



Frequently Asked Questions - New Points Test

Why is a new points test being introduced?

On 8 February 2010, the Australian Government announced a series of reforms to the skilled migration program, including a review of the points test. The points test review found the current points test had led to a skewing of applications toward a small number of occupations and does not always lead to outcomes that are consistent with the objectives of the skilled migration program.

How was the new points test developed?

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship consulted widely in developing the new points test. On 15 February 2010, the department released a discussion paper inviting responses from stakeholders and the general public. More than 220 responses were received from a variety of individuals and organisations including industry peak bodies, education providers, migration agents, current and former international students, prospective migrants from outside Australia and the wider Australian community. State and territory governments were also consulted on the various options under consideration.

The department also took into account research on what aspects of the skilled migration program delivered the greatest contribution to the Australian economy.

How is the new points test different from the current points test?

The new points test provides for migrants with a better balance of skills and attributes. As no one factor will guarantee migration, successful migrants will need to possess a combination of skills and experience. The changes focus on better English language skills, more extensive skilled work experience, higher level qualifications obtained in Australia and overseas and different age ranges. The new points test will continue to award points for study in Australia, regional study, community languages, partner skills and a Professional Year. Points will no longer be awarded on the basis of an applicant's occupation, but all applicants must still nominate an occupation on the applicable Skilled Occupation List.

See: www.immi.gov.au/skilled/general-skilled-migration/pdf/points-fact.pdf

Who will the new points test apply to?

It is important to note that the new points test will only apply to one component of the skilled migration program. This change will not affect every type of skilled migration visa and only applies to applicants for the following visas:

- Subclass 885 Skilled Independent
- Subclass 886 Skilled Sponsored
- Subclass 487 Skilled Regional Sponsored
- Subclass 175 Skilled Independent
- Subclass 176 Skilled Sponsored
- Subclass 475 Skilled – Regional Sponsored.

When will the new points test come into effect?

It is proposed that the new points test will apply to applications made from 1 July 2011, unless the applicant is eligible for transitional arrangements.

Transitional arrangements apply to people who, on 8 February 2010 held or had applied for a Temporary Skilled Graduate visa (subclass 485). Until the end of 2012, this group is able to apply for a permanent skilled visa under the points test in effect as at 8 February 2010.

Student visa holders who lodge an application for points tested skilled migration from 1 July 2011 will be assessed under the new points test. There are still transitional arrangements which may apply to those students affected by the reforms announced on 8 February 2010.

People who held an eligible Student visa on 8 February 2010 still have until the end of 2012 to apply for a Temporary Skilled Graduate visa (subclass 485) under the arrangements in place for that visa as at 8 February 2010.

See: www.immi.gov.au/students/pdf/recent-changes-gsm.pdf

I am a current international student, and am not eligible for the transitional arrangements detailed above. Will the new points test affect me?

After 1 July 2011, if you are not eligible for transitional arrangements and you lodge an application for any of the visas listed above, you will need to meet the requirement of the new points test

Will the pass mark change under the new points test?

Yes. The pass mark is a tool that allows for management of the skilled migration program and is always subject to change. It is expected that the pass mark will be set at 65 points.

There will no longer be a distinction in the pass mark between independent and sponsored visas and permanent and provisional visas.

I am considering applying for a points tested visa. Should I apply now, or wait until the new points test is introduced?

The decision is one for you to make. The department recommends you carefully consider your situation to determine whether the current or the new points test would be of most benefit to you.

For example, people with higher level qualifications, English language proficiency or more extensive skilled work experience may benefit under the new points test.

I have already lodged an application for a GSM visa. Can I choose to have my application assessed under the new points test?

No. Applications lodged before 1 July 2011 will be assessed against the current points test.

If you want to have your application assessed against the new points test, you will need to lodge a new application after the new points test is introduced. It is important to note that if you choose to lodge a new application, you will be required to pay a new Visa Application Charge (VAC). You will not be able to have the VAC you paid in association with your first visa application refunded.

I will not be ready to lodge an application before 1 July 2011 and under the new points test I don't think I will be able to meet the pass mark. What are my options?

Australia is fortunate in that there are many more people seeking migration than places available. Skilled migration to Australia is highly competitive and requirements adjust over time according to Australia's skills needs. Not everyone will be able to meet the requirements for skilled migration.

You may want to consider your eligibility to apply for an alternative migration option, such as the Employer Nomination Scheme or Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme. Further information on these programs is available on the department's website.

See: www.immi.gov.au/skilled/

Will there be more changes to the requirements for skilled migration?

Australia's skilled migration program is run to benefit Australia. The program is designed to help deliver the skills the Australian economy needs. The skilled migration program must remain flexible to adjust to economic circumstances to select the best people to contribute to Australia's future. The program will continue to change over time.

