



# Provider Update – Student Visa Program

## India and Nepal

India and Nepal have experienced significant growth in the last two years. Lodgements for Indian nationals increased by 52 per cent in 2018-19 (89,868 lodgements) over the previous year and by 38 per cent for Nepalese nationals in 2018-19 (43,190 lodgements).

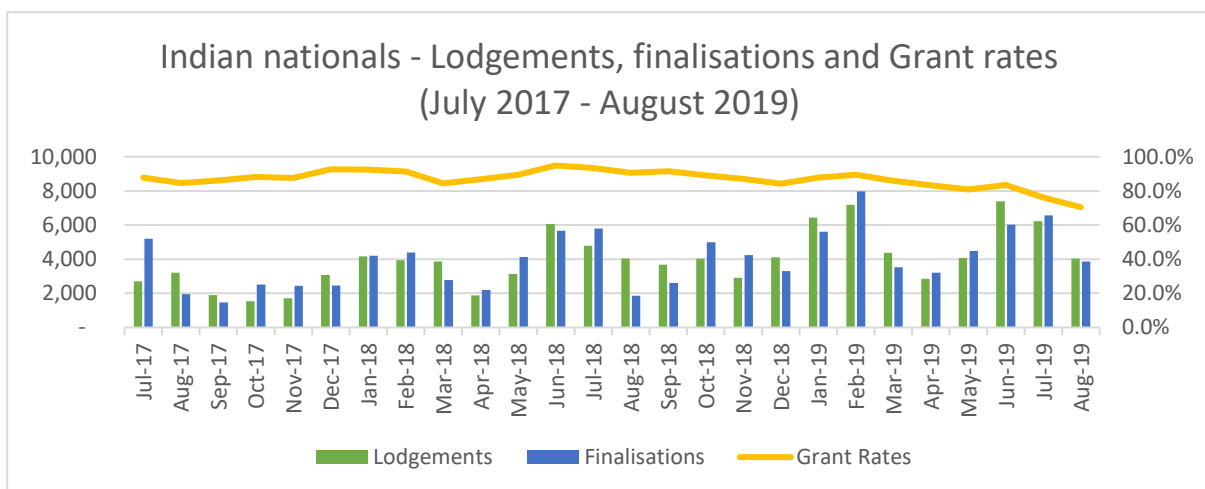
The Department is seeing increasing integrity concerns from the Indian and Nepalese markets. This includes document fraud, fraud related to English language testing, non-genuine claims and non-genuine subsequent marriages. We are also starting to see increased non-compliance with student visa conditions once students reach Australia.

Examples of fraud found in the Indian caseload:

- English examination imposters
- Fraudulent financial documents (e.g. altered bank statements and taxation documents)
- Fraudulent work experience (e.g. fake letters or statements from previous place of work)
- Fraudulent academic documents
- Lack of documents to make a decision and exploitation of the low/no requirement associated with streamlined applications. (refer case study below)
- Relationships contrived for the purposes of a positive visa outcome.

Given these increasing integrity concerns, the grant rate for Indian applicants in the Higher Education Sector has declined in recent months.

