

FACT SHEET

Working Holiday Scheme

1. Introduction

1.1 The Government established bilateral Working Holiday Scheme first with New Zealand and Australia in 2001, then with Ireland (2005), Germany (2009), Japan (2010), Canada (2010), South Korea (2011), France (2013), and the United Kingdom ("UK") (2014). The scheme is to provide an opportunity for young people in Hong Kong to gain first-hand experience living and working in a foreign culture and enrich their global exposure. It also facilitates cultural and educational exchange between Hong Kong and the nine participating countries and strengthens their bilateral relations. This fact sheet highlights the Working Holiday Scheme and its eligibility requirements, as well as recent development of the scheme.

2. Participating countries and eligibility requirements

2.1 Under the Working Holiday Scheme, participants may stay in the host country for an extended holiday. They are also allowed to take up short-term employment and/or study short-term courses as an incidental part of their stay to acquire a better understanding of the cultural and social developments of the host countries. The scheme aims to enable young people to gain valuable experience while holidaying and working abroad.

- 2.2 To be eligible for the Working Holiday Scheme, a Hong Kong applicant must:
- (a) be aged between 18 and 30, not be accompanied by any dependents during the journey;
 - (b) be ordinarily resident in Hong Kong and holding a valid Hong Kong Special Administrative Region ("HKSAR") or British National (Overseas) ("BN(O)") passport¹;
 - (c) be going abroad primarily for holidaying or travelling;
 - (d) hold a return or departure ticket, or have sufficient funds to purchase such a ticket; and
 - (e) be able to produce financial proof of available funds to meet his or her living costs while staying in the host country.

2.3 Participants can stay in the host countries for up to 12 months, with the exception of the UK where the maximum period is 24 months. All eligible applications will be approved on a first-come first-served basis except for Japan and the UK. The Consulate-General of Japan in Hong Kong will select applicants who are regarded as the most suitable candidates if the number of applications exceeds the quota, taking into account the principles and purpose of the scheme. For the UK, applicants holding HKSAR passport must first obtain a valid Certificate of Sponsorship ("CoS")² from the Labour Department before applying the scheme visa with the British Consulate-General in Hong Kong. In the event that there are more than 1 000 eligible registrants for CoS, a computer ballot will be drawn to randomly select 1 000 successful registrants. The holders of BNO passport are not subject to the annual quota of 1 000 and do not require a valid CoS for applying the visa.

¹ BN(O) passport holders enjoy visa-free access to the UK for visits, but do not have the right of abode in the UK.

² The following persons are eligible to register for a CoS: (a) be aged between 18 or over when their visa becomes valid for use, and under the age of 31 on the date their applications were made; (b) be holder of a valid HKSAR passport; and (c) have never been in the UK at any time in the former "working holidaymaker" category or under the Youth Mobility Scheme in which Hong Kong was added as a participant on 1 January 2014.

2.4 In addition, it is compulsory for Hong Kong applicants to take out medical insurance for their entire period of stay, failing which they would not be granted working holiday visa. Such a requirement is exempted in Australia as the country has not set out any requirement for the applicants to take out insurance policy during their stay. Nevertheless, the Australian government has included in its application form a reminder to the applicants to have suitable medical insurance to cover possible costs which may incur in Australia.

2.5 Successful Hong Kong applicants will be issued a working holiday visa or relevant documentation by the host upon successful applications. **Table 1** below sets out the eligibility requirements for Hong Kong applicants to participate in the Working Holiday Scheme.

Table 1 – Eligibility requirements set out by the participating countries for Hong Kong applicants

	New Zealand	Australia	Ireland	Germany	Japan	Canada	South Korea	France	The United Kingdom
Annual quota for Hong Kong applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 400. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No quota restriction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 150. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 250. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 200. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 500. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 200. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 000 for HKSAR passport holders. No quota restriction for BN(O) passport holders.
Financial proof	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial proof of at least NZ\$4,200 (HK\$27,200). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial proof of at least A\$5,000 (HK\$37,500). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial proof of at least HK\$25,000, or HK\$35,000 in the absence of a return or onward ticket upon arrival in Ireland. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial proof of at least €2,000 (HK\$20,600). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial proof of at least HK\$22,000. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial proof of at least C\$2,500 (HK\$18,825). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial proof of at least US\$2,500 (HK\$19,390). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial proof of at least HK\$25,000. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial proof of at least £1,800 (HK\$21,834).

Table 1 – Eligibility requirements set out by the participating countries for Hong Kong applicants (cont'd)

	New Zealand	Australia	Ireland	Germany	Japan	Canada	South Korea	France	The United Kingdom
Length of stay	• 12 months.								• 24 months.
Employment	• Can engage in employment not more than three months with any one single employer.	• Can engage in employment not more than six months with any one single employer.	• Can engage in employment not more than three months with any one single employer.	• Can engage in employment not more than three months with any one single employer.	• Can engage in short-term employment.	• Can engage in employment and/or study courses not more than a total of six months.	• Can engage in employment of not more than six months with any one single employer.	• Can engage in employment of not more than six months with any one single employer.	• Can engage in work (except for self-employment, professional sport or work as a doctor or dentist in training).
Study course	• Can engage in one short-term course of less than three months' duration.	• Can engage in short-term courses for not more than four months.	• Not allowed.	• Can engage in one training or study course of up to six months.	• Can engage in study courses.		• Can engage in one short-term course of up to six months.	• Can engage in study courses.	• Can engage in privately-funded studies.
Insurance	• Participants must have medical and comprehensive hospitalization insurance.	• The Australian government recommends participants to acquire health insurance.	• Participants must have valid medical insurance.	• Participants must have valid medical insurance.	• Participants must have adequate travel insurance.	• Participants must have healthcare insurance.	• Participants must have adequate travel and medical insurance.	• Participants must have liability and medical insurance.	• Participants must have insurance for medical and healthcare.

