



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

The simplified student visa framework

Overview of key changes

The simplified student visa framework (SSVF) will commence 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 for business.

This factsheet summarises the key changes under the SSVF compared to the current Student visa process.

Applying for a Student visa

From 1 July 2016:

- all 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 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.

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 new framework, 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.

Student visa evidentiary requirements

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

This means that these students will generally not be required to provide documentary evidence of financial and English language capacity with their visa application.

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

The online client service tool

Students and agents will be able to obtain indicative visa evidentiary requirements by accessing a working sample of the online tool on the Department's website from late May 2016. The 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.

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 to 576) Student visas. Information regarding these education sectors will also be included in Student visa grant letters.

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
- Form 157N and an application for a Student Guardian (subclass 590) for a nominated relative
- A Confirmation of Appropriate Accommodation and Welfare letter from the education provider.

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 (Acceptance of Advice of Secondary Exchange Student form); and postgraduate research students required to remain in Australia for marking of their thesis (letter from their education provider).

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.

Financial capacity

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

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

Where formal evidence of financial capacity is required, the applicant will be able to provide this as either:

- evidence of travel, 12 months' living, tuition and schooling costs (for school-aged dependants) for the applicant and accompanying family members; **or**
- by meeting a new requirement related to annual income.

The annual income option requires applicants to provide evidence of personal annual income of at least \$60,000. For applicants accompanied by family members the amount is \$70,000 or more. The income demonstrated must be the personal income of the applicant's partner, spouse or parents only. Also the evidence 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 current requirement that applies to AL2 students. 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 \$19,830
- Partner/spouse \$6,940
- Child \$2,970
- Nominating student \$19,830 (for Student Guardians)

CPI Indexation

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

English language requirements

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

- International 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 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.

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. These current exemptions will generally be retained, for example, students enrolled in fulltime school studies, including secondary exchange programmes; postgraduate research courses; standalone ELICOS; and Foreign Affairs or Defence sponsored students will continue to be exempt from the requirement to provide evidence of English language proficiency.

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

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.

Course transfers

From 1 July 2016, a new condition will be introduced which requires all students 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 Masters 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 considered for cancellation. 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 also applies to transfers between CRICOS-registered providers.

For more information see: <https://internationaleducation.gov.au/Regulatory-Information/Education-Services-for-Overseas-Students-ESOS-Legislative-Framework/National-Code/nationalcodepartd/Pages/ExplanatoryguideD7.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.

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. The only exception is applicants who fall within the **bilateral benefit** category who only need to demonstrate sufficient funds to support themselves and any family applicants.

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

- Evidence that their spouse or partner 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. In some cases, applicants will also be asked to provide evidence of living costs for the nominating student.

Under the SSVF, subsequent applications by family members of guardians will no longer 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.

More information

More information about the student visa framework and changes from 1 July 2016 are available on the Department's website at [XXX](#).