



Frequently asked questions

The University Sector Streamlined Visa Processing (Recommendation 3)

The following information provides further detail on Knight Review changes to the student visa program.

What is streamlined visa processing?

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (the department) will assess student visa applicants who lodge their applications on or after 24 March 2012, with a Confirmation of Enrolment from a participating university in Australia at Bachelor, Masters or Doctoral degree level as though they were a lower migration risk (similar to the current Assessment Level 1), regardless of their country of origin.

If I am eligible for streamlined visa processing can I lodge my application online?

Streamlined visa processing does not change the online lodgement arrangements that were in place immediately prior to 24 March 2012. That is, if you did not have access to online lodgement for Student visa applications prior to 24 March 2012, you did **not** gain access to online lodgement under streamlined visa processing.

Which university applicants are eligible for streamlined processing?

Eligible applicants are those enrolled in:

- Bachelor degrees
- 2 plus 2 (or 3 plus 1) arrangements with partner universities
- Masters degrees by coursework
- Masters degrees by research
- Doctoral degrees
- English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) and/or foundation and other preparatory courses, including Vocational Education and Training courses, which are explicitly packaged with an eligible university course at the time when the offer of enrolment is made
- semester or year long non-award courses at a university in Australia as part of their home university's degree course and/or as part of an agreed student exchange between universities.

Which university applicants are not eligible for streamlined processing?

Streamlined processing arrangements are not available for students enrolled in:

- short courses
- Associate degrees

- Graduate diplomas
- Graduate certificates
- Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas
- non-award courses (except as mentioned above)
- courses below Bachelor level delivered by universities which are dual sector (Vocational Education and Training and university).

Which universities are participating in the streamlined visa processing arrangements?

Of the 42 universities operating in Australia, 41 are currently participating in the streamlined visa processing arrangements.

See: <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2013L00436>

Individual universities need to make a formal application to participate in the streamlining arrangements. The guidelines which set out the requirements and obligations for individual universities who want to participate in the streamlined visa processing arrangements can be found on the website.

See: www.immi.gov.au/business-services/education-providers/streamlined-visa-arrangements.htm

Why are the streamlined arrangements only for the university sector?

In his report, the Strategic Review of the Student Visa program 2011, the Hon Michael Knight AO observed that there are sound public policy reasons for providing benefits to universities, namely:

- the universities are the spearhead of Australia's international reputation for education
- quality is high right across the entire university sector in Australia
- governments and regulators traditionally treat universities differently to other education providers
- high quality is preserved by keeping the number of institutions recognised as universities relatively small
- because the sector is small, it is easy to monitor and regulate
- the university sector is very stable
- Australian taxpayers have a huge financial stake in Australian universities
- international students generally stay longer in a university course than with other educational providers
- overall university students have proven to be relatively low risk from a migration integrity perspective.

How do the streamlined visa processing arrangements work?

Students with a confirmation of enrolment for an eligible course in a participating university in Australia will generally have reduced evidentiary requirements when applying for a student visa, regardless of their country of origin, as they would be assessed as though they were a lower migration risk (similar to the current Assessment Level 1).

The students still have to meet requirements in regard to English-language proficiency and financial capacity and will have to satisfy the genuine temporary entrant requirement, as do Assessment Level 1 applicants. However, they will not have the same documentary burdens that currently exist under the higher Assessment levels.

In addition, all applicants will still be subject to basic requirements such as having health insurance and not being a security or health risk. The department also reserves the right to look more closely at applications that pose a particular concern.

What do I need from a university to be eligible for streamlined visa processing?

To be eligible for streamlined visa processing, you need to provide a confirmation of enrolment for an eligible course at a participating university when you lodge your student visa application.

Am I eligible for streamlined visa processing if I only have a letter of offer from a university?

No. You must provide a confirmation of enrolment for an eligible course at a participating university when you lodge your application to be eligible for streamlined visa processing. If you have received a letter of offer from a participating university but not a confirmation of enrolment, you are not eligible for streamlined visa processing.

Am I eligible for streamlined visa processing if I study a prerequisite English language tuition, foundation or bridging course before my main course of study?

If you apply for a package of courses comprising an enabling course (such as a prerequisite English language tuition, foundation or bridging course) followed by the main course (for example, a Bachelor degree from a participating university), you must provide a certificate of enrolment in the enabling course(s) and the main course in your package at the time that you lodge your application to be eligible for streamlined visa processing.

An enabling course must be provided by a participating university or by their nominated educational business partner. A list of universities participating in the streamlined visa processing arrangements and their nominated educational business partners is available.

See: <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2013L00436>

Which educational business partners are included in the streamlined visa processing arrangements?

A list of universities participating in the streamlined visa processing arrangements and their nominated educational business partners is available.

See: <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2013L00436>

Can I still apply for a student visa if I am not eligible for streamlined visa processing?

Yes. If you are not eligible for streamlined processing you can still apply for a student visa under the existing assessment level arrangements.

What if my preferred education provider is not part of the arrangements?

Students need to apply under the existing student visa application processes if their preferred education provider is not a participant in the streamlined visa processing arrangements.

More information about how to apply for a student visa can be found on the department's website.

See: www.immi.gov.au/students/students/chooser/

What are the benefits of streamlined visa processing?

Under the streamlined processing arrangements, universities can be confident that the majority of their students will have their visa applications processed quickly. In addition, student visa applicants applying under the streamlining arrangements will generally have reduced evidentiary requirements.

Streamlined processing will help universities to support increased numbers of high-quality, genuine international students and will help to make Australia a destination of choice for international students.

Are there any changes to where I lodge my application under streamlined visa processing?

No. The streamlined visa processing arrangements do not impact on visa lodgement processes.

Further information on how to apply under streamlined visa processing is available.

See: www.immi.gov.au/students/students/573-0/applying.htm

Do I need to provide additional documents to the department if my university is part of the streamlined visa processing arrangements?

No. However, the department may request additional evidence from applicants during the visa assessment processes, depending upon the circumstances of the case.

What additional information do students need to supply to universities under the streamlining arrangements?

It is a matter for each university to determine what information may be required.

What are assessment levels?

Currently, assessment levels serve to align student visa requirements to the immigration risk posed by applicants from a particular country studying in a particular education sector. Assessment Level 1 represents the lowest immigration risk and Assessment Level 5 the highest. The higher the assessment level, the greater the evidence an applicant is required to demonstrate to support their claims for the grant of a student visa.

Further information about student visa assessment levels can be found on the department's website.

See: www.immi.gov.au/students/student-visa-assessment-levels.htm

What is meant by 2 plus 2 (or 3 plus 1) arrangements with partner universities?

The 2 plus 2 program is described as a formal structured joint program undertaken through partner universities, with two years at the overseas university and two years at a university in Australia.

The 3 plus 1 program is described as a formal structured joint program undertaken through partner overseas and universities in Australia with three years at one university and one year at the other university.

Some joint programs can also last longer than four years in total, with students undertaking, for example, 3 plus 2 programs of study overseas and in Australia. These programs are also included in this definition.

Where do I go for more information?

More information will be provided on the department's website as it becomes available.

See: www.immi.gov.au/students/knight/