Sources: Australian Government (2013), Consulate General of France in Hong Kong & Macau (2013), Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in Hong Kong. (2012), Consulate of Ireland, Hong Kong (2014), Consulate-General of Japan in Hong Kong (2014), Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada (2012), German Consulate General Hong Kong (2014), GOV.UK (2014), Labour Department (2014a), New Zealand Foreign Affairs and Trade (2014).

2.6 Reciprocally, a national of the participating country meeting the following eligibility criteria may be granted a working holiday visa for participating in the Working Holiday Scheme with Hong Kong:

- (a) he or she holds a valid national passport issued by the participating country and is ordinarily residing in that participating country;
- (b) his or her primary intention is to holiday in Hong Kong;
- (c) he or she is aged between 18 and 30;
- (d) he or she is able to produce financial proof of having an amount sufficient for his or her maintenance during his or her proposed stay in Hong Kong, e.g. bank statement, saving accounts passbooks, etc.;
- (e) he or she holds a return air ticket or financial proof of having sufficient funds to purchase a return air fare; and
- (f) he or she agrees to hold medical, healthcare (including hospitalization), repatriation and/or liability insurance to remain in force throughout his or her stay in Hong Kong.

2.7 Overseas participants holding a working holiday visa can enter Hong Kong and stay for not more than 12 months. There is an annual quota for nationals of each participation country and qualified applications are approved on a first-come first-served basis. Application for extension of stay will not normally be considered. Scheme participants are not permitted to engage in permanent employment, but may take up temporary employment as an incidental aspect of their holiday. They may also enrol in study or training courses during their visit. **Table 2** sets out the eligibility requirements for overseas applicants to participate in the Working Holiday Scheme with Hong Kong.

Table 2 – Eligibility requirements set out by Hong Kong for overseas applicants

	New Zealand	Australia	Ireland	Germany	Japan	Canada	South Korea	France	The United Kingdom
Annual quota for overseas applicants	• 400.	• 5 000.	• 100.	• 150.	• 250.	• 200.	• 500.	• 200.	• 1 000.
Financial proof	• Financial proof of at least HK\$14,000.	• Financial proof of at least HK\$20,000.	• Financial proof of at least HK\$20,000.	• Financial proof of at least HK\$20,000.	• Financial proof of at least HK\$20,000.	• Financial proof of at least HK\$15,000.	• Financial proof of at least HK\$20,000.	• Financial proof of at least HK\$25,000.	• Financial proof of at least HK\$22,000.
Length of stay	• 12 months.								
Employment	• Not allowed to work for the same employer for more than three months.						• Not allowed to work for the same employer for more than six months.	• Not allowed to work for more than 12 months.	
Study course	• One only (course duration of not more than three months).	• Any number (course duration of not more than three months).	• Not allowed.	• One only (course duration of not more than six months).	• One only (course duration of not more than six months).	• Any number (cumulative duration of courses not more than six months).	• One only (course duration of not more than six months).	• One only (course duration of not more than six months).	• Any number (cumulative duration of courses not more than 12 months).

Table 2 –Eligibility requirements set out by Hong Kong for overseas applicants (cont'd)

	New Zealand	Australia	Ireland	Germany	Japan	Canada	South Korea	France	The United Kingdom
Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants must have medical, healthcare (including hospitalization), repatriation and liability insurance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not required.⁽¹⁾ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants must have medical, healthcare (including hospitalization), repatriation and liability insurance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants must have comprehensive liability and medical insurance covering hospitalization and repatriation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants must have sufficient medical insurance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants must have medical, healthcare (including hospitalization), repatriation and liability insurance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants must have medical, healthcare (including hospitalization), repatriation and liability insurance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants must have comprehensive liability and medical insurance covering hospitalization, pregnancy, disability and repatriation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants must have medical, healthcare (including hospitalization), repatriation and liability insurance.

Note: (1) Based on the telephone reply from the Immigration Department on 4 March 2014.

Source: Immigration Department (2014).

3. Recent development

3.1 The Working Holiday Scheme has been well received by the youths in Hong Kong as evidenced by the increase in the number of applications which often exceed the annual quota limit. As at January 2014, more than 30 000 youngsters joined the scheme. In view of the popularity of the scheme between Hong Kong and the participating countries, the Chief Executive announced in his 2014 Policy Address that the Government would explore similar arrangements with more countries to help more youngsters enrich their global exposure and broaden their horizon.

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Hong Kong

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