

HR & Tax Alert



Quality In Everything We Do

UK – Suspension and Changes to the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme Scheme

December 2006

Executive summary

The Home Office recently announced that the current Highly Skilled Migrant Programme (HSMP) is to be changed in order to bring the scheme in line with the Government's aims for migration to boost the economy through bringing highly skilled workers into the UK. Therefore, the previous HSMP visa rules have been deleted, and new rules apply with effect from the 4th December 2006.

Intended Changes to the HSMP Scheme

The HSMP visa is subject to the applicant receiving a certain number of 'points' based on their experiences and skills. The changes that apply to the HSMP visa rules from 4th December 2006 include:

- a) New attributes for which points are awarded such as academic qualifications, previous earnings, age and bonus points for previous work/study in the UK,
- b) Increase in points required from 65 to 75 for both initial HSMP applications and extensions,
- c) A mandatory English language requirement for all applicants,

- d) A more robust test for applicants wishing to extend their HSMP visa.

These changes will not affect individuals who have already received approval for an HSMP visa. They may continue to apply for their entry clearance visa in their country of residence to enter the UK, or, if they are in the UK, submit an application to place the relevant endorsement in their passport.

Next steps

Companies should review their assignee population to determine whether current and future applicants for the HSMP scheme will be eligible for the scheme under the new rules. Further advice should be sought to determine whether specific individuals will qualify to apply under the scheme.

Major changes continue to be made to UK immigration procedures and migration in general and we expect further changes to occur next year. We will keep you updated of further developments via future Alerts.

For further information please contact your local Ernst & Young Human Capital professional, or in The UK:

Rebekah Allen

Tel: +44 207 951 2252

E-mail: rallen@uk.ey.com

Michelle Vilanou

Tel: +44 207 951 9074

E-mail: mvilanou@uk.ey.com

Amanda Seward

Tel: +44 207 951 8213

E-mail: aseward@uk.ey.com

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