

Mobility: Immigration alert

October 2022



United Arab Emirates

Changes outlined to short-term and long-term visa categories

Executive summary

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) Government has outlined immigration changes to the way in which individuals work and reside in the UAE. These changes, which came into effect on 3 October 2022, include the introduction of new visa categories, as well as relaxed application criteria and additional benefits under the Golden Visa scheme.

Short-term visas

Five new short-term visas have been introduced:

- ▶ “Business visas” are available to eligible entrepreneurs and investors, who can apply under this category without the need for a local sponsor.
- ▶ “Temporary work visas” are available to eligible foreign nationals who seek to travel to the UAE to complete temporary work or project-based assignments. Applicants must present a work contract or letter from their employer that confirms the duration of their project in the UAE and a medical certificate at the time of filing their application.
- ▶ “Jobseeker visas” are available to new graduates who hold a degree from an approved university, and to skilled workers who hold a bachelor’s degree or its equivalent. Applicants under this category do not require a UAE national or a local business entity to sponsor or host them.
- ▶ “Visit visas for relatives and friends” are available to friends and relatives of UAE nationals and residents. Applicants must present proof of their relationship or friendship with UAE nationals or residents at the time of filing their application, but they do not require a local sponsor to apply for the visa.

- ▶ “Visas for study and/or training” are available to students or other individuals who seek to pursue courses at UAE universities, educational or research institutes, or attend trainings in the country.

Last year, the UAE Government introduced a new five-year multiple entry tourist visa, which is now available to nationals of all jurisdictions. This visa allows holders to stay in the UAE for up to 90 consecutive days per calendar year, and it can be extended for an additional period of up to 90 consecutive days, for a cumulative stay of up to 180 consecutive days in a calendar year. Applicants must present a passport with a validity of at least six months from the date of filing their application, proof of health insurance, return or onward flight tickets from the UAE and proof that they held at least US\$4,000 (or its equivalent in another currency) in their bank account in each of the six months prior to filing their application.

Five-year Green Visa

The [Green Visa](#) is a new residence permit that grants holders the right of residence in the UAE for up to five years. It is available to the following categories of applicants, who may self-sponsor their application (i.e., they are not required to be sponsored by a local entity):

- ▶ Self-employed foreign nationals or freelancers who hold a self-employment or freelancing visa issued by the UAE’s Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization (MOHRE) and a bachelor’s degree or specialized diploma in their field. Applicants must have earned at least AED 360,000 annually

through self-employment or freelancing assignments in the UAE in the two years prior to filing their application or present proof of funds for the duration of their stay in the UAE.

- ▶ Skilled employees who hold an employment contract from a UAE employer, a bachelor's degree (or its equivalent) and a job at Occupational Levels 1 or 2 as defined by the MOHRE, with a minimum monthly salary of AED 15,000.
- ▶ Investors or partners who seek to establish or engage in commercial activities in the UAE. Applicants must have made qualifying investments in the UAE at the time of filing their application, or present proof that their planned investment has been approved by the target business and local authorities. Applicants who seek to invest in more than one entity must present proof of their total invested capital in the UAE or proof of its approval by the target business and local authorities.

Golden Visas

Self-sponsored [Golden Visas](#), which were previously issued only to investors, entrepreneurs and partners who invest sufficient financial capital in the UAE, special talent (e.g., doctors) and students with outstanding academic records, are now available to the following new categories of applicants, provided they meet all requirements:

- ▶ Investors who purchase a property in the UAE worth at least AED 2,000,000 or one or more off-plan properties (i.e., without taking a mortgage) worth at least AED 2,000,000 from approved local [real estate companies](#), or those who take loans from authorized banks in the UAE to purchase a property in the country
- ▶ Highly skilled professionals who earn a minimum monthly salary of AED 30,000 and hold a bachelor's degree (or its equivalent), relevant work experience, an employment contract with a UAE employer and a job at Occupational Levels 1 or 2 as defined by the MOHRE
- ▶ Entrepreneurs who: (a) are owners or partners of start-up enterprises registered in the UAE as small and medium enterprises that generate annual revenues of at least AED 1,000,000; (b) have secured approval to establish a start-up enterprise in the UAE from a business incubator, the Ministry of Economy or local authorities; or (c) are founders of an entrepreneurial project worth at least AED 7,000,000.
- ▶ Individuals with exceptional talent (e.g., inventors and innovators) in fields such as culture, art, sports and digital technology, who hold an approval certificate or a recommendation letter issued by local authorities
- ▶ Scientists and researchers with high-level achievements in their field, who hold a recommendation letter issued by the Emirates Scientists Council, and a PhD or Master's Degree in Engineering, Technology, Life Sciences or Natural Sciences from one of the highest-ranked universities globally
- ▶ Outstanding (i.e., high-performing) students and graduates who graduated from a secondary school or university in the UAE or one of the 100 highest-ranked universities globally
- ▶ Humanitarian pioneers (e.g., distinguished members of international and regional organizations or public benefit organizations, recipients of prestigious awards in humanitarian fields and distinguished volunteers or sponsors of humanitarian efforts)
- ▶ Frontline workers with demonstrated extraordinary involvement in crises, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic

In addition, successful Golden Visa holders are now eligible to receive the following new benefits:

- ▶ They may stay outside the UAE for a continuous period of up to one year.
- ▶ They may sponsor qualifying family members (e.g., opposite sex spouses and male children under the age of 25) and an unlimited number of domestic helpers.
- ▶ In case of the principal applicant's death before the expiry of their Golden Visa, their dependents may remain in the UAE until the end of the validity period of their individual Golden Visas.

Impact on employers

The introduction of new visas and changes to existing visa regulations are expected to promote economic growth, create new opportunities for foreign nationals in the UAE's local labor market, and help employers attract top talent and reduce costs.

Key steps

EY will continue to monitor these developments. Should you have any questions, we encourage you to contact one of our immigration professionals.

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