

Extension of Streamlined Visa Processing Arrangements and Discussion of the Draft Assessment Level Framework Review – Stakeholder Roundtable

9 August 2012, 10am – 12noon

Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Level 5, 300 Elizabeth Street Sydney NSW

Opening comments

- The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (the department) outlined key elements of proposals to extend streamlining-type visa processing arrangements (SVP) to certain non-university education providers: small number of providers to be invited to participate in arrangements; the Australian Skills and Quality Authority and the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency to be consulted prior to inviting the low immigration risk providers; that there would be tight timeframes and capacity constraints for implementation.
- The department discussed other elements of the proposed arrangements including that:
 - Commitment plans would be similar to those provided by the universities
 - Panel to assess commitment documents
 - Panel to make recommendations to the Minister on which providers should be eligible to participate in streamlining-type arrangements
 - Participation to be based on the provider maintaining an AL of 1 or 2
- The department outlined recommendations of the Assessment Level Framework Review report (the Review) including those relating to:
 - Factors for Assessment Levels
 - Simplifying risk categories
 - Risk weightings
 - Extension of streamlining arrangements similar to those that apply now for universities.
- The department noted potential implementation challenges including: complexity and intensity of the work; provider having the economies of scale necessary; and that the department needed a sufficiently high number of active student visa holders to have confidence in the AL.

Stakeholder feedback

Arrangements for providers with fewer than 400 international students

- s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d) concerned that non-university education providers with fewer than 400 international students were not being accommodated under either of the proposed options.
- s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d) noted there was a process for a small number of providers, but that the model did not address all non-university education providers.
- s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d) indicated that many providers in the ELICOS sector would not have the 'critical mass' to be included under the proposed extension of SVP.
- The department noted 400 student visas was the number at which there was a 95 per cent statistical confidence level and that the aim is to implement something achievable in the short term with long-term sectoral benefits.

The merits of an Assessment Level framework risk model

s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d) stated that the model proposed was not a provider risk model and that the majority of providers would not be treated differently. s. 47F(1), s. 47E stated an opportunity had been missed to simplify the risk model to something along the lines of a Low/Medium/High risk model.

- NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet noted that the AL Framework only seems to focus on lower risks, whereas traditional risk models result in most of the focus on higher risks. For example, there is no specific treatment under the current AL Framework model for providers who are considered medium to high risk.
- The department noted that the model focused on immigration risk rather than educational quality.

Conflation of immigration risk with educational quality

- s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d) concerned about the possible perception that non-university education providers considered a higher immigration risk would be linked with offering lower-quality education. This perception could harm the reputation of Australia as an attractive destination for international students.
- s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d) was concerned that eligibility for streamlined visa processing could be perceived as a de facto 'endorsement' by the Australian Government of certain providers over others.
- s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d) stated that much of the anxiety would be the perception of a non-university education provider that became ineligible for SVP arrangements.
- The department noted that messaging around the extension of SVP would need to include that eligibility for SVP does not necessarily equate to an assessment on the quality and characteristics of the education provider.

Amalgamation

s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d) suggested smaller providers be allowed to group together to get sufficient numbers for participation in SVP arrangements.

s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d) queried whether the student visa holders of smaller providers that were under the 'same umbrella' could be combined to exceed the threshold of 400 active student visas.

- The department noted the importance of it only dealing with one legal entity and that amalgamating could complicate arrangements.

Packaging

- s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d) suggested that packaging be included in the proposed arrangements, for example for partners in the arrangements. The department noted that packaging would add to the complexity of arrangements and may delay implementation.

Capacity issues for implementation

s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d) noted that there would be numerous non-university education providers, who for reasons of lack of scale, for example, would not have sufficient infrastructure and resourcing to be eligible for the arrangements. s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d) queried whether extra resourcing could be made available for smaller providers.

- The department indicated that capacity issues could emerge for both the non-university sector and the department in implementing these arrangements.

Comments on Assessment Level Framework Review

- s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d) suggested that the financial requirements for AL3 and AL4 should be no more stringent than those required by other countries.
- s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d) stated that if the minimum English requirements were removed it would increase the stability of the ELICOS sector.
- The department noted that minimum English levels are a fundamental element of the student visa integrity framework.

Other comments

- s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d) was concerned that under the proposals the state-based schools sector regulators would not be consulted.
- The department indicated that the intention is to treat all sectors equally and that there was scope to consult a wider-range of regulators.
- s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d) cautioned that data for non-university education providers can be volatile and difficult to understand.

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANTS	
Minister for Immigration and Citizenship	The Hon Chris Bowen MP
Ministerial staff	s. 47F(1)
International education stakeholders	
s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d), Executive Director(External Reference Group Member (ERG))	s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d),
s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d) (ERG)	s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d)
s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d), Director, International Engagement & Business Development (ERG)	s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d),
s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d), CEO (ERG)	s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d),
s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d), Deputy CEO	s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d)
s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d)	s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d)
s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d)	s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d)
s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d)	s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d)
s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d)	s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d)
s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d)	s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d)
s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d)	s. 47F(1), s. 47E(d)
Commonwealth agencies	
Department of Industry, Innovation, Research and Tertiary Education	s. 47F(1)
Austrade	s. 47F(1)
State/territory agencies	
NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet	s. 47F(1)
NT Department of Education and Training	s. 47F(1)
QLD Department of Education and Training	s. 47F(1)
SA Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology	s. 47F(1)
TAS Government Education & Training International	s. 47F(1)
VIC Department of Business and Innovation	s. 47F(1)
WA Department of Education Services	s. 47F(1)
Department of Immigration and Citizenship	
Peter Vardos, Deputy Secretary	Client Services Group
Kruno Kukoc, First Assistant Secretary	Migration and Temporary Entry Division
Paula Williams, Assistant Secretary	Education, Tourism & International Arrangements Branch
Louise Smith	Global Manager, Operational Integrity
Peta Dunn	Global Manager, Temporary visas
	Student Implementation Taskforce
	Student Policy Projects Section
	Student Implementation Taskforce