

Spring 2022 – An Influx of New Immigration Routes to the UK

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Back in August we reported on proposed additional visa routes slated for launch in Spring 2022 as part of the ‘UK Innovation Strategy’ to help retain the UK’s position as a hub for global business. It’s common for changes to the Immigration Rules to be released each year around March/April, so what can we expect this time around?

Scale-Up visa

This is the route promised in the Autumn 2021 Budget to ‘*help the UK’s fastest-growing businesses to access overseas talent*’. It is intended to attract highly-skilled workers to the UK to work in businesses that are expected to be among the most innovative in a variety of sectors. There are predicted to be around **34,000 businesses** who will qualify for use of the Scale-Up visa, though the precise criteria remain unclear as between innovation, growth, growth potential, size, anticipated size, etc. This route will need some very clear rules from the start or there will inevitably be some difficult value-judgements to be made as to where the economy will get the best “bang for its buck”.

- Applicants under this route are expected to demonstrate English language capabilities, which we imagine will be a similar assessment process and threshold to the Skilled Worker route.
- There will no doubt also be a minimum salary threshold, likely to be in excess of the £25,600 pa currently in place for Skilled Workers.
- Applicants will be able to switch roles, as well as employers once they are in the UK.
- A **fast-track verification** process has also been promised for the route, the details of which are still under wraps for the time being.
- The Home Office will review whether to allow businesses which do not currently meet whatever the detailed requirements turn out to be, yet are projected to have strong growth, to qualify anyway.

High Potential Individual route

In the Autumn 2021 Budget, Chancellor Rishi Sunak noted that 49% of the UK's fastest-growing businesses have at least one foreign-born co-founder and approximately 40% of staff in UK fintechs are from overseas. The High Potential Individual route is a direct response to these statistics, designed to encourage further inward investment (of the right sort – see below) and to attract highly skilled, internationally mobile individuals and usefully-skilled international graduates to the UK. Under this route:

- There is **no requirement for a UK job offer**. Applicants will have the freedom to switch jobs and employers at their leisure.
- Applicants must have graduated from a '**top global university**', although the government has promised to explore the scope to expand this eligibility requirement to encompass other high potential individuals who may not meet this requirement.
- It has been confirmed that time spent on this route can lead to settlement, subject to suitability requirements.

Global Business Mobility route

There is less currently available to say about the planned new GBM route other than that its ETA coincides with the launch of other visa routes this Spring. The route is expected to be part of the existing sponsorship system meaning a sponsor licence will be required for a business to access the route.

While [the Home Office Sponsorship Roadmap announcing the route](#) is light on details, we expect the Global Business Mobility route to follow some of the recommendations made in the Migration Advisory Committee [report](#) into the current Intra-Company Transfer route in October 2021. A pledge has been made to '*make it easier for overseas businesses to assign and manage workers coming to the UK*'.

We'll have to watch this space.

As one door opens....

But one thing we won't have to watch is the Tier 1 Investor route, the so-called "golden visa", which was abolished with immediate effect last week over fears that it facilitated the flow of criminal proceeds and other "dirty money" into the UK from overseas. Attracting inward investment is all very well, apparently, but there are limits, especially when it is politically expedient to have them. It appears that an amended approach will be proposed soon, as the [Home Office's press release](#) on the closure of the route states that settlement in the UK will now be conditional upon applicants "*executing an investment strategy that can show genuine job creation and other tangible economic impacts – passively holding UK investments will no longer be enough to obtain settlement*".

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