



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Immigration  
and Border Protection**

# The simplified student visa framework

## Overview of key changes

The simplified student visa framework (SSVF) comes into effect on 1 July 2016.

The SSVF is designed to make the process of applying for a student visa simpler to navigate for genuine students, deliver a more targeted approach to immigration integrity and reduce red tape.

This fact sheet summarises the key changes under the SSVF compared to the student visa process before 1 July 2016.

### Applying for a student visa

From 1 July 2016:

- international students will apply for a single Student visa (subclass 500), regardless of their chosen course of study
- student guardians will apply for the new Student Guardian (subclass 590) visa
- all students and student guardians will generally be required to lodge their visa application online by creating an account in ImmiAccount. More information about ImmiAccount is available at:  
[www.border.gov.au/Trav/Visa/Immi](http://www.border.gov.au/Trav/Visa/Immi).

### Single immigration risk framework—English and financial requirements

From 1 July 2016, a single immigration risk framework applies to all international students and replaces the previous streamlined visa processing and Assessment Level frameworks.

Under the SSVF, the combined immigration risk outcomes of the student's education provider and country of citizenship will be used to guide the level of documentary evidence of English language and financial capacity that the student needs to provide with their visa application.

### Streamlined evidentiary requirements

Under the SSVF, students associated with the lowest immigration risk will generally have streamlined evidentiary requirements.

This means these students will generally be able to satisfy the Department of their financial capacity by providing a declaration and their English proficiency by a Confirmation of Enrolment.

The Department will however retain the discretion to seek further evidence where appropriate.

### The online client service tool

Students will be able to obtain details about the documentation and evidence that will need to be included with their student visa application by accessing a working sample of the online tool on the Department's website from late May 2016. The online tool will be fully functional from 1 July 2016 and accessible at any stage of the visa application process, including prior to the submission of a visa application.

### Financial capacity

Under the SSVF, all student visa applicants must have sufficient funds available for the duration of their stay in Australia.

Students associated with higher immigration risk, based on their country of citizenship and education provider immigration risk outcomes, will generally need to provide additional documentary evidence of financial capacity with their visa application.

Where the Department's online client service tool indicates that documentary evidence of financial capacity is required, it is important for applicants to attach these documents to their visa application prior to lodgement. Failure to do so may result in visa refusal.

Where additional evidence of financial capacity is required, the student will be able to demonstrate this by providing either:

- evidence of funds to cover travel to Australia and 12 months living, course fees and (for school-aged dependants) schooling costs for the student and accompanying family members **or**
- evidence of meeting the annual income requirement **or**
- the Acceptance Advice of Secondary Exchange Students (AASES) form (for secondary exchange students only).

The annual income option requires students to provide evidence of personal annual income of at least AUD60,000. For students accompanied by family members the amount is AUD70,000 or more. The income demonstrated must be the personal income of the student's spouse or parents only. In circumstances where both the student's parents are working their combined income can be considered for this requirement. In all cases the evidence of annual income must be in the form of official government documentation, such as a tax assessment.

The 12-month living costs requirement is broadly similar to the requirement that applies to Assessment Level 2 students prior to 1 July 2016. The type of evidence, where required, includes: money deposit or loan with a financial institution, government loan, scholarship or sponsorship.

### Living cost amounts

From 1 July 2016, the 12 month living cost will be:

- Student/guardian AUD19,830
- Partner/spouse AUD6,940
- Child AUD2,970

### Consumer Price Index (CPI) Australia Indexation

Financial amounts including annual income, living costs and schooling costs will be regularly reviewed and adjusted in line with the CPI figures for the previous calendar year.

### International English language requirements

Where evidence of English language proficiency is required, the following **minimum** English language test scores will be accepted:

- English Language Testing System (IELTS) overall band score of 5.5 **or**
- IELTS overall band score of 5 when packaged with at least 10 weeks English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students (ELICOS) **or**
- IELTS overall band score of 4.5 when packaged with at least 20 weeks ELICOS.

The equivalent of the above minimum IELTS test scores from the following English language providers will also be accepted:

- Test of English as a Foreign Language paper based test (TOEFL)
- Pearson Test of English Academic
- Cambridge English: Advanced
- Occupational English Test.

Where the Department's online client service tool indicates that documentary evidence of English language proficiency is required, it is important for applicants to attach these documents to their visa application prior to lodgement. Failure to do so may result visa refusal.

### English language exemptions

Currently some students are exempt from providing evidence of an English language test score, regardless of the level of immigration risk that applies.

The full list of English language exemption categories will be set out in a legislative Instrument.

More information about English language requirements is available in the fact sheet *English language requirements*.

### English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students (ELICOS)

Under the SSVF, there is no limitation on the maximum duration of ELICOS study that may be undertaken. Genuine students will be able to undertake as much ELICOS study as either a standalone course or prior to their principal course, as required.

### Evidence of enrolment

International students **outside** Australia must be enrolled in a registered course of study and provide a Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) when they lodge their Student visa application.

