



QFC IMMIGRATION REGULATIONS

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QATAR FINANCIAL CENTRE
REGULATION NO. 11 of 2006
QFC IMMIGRATION REGULATIONS

The Minister of Economy and Commerce, with the consent of the Council of Ministers, hereby enacts the following regulations pursuant to Article 9 of Law No (7) of 2005.

Yousef Kamal
Acting Minister of Economy and Commerce of the State of Qatar

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PART 1 – APPLICATION, COMMENCEMENT AND INTERPRETATION

ARTICLE 1 – CITATION

These Regulations may be referred to as the Immigration Regulations.

ARTICLE 2 – APPLICATION

- (1) These Regulations are made by the Minister pursuant to Article 9 of the QFC Law and have received the consent of the Council of Ministers. Amongst other things these Regulations govern the entry into and sponsorship within the State of Qatar of employees of QFC Authority, the Regulatory Authority, Appeals Body, Tribunal, other QFC Institutions and QFC Entities and their Family Members.
- (2) Pursuant to Article 18(4) of the QFC Law, notwithstanding any provision to the contrary in any other law or regulation of the State, the QFC Authority shall have power to issue all visas, permits and other documents relating to or required for the employment in or doing business with or in, the QFC and such visas, permits and other documents shall be fully valid and accepted by all State authorities.
- (3) Consistent with Article 2(2), the laws, rules and regulations of the State concerning the matters dealt with by or under these Regulations shall not apply to the extent they are inconsistent with a provision of these Regulations or any rule or policy or order issued thereunder.

ARTICLE 3 – COMMENCEMENT

These Regulations shall come into force on the date of their signature by the Minister.

ARTICLE 4 – LANGUAGE

In accordance with Article 9 of the QFC Law, these Regulations are written in the English language and the text thereof shall be the official original text. Any translation thereof into another language shall not be authoritative and in the event of any discrepancy between the English text of these Regulations and any other version, the English text shall prevail.

ARTICLE 5 – INTERPRETATION

Words and expressions used in these Regulations and interpretative provisions applying to these Regulations are set out in Part 6.

PART 2 – THE IMMIGRATION OFFICE

ARTICLE 6 – ESTABLISHMENT OF THE IMMIGRATION OFFICE

- (1) The Immigration Office shall be established by the QFC Authority pursuant to Article 6 of the QFC Law.
- (2) The Immigration Office shall administer these Regulations and all aspects of the entry into and sponsorship within the State of QFC Employees and Family Members.
- (3) The Immigration Office shall be managed by the QFC Immigration Officer who shall determine its procedures and management.
- (4) The Immigration Office shall be subject to the supervision of the QFC Authority which shall have the power and function to:
 - (A) ensure that the Immigration Office exercises its statutory powers and performs its statutory functions;
 - (B) review the performance of the Immigration Office and the use of its resources; and
 - (C) give the Immigration Office written directions as to the furtherance of any of its objectives or the performance of its functions.
- (5) The QFC Authority may make rules to the extent set out in the QFC Law, these Regulations and any other Regulations conferring powers, duties or functions on the QFC Authority as it deems necessary or appropriate to enable it, the Immigration Office and the Immigration Officer to implement, carry out or enforce their duties, functions and powers under the QFC Law, these Regulations and any other Regulations. These rules shall address among other things, any disqualifications standards for entry into or residence in the State.
- (6) The General Directorate of Border Passport & Expatriate Affairs of the Ministry of Interior, Labour Department of the Ministry of Civil Service Affairs and Housing, the CID, and all other relevant State authorities shall cooperate with the QFC Immigration Office and provide all necessary assistance to achieve the objectives of these Regulations, including locating their employees in the QFC Immigration Office as and when necessary.

ARTICLE 7 – ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE IMMIGRATION OFFICE

The Immigration Office shall have the following functions:

- (1) to receive and process all applications for visas, sponsorship and residence permits for QFC Employees and Family Members;

- (2) to assess the eligibility of applicants pursuant to rules, policies or orders developed by the QFC Authority and to ensure the timely issuance of all visas and residence permits;
- (3) to maintain relations with all State authorities involved in matters addressed in these Regulations, to coordinate with such authorities in the implementation of these Regulations and any rules, policies or orders issued thereunder, to provide such authorities with any documents or material to which they have a right under these Regulations and any applicable laws, rules or regulations of the State, and to represent the QFC in dealings with such authorities;
- (4) to keep and maintain in such form as it shall determine a register in respect of each QFC Employee and Family Member in respect of the visas (entry/exit/visit) issued, sponsorships and residence permits, to record in such register all documents and information which fall to be filed with or delivered to the Immigration Office in respect of such QFC Employees and Family Members, including any applications which have been denied; and
- (5) all other functions provided for in these Regulations considered by it to be necessary, desirable or appropriate to achieve, further or assist in relation to any of the above.

