

## Smart Visas: New Benefits for Specialists

13 February, 2018

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### Introduction

On 30<sup>th</sup> January 2018, Thailand's Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Labour, and the Office of the Prime Minister issued notifications regarding a new type of visa, the Smart Visa. This is one of the government's initiatives aimed at attracting highly skilled, foreign workers to Thailand, as well as promoting inbound investment. This new visa came into effect on 1 February 2018.

Applicants for the Smart Visa must work or wish to work in the government's 10 S-Curve target industries, which are:

- Next-Generation Automotive
- Smart Electronics
- High-income and health care/Tourism
- Agriculture and Biotechnology
- Food for the Future
- Automation and Robotics
- Aviation and Logistics
- Biofuel and Biochemical
- Digital
- Medical Hubs

In addition to the qualifications regarding the 10 S-Curve target industries, the Board of Investment (BOI) and other key government organizations have established the Strategic Talent Center (STC), which serves as a platform for communicating with foreign experts regarding their qualifications. Further information regarding the 4 main categories of foreigners who are eligible to apply for the Smart Visa follows:

1. **Highly-skilled experts:** who are on employment contracts of at least one year; have a base salary of at least 200,000 THB per month; are certified by the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society;

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2. **Investors:** who have investment capital of no less than THB 20 million;
3. **Senior Executives:** who have a base salary of THB 200,000 per month; who have a Bachelor's Degree;
4. **Start-up entrepreneurs:** who participate in the government's incubator/accelerator projects and will establish a business in the 10 S-Curve target industries within 12 months after Visa issuance, and;
5. **Others:** these include spouses and children granted the right to stay and work in Thailand with no work permit required. Children wishing to work must be at least 18 years of age, and the work undertaken must not be on the prohibited list of occupations and professions for foreigners.

Many benefits will be accorded to Smart Visa holders; based on government notifications, the key benefits include:

- Visa validity of up to a 4 year stay in Thailand (except for start-up entrepreneurs, for whom the visa validity is up to 1 year);
- No work permit required;
- Extended 'reporting of stay' period to the Immigration Bureau of once per year

The application and approval process for the Smart Visa will take 30 days, according to the notification issued by the Office of the Prime Minister.

Smart Visas have been available since 1st February 2018. Applications can be submitted at designated Visa and Work Permit Service Centers.

This publication is intended to highlight an overview of key issues for ease of understanding, and not for the provision of legal advice. If you have any questions about this publication, please contact your regular contact person(s) at Mori Hamada & Matsumoto or Chandler MHM Limited, or any of the Key Contacts listed in the far-right column.