



NEW REGULATIONS INTRODUCE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO THE UAE IMMIGRATION SYSTEM

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FRAGOMEN

Introduction

Following the implementation of [the new labour law in February 2022](#), and [the new law on entry and residency of foreigners](#) in September 2021, the UAE government continues to roll out enhancements that reshape the country's immigration landscape. The most recent amendment is the publication of executive regulations supplementing the law on entry and residency of foreigners, issued earlier this month. The implementation of the regulations will be governed by the Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs and Port Security and will come into force on September 5, 2022.

Historically, foreign nationals applying for a UAE visa were required to have a sponsor, typically an employer. Other visa options were limited. However, this has changed in recent years with the introduction of several self-sponsored visa categories which resulted in increased flexibility for foreign nationals to enter the country and reside, and for the UAE to retain talent. Thanks to these reforms, the UAE continues to maintain its status as a leading international hub for trade, business, and innovation.

The new regulations bring more reforms, including reclassification of visa categories, the introduction of a new self-sponsored Green Residency (Green Visa) scheme, and clarification of eligibility conditions related to the issuance of existing visa categories, such as Golden Visas. These changes are an elaboration of [the government announcement in April 2022](#) which anticipated the introduction of new visa systems.

It is important to highlight that this report sets out key changes at a high level. Fragomen anticipates that as these changes are implemented, further details will follow as administrative procedures are determined by the authorities in the forthcoming weeks.



Key Highlights

Green Residency (Green Visa)

- ▶ The introduction of a self-sponsored Green Visa scheme brings greater flexibility to foreign nationals residing and working in the UAE.
- ▶ Fragomen foresees the potential for a significant number of businesses and skilled foreign nationals to convert their standard employment-based residence permit to a Green Visa.

Golden Residency (Golden Visa)

- ▶ The recent regulations have further refined the available categories of Golden Visas and expanded the eligibility conditions of each category, making Golden Visas more accessible to diverse groups of individuals. A summary of changes, brought forth by the new regulations in regard to the Golden Visa, will be provided by Fragomen in a separate document.

Validity Period Of Residence Permits For Work

- ▶ The maximum validity of a residence permit for work is now two years. It remains unclear whether free zones will continue to issue three-year residency permits, or if they will align with the new regulation and shift to two years' maximum duration. However the introduction of the Green Residency which allows the issuance of residence permits for up to five years may justify this change.

Visit Visa For A Short Term Work Assignment

- ▶ This is a welcome introduction as previously, such short-term options were limited to employers in the mainland through the "Mission Work Permit" and "Mission Entry Visa" route. The expansion of this visa category to businesses operating in free zones will be a welcome change to employers that do not have a mainland presence.

Residence Permit For Family Residency

- ▶ Provisions related to the sponsorship of a residence permit for dependents provide more flexibility to visa applicants by expanding eligible categories of individuals and clarifying the sponsorship conditions;
- ▶ Foreign nationals residing in the UAE may now sponsor their son(s) who do not exceed 25 years of age, whereas previously the age limit for the sponsorship of a male child was capped at 18 years. There continue to be no age restrictions for unmarried daughters.

- ▶ Whilst there is no longer a fixed minimum salary requirement defined to be eligible to sponsor family members, there is a requirement for demonstrating financial standing and it is expected that this will be clarified in the administrative procedures.

Residence Permit For Remote Work

- ▶ Introduction of a minimum monthly income threshold of USD 3,500, whereas previously the Dubai Remote Working Visa scheme required applicants to earn at least USD 5,000 per month. This change is expected to increase the accessibility of this permit to a wider range of remote workers and digital nomads.

Five-Year Multiple Entry Visit Visa For Tourism

- ▶ The introduction of this self-sponsored tourism visa category is a breakaway from the traditional practice of obtaining a tourist visa which requires sponsorship, typically by a tourist agency.

Maximum Duration Of Stay In The UAE Post Visa Cancellation

- ▶ The maximum allowable duration of stay in the UAE following cancellation of a residence permit ("the grace period") has been increased from the previous one month to **a maximum of up to six months**. However, this grace period will be further defined for each category of residence permits. It is likely to be shorter for holders of standard residence permits for work and family, and longer for Green and Golden Visa holders, but at all times within the maximum allowable grace period of six months. We anticipate that more details will follow from a decision released by the Authority.

Residence Permit For Retirement

- ▶ The eligibility criteria has been elaborated upon further and formally defined, setting out three main channels of obtaining residency under this visa category: property ownership, financial deposits or meeting the fixed annual income cap.

