

New Visa routes announced - UK Innovation Strategy

One aim of the Innovation Strategy is to generate innovation through new Visa routes - what does this mean for UK businesses?

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On 22 July 2021, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy published a policy paper which sets out the UK Governments plans to 'make the UK a world leader in science, research and innovation.' [The Innovation Strategy](#) aims to achieve goals of levelling up UK economy and creating high value new jobs and trading opportunity, making the UK a global hub for innovation by 2035.

One of the pillars of the strategy is the use of people to generate innovation through immigration with the introduction of High Potential Individual Visa and Scale Up Visa routes, designed to attract and retain globally mobile and innovative individuals wanting to share talent in the UK.

Some of the key elements are:

- A High Potential Individual will be able to come to the UK to work without a job offer, so UK employers will not need a sponsor licence to employ these individuals who are in the UK or planning to work in the UK. The route will be open to those who 'have graduated from a top global university.' This route will give eligible nationals to flexibly work, switch jobs or employers, settle in the UK and make contributions to the UK economy.
- The Scale Up Visa is for skilled migrant workers who have a job offer from a Scale Up which is defined as a business that demonstrate an average revenue or employment growth rate over a 3 year period greater than twenty percent and a minimum of 10 employees at the start of the three year period. Additionally, the applicant will need to be paid a minimum salary threshold.
- There will also be a new Global Mobility Visa referred to in the policy which aims to make it easier to transfer employees to the UK branch of an international company.

The policy paper also aims to simplify the current Innovator Visa route which intends to make the route more accessible and desirable. Applicants will need to show their business has high potential to grow and add value to the UK and that it is innovative rather than having to prove growth in international markets as is the case currently.

It remains to be seen if control will be given back to non-UK entrepreneurs, however the reforms are a step in the right direction. Nonetheless, most overseas recruits will still fall into the category of skilled migrant workers needing sponsorship rather than the more 'elite' new visa categories.

It is a question of watch this space for more information as Immigration practitioners await a statement of changes to the immigration rules to discover more detail and how it will help individuals to work in the UK and UK companies.

In the meantime, currently UK businesses continue to desperately need industry specific visas or lower skilled visas to address the recruitment crisis as a result of Brexit and the end of free movement for EU nationals. Therefore, are looking to eligibility under alternative immigration categories.

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