



AUSTRALIAN CONSULATE GENERAL
HO CHI MINH CITY

VISA AND CITIZENSHIP OFFICE

Changes to the Student Visa Program – 27 March 2010

From 27 March 2010, several changes to Australia's Student visa program will come into effect.

These changes are designed to strengthen the integrity of the Student visa program and to help streamline visa application procedures for some clients. These changes apply to all students worldwide

The changes that have the greatest impact on students making their Student visa applications overseas are:

- new migration regulations which require Student visa applicants who wish to study two or more courses as a package on their Student visa, to meet the highest Assessment Level which applies to any of the courses in their package of study (with the exception of ELICOS courses); and
- a reduction of the Assessment Levels for Postgraduate Research (Subclass 574) Student visas.

Course Packaging Assessment Levels

Student visa applicants must provide evidence in support of their application based on the Assessment Level (AL) which applies to their application. There are five assessment levels; Assessment Level 1 represents the lowest evidentiary requirements and Assessment Level 5, the highest.

Student visa applicants can apply to study two or more courses on the one Student visa. This is known as 'Course Packaging'. 'Course Packaging' is where a Student visa applicant seeks to combine a **preliminary** course (or courses) of study with a **main** course of study. These students apply for the visa Subclass which corresponds to the **main** course of study.

If a Student visa applicant is only studying one course, then their Assessment Level is based on the country of the passport they hold and the Subclass of visa which corresponds to that course of study.

From 27 March 2010, the Assessment Level of a Student visa applicant's preliminary course (or courses) affects the evidentiary requirements the student must meet. Where the Assessment Level of a **preliminary** course is higher than the Assessment Level for the **main** course (with the exception of English language courses) students will be assessed against the evidentiary requirements of the highest Assessment Level in their package of courses.

Example: A student from Vietnam has received offers from Australian education providers to study the following courses in Australia:

- a preliminary English language course in the Independent ELICOS sector (Subclass 570) subject to Assessment Level 3;
- a Diploma course in the Vocational Education & Training sector (subclass 572) subject to Assessment Level 3; and
- a Bachelor degree in the Higher Education sector (Subclass 573) subject to Assessment Level 2.

Currently, this student can package all three courses and apply for a Higher Education sector (Subclass 573) visa and be subject to Assessment Level 2.

Under the new arrangements, the student will be subject to Assessment Level 3 requirements against the **main** course (Bachelor degree).

This is because the Assessment Level for the Diploma course attracts the highest Assessment Level in the package, and the Assessment Level for the English course is excluded from the Assessment Level calculation.



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Streamlining Postgraduate Research Sector Student visa applications

From 27 March 2010, the Assessment Levels for international students seeking to apply for a Postgraduate Research (Subclass 574) Student visa, to obtain a Doctoral or Masters by Research degree, have been reduced as follows:

- countries previously listed at Assessment Level 3 or 4 will move to Assessment Level 2;
- countries previously listed at Assessment Level 1 will remain at this level;
- countries previously listed at Assessment Level 2, which are not mentioned below, will remain at this level;
- the following passport countries currently listed at Assessment Level 2 will move to Assessment Level 1:

- | | | |
|--------------|----------------------------|-----------|
| ○ Bulgaria | ○ Jordan | ○ Tonga |
| ○ Costa Rica | ○ Laos | ○ Turkey |
| ○ East Timor | ○ Maldives | ○ Uruguay |
| ○ Guam | ○ Northern Mariana Islands | ○ Vanuatu |
| ○ Israel | ○ Solomon Islands | |

Assessment Level 1 countries (including those countries listed above) will be eligible to make their initial and subsequent Student visa applications using eVisa. Vietnam will remain an Assessment Level 1 country for the purposes of this subclass.

Frequently asked questions

Course Packaging

I am currently in the middle of studying a packaged course for which I have a visa for the full package. Will this new legislation affect me?

No. Only applications made on or after 27 March 2010 are affected.

I am currently in the middle of studying a packaged course for which I have a visa for the length of the first course only. Will this new legislation affect me?

Yes. If you make a new application for a Student visa on or after 27 March 2010, your Assessment Level will be the highest Assessment Level of any of the remaining courses of study in your package of courses.

My main course is Assessment Level 1, but I wish to package this course with a preliminary course which is Assessment Level 2, can I lodge my initial application using eVisa?

If your preliminary course is English language (ELICOS) you will be able to lodge your initial application using eVisa. If your preliminary course is any other course besides English Language then you will not be able to lodge your initial application using eVisa. You may be able to make lodge your initial application through an eVisa agent if you are from one of the following countries: People's Republic of China, India, Indonesia or Thailand. For more information on eVisa agents, please see: <http://www.immi.gov.au/students/>.

Why has the Department changed course packaging arrangements?

The change is in response to concerns that applicants were enrolling in courses that they may not intend to undertake in order for their Student visa application to be assessed in accordance with a lower Assessment Level. This change seeks to align the Student visa assessment criteria to the highest risk course that the applicant will undertake. Prospective students who apply for a Student visa to undertake a package of courses will be assessed against the highest Assessment Level in their package, irrespective of their main course. This change will encourage students to make enrolment choices based on their desired field of study rather than migration requirements.



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Why has the Department lowered the Assessment Levels in the Postgraduate Research Sector?

Students from the Postgraduate Research sector generally pose a lower immigration risk. The Australian Government has prioritised attracting prospective students in this sector to study in Australia. By reducing the Assessment Levels, Postgraduate Research students from all countries can access streamlined application procedures.

Will the new Assessment Levels for the Subclass 574 visa be taken into account with regard to course packaging?

Yes. Students who package a Postgraduate Research (Subclass 574) Student visa with a preliminary course which has a higher Assessment Level than that for the Subclass 574 visa, will be subject to the higher Assessment Level of their preliminary course (except for ELICOS).

Are the Assessment Levels for other Student visa subclasses also changing on 27 March 2010?

No. Only the Assessment Levels for Subclass 574 visas are changing.

Useful Information

Specific information on applying for a Student visa for students in Australia is available by phoning **131 881**.

For students located outside Australia, contact details for DIAC offices are available on the Department's website and at the foot of this notice.

See: <http://www.immi.gov.au/contacts/overseas/>

Further information on applying for a Student visa is available on the Department's website.

See: <http://www.immi.gov.au/students/>