

Australian Student Visa Guide



Everything you need to prepare
a strong student visa application

Updated for 2026

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By using this guide, you acknowledge that you do so at your own risk and that you are responsible for verifying any information that is important to your application.

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WELCOME TO THE MIGROO STUDENT VISA GUIDE

Studying in Australia is an exciting opportunity, but the visa process can feel confusing when you are starting out. This guide is designed to walk you through everything you need in a clear, friendly, step-by-step way so you can apply with confidence. Whether you are enrolling in a short course, a vocational program, or a full university degree, the student visa process follows the same core steps. Once you understand them, the whole journey feels much less overwhelming.

The Australian student visa (subclass 500) allows you to study in Australia, work part-time, bring eligible family members, and live here while completing your course. It is one of Australia's most popular visa pathways, and it gives you access to high-quality education, campus life, travel, and the chance to experience what living in Australia is really like.

This guide explains the full process from start to finish. You will learn what documents you need, what the Genuine Student requirement is, how to prepare a strong application, what happens after lodgement, and how to avoid the common mistakes that cause delays or refusals. You will also see clear examples, practical checklists, and simple explanations of Department requirements.

If you are using Migroo, some chapters also include optional references to our AI review tools, which are designed to help you check your statements, evidence, and application structure before you lodge. These are completely optional, and the guide stands on its own, but they can make the process much easier.

By the time you reach the final chapter, you will understand exactly how to prepare a strong student visa application and what to expect at each stage. Take your time, work through each chapter step by step, and you will be in a great position to submit your application confidently.

Warmly,

Nick Muir, founder and CEO of Migroo

UNDERSTANDING STUDENT VISAS

Before you start preparing documents or filling out forms, it's worth stepping back and understanding how the Australian Student Visa actually works. Most refusals don't happen because someone forgets a document. They happen because the application doesn't make sense when viewed as a whole. This chapter explains what the Student Visa allows, how the Department of Home Affairs assesses applications, and what they expect from you as the applicant.

2.1 What the Student Visa is designed for

The Australian Student Visa (subclass 500) exists for one primary purpose: to allow you to study in Australia. If granted, the visa allows you to enrol full time in a CRICOS-registered course and remain in Australia for the duration of your studies. It also provides limited work rights and the ability to travel in and out of Australia while the visa is valid.

Work rights are part of the visa, but they are not the focus. They exist to support your studies, not to replace full-time employment. Understanding this distinction is important, as it underpins how the Department assesses your application.

2.2 How the Department assesses student visa applications

Student visa applications are not assessed by ticking off documents in isolation. Case officers look at the application as a complete picture and ask whether it makes sense.

At a high level, the Department is trying to answer three questions. Are you genuinely coming to Australia to study? Can you support yourself during your stay? And are you likely to comply with your visa conditions?

If your application clearly addresses these points and your documents support what you say, the assessment is usually straightforward.

2.3 Being a genuine student

Showing that you are a genuine student is about demonstrating that your course choice is reasonable given your background and future plans.

The Department will look at your education history, work experience, and overall circumstances and ask whether your decision to study in Australia makes sense at this point in your life. They are not expecting a perfect academic pathway, but they do expect logic.

If your chosen course fits naturally with what you have done before, this is usually easy to explain. If it represents a change in direction or a step back in level, the explanation needs to be clearer. The issue is not the change itself, but whether it has been properly thought through.

2.4 Financial capacity and self-support

Another core part of the assessment is whether you can realistically support yourself while studying.

The Department needs confidence that you can pay your tuition fees, cover your living costs, and meet any additional expenses without breaching visa conditions. This is why financial evidence plays such an important role in many applications.

Even where financial documents are not required upfront, your overall situation still needs to make sense. If your finances appear unrealistic or unexplained, this can raise doubts about whether study is genuinely your primary purpose.

2.5 Visa compliance and conditions

The Student Visa comes with conditions that apply for the entire period you are in Australia. These include limits on work, requirements to remain enrolled, and obligations to maintain health insurance.

When assessing your application, the Department is not just looking at whether you know these rules exist. They are assessing whether you are likely to comply with them in practice.

This does not mean you are expected to rule out future visa options. It simply means you understand the purpose of the Student Visa you are applying for and intend to follow its conditions while you hold it.

2.6 Key documents and alignment

Most student visa applications rely on a small set of core documents, including your Confirmation of Enrolment, health insurance, and evidence addressing the Genuine Student requirement.

What matters most is not just having these documents, but ensuring they align with each other. Dates, course details, financial information, and explanations should all tell the same story.

Inconsistencies, even small ones, are a common cause of delays and refusals.

2.7 Education providers and risk levels

The Department applies risk settings based on both your country of passport and your education provider. These settings affect how much evidence you are required to provide at lodgement.

Lower risk profiles may be asked for fewer documents initially, while higher risk profiles usually require more evidence upfront. However, a lower risk setting does not remove the need for a strong application.

If the Department later requests documents and you cannot provide them quickly or clearly, your application can still be refused.

2.8 Your role in the process

Regardless of whether you use an agent or tools to assist you, responsibility for your application always rests with you.

You are expected to ensure that the information you provide is accurate, consistent, and complete, and that you respond to any requests from the Department within the required timeframes.

Approaching the process carefully from the start makes everything that follows much easier.

2.9 When to lodge your application

Timing matters with student visas. You should only lodge once your enrolment is confirmed, your health insurance is arranged, and your explanations and documents are ready. Lodging early with incomplete or inconsistent information rarely speeds things up and often creates issues that are difficult to fix later.