The introduction of the new points test is part of a suite of reforms announced on the 8 February 2010 aimed at delivering a skilled migration program that will select migrants with the high value, nation-building skills that are needed by the Australian economy and labour market.

Why have occupation points been removed from the new points test?

The points test review found that the current points test gives undue weight to a person's occupation, as an applicant can claim up to half the points needed to meet the pass mark on the basis of their nominated occupation alone.

The introduction of a more targeted Skilled Occupation List (SOL) means it is no longer necessary to award points on the basis of occupation, as all applicants must nominate an occupation from the new list.

Will the new points test changes apply to the threshold age requirements?

Yes. The maximum age threshold for applicants will be raised from 45 to 49. This recognises that in many professions, workers do not reach their full potential until their mid to late 40s, and that significant work experience is a key factor in determining a skilled migrant's labour market performance.

While applicants aged 45-49 will be eligible to apply, no points will be awarded for age. This means that those applicants will have to have outstanding results in other areas in order to meet the pass mark.

Will the new points test change the allocation of points across different age brackets?

Yes. Australian Bureau of Statistics data and the department's research indicate that highly skilled migrants who come to Australia between the ages of 25-32 add the most benefit to the Australian economy in terms of lifetime earnings. The new points test will award points for age as follows.

Points	Age
30	25 – 32
25	18 - 24 and 33 – 39
15	40 – 44
0	45 – 49

I am over the age of 45 and wish to apply. Do I need to wait until the new points test is introduced?

Yes. The maximum age requirement will not be increased until the new points test comes into effect.

Is there a new minimum English language requirement?

For all skilled migration points tested visas the threshold English language requirement will be Competent English, which is a minimum score of 6 in each of the four components of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test. No points will be awarded for English language where an applicant has Competent English.

Will the new points test allow applicants to claim points for higher levels of English language proficiency?

Yes. The new points test will recognise applicants with higher levels of English language proficiency. The new points test will award points for English language ability as follows.

Points	Description of English language ability
20	Superior English (a score of at least 8 in each of the four components of the IELTS test).
10	Proficient English (a score of at least 7 in each of the four components of the IELTS test).

Will the new points test award points for both overseas and Australian work experience?

Yes. The new points test gives more recognition to applicants who have more extensive skilled work experience, either in Australia or overseas.

Will the new points test award points for experience in any skilled occupation?

No. To claim points for work experience under the new points test, the experience must be in an applicant's nominated occupation, or a closely related occupation.

I have worked in my nominated occupation in Australia and overseas. Can I claim points for both overseas and Australian work experience?

Yes. If you are able to meet the requirements to claim points for both Australian work experience and overseas work experience under the points test then you will be recognised for both.

For example, an applicant who has worked in their nominated occupation overseas for three out of the past five years and in Australia for one in the past two years will be able to claim ten points for work experience – five points for their overseas work experience and five points for their Australian work experience. Points for skilled work experience will be awarded as follows:

Australian work experience

The following table outlines the number of points an applicant will receive depending on their Australian work experience.

Points	Description of Australian work experience
15	Five years Australian work experience in the seven years before lodging an application.
10	Three years Australian work experience in the five years before lodging an application.
5	One year Australian work experience in the two years before lodging an application.

Overseas work experience

The following table outlines the number of points an applicant will receive depending on their overseas work experience.

Points	Description of overseas work experience
15	Eight years overseas work experience in the ten years before lodging an application.
10	Five years overseas work experience in the seven years before lodging an application.
5	Three years overseas work experience in the past five years.

Why are more points awarded for Australian work experience, compared with the same length of overseas experience?

The points test recognises the extra value Australian work experience provides in assisting migrants find skilled employment and settle easily in Australia.

Will points still be awarded under the new points test for the completion of a Professional Year?

Yes. Under the new points test, five points will be awarded to applicants who complete an approved Professional Year in their nominated occupation or a closely related skilled occupation.

Under the new points test will applicants be able to claim points for both a Professional Year and Australian work experience?

Yes. The current points test is designed so that applicants can only claim points for either Australian work experience or the completion of a Professional Year. The new points test allows an applicant to claim points for both completing a Professional Year and meeting work experience requirements. It is important to note however that work conducted as part of the Professional Year program will not be eligible for consideration as work experience.

What points will be awarded for education qualifications?

The following table outlines the number of points awarded for an applicant's highest education qualification.

Points	Description of education qualifications
20	PhD
15	Bachelor Degree (including a Bachelor Degree with Honours or Masters)
10	Diploma completed in Australia AQF III/IV completed in Australia Offshore recognised apprenticeship

Why will the new points test award more points to higher level qualifications?

