

A number of changes to the Singapore work pass regime have come into effect from 1 September 2022, with more to come in 2023. In this article we outline the notable changes.

**Increases to the Salary Thresholds for Employment Pass (EP) and S Passes**

**Increase in the Salary Threshold for EPs**

With effect from 1 September 2022, the minimum qualifying salaries for EPs have increased, as follows:

- SG\$5,000 and SG\$5,500 (for financial institutions). For applicants in their mid-40s, the minimum salaries are SG\$10,500 and SG\$11,500 (for financial institutions).

The new salary thresholds will apply to renewals from 1 September 2023 onwards.

**Increase and Scheduled Increases in the Salary Threshold for S Passes**

The minimum qualification salaries for S Passes have been – and will be – incrementally raised, as follows:

- From 1 September 2022, the minimum qualifying salaries have been increased from SG\$2,500 to SG\$3,000 and SG\$3,500 (for financial institutions – there was no specified minimum qualifying salary for financial institutions prior to 1 September 2022). For applicants in their mid-40s, the minimum salaries are SG\$4,500 and SG\$5,500 (for financial institutions). These minimum salaries will apply to renewals from 1 September 2023 onwards.
- From 1 September 2023, the minimum qualifying salaries will be at least SG\$3,150 and SG\$3,650 (for financial institutions). These minimum salaries will apply to renewals from 1 September 2024.
- From 1 September 2025, the minimum qualifying salaries will be at least SG\$3,300 and SG\$3,800 (for financial institutions). These minimum salaries will apply to renewals from 1 September 2026.

Employers should assess ahead of time whether their existing foreign employees will be able to meet the qualifying salaries for renewals.

**Advertisements on MyCareersFuture**

Advertisement on the MyCareersFuture.sg (Portal) is required before a company may apply for an EP or S Pass for a new employee, unless the role meets one of the exemptions.

With effect from 1 September 2022, advertisements on the Portal need only run for 14 calendar days (instead of 28 days), as the Singapore labour market has recovered and resident job seekers (Singaporeans and permanent residents) may not need such a long period to respond to vacancies posted on the portal.

With effect from 1 September 2023, the salary benchmark for exemption from the advertisement requirement will be raised to SG\$22,500 (pegged to the top 10% of EP holders). The current salary benchmark for exemption is SG\$20,000.

**Introduction of the Complementarity Assessment Framework (COMPASS)**

Commencing 1 September 2023, all new EP applications will be subject to the COMPASS. The COMPASS will apply to renewal applications with effect from 1 September 2024.

The COMPASS is a points-based system, where applicants must earn 40 points to qualify for an EP. The COMPASS evaluates an EP application based on a holistic set of individual and firm-related attributes (set out in the table below).

	Individual Attributes	Firm-Rated Attributes		Individual Attributes	Firm-Rated Attributes
<b>Fundamental Criteria</b>	<b>C1. Salary</b> Relative to local PMET salary norms for sector	<b>C3. Diversity</b> Whether candidate improves national diversity in firm	<b>Bonus Criteria</b>	<b>C5. Skills Bonus (Shortage Occupation List)</b> For candidate in job where skills shortages exist	<b>C6. Strategic Economic Priorities Bonus</b> For partnership with Government on ambitious innovation or internationalisation activities
	<b>C2. Qualifications</b> Based on candidate's qualifications	<b>C4. Support for Local Employment</b> Based on local PMET share relative to industry peers			

It enables companies to select high-quality foreign professionals, while improving workforce diversity and building a strong Singaporean core. It is a transparent system to give businesses clarity and certainty for their manpower planning.

Additionally, on 29 August 2022, the Minister for Manpower shared that there will be an option for a five-year EP (currently, EPs are typically valid for two to three years) for experienced professionals filling specified tech occupations listed on the COMPASS Shortage Occupation List. The Shortage Occupation List will be released in due course. In line with the expectation that such talent is valuable to the Singapore market, applicants would need to meet a higher salary criterion of at least SG\$10,500 a month, pass the COMPASS and score at least 10 points on the diversity criterion.

In view of the assessment criteria under the COMPASS, employers should take steps to improve workforce diversity and build its Singaporean core to avoid facing difficulties meeting the 40-point requirement when COMPASS is implemented.

## Introduction of the Overseas Networks and Expertise (ONE) Pass

The Singapore Ministry of Manpower (MOM) has announced a new five-year work pass that is targeted at foreigners earning at least SG\$30,000 a month.

This new work pass, called the ONE Pass, is expected to attract top foreign talent with valuable networks and deep skills and expertise across all sectors. Applications will open on 1 January 2023.

Key attributes of the ONE Pass that have been disclosed are:

- Applicants have to earn a fixed monthly salary of at least SG\$30,000.
- If an applicant does not meet the salary criterion, they need to demonstrate outstanding achievements in other areas, e.g. arts and culture, sports or academia.
- The ONE Pass will have a five-year validity period instead of the two- to three-year validity periods applicable to the regular EP.
- Holders of the ONE Pass may start, operate and work for multiple companies in Singapore at the same time. Under the regular EP, a pass holder may only work for the company that applied for the EP, and, if such a pass holder wishes to take on a directorship in a related company, a letter of consent from the ministry is required.
- Spouses of ONE Pass holders will be able to work upon obtaining a letter of consent from the ministry.
- ONE Pass holders will be required to notify the ministry of their professional activities annually.