Students **in** Australia may still apply with a letter of offer or a CoE but **must** obtain a CoE to be granted the visa.

Existing exceptions to these requirements will continue to apply to Foreign Affairs and Defence sponsored students (Letter of Support from Foreign Affairs/Defence); secondary exchange students (an Acceptance Advice of Secondary Exchange Students form); and postgraduate research students required to remain in Australia for marking of their thesis (letter from their education provider).

## Course transfers

From 1 July 2016, a new condition will be introduced requiring all Student (subclass 500) visa holders to maintain enrolment at the same level or a higher Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) level for which they were granted a visa, unless they are undertaking a doctoral degree (AQF10) and transfer to a master's degree (AQF9).

Transferring to a lower AQF level course or transferring from an AQF level course to a non-AQF Award course would be in breach of the student visa condition and may result in the visa being cancelled. Students who wish to change to a lower level course must apply for, and be granted, a new student visa before they change their course.

Standard 7 of the *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007* also applies to transfers between CRICOS-registered providers. For more information visit the Department of Education and Training's website:

<https://internationaleducation.gov.au/Regulatory-Information/Education-Services-for-Overseas-Students-ESOS-Legislative-Framework/National-Code/Pages/default.aspx>.

## School sector requirements

### Age requirements for school study

From 1 July 2016, all school students must be of an appropriate age for the entry level for their school course, regardless of their country of citizenship. To be granted a visa for school studies, the student must meet the following age requirements:

**Table 1 – Appropriate age for school entry**

Age requirement
At least six years old at time of visa application
Less than 17 years old at time of commencing Year 9 of high school
Less than 18 years at time of commencing Year 10 of high school
Less than 19 years at time of commencing Year 11 of high school
Less than 20 years at time of commencing Year 12 of high school

### Grant periods for primary school students

Generally, the maximum period for a Student visa grant is five years, with the exception of primary school-aged students where a maximum period of two years will generally be applied. The shorter grant period for primary school students will act as an important safeguard for younger and more vulnerable students.

## Welfare

All students under 18 must continue to have welfare arrangements in place for the duration of their stay in Australia AND provide one of the following forms of evidence at the time they lodge their visa application:

- Form 157N which nominates a suitable relative in Australia **or**
- Form 157N and an application for a Student Guardian (subclass 590) for a nominated relative **or**
- A Confirmation of Appropriate Accommodation and Welfare letter from the education provider **or**
- An Acceptance Advice of Secondary Exchange Students (AASES) form.

## Packaging Arrangements

Genuine students will continue to be able to package two or more courses on the one student visa where there is progression from one course to another.

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

## Family members of students

From 1 July 2016, family members of existing student visa holders will need to apply for a subclass 500 visa if they do not currently hold a student visa and wish to join the student in Australia.

Family unit members must be declared on the initial student visa application, regardless of whether or not they intend to join the student in Australia at a later stage. Those not declared will not be eligible for the grant of a visa at a later stage. An exception applies to those who became a family member after the primary applicant (student) was granted a visa.

From 1 July 2016, there will be no restrictions on the duration of particular courses that the primary applicant (student) must study to be accompanied by family members, including subsequent dependants. Generally the same level of evidentiary requirements of financial capacity applied to the primary applicant (student) would apply to their family members, including subsequent dependants.

In all circumstances, Departmental officers have discretion to ask for evidence of funds, if required.

## Student Guardian visa

All applicants for a student guardian visa must have sufficient funds to support themselves, the nominating student(s) and any secondary applicants for the duration of their intended stay in Australia.

Under the SSVF, the single immigration risk framework will **not** apply to student guardian visa applicants. Rather, all guardians must provide evidence of their financial capacity with their visa application.

Evidence of financial capacity can be provided in either of the following forms:

- Evidence that their spouse has annual income of \$70,000 or more; or
- Evidence of sufficient funds to cover travel costs, and the first 12 months living costs for themselves and each dependent child included in the application.

Under the SSVF, subsequent applications by family members of guardians will not be accepted. Guardians wishing to bring additional family members under six years of age to Australia must apply for a new student guardian visa for themselves and these students.

## Reporting by education sector

Under the SSVF, the Department will maintain the capacity to report on visa outcomes by education sectors. These education sectors will be aligned to the replaced seven (subclass 570–576) student visas. Information regarding these education sectors will also be included in Student visa grant letters and Visa Entitlement Verification Online (VEVO).

## Processing times

The Department aims to finalise 75 per cent of complete student visa applications within one month of lodgement.

To reduce visa processing times, students are strongly encouraged to submit all required documents with their visa applications. Failure to submit all required documents may lead to processing delays or visa refusal.

## Fraud

The Department will continue to focus on ensuring that only applicants who are genuine students, and their immediate family members, are granted a student visa to Australia. Instances of fraud are taken very seriously and are thoroughly investigated by the Department.

An individual's visa application may be refused or their visa may be cancelled if there is evidence that the individual has given, or caused to be given, a bogus document or false or misleading information. If a visa is refused or cancelled under these circumstances the individual may be excluded from applying for further visas for a period of time.