PART 3 – ENTRY AND SPONSORSHIP OF QFC EMPLOYEES

ARTICLE 8 – ENTRY OF FOREIGNERS INTO THE STATE

- (1) No foreigner shall enter the State or depart from it unless the foreigner holds a valid passport issued by the competent authorities of the foreigner's country or any other competent authority, or unless the foreigner holds a document that may be substituted for the passport issued by one of the authorities mentioned in this Article. The Ministry of Interior shall, by a resolution, define the documents which may be substituted for the passport.
- (2) The passport or substitute document must be stamped with an entry visa by the competent authority.
- (3) A foreigner may only enter or leave the State from the places specified by a decision of the Ministry of Interior and after having the foreigner's passport or substitute document stamped by the competent supervising officer.
- (4) QFC Employees and Family Members shall present their passport or alternative document to the Immigration Office, the General Directorate of Border Passport & Expatriate Affairs of the Ministry of Interior, the CID, State police authorities or any other appropriate State authority upon request. In the event of the loss of a passport or alternative document they shall notify the Immigration Office immediately.
- (5) Every QFC Employee and Family Member wishing to reside in the State must:
 - (A) obtain a residence permit from the Immigration Office; and
 - (B) leave the State upon the expiry of their residence permit unless they have previously obtained an extension from the Immigration Office.

ARTICLE 9 – SPONSORSHIP OF QFC EMPLOYEES

- (1) QFC Employees must be sponsored in the State by their Employer.
- (2) Employers may not employ persons in violation of these Regulations or any rules, policies or orders issued thereunder.

ARTICLE 10 – APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL TO BRING A QFC EMPLOYEE INTO THE STATE

- (1) Any Employer that wishes to bring a QFC Employee to the State must provide the Immigration Office with:
 - (A) the QFC Employee's name;
 - (B) the position of the QFC Employee; and

- (C) a copy of the QFC Employee's passport.
- (2) The Immigration Office shall make the necessary arrangements for the issuance of the visa for the QFC Employee and any Family Members and shall inform the Employer when the visa is available for collection.
- (3) Absent any disqualifying information, the Immigration Office will make best efforts to have the visa issued within two (2) working days of the date the Employer provides the information in this Article.

ARTICLE 11 – RESIDENCE PERMIT

- (1) Within five (5) working days of the arrival of the QFC Employee in the State the Employer shall apply to the Immigration Office for a State residence permit for the QFC Employee using the application form provided by the Immigration Office. The documents required in support of such an application shall be those identified for this purpose by the Immigration Office.
- (2) The QFC Employee shall complete a medical examination at a hospital designated by the Immigration Office and must have his fingerprints taken at the Immigration Office on the date and at the time specified by the Immigration Office.
- (3) Absent any disqualifying information, the residence permit shall be issued within five (5) working days of the date of the completion of the matters specified in Article 11(2) and in no event shall it extend past ten (10) working days of the filing of the application, provided the QFC Employee has provided all necessary information and completed all necessary procedures.
- (4) The Immigration Office shall notify the Employer when the residence permit has been issued to its QFC Employee. The duration of the residence permit will be for three (3) years provided that his passport remains valid during that period.
- (5) The Employer shall apply to the Immigration Office to renew an expired residence permit on behalf of a QFC Employee.

ARTICLE 12 – MULTIPLE EXIT VISA

- (1) The Immigration Officer shall provide QFC Employees who have a residence permit a multiple exit visa valid for the duration of the QFC Employee's residence permit.
- (2) A multiple exit visa shall be issued to the QFC Employee with the residence permit.
- (3) Pending the issuance of the residence permit the QFC Employee and Family Members may leave the State without any further permission or authorisation.

ARTICLE 13 – SPONSORSHIP OF FAMILY MEMBERS

- (1) Family Members of QFC Employees must be sponsored in the State by the QFC Employee in order to reside in the State.
- (2) In order to sponsor a Family Member the QFC Employee must file the documents identified for this purpose by the Immigration Office.
- (3) A partner of a QFC Employee who subsequently obtains work in the QFC shall remain under the sponsorship of the partner.
- (4) A partner of a QFC Employee who subsequently obtains work in the State outside the QFC shall be subject to the laws, rules and regulations of the State regarding entry, sponsorship and residence.

