

International Business Committee

Arrangements to Facilitate Entry of Talent and Professionals

This paper outlines the admission arrangements for talent and professionals of Hong Kong.

Overview

2. The Government endeavours to enhance the quality of Hong Kong's working population and competitiveness through investing in education and training of local talent, attracting Hong Kong talent living abroad to return, and at the same time attracting and retaining non-local talent. This is being pursued by different bureaux and departments through various means which include cleaning up the environment, upholding a low-and-simple tax regime, ensuring a conducive business environment, etc.

3. The Security Bureau and Immigration Department (ImmD) contribute to the overall scheme on the immigration front. We endeavour to facilitate the entry of non-local talent by administering an open regime for the issue of employment visas and entry permits.

Admission Arrangements

4. Hong Kong has a liberal immigration regime towards the admission of talent and professionals. In 2007, over 33 000 talent and professionals from different parts of the world, which represents a two-fold increase over 2003, were admitted for working or settling in Hong Kong through a number of avenues.

Entry for Employment as Professionals

5. Professionals from around the world are welcome to come and

take up employment in Hong Kong, so long as the job cannot be readily taken up by the local workforce; and is remunerated at the prevailing market rate. These requirements aim to strike a balance between protecting the local labour force and enabling employers to admit the talent they need. There are no quota, nor any restrictions on employment sectors or geographical origins of the entrants (except for a few places because of security/immigration concern¹). Since the reunification, over 210 000 talent and professionals have been admitted for employment in Hong Kong.

Entry as Talent

6. To enhance Hong Kong's pool of human capital, the Government introduced the Quality Migrant Admission Scheme (QMAS) in June 2006. Under the scheme, talented people from around the world with proven ability in any area may apply to enter and settle in Hong Kong without first securing an offer of local employment. Applicants are only required to provide basic information such as academic attainment and work experience, plus a brief plan on what they intend to do after entering Hong Kong. By end May 2008, nearly 500 places have been allotted under the scheme to applicants from a wide array of professions, ranging from the commercial sectors to arts and sports.

Stay/Entry for Employment as Non-local Graduates

7. Under the Government's initiative to further develop Hong Kong as a regional education hub, new immigration measures to attract and retain non-local graduates to live and work in Hong Kong have been put in place with effect from May 2008. Specifically, non-local fresh graduates of full-time locally-accredited programmes at degree or above levels may stay for one year in Hong Kong to take up employment freely. Those who had previously graduated in Hong Kong may also return to work, so long as their job is at a level commonly taken up by degree holders and is remunerated at the market rate. The new measures are among the most liberal ones in the developed economies around the world.

¹ These countries include Afghanistan, Albania, Cambodia, Cuba, Laos, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Nepal and Vietnam. However, the Government also considers from time to time possible relaxation taking into account the latest political and economic development of the countries concerned.

Enhancement Measures

8. We endeavour to facilitate the entry of talent and professionals, and seek to streamline and enhance our admission arrangements on an on-going basis. To make the system more user-friendly, a series of major initiatives have been introduced in recent years, including:

- (a) Introduction of the QMAS in June 2006, which enables non-local talent to enter Hong Kong without the requirement of securing an offer of local employment beforehand; and
- (b) Liberalisation of the dependant policy in 2006 and 2007, which enables dependants² of non-local talent and professionals to take up employment without the need to obtain ImmD's prior approval, as well as allows the Mainland dependants of foreigners and overseas Chinese to reside in Hong Kong.

9. To cast our net wider for quality migrants, the Government enhanced the QMAS in January 2008 by relaxing various restrictions and prerequisites. For example, the age limit of 50 was lifted and candidates aged 51 or above are now eligible to enter the selection pool; the marking scheme was relaxed to make it possible for younger degree holders with less, or even no, working experience to meet the passing mark for further assessment. Furthermore, marks will be accorded to applicants who are proficient in a foreign language in addition to Chinese or English.

10. Apart from enhancing the existing admission arrangements, simplified application procedures for entry for employment as professionals and for training were introduced by ImmD in May 2008 as follows:

² Spouse and dependant children under the age of 18.

	Before May 2008	Since May 2008
(a)	Different application forms for different employment-related admission schemes	One simplified and integrated application form ³ for entry for employment as professionals
(b)	Separate form for application for entry of accompanying dependants	The same form of applicant covering accompanying dependants as well
(c)	All supporting documents were required for each and every application	Certain documents relating to the employing/sponsoring companies exempted ⁴

With the new simplified application form and the streamlined measures, application under our admission arrangements is now more user-friendly to both applicants and their local employing/sponsoring companies.

11. The Government will in parallel continue to step up the publicity of the admission arrangements through various channels, including making better use of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices overseas and in the Mainland on the external promotion, partnering with relevant parties like chambers of commerce, business groups, etc. We would also actively engage stakeholders and take into account suggestions on how our immigration regime may evolve to meet changing needs and be even more user-friendly for the business community.

Comments and Suggestions Welcome

12. Amid the global competition for talent, we are committed to upholding a liberal and facilitating immigration regime. In this regard, the Commission on Strategic Development chaired by the Chief Executive has recommended, among other initiatives to attract and retain talent, streamlining the admission of high-end labour like executives and professionals by waiving the requirement for employers to prove that the

³ Two separate copies for completion by the applicant and the employing company.

⁴ Provided that the employing/sponsoring company had successfully obtained an employment or training visa/entry permit for a non-local in the past 18 months immediately before the submission of application, certain documents relating to the employing/sponsoring company will be exempted, e.g. the business registration certificate, financial statement, company background, etc.

job vacancies cannot be readily filled by local labour. The Government is now looking into the matter and would welcome views from Members.

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