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Singapore – Issuance of employment passes

Introduction

This note describes the issuance procedure for Singaporean employment passes. The information presented in the note was collected at a meeting with the Ministry of Manpower at the Employment Pass Service Centre in Singapore and available open source materials.

Work passes and permits are issued to all foreigners working legally in Singapore. The Ministry of Manpower (MOM) administrates the issuance of work passes and permits. The MOM issues several types of work passes and permits for professionals, trainees, students, skilled and semi-skilled workers. For example, S Pass, EntrePass, Personalised Employment pass, Training Employment pass, Work Permit for migrant workers etc. This note only deals with the issuance of the category named 'Employment passes', however according to the MOM the issuance procedure is the same for all the different passes.¹ For more information about the requirements for each category of work passes, consult the MOM's website:

<https://www.mom.gov.sg/passes-and-permits>.

Employment pass application

The employment pass is for foreign professionals who:

- Have a job offer in Singapore.
- Work in a managerial, executive or specialised job.
- Earn a fixed monthly salary of at least \$4,500 Singaporean Dollars (older candidates need higher salaries to qualify).
- Earn a fixed monthly salary of at least \$5,000 (older candidates need higher salaries to qualify) for candidates in the financial services sector.
- Have acceptable qualifications, usually a good university degree, professional qualifications or specialised skills.²

If a company wish to hire a foreigner to work in Singapore, the employer or authorised third party must first apply for an employment pass online.³ During the

¹ Ministry of Manpower, Singapore, October 2019.

² Ministry of Manpower C, 4 May 2022.

³ Ministry of Manpower C, 4 May 2022.

application, the following documents of the employee must be uploaded: Copy of passport, company's latest business profile or instant information registered with ACRA, and educational certificates.⁴

From 1 February 2022, candidates must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 as a condition for their work pass approval.⁵

It is worth noting that MOM will be raising the qualifying salary and introducing Complementarity Assessment Framework (COMPASS) for employment pass applications from 1 September 2022 onwards.⁶

When filling out the application form, the employee's information has to be seamlessly transferred from the passport. MOM uses the copy of the passport to make sure that the personal details are correct.⁷ If MOM decides to grant the work permit, an in-principle approval letter is issued to the employee, which allows the employee to enter Singapore and register for an employment pass within the next six months.

Employment pass registration

Upon arrival in Singapore, the employee must show up in person at MOM to register for an employment pass. During the registration, biometric data (photo and fingerprints of two fingers) is registered.

At the appointment, the employee must also present the following documents for verification: The original passport, candidate's Singapore residential address, which must meet certain housing requirements, a Singaporean medical examination form, in-principle approval letter and the current Short-Term Visit Pass (STVP) or immigration pass details. Finally, details of up to three authorised recipients to receive the card (their mobile number, email address and NRIC number / FIN / passport number) must also be presented and MOM may ask for additional documents.⁸

After the registration and when the documents have been verified, the card is then printed and couriered within four working days. The identity of the employee is validated upon delivery.

An employment pass costs 225 Singaporean dollars (approximately 164 US dollars in 2022) and is usually financed by the employer.⁹ If a card has been lost more than two times, it costs 1,000 Singaporean dollars (approximately 727 US dollars in 2022) to get a new card reissued. In cases where the card has been lost multiple times, the employee is called in for an interview.

⁴ Ministry of Manpower B, 4 May 2022; Ministry of Manpower D, 4 May 2022.

⁵ Ministry of Manpower A, 4 May 2022.

⁶ Ministry of Manpower C, 4 May 2022.

⁷ Ministry of Manpower, Singapore, October 2019.

⁸ Ministry of Manpower E, 4 May 2022.

⁹ Ministry of Manpower A, 4 May 2022.

Validity of an employment pass

Passes from Marts 2018 and onwards are equipped with a QR-code. The app, SGworkPass, allows you to scan the code and reveal the validity of the card. Therefore, the expiration date, which was previously stated on the card, has been removed in favour of the app that can reveal if the card has been cancelled.

Foreign identification number

Foreign identification number (FIN) is a unique number issued by the Immigration and Checkpoint Authority (ICA) and government agencies to foreigners who are working, studying, or residing in Singapore. The number appears on the back of the work pass. A FIN consists of nine characters and is a combination of both numbers and letters.¹⁰

Children

Children of foreign nationals are required to register for a pass within 42 days of birth.¹¹

¹⁰ ICA, 12 July 2021.

¹¹ Ministry of Manpower, 15 June 2022.

References

Written sources

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Oral source

- Ministry of Manpower (October 2019): Interviewed in Singapore.