

Law & Policy Group

GRIST

Singapore to tighten foreign work pass criteria, boost local jobs

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Companies in Singapore face increased barriers to hiring foreign workers and increased scrutiny of employers' track records for the hiring and training of skilled Singaporeans, following the introduction of new salary and qualification criteria. The measures aim to "ensure a strong Singaporean core" by increasing employment opportunities for Singaporean nationals in professional, management, executive and technician (PMET) roles.

Highlights

Employment Pass (EP) qualifications and salary criteria. The minimum qualifying salary for new EP applicants increased to SG\$4,500 on 1 Sep 2020, and will approximately double for applicants in their forties. The increased salary threshold will apply to EP renewal applicants from 1 May 2021. The EP is a type of work permit that allows foreigners to work in PMET roles.

EP applicants for financial services sector roles. The minimum qualifying salary for new EP applicants in the financial service sector increased to SG\$4,500 on 1 Sep 2020, and a further increase to SG\$5,000 is slated for 1 Dec 2020. An increased qualifying salary will be required for EP applicants in their forties. The new minimum salary criteria will apply from 1 May 2021 to renewal applicants. This is the first time a sector-specific qualifying salary has been introduced.

S Pass applicants and salary criteria. The minimum qualifying salary for new S Pass applicants will increase to SG\$2,500 from 1 Oct 2020 and will apply to renewal applicants from 1 May 2021. An increased minimum salary will be imposed for older and more experienced S Pass applicants. The S Pass allows mid-level skilled staff to work in Singapore.

Evaluation of employer hiring and training practices. Employers applying for EP and S Passes will be evaluated with regard to their track records for hiring and training Singaporean nationals in PMET roles, and for any previous discrimination against qualified Singaporeans.

Fair Consideration Framework

- Employers must fairly consider all Singaporean job applicants regardless of their age, gender, nationality or race in accordance with the Fair Consideration Framework (FCF). The FCF requires employers to advertise jobs first to local jobseekers, follow a fair selection process, and to document the reasons for each candidate's selection.
- The FCF will apply to S Pass applicants from 1 Oct 2020 to encourage increased hiring of mid-skilled Singaporean nationals. From 1 Oct 2020, EP and S Pass roles must be advertised for 28 days (up from 14) to encourage more Singaporean applicants.
- Authorities have warned that discrimination against Singaporeans by employers will be considered "especially unacceptable," and could be punished by reduced or suspended work pass privileges and prosecution. Also, employers face greater scrutiny of their hiring practices and could be placed on an expanded watch list if their PMET workforce profiles "suggest a bias against locals."

Related resources

Non-Mercer resources

- [Information about Employment Pass](#) (Ministry of Manpower)
- [Information on S Pass](#) (Ministry of Manpower)
- [Fair Consideration Framework](#) (Ministry of Manpower)
- [Tightening of work pass requirements](#) (Ministry of Manpower, 27 Aug 2020)
- [Ministry of Manpower's Addendum to the President's Address 2020](#) (Ministry of Manpower, 26 Aug 2020)

Mercer Law & Policy resources

- [Singapore announces budgetary measures to address COVID-19](#) (1 Jun 2020)
- [Singapore to increase permit cost, boost local employment rate](#) (16 Mar 2020)
- [Singapore budget to boost jobs, reduce reliance on foreign workers](#) (20 Feb 2020)

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- [Singapore increases penalties for hiring discrimination \(15 Jan 2020\)](#)

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