



GMS Flash Alert

Immigration Edition

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United Kingdom - Extension of ePassport Gates and Abolition of Landing Cards

The U.K. government has announced that from 20 May 2019, visitors from Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, and the United States will now be able to use ePassport gates at ports across the United Kingdom. Nationals of these countries who obtain U.K. visas will also be able to use ePassport gates for entry to the U.K. with their visas, though the date of this change is still to be confirmed.

The U.K. government is also removing the need for all non-European Economic Area (EEA) travelers to fill in landing cards upon arrival to the U.K. which should make for a smoother entry into the country.¹

WHY THIS MATTERS

These changes will affect the experience of people entering the U.K., hopefully speeding up immigration checks and reducing paperwork while taking steps to enhance use of digital technology.

Sponsors of Tier 2 visas will need to change their procedures when collating documents for compliance purposes because the normally-required entry stamp on a U.K. visa will not be available for people who use ePassport gates.

Context

The ePassport gates have been available for British and EU nationals since 2008, and EU nationals will remain eligible to use them once the U.K. leaves the EU.

In the Spring Statement, Philip Hammond, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had announced the ePassport gates expansion to the aforementioned seven countries for June.²

In announcing the anticipated expansion of ePassport gates, the Home Secretary Sajid Javid explained it is hoped that expanding the facility to the seven new countries will "...improve the passenger experience to the U.K. while also keeping our border secure." Chief Executive of the Airport Operators Association Karen Dee said it also sends the message that the U.K. is "...open for business, tourism and visiting friends and relatives."³

How It Works

The ePassport gates use facial recognition technology to compare the passenger's face to the digital image recorded in their passport. The gates are monitored by Border Force officers so anyone rejected at the gates will be sent to have a manual passport check. The gates can only be used by those aged 18 and over, and who are travelling using a biometric or 'chipped' passport. However those who are aged 12 to 17, and who are accompanied by an adult, may also use them.

Those travelling with ID cards of EU countries cannot use the ePassport gates.

Currently, anyone who has been issued with a U.K. visa (entry clearance vignette) must have their visa/vignette stamped with a 'wet ink' stamp when they first enter the United Kingdom.

Dates have yet to be decided; however, it is intended that by the end of May 2019, nationals of Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, and the USA will no longer have the entry clearance vignette in their passports stamped by an Immigration Officer when entering the United Kingdom.

Nationals from the above seven countries will be encouraged to use the ePassport gates, which should hopefully result in swifter movement through immigration controls upon their entry into the United Kingdom. If the ePassport gates are not available, an Immigration Officer will carry out a manual check on their visas, but will no longer stamp the vignette in their passports. Certain immigration categories still require the traveler to see an Immigration Officer upon arrival, who will then manually check the individual's visa and endorse it with a wet ink stamp.⁴

The travelers from the seven countries will still need to collect their 'Biometric Residence Permits' (BRP) Card and must still attend the relevant Post Office location in person to collect their BRP cards. Where the entry clearance vignette has not been endorsed/stamped by an Immigration Officer, the collection of the BRP Card acts as a reassurance that the migrant has entered the U.K. lawfully.

KPMG LLP (U.K.) NOTE

These changes should result in reduced time and administration when entering the United Kingdom. This is welcome for any business traveler or expatriate. However the changes will also have knock-on effects which need to be borne in mind.

Certain immigration categories entitle an individual to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain in the U.K. upon meeting certain requirements, namely a requirement to show that the individual has been continuously resident in the U.K. for the requisite period.

By removing the need to have entry clearance vignettes stamped when travelers first enters the U.K., individuals will no longer be able to rely on their endorsed entry clearance vignettes to evidence when they first entered the country.

The U.K. government has not announced how an individual would evidence this in the absence of his endorsed visa. It is hoped that the ePassport gates may be able to track an individual's first entry into the U.K.; however, we would encourage individuals to keep their flight tickets or any other documentary evidence to support their entry to the U.K. where they have not had their visas stamped. Sponsors of Tier 2 visas will also need to keep a copy of this evidence such as the travel ticket to the U.K. or boarding card in the absence of an entry stamp.⁵

FOOTNOTES:

1 See the 20 May 2019 News Story "[Government expands use of ePassport gates to 7 more countries](#)" issued by the U.K. government.

2 See the 14 March 2019 News Story "[ePassport gates eligibility expansion confirmed for June](#)" issued by the U.K. government.

3 See the 20 May 2019 News Story "[Government expands use of ePassport gates to 7 more countries](#)" issued by the U.K. government.

4 Individuals in the following categories must have their visas checked by an Immigration Officer upon arrival to the U.K.: Tier 5 creative and sporting concession Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS) holders; Short Term Students (STS); Individuals coming to take part in Permitted Paid Engagements; or Individuals coming to join their EEA family member in the United Kingdom.

5 To see "Appendix D: Keeping documents guidance for sponsors," issued by the U.K. government, click [here](#).

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Contact us

For additional information or assistance, please contact your local GMS or People Services professional* or one of the following professionals with the KPMG International member firm in the United Kingdom.

The KPMG Legal Services – Immigration Team has a wealth of experience in transactional, advisory, and compliance assurance services. We will be able to advise your business in relation to practical considerations in light of the above changes, as well as what this means for your long-term recruitment and compliance strategies.



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The information contained in this newsletter was submitted by the KPMG International member firm in the United Kingdom.

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