

7.19 At the request of The Royal Society, The Royal Academy of Engineering, and The British Academy, the following changes have been made to increase the number of applicants in science, engineering, and humanities to take advantage of a simpler process under the Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) route. We have:

- Expanded the list of peer-reviewed fellowships to include fellowships awarded by the National Institute for Health Research;
- Expanded the criteria to include applicants who have held a peer-reviewed fellowship in the 12 months immediately prior to date of application; and,
- Expanded the application criteria to allow a wider range of eligible senior academic or research positions to qualify.

***Changes relating to the Tier 2 (General) category***

7.20 Tier 2 of the Points-Based System caters for migrant workers with an offer of a skilled job from a licensed employer. There are four categories: General, Intra-Company Transfer (ICT), Minister of Religion and Sports person. Changes have been made to each of these as described below.

***Minor amendment to Tier 2 (General) category – To remove PhD level occupations from the Tier 2 Cap***

7.21 The Tier 2 (General) category is the main immigration route for UK employers seeking to recruit non-EEA skilled workers. It is subject to an annual limit of 20,700 places, divided into monthly allocations.

7.22 Changes are being made to exempt PhD level occupations from the Tier 2 (General) limit. Announced in the Chancellor’s 2019 Spring Statement, this is to signal that the UK welcome researchers and other highly skilled individuals and will free up places in that tier for other key roles that contribute to the UK economy.

7.23 Also, as announced in the Spring Statement, amendments are being made to ensure that applicants whose occupations are at PhD level, and who undertake research overseas directly related to their Tier 2 employment, may do so without that absence being ‘counted’ when any application for settlement is assessed. Corresponding amendments are also being made to benefit partners who accompany them in these circumstances.

***Minor amendment to Tier 2 (General) category – Changes to Shortage Occupation List***

7.24 The Shortage Occupation List (SOL) is being amended following a review by the independent Migration Advisory Committee published 29 May 2019. There is one list covering the whole of the UK and an additional list for Scotland.

7.25 The SOL means that (i) listed jobs are exempt from the Resident Labour Market Test requirement and are given higher priority within the Tier 2 (General) annual limit; and, (ii) jobholders whose occupations are on the list are exempt from the relevant Tier 2