

Hong Kong

Immigration country brief



The purpose of this Immigration Country Brief is to serve as a resource and provide a general overview of the immigration requirements related to business visitors and employment authorization in Hong Kong. The information contained in this document is provided as a resource only and should not be construed as legal advice. If you have any further enquiries regarding the applicability of this information, please contact Crown's Immigration Manager, Asia.

Hong Kong has been a “Special Administrative Region” of the People’s Republic of China since 1997. Hong Kong has its own immigration laws which are enforced by the Hong Kong Immigration Department.

Overview: Business visas

There is not a single visa category dedicated to business visitors to Hong Kong. Business visitors may enter Hong Kong on Visitor status. Currently, over 160 nationals can enter Hong Kong without the need to arrange for Visitor visa prior to entry for a period ranging from seven days to 180 days (depending on nationality). The full list of Visitor visa-exempt nationals can be found on the Hong Kong Immigration Department's website (referenced below).

Visa types

Visitor Visa

Summary: As mentioned previously, Hong Kong Immigration grants Visitor visa status to over 160 nationals upon entry. The duration of stay can range from 7 days to 180 days, depending on the nationality of the passport.

The non-exempt nationals must secure a Visitor Visa prior to entry to Hong Kong. A Visitor Visa to Hong Kong serve the purposes of business activities, as well as sightseeing and tourism.

Maximum stay: Typically, a Visitor Visa allows for a maximum stay of 30 days with single, double or multiple entries.

Typical processing time: Hong Kong Immigration takes about 4 to 6 weeks to process a Visitor visa application.

Activities permitted as a business visitor include:

- Attending business meetings or conferences, or participating in product orientation as an audience
- Observing operations at the Hong Kong office or general orientation
- Executing contracts or submitting tenders
- Examining or supervising the installation or packaging of goods or equipment
- Participating in exhibitions or trade fairs as a potential buyer
- Civil proceedings

Overview: Employment authorization

Foreign nationals who wish to work or undertake gainful employment (whether paid or unpaid) or establish or join any business in Hong Kong are required to obtain work authorization.

Work visa types

General Employment Policy (GEP)

Summary: GEP is the guiding principle to access an employment visa application by the Hong Kong Immigration Department. In short, GEP states that the applicant must have relevant education and the qualification for the position in Hong Kong; the salary is up to the market standard; and the position must be a legitimate position and it is not easily filled by locals in Hong Kong.

Maximum stay: It grants the holder an employment immigration status to work in Hong Kong for the employment sponsor for up to 12 months initially. An extension can be applied for within two months of visa expiration.

Processing time: The Hong Kong Immigration usually takes four weeks to process an employment visa application.

Dependents: Dependents (spouse, unmarried children) can accompany principal applicant in dependent immigration status. Unmarried children 18 years old and under and spouse can study in dependent immigration status. Work permission is granted to spouse as dependent.

Limitation or special requirements: Some nationals are restricted from applying for an employment visa in Hong Kong.

Training visa

Summary: For applicants who have secured a training arrangement with an organization in Hong Kong that is capable to offer training. The purpose of the training is to acquire special skills and knowledge that is not readily available at the applicant's home country.

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Maximum stay: It grants the holder the right to receive training in Hong Kong for up to 12 months.

Typical processing time: Hong Kong Immigration takes about 4 to 6 weeks to process a Training visa application.

Dependents: Sufficient funding will be required to evidence the principal can fully support his/her dependents in Hong Kong.

IANG Visa

Summary: This is a type of employment visa for graduates from one of the universities in Hong Kong.

Maximum stay: It grants the holder the right to work in Hong Kong for up to 12 months initially, provided the criteria are met. An extension can be applied for within two months of visa expiration.

Processing time: Approximately three weeks for the process by the Hong Kong

Immigration Department. An additional 10 days for Hong Kong Identity Card if such is required.

Dependents: Dependents (spouse, unmarried children) can accompany principal applicant on dependent immigration status. Unmarried children 18 years old or younger and spouse can study on dependent immigration status. Work permission is granted to spouse as dependent.

Mainland Talent and Professional

Summary: This is a type of employment visa specialized for mainland Chinese applicants who uses an Exit-Entry Permit to travel to Hong Kong.

Maximum stay: It grants the holder the right to work in Hong Kong for the employment sponsor for up to one year, provided the criteria are met.

Processing time: Approximately four weeks for the process by the Hong Kong Immigration Department, followed by a 10-business day Exit Endorsement process in China. An additional 10 days post-arrival for Hong Kong Identity Card before the entire process is completed.

Dependents: Dependents (spouse, unmarried children) can accompany principal applicant on dependent immigration status. Unmarried children 18 years old or younger and spouse can study in dependent immigration status. Work permission is granted to spouse as dependent.

This list is not all-inclusive; other visa classifications may exist. The above are the most common employment-related work permits.

Additional information and resources

- Hong Kong Immigration Department: www.immd.gov.hk/en/home.html

