A Complete Guide to Singapore S Pass Application

Singapore is globally known as an economic powerhouse. The city-state boasts of an enterprise-friendly environment that continues to attract entrepreneurs, investors and corporations. The Singapore start-up ecosystem has been ranked in the top 10 top ecosystems in the world according to Compass' 2015 Global Startup Ecosystem Ranking. More than the ease of doing business in Singapore, transparent business policies, and low corporate tax rates, the productive and skilled workforce is instrumental in making Singapore a highly conducive place for businesses. To supplement the workforce requirements in the city-state, the government implements various employment pass schemes that allow businesses to bring in foreign talent.

With the vision of building a *Great Workforce and a Great Workplace for Singapore*, the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) is responsible for formulating and implementing the city-state's labour law policies. The MOM is also the governing body that handles the issuance of work passes to foreign professionals.

In December 2015, there was a total of 1,387,300 foreign workers in Singapore. Out of this number, 178,600 are S Pass holders.

Foreign Workforce Numbers					
Pass Type	Dec 2011	Dec 2012	Dec 2013	Dec 2014	Dec 2015
Employment Pass (EP)	175,400	173,800	175,100	178,900	187,900
S Pass	113,900	142,400	160,900	170,100	178,600
Work Permit (Total)	901,000	942,800	974,400	991,300	997,100
Work Permit (FDW)	206,300	209,600	214,500	222,500	231,500
Work Permit (Construction)	264,400	293,300	318,900	322,700	326,000
Other Work Passes[2]	7,600	9,300	11,300	15,400	23,600

Total Foreign Workforce	1,197,900	1,268,300	1,321,600	1,355,700	1,387,300
Total Foreign Workforce (excluding FDWs)	991,600	1,058,700	1,107,100	1,133,200	1,155,800
Total Foreign Workforce (excluding FDWs & Construction)	699,100	731,300	748,100	764,500	780,300

This article will provide information on S Pass eligibility, requirements, application process and card issuance to guide foreign applicants, local employers and entrepreneurs who look forward to starting a business in Singapore.

Singapore S Pass

The S Pass is a type of work pass that is specifically for foreign professionals of any nationality that have middle level skills and experience. The candidate must be earning a fixed monthly compensation of at least S$2,200. The validity of the S Pass usually ranges up to two years. The pass is renewable as long as the candidate satisfies the qualifications set by MOM and as long as he or she remains employed with the company.

Unlike the Singapore Employment Pass (EP), there is a quota or maximum number of employees with an S Pass that a company can hire. The cap is based on a sub-dependency ceiling which means that the number of employees that are S Pass holders must only comprise 15% of the company's total labour force in the services sector and 20% in all other sectors. The MOM has a foreign worker quota calculator that you can use to gauge if you can still on board a foreign worker.

Taking a look at the levy rates

The government also requires employers to pay a monthly foreign worker levy for each employee who is holding an S Pass from the date of pass issuance up until the day of pass cancellation.

The levy must be paid consistently and timely every month. There are consequences when employers are unable to pay the full levy on time. The offending company can be charged with a late payment penalty fee, have the passes revoked, not be allowed to apply for new S Passes, and face legal action. If the company directors also own other companies, these companies may also be banned from applying for S Passes.

The following is the levy rate for businesses in the services sector:

Tier	Quota %	Monthly levy rate	Daily levy rate
Tier 1	Up to 10% of the total workforce	$330	$10.85
Tier 2	Above 10% to 15% of the total workforce	$650	$21.37

The following is the levy rate for businesses in the all other sectors:

Tier	Quota %	Monthly levy rate	Daily levy rate
Tier 1	Up to 10% of the total workforce	$330	$10.85
Tier 2	Above 10% to 20% of the total workforce	$650	$21.37

*The tables above are from MOM's website.

Medical Insurance for S Pass holders

Employers in Singapore are required to secure medical insurance for S Pass holders for the duration of their employment. The details of the medical insurance including the name of insurer, policy number, commencement date and expiry date of the insurance policy. Additionally, must be submitted the pass can be issued or renewed. Employers can submit the

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aforementioned details through Work Permit Online (WP Online) and through the Employment Pass Online website, more popularly known as EP Online, which serves as an all-around employment pass transactions portal.

