Example 1

Sue has been working for her current employer as a Graphic Designer for 4.5 years. For the first 3.5 years, she worked for 20 hours per week as she was on a student visa. For the recent one year, she worked full-time, 38 hours per week on a 485 visa.

Sue meets the ‘3 year, full-time’ requirement. She already has one year full-time experience obviously and her 3.5 years (186 weeks) of part-time work experience equals 2 years (104 weeks) of full-time. (186 weeks x 20 hrs / 35 hrs = 104 weeks). Therefore in total she is considered to have 3 years full-time work experience.

Example 2

Lee worked full-time (40 hours/ week) for two years in Hong Kong as a Software Engineer after finishing his Bachelor degree. He then came to Australia to do a Master course. While studying, he is working part-time for an IT company in Sydney as a Software Engineer. His working hours is 20 hours per week and it has been 2 years since he started working.

Lee meets the ‘3 years, full-time’ because 2 years of part-time, 20 hrs/wk employment equals more than 1 year of full-time employment and plus the two years full-time overseas employment, a total of 3 years full-time work experience is met.

With above said, it is not impossible for overseas students to fullfil the ENS work experience requirements. However one need to be cautious that the work experience they are claiming must be at the required skill level, which brings out the next crition.

**‘At required skill level’**

Work expeirence at required skill level means work experience gained by the applicant after obtaining any qualifications that would allow them to work without restriction in the occupation. The applicant must have been fully skilled to perform the duties specified for the occupation according to the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classifcation of Occupations (ANZSCO). Any periods of work as an apprentice, trainee, assistant or other developmental role for the occupation do not count towards the 3 year full-time work requirement.

When calculating your work experience, it is crucial to calculate from the time you completed the required qualification for the nominated occupation. Work experience prior to required level of qualification cannot be counted.

Take Lee for example again. His occupation is Software Engineer. According to ANZSCO this occupation requires a level of skill commensurate with a bachelor degree or higher qualification. In the above mentioned scenario Lee started his overseas employment after finishing his bachelor degree, hence the two years of overseas work experience can be counted towards the total three years of full-time work requirement. However, if he had only completed a diploma before the two years of overseas work experience and then came to Australia to pursue a bachelor degree while working part-time for an IT company, none of his work experience would count because all the experience is considered to be below the required skill level.

**‘Closely related to the nominated occupation’**

This criterion is quite tricky and I believe confuses many potential applicants, not only for ENS visa but also for GSM visas.

To claim a certain period of work experience, the applicant must be able to demonstrate that the tasks in the position they claim towards meeting the 3 year employment requirement are the same as or closely related to the tasks of the nominated position. The tasks must have been performed to the same level of complexity and with at least the same level of responsibility. When a DIBP case officer assesses whether the work experience is closely related to the nominated occupation, they focus on the tasks of the occupation rather than the title of the position.

A common example of confusion on ‘closely related’ issue is Accountants against Bookkeepers.

Accountants requires a level of skill commensurate with a bachelor degree or higher qualification (ANZSCO Skill Level 1). Tasks for Accountants priscribed by ANZSCO include:

* assisting in formulating budgetary and accounting policies
* preparing financial statements for presentation to boards of directors, management, shareholders, and governing and statutory bodies
* conducting financial investigations, preparing reports, undertaking audits and advising on matters such as the purchase and sale of businesses, mergers, capital financing, suspected fraud, insolvency and taxation
* examining operating costs and organisations' income and expenditure
* providing assurance about the accuracy of information contained in financial reports and their compliance with statutory requirements
* providing financial and taxation advice on business structures, plans and operations
* preparing taxation returns for individuals and organisations
* liaising with financial institutions and brokers to establish funds management arrangements
* introducing and maintaining accounting systems, and advising on the selection and application of computer-based accounting systems
* maintaining internal control systems
* may appraise cash flow and financial risk of capital investment projects

Bookkeepers requires a level of skill commensurate with AQF Certificate II or III (ANZSCO Skill Level 4). Tasks for Bookkeepers priscribed by ANZSCO include:

* keeping financial records, and maintaining and balancing accounts using manual and computerised systems
* monitoring cash flow and lines of credit
* preparing and producing financial statements, budget and expenditure reports and analyses using account books, ledgers and accounting software packages
* preparing invoices, purchase orders and bank deposits
* reconciling accounts against monthly bank statements
* verifying recorded transactions and reporting irregularities to management
* may be required to prepare forms reporting business tax entitlements and obligations such as the amount of goods and services tax paid and collected

A lot of accounting graduates face problem when claiming their work experience. Although they have completed a bachelor or even master degree and working under the title of ‘accountant’ or ‘assistant accountant’, their actual tasks are more of a bookkeeper’s. In such a case, they will not be able to claim their work experience.

It is advisable that potential applicants check ANZSCO job description carefully when considerting claiming work experience. If not certain whether the tasks you performed are closely related to what are described by ANZSCO, always seek professional advice.

In conclusion, the Direct Entry Stream is only for people who can demonstrate 3 years of full-time relevant work experience. For those without the required work experience, Transition Stream- a path from 457 visa to ENS can be an alternative option. We will discuss about this option in coming edition.