



Future directions of Streamlined Visa Processing

Frequently Asked Questions (education providers)

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.

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.

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 main implications of the SSVF for education providers?

Under the SSVF, it is intended that all Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS) registered education providers will be allocated an immigration risk rating, based on the immigration risk outcomes of their international students over the previous 12-month period. The same approach will also be used to allocate an immigration risk rating to each country.

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

Through this model all education providers across all education sectors will have access to the benefits associated with 'streamlined evidentiary requirements' for at least some countries.

What does 'streamlined evidentiary requirements' mean?

Where streamlined evidentiary requirements apply, the student visa applicant will generally be able to satisfy the Department of their financial capacity and English language proficiency by declaration.

This is similar to existing streamlined visa processing and Assessment Level (AL) 1 arrangements. The Department would however retain the discretion to seek additional information about the student's financial capacity and English language proficiency where appropriate.

All students, regardless of the financial capacity and English language proficiency documentation that may be required, will continue to have to meet all other core visa criteria such as the Genuine Temporary Entrant requirement and health and character criteria.

Which students will have streamlined evidentiary requirements under the SSVF?

The following students would have streamlined evidentiary requirements under the SSVF:

- All students enrolled at education providers with the lowest immigration risk ratings (similar to the current AL1)
- All students from countries with the lowest immigration risk ratings (similar to the current AL1)
- Students enrolled at education providers with medium immigration risk ratings (similar to the current AL2), provided that the student's country of citizenship has a low or medium immigration risk rating (equivalent to the current AL1 or AL2)

How will immigration risk ratings be calculated?

The methodology used to determine immigration risk under the SSVF will be similar to the methodology used in the existing streamlined visa processing arrangements and the AL framework. The methodology currently takes into account statistical data on visa refusal rates (fraud and non-fraud related), rates of students overstaying their visa and visa cancellation rates.

In line with recommendation 5 of the *Future directions for streamlined visa processing* report, further consultation is intended to occur with a working group of members from the Education Visa Consultative Committee regarding aspects of the immigration risk methodology.

Will immigration risk ratings of education providers and countries be published?

No – due to commercial sensitivities it is intended the immigration risk ratings of education providers and countries will not be published but will instead feed into an online tool that will guide students about their likely English language proficiency and financial capacity evidentiary requirements.

How often will immigration risk ratings be updated?

Immigration risk ratings are intended to be updated every six months based on immigration risk outcomes from the previous 12-month period.

How can I access the immigration risk rating of my education provider?

To assist in implementation of the SSVF, the Department proposes to send all education providers details about their current immigration risk rating in approximately October 2015.

Following implementation the Department intends that education providers will be able to access their immigration risk rating on a regular basis through an online reporting tool.

How can providers 'opt-in' to the SSVF?

Education providers will not be required to formally 'opt-in' as the SSVF will apply to all education providers.

Will the SSVF create any additional obligations for education providers?

No – while an education provider may choose to put in place strategies in order to obtain or maintain a lower immigration risk rating there will no obligation or requirement for education providers to do this.

Will I be able to nominate educational business partners under the SSVF?

Education providers will not be required to formally nominate educational business partners under the SSVF and will be able to package with other education providers with whom they have a commercial arrangement.

What immigration risk rating will apply to smaller education providers?

It is intended that education providers that enrol small numbers of international students will be allocated a default risk rating of 'two', with some possible exceptions. Further detail will be provided closer to implementation.

When will these changes take place?

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

How will existing streamlined visa processing arrangements be affected?

The current streamlined visa processing policy guidelines are due to expire at the end of June 2016. It is intended that the streamlined visa processing arrangements will continue to operate as usual until this time.

Will the Department consult further with the international education sector about the SSVF?

To progress the recommendations from the *Future directions for streamlined visa processing* report, the Department intends to establish a working group comprising a number of Education Visa Consultative Committee members. The working group will play an important role in contributing to the implementation of the SSVF.

Where can I find more information?

The Department intends to deliver workshops for Australian based education providers and peak education bodies on the report outcomes and the proposed SSVF during June and July 2015.

Information will also be updated on the Department's website as it becomes available at www.immi.gov.au.