

Employment Pass Options in Singapore

If you have decided to start a company in Singapore, if you just want to work in Singapore or if you are simply considering where in the world to work and live, the legal documentation that supports your employment is often a factor that gets overlooked. Which employment pass is available to you or which employment pass you choose to apply for can have important implications to you and your family while living and working in a foreign country.

For employment pass options in Singapore, salary and education play a major role. The industry of your employment is also relevant, as well as less obvious factors such as work experience, age and even nationality.

Given that most people are sure of at least ONE factor of their employment criteria, employment pass options will be presented around key individual criterion to facilitate identification of the employment options available to you. Following are some of the key variables and their influence on corresponding work pass options.

Salary

If your monthly salary is below S\$1,800: Foreign Worker Pass

If your monthly salary is above S\$1,800: S Pass

If your monthly salary is below S\$2,500: Training Work Permit

If your monthly salary is between S\$2,500 and S\$3,500: Employment Pass Type Q1

If your monthly salary is between S\$3,500 and S\$7,000: Employment Pass Type P2

If your monthly salary is above S\$7,000: Employment Pass Type P1, Personalized EP

Note that the above passes are not solely dependent on salary. Other work permits not dependent on salary include: EntrePass, EP Eligibility Certificate, Miscellaneous Work Pass, Work Holiday Program and Foreign Student Employment Pass.

Education

If you have University qualifications: EP Eligibility Certificate, S Pass, Work Holiday Program, Employment Pass

If you have a Diploma: S Pass, Training Work Permit, Work Holiday Program

If you have a Technical Certificate: S Pass, Foreign Worker Pass, Training Work Permit

If you have an SPM Qualification/NTC-3 Practical Trade Certificate: Foreign Worker Pass

If you have minimum 8 years formal education: Training Work Permit

It is also important to note that Education and Salary are highly correlated factors and can have an important effect on the actual job options you face, which in turn affect your work permit options.

Other work permits not directly dependent on education include: Personalized EP, EntrePass and Miscellaneous Work Pass.

Industry

If you are in a skilled industry: Foreign Worker Pass, Training Work Permit

If you are in a Specialist/Technical/Professional job: S Pass

Other work permits not directly dependent on industry experience include: Personalized EP, EntrePass, Miscellaneous Work Pass, EP Eligibility Certificate, Work Holiday Program, Foreign Student Employment Pass

After identifying the various passes that are more relevant to you, the following brief outline of the main work passes should provide a better understanding of which one applies to your overall characteristics. Evidently, the best solution is to approach a knowledgeable professional services firm that handles expatriates and company incorporation, to ensure you choose the best pass available to you.

The Regular Employment Pass

This pass is split into 3 different categories (P1, P2, Q1) and is largely dependent on salary requirements. Exemptions aside, for a Q1, your salary must be above S\$2,500, for a P2 your salary must be above S\$3,500 and for a P1 your salary must be above S\$7,000. A person must also sometimes have recognized qualifications in order to be eligible for an EP, such as coming from a listed university or having an official skills certificate or diploma. These are judged on a case basis. Typically, the company hiring a person applies for an EP for them and sponsors them to work in Singapore. Therefore, the EP is only valid for the specific job it states, and if you leave that job, you will require a new EP. An EP holder's family is eligible for a Dependent's Pass (DP), which is valid the duration of the EP. In the case where a family member does not fit DP requirements, they may be eligible for a Long Term Visit Pass (LTVP). This does not apply for Q1 holder family members. Having a DP or LTVP alone, does not allow the pass holder to work in Singapore, a relevant work pass is required.

Personalized Employment Pass

The Personalized EP is relevant to overseas professionals with a minimum monthly salary of S\$7,000, foreigners who graduate from Singapore universities, as well as current and former P1 holders whose last salary was above S\$30,000 annually and current P2 and Q1 holders who also have at least S\$30,000 annual salary. There are various minimum work experience requirements depending on previous salary and status, as well as a general rule that the person cannot have been unemployed for over 6 months to be eligible. Personalized Employment Pass holders' families are eligible for Dependent's Pass as well as Long Term Visit Pass.

EntrePass

The EntrePass is most relevant to entrepreneurs in Singapore and is an excellent starting point for anybody looking to incorporate a company in Singapore. The main requirement to be eligible for an EntrePass is to have a company registered with ACRA, the organization that deals with Company Registration in Singapore. Two types of EntrePass exist, similar to with the EP, names Q1 and P, dependant on salary. As a general requirement, the company must have a minimum paid up capital of S\$50,000 and the EntrePass applicant must have at least 30% ownership and be actively involved in the running of the firm. Also, entrepreneurs in various listed industries are not eligible for an EntrePass, such as coffee shops, foot reflexology, bars and night clubs etc. The family members of EntrePass holders are eligible for Dependent's Pass and Long Term Visit Pass, based on standard criteria.

Dependent's Pass

The dependent's pass is relevant to direct family members of Singapore EP holders, Personalized EP holders, EntrePass holders and S Pass holders. The dependents of these work pass holders i.e. dependent's pass holders, must fulfill various requirements before qualifying. This includes being the spouse of the holder, or being the child of the holder and being below 21 years of age. Legally adopted children, step-children and new born babies are also eligible. Past the age of 21, some DP holders who are the children of the work pass holder may be eligible to apply for a Long Term Visit Pass. DPs are only valid the duration of the EP, Personalized EP, EntrePass or S Pass. DP holders can work in Singapore, but require their own work permit. The DP is an authorization to live and study in Singapore, but not to undertake paid work.

Long Term Visit Pass

The Long Term Visit Pass is relevant to direct family of P1 and P2 EP, P1 and P2 Personalized EP and P EntrePass holders. Direct family members includes common-law spouse, unmarried daughters above 21 years of age, handicapped children above 21 years of age, step children, parents and parents-in-law. Ultimately, sons of work pass holders, who are above 21, are considered to be able to provide for themselves and cannot live in Singapore based on the working situation of either of their parents. However, daughters who are originally DP holders can apply for LTVP when their DP expires. The maximum duration of a LTVP is 60 months (5 years) or whenever the work pass expires, whichever is shorter. Much like a DP, a LTVP does not authorize employment of the LTVP holder, and LTVP holders must apply for their own relevant EP before being able to legally work in Singapore. However, there is a grey area in Singapore law as to whether LTVP holders are able to study in Singapore, or whether they require a student pass.

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From the summary of main work pass types it should be possible to identify at least one that is relevant to you and your family. A good source of information for employment pass options in Singapore is the Singapore Ministry of Manpower website, which gives details on eligibility and application procedures. If incorporating a company in Singapore the professional services firm that you hire to guide you through your company set-up, should be able to advise you on this matter. Ultimately, Singapore is a country that thrives on business and has a proactive business culture. The eligibility for obtaining work permits is more open to foreign talent than many other offshore business hubs. Furthermore, the procedures involved in applying for and acquiring work permits are comprehensive and highly efficient.

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