# HOW TO APPLY FOR A SKILLED WORKER VISA



Under the Points-Based Immigration System, workers from outside the UK must generally have a visa, sponsored by an employer, in order to work in the UK. This does **not** include 'settled workers', including Irish citizens, who can work in the UK without restrictions.

Most workers from outside the UK in construction are likely to be 'skilled workers' and will require a **Skilled Worker visa** to work in an eligible occupation. Applying for a Skilled Worker visa can be a complex process and Build UK has summarised the key steps to help individuals understand what is involved. Individuals should ensure they set aside sufficient time to review all the information before submitting an application.

## Overview

Confirm eligibility for Skilled Worker visa → Collate the required documents → Apply online → Prove identity → Receive decision on application → Update Skilled Worker visa (if required)

### ✔ Confirm eligibility for Skilled Worker visa

To apply for a Skilled Worker visa, an individual must:

1. Have a confirmed job offer in an eligible occupation which meets the minimum salary requirements for the role and is either:
   - Higher Skilled, or
   - Medium Skilled and on the Immigration Salary List or Temporary Shortage List
2. Work for an employer that has the appropriate sponsor licence
3. Prove their knowledge of English
4. Have sufficient funds to apply and support themselves in the UK.

## ✔ Collate the required documents

As part of the online application process, an applicant must provide certain information and documentation. Some documents are mandatory for all applicants whilst others depend on the applicant's circumstances. If the documents listed below are not in English or Welsh, the applicant must provide a certified translation.

| Mandatory | Additional (depending on circumstances) |
|---|---|
| Certificate of sponsorship reference number, name of employer and their sponsor licence number | Evidence that they have enough personal savings to support themselves in the UK (unless their certificate of sponsorship shows their employer can support them) |
| Proof of knowledge of English | Tuberculosis test results if they are from a listed country |
| A valid passport or other document which shows identity and nationality | Criminal record certificate if working in certain jobs |
| The job's title, annual salary and occupation code | Proof of their relationship with their partner or children if they are applying with them |
| | Valid ATAS certificate if the job involves researching a sensitive subject at PhD level or higher |
| | UK PhD certificate, or unique Ecctis reference number if the qualification is from outside the UK |

## ✔ Apply online

The applicant should have all the documents required before applying online and the process will depend on whether the applicant is:

- outside the UK
- inside the UK and extending a current visa
- inside the UK and switching from a different visa.

Applicants must complete the application form in English, upload the required documentation, pay both the visa fee and health surcharge, and book an appointment at a visa application centre if required.

**Extending a Current Visa**

To extend a current Skilled Worker visa, an applicant must meet the following requirements:

- Their job is the same or in the same occupation code as on their current Skilled Worker visa,
- They are working for the same employer that issued their current certificate of sponsorship, and
- If their job is listed as 'Medium Skilled', they got their first certificate of sponsorship before 22 July 2025 and they have continuously held one or more Skilled Worker visas since they got their first certificate of sponsorship.

**Switching from a Different Visa**

To switch to a Skilled Worker visa from a different type of visa, an applicant must ensure their current visa does not prohibit them from doing so and they must continue to meet the eligibility requirements.

## ✔ Prove identity

Once an applicant has applied online, they will be required to prove their identity. How they do this will depend on whether they are applying from outside or inside the UK and the process will be confirmed once they have applied.

| Outside the UK | Inside the UK |
|---|---|
| • Have their fingerprints and a photograph (biometric information) taken at a visa application centre, or<br>• Use the 'UK Immigration: ID Check' app to create a UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) account to scan their identity document. | • Provide their fingerprints and a photograph (biometric information) at a UK Visa and Citizenship Application Services (UKVCAS) service point, or<br>• Use the 'UK Immigration: ID Check' app to create a UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) account in order to scan their identity document. |

## ✔ Receive decision on application

The applicant will receive a letter or email from UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) with the result of their application which will explain what they need to do next. The timeframe will depend on whether the applicant applied outside or inside the UK:

- **Outside the UK** - A decision is usually made within **30 working days**. If they applied through a visa application centre or using the 'UK Immigration: ID Check' app, they may be able to pay an additional fee to get a faster decision
- **Inside the UK** - A decision is usually made within **eight weeks**. They may be able to pay an additional fee to get a faster decision and this will be confirmed when they apply.

If the **application is successful**, the applicant will receive one of the following which will detail the type of visa, any conditions that apply, and the start and end dates:

- A vignette (sticker) if they gave their biometric information at a visa application centre that goes into their passport.
- Access to their immigration status online if they used the smartphone app to prove their identity.

If an **application is refused**, the applicant will have the right to an administrative review or immigration decision appeal.

## ✔ Update Skilled Worker visa

An individual will need to update their Skilled Worker visa if any of the following apply:

- They change their job and the new job is with a different employer
- Their job changes to a different occupation code and they are not part of a graduate training programme
- They leave a job on the Immigration Salary List for a job that is not on the list.

An individual can apply to update their visa up to three months before the start date of a new job which must meet the eligibility requirements. They will need a new certificate of sponsorship but would only need to provide other documents again if they have been in the UK for less than one year.

Applicants can either continue working in their current job while their new application is being considered, or work out their notice period, as long as they have a current visa. They must **not** start a new job until they have received confirmation that their visa has been successfully updated.

### Further Information

- Build UK's Employing a Worker from Outside the UK Flowchart
- Points-Based Immigration System
- Skilled Worker visa guidance
- Build UK guidance on how to get a Sponsor Licence

*This publication is issued by Build UK Group Limited ("Build UK") to give general guidance only on how to get a Skilled Worker visa. If you require guidance on a specific issue, you should contact UK Visas and Immigration or seek your own independent professional advice.*