

IMPORTANT CHANGES TO TIERS 2 AND 5 FROM APRIL 2009

The UK Border Agency have announced that premium services will commence for Tiers 1, 2 and 5 at its public enquiry offices, from 6 April 2009. This will allow same day processing for applicants, which for the first time includes highly skilled workers – it was never previously possible to process in-country HSMP applications on this basis.

However, given the current economic climate, the Government has also decided to make it more difficult for foreign workers to enter the UK under the Points Based System.

With effect from 1 April, changes will be made to Tier 2 to strengthen the resident labour market test and to use the current shortage occupation lists to develop focused training for resident workers.

However, the most significant change affects Tier 1, with the Government raising the minimum qualification to a Master's degree. This will exclude a large number of applicants who ordinarily use Tier 1. It is not currently clear how this change will affect existing Tier 1 visa holders with a bachelor's degree when they need to extend their leave.

The minimum salary level to score points for Tier 1 will also be increased from £16,000 to £20,000.

Finally, the Government have asked the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) to produce a report on restricting Tier 2 further and whether additional changes to the Tier 1 criteria should be introduced.

If you have any queries, please get in touch with your usual Parker & Co contact.

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