Entry Visa For Property Owner

- ▶ The regulations have not set a minimum threshold of property value for property owners to be eligible for this category. However, it has placed additional conditions which must be met to be eligible for this visa category. These conditions are further discussed in upcoming sections of this document.

Visa reclassification

According to the new regulations, visas are now grouped into **entry visas** and **residence permits** (or **visas for residency**). They are further divided into categories and sub-categories.

I. Entry visas

The entry visas set out below are primarily tailored for short-term visits for business, work assignments, tourism, and leisure purposes. However, there are several additional entry visas, covered in upcoming sections, which may lead to residency status.

1. Visit visa

Visit visas can be for single- or multiple-entry. Although the maximum allowable duration of stay in the UAE is set to one year, it is expected that in the case of majority of visa categories, it will be significantly shorter. All visitors are required to have a return ticket (or a ticket for an onward travel) and health insurance.

VISIT VISA FOR TOURISM

- ▶ There are two sub-categories of visit visa for tourism:
 - standard visit visa for tourism which requires a sponsor (e.g.: a tourist agency); and
 - a five-year multiple-entry visit visa for tourism which is self-sponsored.
- ▶ The maximum allowable duration of stay under the five-year visa is 90 days, extendable once for the total duration of stay of 180 days in a year.
- ▶ The self-sponsored multiple entry visit visa for tourism requires a six-month bank statement indicating a minimum balance of USD 4,000 (or equivalent in another currency).

VISIT VISA FOR VISITING RELATIVES OR FRIENDS

- ▶ A self-sponsored visa issued to a relative or a friend of an Emirati national or a foreign resident.
- ▶ Requires a financial deposit.
- ▶ A proof of kinship and providing reasons for the visit is required.

VISIT VISA FOR A WORK ASSIGNMENT

- ▶ Company sponsored visa issued for a temporary work assignment for individuals working on temporary projects.
- ▶ Available to employers in government and private sectors, including those in free zones.
- ▶ Requires that the applicant is medically fit.
- ▶ A temporary employment contract is mandatory.

VISIT VISA FOR JOB SEEKERS

- ▶ A self-sponsored visa issued to individuals seeking job opportunities in the UAE.
- ▶ Applicant must either be a skilled worker or must have graduated from one of the world's best universities.
- ▶ Applicant must have a minimum bachelor's degree.
- ▶ Requires a financial deposit.

VISIT VISA FOR EXPLORING BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

- ▶ A self-sponsored visa issued to individuals seeking to explore business opportunities in the UAE.
- ▶ Requires a financial deposit.

VISIT VISA FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT

- ▶ A sponsored visa issued to individuals seeking medical treatment, and their escorts.
- ▶ An approved medical report and a letter from an authorized health institution in the UAE is required.
- ▶ Requires a financial deposit.

VISIT VISA FOR STUDY, TRAINING, OR GAINING QUALIFICATIONS

- ▶ A sponsored visa issued to individuals seeking study, attending training, or gaining qualifications.
- ▶ A letter from a company or an authorized educational, research or training institute in the UAE is required.

COURTESY VISA

- ▶ A sponsored visa issued upon request of the UAE consular posts abroad to diplomats, holders of special or UN passport, and other categories of individuals.



2. Temporary and emergency visa

Temporary and emergency visas are typically issued for a single-entry only, however there can be instances where the applicant will be granted a multiple-entry visa. The maximum allowable duration of stay in the UAE under this category is seven days, except for a transit visa which is issued for a maximum of 96 hours.



TRANSIT VISA

- ▶ There are two sub-categories of visit visa for transit:
 - a 48-hour visa; and
 - a 96-hour visa.
- ▶ The visa is self-sponsored and is issued to individuals transiting through the UAE through air or sea.

CREW MEMBER VISA

- ▶ A sponsored visa issued to a crew member of an aircraft.
- ▶ Maximum allowable duration of stay is seven days.

SEAMEN VISA

- ▶ A sponsored visa issued to an individual holding a seamen book and working onboard a UAE or a foreign ship, including a crew member.
- ▶ Maximum allowable duration of stay is seven days.

EMERGENCY VISA

- ▶ A sponsored visa issued in specific emergency situations, including health-threatening accidents, incidents caused by bad weather or technical issues of an aircraft.
- ▶ Maximum allowable duration of stay is 96 hours, except for situations where the individual's health is at risk, which is when the visa may be granted for up to seven days.

3. Entry visa for residents of GCC countries

This entry visa category is designed to cater to foreign nationals who are residents of other GCC countries, including their sponsored domestic workers. Although no specific conditions or requirements have been provided for this category, it is anticipated that the visa will allow short-term visits for business, tourism and leisure purposes. Additional details related to this visa are expected to be issued in the coming months.