Below, we compare the ONE Pass with the EP, EntrePass and Personalised Employment Pass (PEP):

	EP	EntrePass	ONE Pass	PEP
<b>Target Candidates</b>	Foreign professionals, managers and executives with a job offer in Singapore	Foreign entrepreneurs keen to operate a business in Singapore that is venture-backed or possesses innovative technologies	Top talent in business, arts and culture, sports, science and technology, and academia and research	High-earning EP holders or overseas foreign professionals
<b>Who Applies</b>	Employer	Candidate	Candidate	Candidate
<b>Minimum Salary</b>	SG\$5,000/SG\$5,500 (for financial services sector).  Minimum salary increases progressively with age, up to SG\$10,500/SG\$11,500 (for financial services sector) for candidates in their mid-40s.  Note – The minimum salary will be adjusted based on the salary of the top one-third of the local professionals, managers, executives and technicians workforce by age.	None stipulated	Earn or will earn a fixed monthly salary of SG\$30,000 or equivalent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Existing EP Holders</b> – Fixed monthly salary of at least SG\$12,000.</li> <li>• <b>Overseas Foreign Professionals</b> – Fixed monthly salary of at least SG\$18,000.</li> </ul> <p>Note – Both minimum salaries will be raised to SG\$22,500 from 1 September 2023, benchmarked to the top 10% of EP holders.</p>

	EP	EntrePass	ONE Pass	PEP
<b>Other Eligibility Criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a job offer in Singapore</li> <li>• Work in a managerial, executive or specialised job</li> <li>• Have acceptable qualifications (usually a good university degree, professional qualifications or specialised skills)</li> <li>• Commencing 1 September 2023, attain 40 points on the COMPASS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have started (company must be less than six months old) – or intend to start – a private limited company, registered in Singapore, that is venture-backed or owns innovative technologies</li> <li>• Meet the criteria as an entrepreneur, innovator or investor</li> </ul>	Have been working or will be working for a company with a market capitalisation of at least US\$500 million or annual revenue of at least US\$200 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not a freelancer or foreigner who intends to work on a freelance-basis</li> <li>• Not a sole proprietor, partner or director and shareholder of company registered in Singapore</li> <li>• Not a journalist, editor or producer</li> </ul>
<b>Duration</b>	Up to two years for first-time candidates, determined by MOM	One year for new passes and first renewals	Five years	Up to three years
<b>Whether Renewable</b>	Yes, for up to three years, as determined by MOM, subject to meeting prevailing eligibility criteria	<p>Yes, two years, subject to meeting eligibility criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Company is registered with ACRA as a private limited company</li> <li>• Own at least 30% shareholding of the company</li> <li>• Can provide proof of ongoing business activity, is venture backed or owns innovative technologies</li> <li>• Have an individual profile and claimed company profile on Startup SG network</li> <li>• Achieve the required business spending and create local employment as required</li> </ul>	<p>Yes, five years at a time, subject to meeting eligibility criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Earned a fixed monthly salary of at least SG\$30,000 on average in the previous five years</li> <li>• Started and is operating a Singapore-based company that employs at least five locals, each earning at least the minimum EP-qualifying salary (currently SG\$5,000)</li> </ul>	No

	EP	EntrePass	ONE Pass	PEP
<b>Passes for Family</b>	Yes, if the pass holder earns at least SG\$6,000 a month (SG\$12,000 to obtain a long-term visit pass for parents)	Yes, subject to meeting the relevant criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total annual business spending is at least SG\$100,000 (SG\$200,000 for passes for parents)</li> <li>• Employ at least three (six, for passes for parents) locals earning a monthly salary of at least SG\$1,400 and receive Central Provident Fund (CPF) contributions for at least three months, or one (two, for passes for parents) local professional, manager or executive earning a monthly salary of at least SG\$3,900 and receive CPF contributions for at least three months</li> </ul>	Yes	Yes
<b>Spouse's Ability To Work for an Employer in Singapore</b>	Yes, subject to meeting the eligibility criteria of the relevant work pass on their own merits	Yes, subject to meeting the eligibility criteria of the relevant work pass on their own merits	Yes, with a letter of consent. Spouse is not required to meet the eligibility criteria of the relevant work pass on their own merits.	Yes, subject to meeting the eligibility criteria of the relevant work pass on their own merits
<b>Other Considerations</b>	Employers have to advertise the relevant job opening on MyCareersFuture and fairly consider all applicants before applying for the EP, unless one of the requirements for exemption apply	The following businesses are not eligible for an EntrePass: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coffee shops, hawker centres, food courts</li> <li>• Bars, night clubs, karaoke lounges</li> <li>• Foot reflexology, massage parlours</li> </ul>	Individuals with outstanding achievements in the arts and culture, sports, science and technology, and academia and research can qualify for the ONE Pass, even if they do not meet the salary criterion. More details will be released in due course.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PEP holders are not allowed to start a business or conduct any form of entrepreneurial activity. For foreigners with such plans, please apply for the EntrePass or ONE Pass.</li> <li>• A PEP holder cannot be unemployed for more than six months.</li> </ul>

	EP	EntrePass	ONE Pass	PEP
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acupuncture, traditional Chinese medicine, herbal dispensing businesses</li> <li>• Employment agencies</li> <li>• Geomancy businesses</li> </ul>	<p>Every year, MOM will require the following information from pass holders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Details of professional activities</li> <li>• Annual salary earned from all professional activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A PEP holder is required to earn a fixed salary of at least SG\$144,000 per calendar year, regardless of the number of months the holder is in employment.</li> <li>• Note – For a PEP approved after 1 September 2023, the PEP holder must earn a fixed salary of at least SG\$270,000 per calendar year.</li> <li>• MOM has to be notified</li> <li>• When the PEP holder starts or leaves a job <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– If the PEP holder changes their contact details</li> <li>– Of the PEP holder's annual fixed salary by 31 January the following year</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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