**Table 1 - Higher Education Sector**

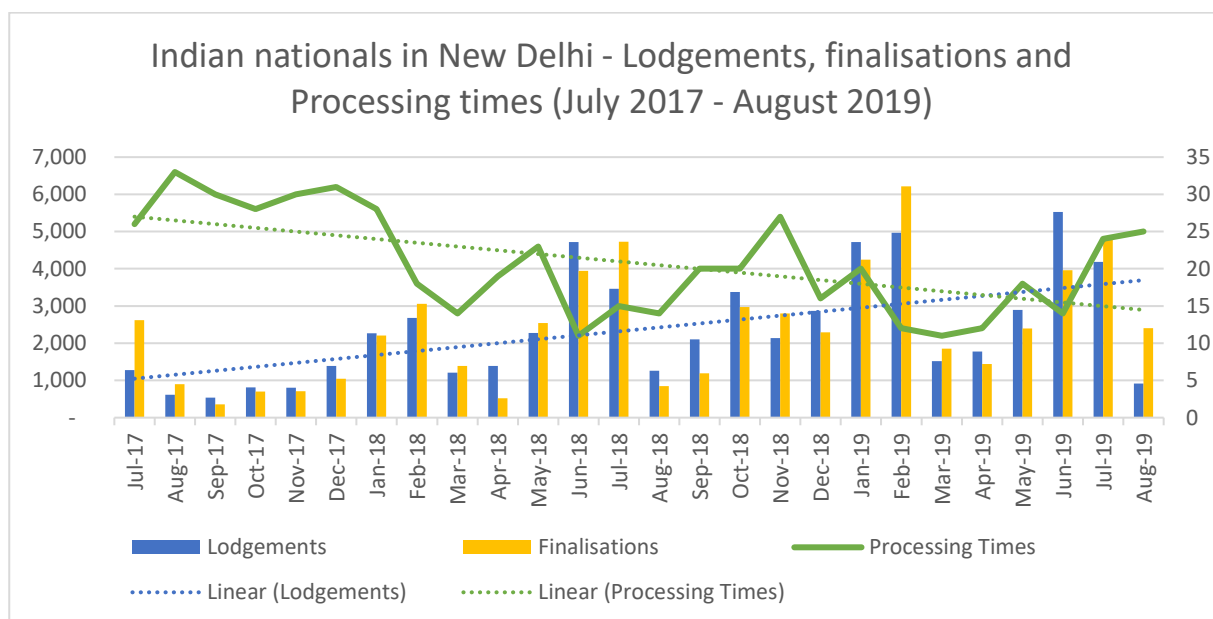


## Processing times

A significant rise in lodgements and increasing integrity concerns do put a strain on processing times in New Delhi. Student visa lodgements saw a significant spike in June and July which increased processing timeframes from 15 to 24 days. In addition to growth in lodgement numbers, poor quality applications require greater scrutiny.

Over the last two years of growth in in the India caseload, Higher Education Sector processing times in New Delhi have come down. Processing times have kept well within the widely communicated six week timeframe for the processing of a student visa from New Delhi.

**Table 2 – Higher Education Sector processing times**



New Delhi continue to receive visa applications within 1-2 weeks of course commencement. We strongly encourage students to lodge six weeks prior to course commencement. Six weeks allows for any requests for further information required as part of the visa application process and ensures that the student receives an outcome before the commencement of course, with time to travel and arrive in Australia.

## Decision records

Recent feedback from Education Providers has indicated some concern that decision records from New Delhi are generic in nature and lacking in detail. The feedback has been taken on board. Whilst a level of standardisation is required in decision records due to efficiency objectives and legislative requirements, we will look to ensure that they are as informative as they can be.

Our posted Home Affairs officers in New Delhi regularly undertake quality control and quality auditing of visa decisions. The outcomes form part of regular performance reviews and feedback loops for visa decision makers.

## **Student visa condition 8202 – changing courses**

One of the recommendations arising from the SSVF Appraisal, endorsed by the Government in May 2018, was that the Department run a campaign to educate students and encourage compliance with visa condition 8202. The Department has been running messages on its social media platform that under visa condition 8202, students must maintain enrolment in a registered

course that is the same Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) level as, or higher than, the course for they were granted their Student visa. If a student wants to change to a lower AQF level course, they will need to apply for a new Student visa, even if the course is with the same education provider. It is important that students comply with their visa conditions and failure to do so may result in their visa being considered for cancellation.

More information is available at: <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/reports-and-pubs/files/ssvf.pdf>; <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/change-in-situation/study-situation> and <https://www.aqf.edu.au/aqf-levels>

### **Extra year for Temporary Graduate visa holders in regional areas**

Announced on 20 March 2019, an additional year will be provided to eligible former international students who graduate with a bachelor degree or higher qualification from a regional campus of a registered university or institution, and can demonstrate ongoing residence in a regional area while holding their first Temporary Graduate (subclass 485) visa. <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/plan-australias-future-population>

The second visa will require ongoing residence in a regional area. Temporary Graduate visa holders can choose to work, study or travel on their visa.

The definition of regional Australia is similar to that of skilled migration and for this purpose will be everywhere except:

- Sydney
- Brisbane and the Gold Coast
- Perth
- Melbourne

This initiative will provide an additional incentive for international students to choose to study at a regional university and to live in regional areas post-study, boosting diversity and prosperity in regional Australia.