

Foreign healthcare workers benefit from updated Critical Skills List

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The revised Critical Skills List extends the opportunity to obtain critical skills visas and permanent residence permits to various professionals in the healthcare sector effective from 2 August 2022.



Image source: Edward Jenner from [Pexels](#)

2022 brought about significant developments and proposed changes in immigration law specifically for South African employers hiring foreign nationals. On 2 February 2022, the Minister of the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) published a Critical Skills List under the Immigration Act, 13 of 2002 (Immigration Act). Exactly 6 months later, the DHA published a revised Critical Skills List in Government Gazette No 47182 on 2 August 2022. The list of critical skills required in South Africa has been expanded to include various occupations in the healthcare sector. This means that foreign nationals employed in the newly listed occupations may now be eligible for the corresponding work visas and permanent residency.

Comparing the Critical Skills List that was published on 2 February 2022 with the newly published version, the DHA has identified an additional 39 occupations in which certain skills or qualifications are critical. The revised Critical Skills List indicates a general description of specialised medical practitioners and individual specialisations for each occupation. The following new occupations have been included on the revised Critical Skills List effective from 2 August 2022:

- Dentist Specialist - in five different specialised fields;
- Medical Practitioner Specialist - in 27 specialised fields;
- Registered Nurse - in six specialised fields; and
- Industrial Pharmacist.

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In respect of the newly added occupations, the Critical Skills List provides the minimum qualification level required; however, it does not indicate a prescribed minimum NQF level required, as with the other occupations listed. It does however provide what qualifications are required to qualify under the newly added occupations. A minor change to an existing listed occupation relates to that of Nurse Educator which has been revised to Specialist Nurse Educator, in line with the focus on specialists. If a foreign national does not meet the requirements in the revised list due to the emphasis on specialised skills, then he or she will not be eligible to renew his or her current Critical Skills Work Visa when it expires.

If a foreign national possesses the skills and qualifications included in the revised Critical Skills List, he or she is still required to be registered as a member at a relevant professional body, board or council. Additionally, a foreign national who is registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) is required to provide proof of his or her active registration with the applicable foreign regulatory body for the particular field.

Foreign healthcare professionals with the qualifications and experience desperately needed in South Africa and the businesses hoping to employ them in South Africa may sigh a breath of relief. Foreign nationals who qualify under the revised Critical Skills List still need to comply with all other applicable requirements set out in the Immigration Act and Regulations.

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