A well-prepared application lodged at the right time is far more likely to be processed smoothly.

Summary

The Student Visa is assessed as a complete picture, not as individual documents in isolation. The key points to remember are:

- the visa is for genuine study
- your course choice must make sense
- financial capacity must be clear
- consistency across documents is critical

In the next chapter, we'll focus entirely on the Genuine Student requirement, including how to structure your explanation so it's clear, credible, and aligned with your evidence.

THE GENUINE STUDENT (GS) REQUIREMENT

The Genuine Student requirement is one of the most important parts of your student visa application. It's also where many applications fail, not because the applicant isn't genuine, but because their explanation lacks clarity or doesn't line up with the evidence. This chapter explains what the GS requirement is, what the Department is really assessing, and how to approach your explanation in a way that's logical, structured, and credible.

3.1 What the Genuine Student requirement is

The Genuine Student requirement replaced the former Genuine Temporary Entrant format for student visa applications lodged from 23 March 2024. Although the wording has changed, the underlying purpose is familiar. The Department wants to understand whether you are coming to Australia primarily to study and whether your plans make sense when viewed as a whole.

What has shifted is the focus. The GS requirement places less emphasis on long personal narratives and more emphasis on clear reasoning supported by evidence. You are not being asked to persuade. You are being asked to explain.



3.2 What the Department is actually assessing

When a case officer reviews your GS explanation, they are not looking for perfect English or emotional language. They are looking for logic.

At its core, the assessment is about whether your study plans are reasonable given your background, your circumstances, and your future goals. The officer wants to understand why you chose this course, why Australia is the right place to study it, and how the course fits into your broader plans.

If those elements are clear and consistent across your application, the GS requirement is usually satisfied.

3.3 How your personal background is considered

Your GS explanation does not exist in isolation. It is read alongside your education history, employment record, and personal circumstances.

The Department will naturally look at where you are in your life and career and ask whether your decision to study in Australia makes sense at this stage. This includes considering previous qualifications, work experience, any gaps in study or employment, and your ties to your home country.

There is no single profile that guarantees approval. What matters is whether your explanation accounts for your history honestly and logically.

3.4 Course choice and study progression

Your course selection is one of the strongest signals of whether you are a genuine student.

In most cases, the Department expects to see a reasonable progression in your studies. This does not mean you must stay in the same field forever, but there should be a clear explanation for any change in direction or level.

If your course is unrelated to your prior studies, significantly lower than your existing qualifications, or similar to courses you have already completed, you should expect closer scrutiny. These situations are not automatic problems, but they do require a clear explanation of why the course is appropriate and necessary for you.

3.5 Future plans and intentions

You are not required to guarantee that you will leave Australia at a specific time or rule out applying for another visa in the future.

What the Department is assessing is whether you understand the purpose of the Student Visa at the time you apply. Your future plans should show that the course has value beyond simply staying in Australia.

Strong explanations focus on realistic outcomes. They explain how the qualification fits into a career pathway, how it will be used after graduation, and why the investment in study makes sense. Vague statements about better opportunities or lifestyle changes tend to weaken an application rather than strengthen it.

3.6 Financial capacity and study focus

Your GS explanation should align with your financial evidence and your overall study plan.

The Department needs confidence that you can support yourself without breaching visa conditions. This includes being able to pay tuition, cover living expenses, and manage costs for any accompanying family members if relevant.

If your financial support comes from savings, family assistance, or a scholarship, this should be explained simply and backed by evidence. Financial arrangements that appear unclear or unrealistic can raise doubts about whether study is truly your primary focus.

3.7 Common problems with GS explanations

Many GS refusals are avoidable. They often arise when explanations are copied from generic templates, overloaded with unnecessary detail, or inconsistent with other documents in the application.

Another common issue is focusing too heavily on migration outcomes rather than study outcomes. While future possibilities can be acknowledged, the emphasis should always remain on education and how it fits your broader plans.

Clear structure, honest explanations, and alignment with evidence are far more persuasive than length.

3.8 How Migroo helps with the GS requirement

Migroo supports the Genuine Student requirement in two distinct ways, depending on where you are in the process.

If you are still drafting your GS explanation, Migroo's Prepare Package includes a structured GS template. This template is designed to mirror how case officers assess the requirement, guiding you through each GS factor in a logical order. Rather than asking you to write a long, unstructured statement, it helps you organise your reasoning clearly from the start, so nothing important is missed.

If you already have a draft GS explanation, Migroo's Review Package allows you to upload your statement for review and scoring. The GS review tool assesses your explanation against the key GS factors and provides structured feedback on clarity, logic, and alignment with your evidence. It highlights areas that may be unclear, underdeveloped, or inconsistent, so you can refine your explanation before you lodge.

Both tools are designed to support your own explanation, not replace it. Migroo does not generate a story for you or tell you what to say. Instead, it helps you present your genuine intentions in a way that is clear, well structured, and easy for a case officer to assess.

Used together, these tools reduce the risk of misunderstandings and help ensure your GS explanation supports the rest of your application rather than undermining it.

Summary

The Genuine Student requirement is about coherence rather than persuasion. Strong applications show a clear connection between the course, the applicant's background, and their future plans.

If your explanation is logical, supported by evidence, and focused on genuine study, you are doing exactly what the Department expects.

In the next chapter, we'll look at the evidence you'll need, including how to support your GS explanation and organise your documents so everything aligns cleanly.