



China easing work permit requirements for foreign graduates

(Information current as at 25 January 2017)

In 2016 [China announced changes](#) to some of its work visa requirements in Shanghai and Beijing, which saw a partial waiving of the “two year” post-study overseas work experience required to work in China. Guangdong province followed with [similar initiatives](#) in July 2016. These changes were limited to specific regions and revolved around innovation precincts and start-up initiatives.

On 6 January 2017, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security jointly issued a [new policy](#) that allows international graduates who have obtained a Master or Doctoral degree within the past year to apply for a work permit in China without having to demonstrate two years of work experience overseas. This new policy applies to foreign graduates from Chinese institutions as well as from “well known” international higher education institutes, and requires the applicant to demonstrate good grades (80% and above or a B average). A number of other requirements are detailed in the policy. Provincial governments will set quotas on the numbers of foreign graduates recruited on a yearly basis.

The president of the Center for China and Globalization (CCG), a major Chinese think tank, commented on the new policy as a “[major breakthrough](#)” for including graduates from foreign universities (not just Chinese universities), and added that it might be possible to further relax restrictions in the future, including through opening the scheme to bachelor degree graduates.

Just a few days after the announcement of the recent work permit reform, Beijing introduced a [Permanent Residence evaluation system](#) for foreign experts and start-up group members in Zhongguancun Science Park, which would enable them to accumulate points to make them eligible to apply for a green card.

China is also in the process of piloting a [simplified work permit documentation and application process](#) for foreigners to work in China, which will be officially implemented across China from 1 April 2017. The program introduces a new mechanism that categorises foreign recruits into “A” “B” and “C” groups, depending on their professional level and field of expertise.

These actions follow the release of a high level Government document (in Chinese) by the CPC in March 2016 that called for China to put more active, open and effective policy in place to attract foreign graduates to work in China, echoing several [speeches](#) (in Chinese) made by Chinese leaders since 2013.

Although China has the largest numbers of students studying overseas, the fact that there have been very few options for international students to stay in China post-study has acted as a drag on China's ambitions to be a leading destination for international students. The recent changes to foreigner work permits and permanent residence policies will help to attract more international students and foreign experts in the future. While China is still testing the water with these changes, more policies are likely to occur in the near future.

For further enquiries, please contact the [Education and Research Section of the Australian Embassy](#) in Beijing.