Introduction of New Points Test](#)
immi.gov.au – [FAQ: New Points Test](#)

For further discussion or to book an appointment, call Zoltan on 07 40515388 or e-mail ZoltanVandulek@belaw.com.au.

