

# New UK Work Visa Routes Opening This Spring

**Following a major shake-up of the UK Immigration Rules, overseas businesses will soon be presented with a wider range of visa options when seeking to establish a presence in or transfer staff to the UK for temporary assignments.**

As part of its long-term plan to make the UK a global hub for top talent, the government is set to introduce several new business immigration categories this spring, which are designed to facilitate entry of the most highly skilled from around the world.

The High Potential Individual visa, the Scale-up visa and the Global Business Mobility visa will all open for applications in a matter of weeks. However, overseas businesses looking to utilise these new routes for their employees should be aware of potential delays in the processing of UK visa applications due to the Ukraine crisis.

In this article, we explore the basic principles of each new category and provide an update on current visa processing times for applications filed outside the UK.

## The High Potential Individual Visa

The High Potential Individual route has been designed to make it easier for overseas citizens to come to the UK without a job offer if they demonstrate high potential.

This unsponsored route is for recent graduates of top global universities, who want to work, or look for work in the UK following their studies. Applicants must have either a bachelor's or postgraduate degree qualification from one of the top global universities outside the UK as published in the Global Universities List by the Home Office, awarded during the last 5 years from the date of application.

The list will be compiled on an annual basis and consists of eligible non-UK institutions that are included in the list of the top 50 universities in at least two of the following ranking systems:

- Times Higher Education World University Rankings
- Quacquarelli Symonds World University Rankings
- The Academic Ranking of World Universities.

Under the High Potential Individual route, applicants with a qualification equivalent to a UK Bachelor's or Master's level degree will be permitted to stay for 2 years, and applicants holding a qualification equivalent to a UK PhD will be able to stay for 3 years.

Of the three new routes, the Global Business Mobility route is likely to be the most commonly used by businesses

## The Scale-Up Visa

The Scale-up route is for talented individuals recruited by a UK Scale-up sponsor, who have the skills needed to enable to Scale-up business to continue growing. This category is intended to help the UK's fastest growing businesses to access overseas talent.

Applicants in this route must have a sponsored job offer from an authorised UK scale-up company. The job offer above must be skilled to graduate level (RQF 6 and equivalent) and be paid a salary of at least £33,000 per year or the going rate for the occupation, whichever is higher.

To register for this route, a company will need to demonstrate that they have an annualised growth of at least 20% for the previous 3-year period in terms of turnover or staffing. Companies will also need to have had a minimum of 10 employees at the start of this 3-year period. The Government will consider further ways in which scale-up companies may be able to register for this route in due course.

Under the Scale-up route, permission will be granted for 2 years. To extend their permission to stay, applicants must have PAYE earnings of at least £33,000 per year for at least 50% of their time in the route. Extensions will be granted for 3 years. The route also leads to settlement in the UK, providing the applicant meets the requirements.

## The Global Business Mobility Visa

Of the three new routes being introduced this spring, the Global Business Mobility route is likely to be the most commonly used by businesses. This 'umbrella category' consists of five sponsored routes for overseas businesses seeking to establish a presence in, or transfer staff to, the UK for temporary assignments.

The new routes will replace four existing work categories and create a new provision for secondments. As well as rebranding to make these provisions more easily identifiable by businesses seeking to send workers to the UK, the requirements and conditions for each have also been simplified and consolidated where possible to provide greater clarity to employers and workers.

The five routes will correspond to different assignment types as follows:

- **Senior or Specialist Worker** – For senior managers or specialist employees who are being assigned to a UK business linked to their employer overseas. This route replaces the Intra-Company Transfer (ICT) route
- **Graduate Trainee** – For workers on a graduate training course leading to a senior management or specialist position and who are required to do a work placement in the UK. This route replaces the Intra-Company Transfer Graduate Trainee route
- **UK Expansion Worker** – For senior managers or specialist employees who are being assigned to the UK to undertake work related to a business's expansion to the UK. This route replaces the Sole Representative provisions in the Representative of an Overseas Business route
- **Service Supplier** – For contractual service suppliers employed by an overseas service provider and self-employed independent professionals based overseas, that need to undertake an assignment in the UK to provide services covered by one of the

UK's international trade commitments. This route replaces the contractual service supplier and independent professional provisions in the Temporary Work – International Agreement route

- **Secondment Worker** – For workers being seconded to the UK as part of a high value contract or investment by their employer overseas. This is a new route in the Immigration Rules.

of Ukraine. For this reason, applications for work, study and family visas may take longer to process at the present time.

'Priority' and 'super priority' visa services have also been temporarily suspended for new work, study and family visa applications, and it is not yet known when these services will resume.

With this in mind, employers should factor in the potential for longer waiting times if their employees will be applying for a visa under the new routes this spring.

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### Longer Visa Processing Times For Overseas Applicants

UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) is currently prioritising applications under the Ukraine Family Scheme, in response to the humanitarian crisis caused by the invasion



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