Eligibility and Requirements

As previously mentioned, foreign professionals with middle level skills and experience who want to work in Singapore may apply for an S Pass. The Ministry of Manpower (MOM) has a wide-ranging criteria with which it evaluates each S Pass evaluations. The said assessment is based on a points system grading how well each applicant satisfies the criteria:

- A degree and other educational qualifications to reflect that the candidate is qualified for the specific industry;
- Technical and specialist expertise;
- Relevant skills and experience;
- A minimum fixed compensation of at least S$2,200

MOM is highly encouraging employers and applicants alike to use the Self-Assessment Tool (SAT Tool). The tool looks at the educational and employment background of a candidate and gauges if the candidate satisfies the basic qualifications for a specific pass. If the SAT Tool shows that the candidate is not eligible, then there is a high likelihood that the S Pass application will be rejected. Meanwhile, positive results mean that there is a 90% likelihood that the S Pass application will be approved.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS:

- A good educational background from a reputable institution will be helpful. Although MOM does not have a list of approved educational institutions.

- The agency evaluates each application on its own merit. The Ministry also considers other factors such as proven track record and specialised skillset.

- Hiring older and more experienced foreign applicants requires a higher salary that reflects their skills and experience.

What are the requirements for the S Pass Application?

- Applicants' educational documents which may include diploma, transcripts and Certificate of Graduation
- Personal particulars page of applicants' passport or travel document
- Employer's most recent ACRA business profile

The applicant must also submit other documents that may be required by the MOM. Take note that documents that are not written in English must be submitted with an official English translation from a translation service providers, a notary public or High Commission or Embassy.

S Pass Application Process

The application process for an S Pass can be divided into three parts – submission of requirements, assessment and approval. The application must be facilitated by a representative from the employer or an approved third-party service provider.

Similar to any government service, the application for S Pass can be done either via online or manually. The Singapore government encourages the use of its e-services to make processes more efficient. In this regard, many government processes take less time when done online. The S Pass application entails an administrative fee of S$60 for every application submission and another S$80 upon the employer's request for issuance.

The S Pass online application can be done through the EP Online. The online application process usually takes seven working days. The employer or applicant may check the status of the S Pass application during these days.

The manual application on the other hand requires the employer to personally submit all the requirements at any branch of SingPost. The process normally takes five weeks and could take longer depending on the volume of applications received by MOM.

Once an online or manual S Pass application has been approved, an In-Principle Approval will be sent to the employer with details of additional requirements that are needed to facilitate the issuance of the S Pass card.

The issuance process of the S Pass card can be broken down into three vital steps: issuance request, fingerprints and image registration and S Pass card delivery.

The representative from employer must be the one to request the issuance of the S Pass card. This requires the foreign applicant to be present in Singapore in order to satisfy the requirements needed for the card. He or she must set an appointment at MOM for the card registration.

Among the requirements needed during the physical visit to MOM are the following: foreign applicant's travel document or passport, embarkation or disembarkation card, educational attainment documents, foreign applicant's residential address in Singapore, completed medical exam form, IPA letter, accomplished declaration form and the employer representative's contact details for card delivery purposes. The applicant and employer must provide any other additional requirements requested by MOM.

The S Pass card will be delivered within four working days to the provided address of employer representative. Said representative will receive an SMS informing him or her of the card delivery schedule.

Appealing a Rejected S Pass Application

The government of Singapore is dedicated to ensuring the quality of its workforce. As such, the MOM implements strict measures in screening applications for a pass. The Ministry usually indicates the reason why the pass application has been rejected in the EP Online for those who applied online and in the rejection letter for those who applied manually.

When the S Pass application is rejected, the employer has three months to file an appeal. Of course, one must only file an appeal if the reasons indicated in the rejection advisory can be addressed. Otherwise, if there are no new information in the pass application, the result will remain the same.

The appeal can only be coursed through EP Online since MOM receives a high volume of appeals. Employers can log-in EP Online to check the status of the appeal. The process can take up to five weeks or longer, depending on a case to case basis.

Can an S Pass holder apply for passes for family members?

S Pass holders can apply for a Dependant's Pass or Long Term Visit Pass (LTVP) for immediate family members if they satisfy the main requirements. S Pass holders who wish to bring in their spouse or children must have a fixed monthly compensation of at least S$5,000.

Cancellation of the Pass

An employer can cancel the pass in the event that the S Pass validity expires or when the pass no longer works for the employer. The employer or an appointed employment agency can facilitate the S Pass cancelation through the EP Online. Once a request has been submitted, the cancellation of the pass is immediate. The original S Pass card must be submitted to the MOM office within one week after the pass has been cancelled. If the S Pass holder has any family member handling a Dependant's Pass at the time of the pass cancellation, the DP will also be cancelled.

Applying for an S Pass Renewal

The employer can apply for an S Pass renewal up to six months or 180 days before the pass is set to expire. Only a representative from the company or an appointed employment agency can facilitate the S Pass renewal through EP Online or by mailing the renewal forms from MOM along with the required documents. In order to renew the pass, the S Pass holder must meet the eligibility requirements set by MOM and must have a passport that is valid for at least seven months upon application. The employer, on the other hand, must have a sufficient S Pass quota for its specific sector.

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