

working DOWN UNDER

Jobs, training and skills in the Antipodean workplace

Getting assessed

If you want to work as a tradesperson in Australia, check whether you need to pass a skills assessment, writes **Leanne Stevens**

So you're an experienced tradie; you want to move to Australia and you think the Australian visa system is complex enough as it is? If you're applying for a visa based on your skills or qualifications, the chances are, you will also need a skills assessment, in order to apply.

With the current skill shortages in Australia, opportunities abound for tradespeople. The demand for construction workers is fuelled by a number of approved large scale mining and gas infrastructure projects.

While many of the jobs created through the boom will be temporary, last year 48 per cent of people who entered Australia on Subclass 457 visas converted their status to permanent residency, so it's a great time to consider the move.

Australia prides itself on a high standard of vocational education, training and workplace safety. Indeed, people from around the world study in Australia to secure a world class qualification, increasing their chances of employment in their home country and abroad. An Australian qualification is often a selling point for a job seeker. But what if you were trained in the UK and now want to work as a tradesperson in Australia?

For many visas, a skills assessment is an integral step in the process. Further, many Australian employers are unwilling to take the risk of employing an overseas trained person without verification of their qualifications and skills. Employers have responsibilities to their staff and customers under workplace health and safety legislation. It's up to the boss to make sure that a new person in a workplace can work safely in the >>

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Workplace safety is paramount for tradespeople in Australia

environment. For these reasons, it's important that people who have been educated overseas are assessed as comparable to the Australian standard in their particular trade; and receive additional training to bring them to that level if necessary.

DO I NEED A SKILLS ASSESSMENT?

If you're from the UK and applying for a Temporary Long Stay Business (Subclass 457) Visa, in most cases you won't need a skills assessment, however for some professions you may need to become licensed or registered before you can work in Australia.

For most employer sponsored or independent skilled permanent residency visas, it is mandatory to have a formal skills assessment before lodging the visa application, although people who have worked in Australia on a Subclass 457

visa for a prolonged time are exempt in some cases.

LICENSED OCCUPATIONS

Some occupations, such as electrician and plumber, require licensing by the relevant authority before a person is able to work independently.

A common misconception is that registration or licensing is a substitute for a skills assessment. In many cases, both are required. Apart from trades occupations, this is often encountered with health care professionals.

While an overseas trained nurse would require registration by the Australian Health Practitioners Registration Authority (AHPRA) to work on a Subclass 457 visa, the same nurse would also require a positive Skills Assessment from the Nursing and Midwifery Board, to meet the requirements for a permanent residency visa.



If you work in a trade profession for which licensing is required, following your skills assessment you will be issued with an Offshore Technical Skills Record (OTSR), and with this, you can secure a provisional license.

Once you have worked under supervision for 12 months and undertaken gap training, to bring you up to speed with Australian safety regulations, you'll be eligible to apply for a full license.

If you are applying for certain nominated occupation, you may be eligible for an Offshore Skills Assessment. For people who have received their qualifications outside Australia, the basic steps involved in an Offshore Skills assessment are as follows:

1. Undertake a Self Evaluation using the online self-evaluation tool TradeSET (www.tradeset.com.au) – this will help you to work out whether you have appropriate skills and knowledge for your nominated occupation;
2. Locate an approved Registered Training Organisation;
3. Submit your documentary evidence, including qualifications and any work experience you have built up;
4. Undertake a technical assessment with an approved assessor;
5. Receive your assessment results.

PRACTICAL ADVICE

Getting it right the first time will save you lots of time, money and stress.

Before you start, consider the following:

● Identify the assessing authority

Trades Recognition Australia (TRA) approves a number of Registered Training Organisations to undertake trade assessments. Other professions will be assessed by different industry bodies.

The appropriate assessing body for your nominated occupation can be found on the Skilled Occupation Lists, and most of these assessing bodies will have up-to-date websites.

● Know the requirements of your visa

Some visas require a positive skills assessment at the time of lodging the application; while others just require evidence that you have applied for a skills assessment before applying for a visa.

Make sure you are applying in the correct manner for your visa – if you don't meet the Schedule Two requirements your visa may be refused.

● Give yourself plenty of time

Many of the assessing bodies take several weeks, or even months, to process applications. If you have a prescribed timeframe in which to lodge your visa, make sure you factor in the time it will take to apply for and receive the results of your skills assessment.

● Check ANZSCO before applying

There's no point in paying for a skills assessment for an occupation if you do not meet the prescribed criteria. You can

check this under the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO).

If ANZSCO states that your nominated occupation requires a degree or higher, there is a good chance you won't receive a positive assessment if you only have a diploma, unless exceptional circumstances apply. There might be another ANZSCO code which better matches your qualifications.

For example, there is often confusion between the terms 'chef' and 'cook'. Many people who undertake hospitality training in Australia apply for skilled visas. Yet some apply under the wrong occupation code when seeking a skills assessment. The terms 'chef' and 'cook' are not interchangeable.

Problems can arise when a person who receives a positive skills assessment as a 'cook' applies for a visa as a 'chef'.

Some applicants for skills assessment as a 'cook' might easily pass an assessment as a 'chef', however the assessing body will decide upon the evidence provided against the nominated ANZSCO code.

It is up to you, the applicant, to thoroughly research the occupation for which you're most likely to receive a positive skills assessment.

● Update your CV

Your past work experience is important. Make sure that you keep referee reports and statements of service from all of your previous workplaces. In some cases, several years of experience in an

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Both electricians, *below left*, and plumbers, *above*, are required to be licensed in Australia before they are able to work independently

occupation may be an acceptable substitute for a formal qualification.

SEEK ADVICE

If you're planning a move to Australia to work, it pays to seek early professional advice about skills assessment. Many migration agents assist clients with skills assessments when they are applying for a skilled or employer nominated visa.

While it might be tempting to try to save money by undertaking this process yourself, this can be a false economy. Getting it wrong at the skills assessment stage can stop you in your tracks, if you are depending on a positive skills assessment to be eligible for a visa.

Engaging a registered migration agent can help you avoid these pitfalls. 



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