II. Residence permits (including associated entry visas)

Residence permits constitute two main categories comprising of **residence permits for work** and **residence permits for residency without work**. All residency permits require the applicant to be present in the UAE at the time of issuance. Therefore, an entry visa from a corresponding category (e.g.: entry visa for contractual work in the case of individuals seeking work with an employer in a free zone or entry visa for retirement in the case of individuals seeking to retire in the UAE) or an entry visa different from the residence permit they have applied for, are required to facilitate entry into the country. Once in the UAE, the applicant may apply for an in-country change of immigration status and must then undergo the associated formalities, such as (but not limited to) medical fitness tests as in all cases, the residence permit applicant must be medically fit.

1. Residence permit for work

Residence permits for work are issued to foreign nationals seeking long-term residency for the purpose of work.

Residence permits for work are issued for up to two years, renewable, or for five years in the case of a Green Residency (also renewable).

RESIDENCE PERMIT FOR CONTRACTUAL EMPLOYMENT

- ▶ A sponsored residence permit issued to an individual engaged in a contractual employment with an entity in the government or private sector (in the mainland or in a free zone), or for a domestic worker.
- ▶ An approval from the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization (MOHRE) is required in the case of employment in the mainland and for domestic workers.
- ▶ An employment contract is mandatory.
- ▶ Residence permit is issued with a maximum validity of two years, renewable.

GREEN RESIDENCY (GREEN VISA)

- ▶ A self-sponsored residence permit issued to a commercial investor (and their business partner, if applicable), a highly skilled worker, or a freelance worker.
- ▶ For a commercial investor (and their business partner, if applicable), the applicant must have obtained approval from the Ministry of Economy along with a review of the value of their investment.
- ▶ For a skilled worker, the applicant must have a valid work authorization issued with a job title in a skilled category, must hold a minimum bachelor's degree or equivalent, and must earn a monthly salary of at least AED 15,000.
- ▶ For a freelance worker, the applicant must have a freelance permit issued by the MOHRE, must hold a bachelor's degree or a specialization diploma or equivalent, and have received an annual income of at least AED 360,000 in the past two years.
- ▶ Green residence permits are issued with a maximum validity of five years and are renewable.



2. Residence permit for residence without work

Residence permits for residence without work are issued to foreign nationals seeking residence for purposes other than work for an employer in the UAE.

RESIDENCE PERMIT FOR STUDY

- ▶ A sponsored residence permit issued to an individual enrolled in a university, a college, or an educational or research institute in the UAE.
- ▶ An approval from the Ministry of Education may be required.

RESIDENCE PERMIT FOR REMOTE WORK

- ▶ A self-sponsored residence permit issued to an individual working remotely for an employer overseas.
- ▶ Residence permit for remote work is issued with a maximum validity of one year, renewable.
- ▶ The applicant must earn a monthly salary of at least USD 3,500 or equivalent in another currency.

RESIDENCE PERMIT FOR RETIREMENT

- ▶ A self-sponsored residence permit issued to an individual seeking to retire in the UAE.
- ▶ Residence permit is issued with a maximum validity of five years, renewable.
- ▶ The applicant must be either 55 years old or more, or must have worked in the UAE for a minimum 15 years.
- ▶ The applicant must either:
 - own a property (or properties) in the UAE worth at least AED 1 million; or
 - have a financial deposit in the UAE worth at least AED 1 million (with some exceptions); or
 - receive an annual income of at least AED 240,000 from a source inside or outside the UAE.

RESIDENCE PERMIT FOR PROPERTY OWNER

- ▶ A self-sponsored visa issued to an individual who owns a property in the UAE.
- ▶ The property must be fully constructed, owned by the applicant, and must be fit for accommodation.
- ▶ The applicant must receive a monthly income of at least AED 10,000 or equivalent in another currency.
- ▶ There is no required minimum value of the property specified.

RESIDENCE PERMIT FOR FAMILY RESIDENCY

- ▶ There are five sub-categories of this sponsored visa category:
 - spouse or children under 25 (or unmarried daughters of any age) of a foreign resident (sponsorship of the visa for parents is permissible if the principal applicant holds a Green Residency visa);
 - foreign spouse, children, or parents of an Emirati national;
 - foreign wives or children of a GCC national;
 - foreign woman widowed or divorced from an Emirati husband, provided that she has at least one child with him; and
 - family residency issued for humanitarian reasons
- ▶ Proof of familial relationship and suitable accommodation is required.
- ▶ Residence permit is issued with a validity equal to the validity of the permit of the sponsor, where applicable.



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