The new points test awards more points to certain higher level qualifications as higher level qualifications generally result in increased earning capacity.

Why doesn't the new points test award extra points to an applicant who studies a Master program after completing their Bachelor Degree?

Applicants who complete a Master program after completing a Bachelors degree are not awarded extra points, as research indicates that the labour market outcomes of previous skilled migrants have not been improved by holding a Masters degree.

Under the new points test will I be able to claim points for two qualifications?

No. The new points test will only allow applicants to claim points for their highest level qualification. For example, if an applicant has completed a Bachelors Degree and a PhD, they will only be able to claim points for the PhD.

To claim points for a qualification or apprenticeship obtained overseas, do I have to have the qualification recognised?

Yes. To claim points for a qualification or apprenticeship obtained overseas, it will need to be recognised as being of a standard comparable to that awarded by an Australian education institution. Further information regarding the process for having an overseas qualification or apprenticeship recognised will be made available closer to the date of implementation of the new points test.

Are there any restrictions on what Australian qualifications can be used to claim points?

Yes. To claim points for an Australian qualification, the qualification must have been undertaken while the applicant was in Australia and it must have been completed as the result of a course of study that was at least two academic years (that is, 92 weeks as registered on the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS)).

Will the new points test still allow points to be claimed for the Australian study requirement?

Yes. Applicants who have studied in Australia and who have met the Australian study requirement will be eligible for five points under the new points test.

Under the new points test can I use the same period of study to claim points for both qualifications and Australian study?

Yes. The new points test will allow applicants who have studied in Australia to use the same period of study to claim points for qualifications and for meeting the Australian study requirement. For example, if you obtain a PhD and meet the Australian study requirement, you can claim 20 points for the PhD and five points for the study in Australia.

Will the new points test continue to award points to applicants who have studied in regional Australia?

Yes. Under the new points test applicants who satisfy the Australia study requirement while studying in regional Australia will continue to be awarded an additional five points. These points will be available in addition to points claimed for the qualification and for meeting the Australian study requirement.

Under the new points test will applicants still be able to claim points for fluency in a designated community language?

Yes. The new points test will award five points to applicants who meet the requirements to claim points for community language.

Will the new points test change the evidence required to claim points for community language?

Yes. The new points test will recognise applicants who are accredited by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) in a designated language. Points for designated language will no longer be able to be claimed on the basis of having obtained a qualification from a university where instruction was in that language.

Will applicants still be able to claim points for partner skills under the new points test?

Yes. The new points test will continue to award five points where the primary applicant's partner satisfies the threshold criteria for GSM.

Under the new points test, to claim partner points the primary applicant's partner will need to meet the following criteria:

- be included on the same visa application as the primary applicant
- not be an Australian permanent resident or citizen
- be less than 50 years old at the time of application
- nominate an occupation on the Skilled Occupation List, and be assessed by the relevant assessing authority as having suitable skills for the occupation
- have Competent English
- have been employed in a skilled occupation for at least 12 months in the 24 months before the application is lodged.

Will the new points test change the award of points for sponsorship?

Yes. The new points test will award points for sponsorship as follows.

Points	Description of sponsorship
5	Nomination by a state or territory government under a state migration plan, for the purposes of a subclass 176 or 886 application.
10	Nomination by a state or territory government under a state migration plan, or sponsorship by an eligible relative, to a regional area for the purposes of a subclass 487 or subclass 475 Skilled – Regional Sponsored application.

Will family sponsored applicants still be eligible to apply for a permanent Skilled – Sponsored visa?

No. As part of the changes accompanying the introduction of the new points test, from 1 July 2011 applicants for the Skilled – Sponsored subclass 176 or 886 visa subclasses will need to be sponsored by a state or territory government under a state migration plan.

There will no longer be a permanent family sponsored skilled migration visa however eligible family members can still sponsor relatives under the provisional sponsored skilled migration visa. Holders of a provisional sponsored skilled migration visa may be eligible for a Skilled Regional (Residence) visa (subclass 887) after meeting certain eligibility criteria.

Will family sponsored applicants still be able to apply for a provisional Regional Sponsored visa?

Yes. The new points test will continue to award points to applicants for a subclass 475 or subclass 487 who are sponsored to a regional area by an eligible family member or a state or territory government under a state migration plan. Holders of either of these provisional sponsored skilled migration visas may be eligible for a Skilled Regional (Residence) visa (subclass 887) after meeting certain eligibility criteria.

Is there a specific contact number that I can use to find out more about these changes?

The department is operating a dedicated telephone line to respond to any queries on the new points test.

Telephone: 1300 735 683