

Migration changes ahead?

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The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) has now published its report into two commissions – the first on whether a points-based system is the way forward, and the second on the appropriate level of any salary thresholds included. Both were intended to assist with framing the UK's immigration policy to commence at the end of the Brexit transition period (January 2021).

In respect of the UK's current "Tier 2 (General)" (an entry route for skilled workers who have already secured a job offer), the MAC does not recommend any changes to this framework – saying that the "combination of skill eligibility and a salary threshold works well for an employer-driven system". However, it did suggest that the attempts to label this framework as a points-based-system were "pointless" (as applicants need to meet all the criteria to be successful) and recommended both lowering the salary threshold from £30,000 to £25,600 and expanding the scheme to include medium and highly skilled workers. In the fields of education and health, the MAC recommends using National pay scales as the relevant salary threshold.

In respect of the current "Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent)" (an entry route for those without a job offer), the MAC concluded that this was not working well, with the skills bar for an entry set too high. A points-based system could, therefore, be introduced for this group of individuals, with higher points awarded for the areas the Government wishes to attract. The report recommends a focus more on high potential, rather than established exceptional talent, and stresses that caution should be exercised in respect of the number of visas issued.

The Government has not yet indicated whether it intends to adopt the recommendations in the report – although it has previously been pressing for an "Australian-style points-based-system". Whichever approach is to be taken, steps will need to be taken to ensure that something is in place for post-Brexit immigration – with sufficient time for both employers and migrants to get to grips with the steps that they will need to take, and the criteria they will need to be met, from January 2021.

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