**Quick Guide**

**Employing Non-UK/EEA Nationals**

**Applying for Certificates of Sponsorship**

A sponsorship licence holder is the organisation responsible for issuing a certificate of sponsorship (CoS) directly to the migrant. The CoS is not an actual document but a reference number which the migrant can use to apply for leave to remain in, or entry to the UK. This step-by-step guide highlights the differences between unrestricted and restricted CoS and the process employers should use when applying for them.

### Unrestricted CoS

**Not included in the permanent limit**

- Applies to:
  - in-country recruitment
  - switching into Tier 2
  - Tier 2 extensions
  - new hires above £159,600
  - any recruitment of doctors or nurses using SOC codes 2211 or 2231

**Process**

1. **Employer applies online to Home Office UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) for yearly allocation of CoS.**

2. **CoS allocation granted and added to the sponsorship management system (SMS) on 5 April each year.**

3. **Recruitment takes place (employment checks completed and job offer made) or CoS needs renewing for visa extension. Employer applies resident labour market test (RLMT) as appropriate.**

4. **CoS is assigned by employer to the individual (if the RLMT applies, this must happen within six months of first advertising the vacancy).**

5. **Individual applies for Tier 2 visa within three months of receiving CoS.**

6. **Application successful. Entry clearance/leave to remain granted.**

### Restricted CoS

**Included in the permanent limit**

- Applies to:
  - all other new out-of-country applications for CoS where the salary is below £159,600
  - family members (dependants) of Tier 4 migrants who are switching to a Tier 2 visa.

**Process**

1. **Recruitment takes place and resident labour market test (RLMT) applied as appropriate, employment checks completed, job offer made.**

2. **Employer applies online to UKVI for a certificate from the monthly limited allocation. A minimum of 21 points is required, subject to demand [Tier 2 guidance, Section 29].**

3. **Applications assessed by UKVI on the 11th of each month (or closest working day) when a panel meeting takes place. Applications must be received by the 5th of each month to be considered on time.**

4. **If CoS is granted, employer assigns to the individual within three months or the CoS will expire (if the RLMT applies, the CoS must be assigned within six months of first advertising the vacancy). This is the point when the employer is charged for the CoS.**

5. **Individual applies for Tier 2 visa within three months of receiving CoS.**

6. **Application successful. Entry clearance/leave to remain granted.**

*The permanent limit places an annual restriction on the number of migrant workers admitted to the UK from outside the EEA under Tier 2 (General).*

Published July 2018 EINF23301