



Future directions of Streamlined Visa Processing

Frequently Asked Questions (general)

On 16 June 2015 the Australian Government released the *Future directions for streamlined visa processing* report and announced the introduction of a simplified student visa framework (SSVF) to support Australia's education services sector.

Subject to the regulatory change process, it is expected that the SSVF will be implemented by mid-2016.

A copy of the *Future directions for streamlined visa processing* report can be viewed on the Department's website at: <http://www.immi.gov.au/Study/Pages/review-student-visa-programme.aspx>

What are the key changes under the SSVF?

Key changes under the SSVF are:

- a reduction in the number of student visa subclasses from eight to two; and
- the introduction of a simplified single immigration risk framework for all international students.

Why does the government intend to make these changes?

The changes are designed to make the student visa framework simpler to navigate for genuine students, deliver a more targeted approach to immigration integrity and create a level playing field for all education providers.

When will the changes take place?

Subject to the regulatory change process, it is expected that the SSVF will be implemented from mid-2016.

What is the current structure of the student visa programme?

The student visa framework is currently quite complex, encompassing eight visa subclasses, the Assessment Level framework and streamlined visa processing arrangements.

Currently, prospective students must apply for the student visa sub-class applicable to their intended level of study for example, sub-class 573 for Higher Education.

Prospective student visa applicants are then either assessed under the Assessment Level (AL) framework or streamlined visa processing (SVP) arrangements. These frameworks primarily determine the level of evidence of financial capacity, English language proficiency and academic background that the student needs to provide with their student visa application.

Under the AL framework, there are three assessment levels with AL1 representing the lowest immigration risk and AL3 the highest. The higher the AL, the greater the amount of evidence an applicant is required to demonstrate to support their claims for the grant of a student visa.

Under SVP, eligible student visa applicants - that is students whose main course of study is an Advanced Diploma, Bachelor degree, Masters, Doctoral degree or eligible exchange programme at a participating SVP education provider - are not assigned an AL. If a student is eligible for SVP, they will generally have requirements for financial capacity, English language proficiency and academic background related requirements that are similar to those that apply under the current AL1, regardless of their country of origin.

How will the proposed changes affect the student visa programme?

The SSVF is intended to replace existing streamlined visa processing and AL framework arrangements.

Under the SSVF, the combined immigration risk outcomes of the student's education provider and country of citizenship would be used to guide the level of documentation relating to financial capacity and English language proficiency that the student would need to provide with their student visa application.

Additionally, students would no longer apply for a specific student visa sub-class applicable to their level of study for example, subclass 573 for Higher Education. Rather, it is intended that there will only be one student visa subclass, for which all prospective students will apply.

Which students will be required to provide evidence of financial and English language under the SSVF?

The level of documentary evidence required in relation to financial and English language capacity will be guided by the combined immigration risk of the prospective student's education provider and country of citizenship.

Generally, students enrolled at an education provider with the lowest immigration risk outcomes will have lower evidentiary requirements, regardless of their nationality. Students enrolled at an education provider with the highest immigration risk outcomes will have access to reduced evidentiary requirements if they are from a country with the lowest immigration risk.

How will I know what documentation to provide with my visa application under the SSVF?

It is intended that students will be able to identify what documents they will be required to provide with their visa application by entering in their intended education provider and country of citizenship into an online tool. The Department will however retain the discretion to request additional documentation if required.

Will I be able to determine the immigration risk associated with my country of citizenship and education provider?

Through the online tool you will be able to determine the level of financial capacity and English language proficiency documentation that you will likely need to provide with your student visa application. This will be determined based on your country of citizenship and intended education provider.

While the Department will publish full details about how immigration risk ratings are calculated and used in the visa process it will not, due to commercial sensitivities, publish individual risk ratings of education providers and countries.

Will the changes make it easier to get a student visa?

The SSVF is intended to make the visa application process simpler and faster for genuine students while also ensuring the integrity of the student visa programme.

In addition to financial capacity and English language proficiency requirements all students will continue to have to meet other core visa criteria such as the Genuine Temporary Entrant requirement and health and character criteria.

Will the changes affect eligibility for the Temporary Graduate (sub-class 485) or other types of visa?

The eligibility criteria for the Temporary Graduate (sub-class 485) visa will not change.

Will this change affect existing student visa holders?

No. The SSVF is intended to apply only to student visa applications lodged after the middle of 2016.

I want to apply for a student visa. What does this change mean for me?

Current student visa processing arrangements will remain unchanged until the SSVF is implemented in mid-2016.

Where do I go for more information?

As it becomes available, further information will be updated on the Department's website at www.immi.gov.au.