ARTICLE 14 – RESIDENCE PERMITS FOR FAMILY MEMBERS

- (1) Within five (5) working days of the arrival of a Family Member in the State the QFC Employee shall apply to the Immigration Office for a State residence permit for the Family Member in accordance with Article 11 (Residence permit) and using the application form provided by the Immigration Office. The documents required in support of such an application are those identified for this purpose by the Immigration Office.
- (2) Family Members must complete a medical examination at a hospital designated by the Immigration Office and must have their fingerprints taken at the Immigration Office on the date and at the time specified by the Immigration Office.
- (3) Absent any disqualifying information, a residence permit shall be issued for the Family Member within five (5) working days of the date of the completion of the matters specified in Article 11(2) and in no event shall it extend past ten (10) working days of the filing of the application, provided the Family Member has provided all necessary information and completed all necessary procedures.
- (4) The Immigration Office will notify the QFC Employee when the residence permit has been issued. The period of the Family Member's residence shall be coextensive with the duration of the QFC Employee's residence permit provided that the Family Member's passport remains valid throughout that period, and shall terminate when the QFC Employee's permit terminates.
- (5) An Employer or QFC Employee may apply to the Immigration Office to renew an expired residence permit for a Family Member.

ARTICLE 15 – EXIT VISAS FOR FAMILY MEMBERS

Family Members sponsored by a QFC Employee do not require exit visas to leave the State.

ARTICLE 16 – TRANSFER OF SPONSORSHIP

- (1) Upon application, the Immigration Office shall assist in the transfer of the sponsorship of a QFC Employee from one QFC Employer to another QFC Employer. The transfer of sponsorship from one QFC Employer to another QFC Employer, or from a QFC Employer to a new employer in the State, shall not require the consent of, or any release by, the current Employer of the QFC Employee.
- (2) Upon application, the Immigration Office shall assist:
 - (A) QFC Employees who wish to have their sponsorship transferred to a new employer in the State outside the QFC; and
 - (B) Sponsored Employees in the State seeking to become QFC Employees,

in their dealings with the Ministry of Interior to obtain a change of sponsorship under these Regulations and the laws, rules and regulations of the State.
- (3) The QFC Immigration Office may accept the transfer of sponsorship of a Sponsored Employee to an Employer if:
 - (A) the Sponsored Employee has notified his State Sponsor of his wish to transfer his sponsorship;
 - (B) the State Sponsor has:
 - (i) consented to the transfer of sponsorship;
 - (ii) refused to consent to the transfer of sponsorship and has not provided a valid reason for the refusal; or
 - (iii) failed to respond to the Sponsored Employee's request to transfer his sponsorship within thirty (30) working days of receipt of such request;
 - (C) the Sponsored Employee who accepts an offer of employment from an Employer is not violating the terms of that Employee's current employment contract with the State Sponsor; and
 - (D) the relevant office of the Ministry of Interior has approved the transfer.
- (4) The Immigration Office may request information from the State Sponsor in relation to any matter identified in Article 16(3) above.
- (5) The Sponsored Employee shall be liable for any violation of these Regulations in connection with the transfer of his sponsorship to an Employer.

- (6) QFC Employees shall not work for any other employer in the State outside the QFC without complying with these Regulations and the applicable laws, rules and regulations of the State.
- (7) An Employer may apply to the Immigration Office to second his QFC Employees to another Employer for a duration not exceeding twelve months or to permit QFC Employees to work for another Employer outside their usual working hours.
- (8) An Employer may apply to the Immigration Office for assistance in obtaining the permission of the Ministry of Interior either:
 - (A) to second his QFC Employees to an employer in the State for a duration not exceeding twelve (12) months,
 - (B) to receive seconded employees from an employer in the State for a period not exceeding twelve (12) months; or
 - (C) to permit a QFC Employee of an Employer to work for another employer in the State outside his usual working hours.

ARTICLE 17 – CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Any QFC Employee must inform the Immigration Office within five (5) working days of any change of address.

ARTICLE 18 – VISIT AND BUSINESS VISAS

- (1) Any Employer that wishes to apply for a business visit visa for a business contact or member of staff employed outside the State in circumstances where:
 - (A) the visit will extend past the period for which State requirements on entry into the State generally apply; and/or
 - (B) the business contact or staff holds a passport from a jurisdiction that has no visa waiver program with the State,shall file the documents identified for this purpose by the Immigration Office.
- (2) Any visa issued under this Article shall not extend past three (3) months although an Employer may file an extension for a further period of up to three (3) months.
- (3) The Immigration Office shall make the necessary arrangements for the issuance of the visa and shall inform the Employer when the visa is available for collection.
- (4) Absent any disqualifying information, the Immigration Office will make best efforts to have the visa issued within two (2) working days of the date the Employer provides the information in this Article.

(5) The provisions of this Article shall also apply to any QFC Employee who wishes to obtain a visa for a family member who is not sponsored by the QFC Employee for a visit to the State.

ARTICLE 19 – FEES

A table of fees payable for services provided by the Immigration Office shall be published.

PART 4 – SPONSORSHIP

ARTICLE 20 – PROVISIONS RELATING TO SPONSORED QFC EMPLOYEES

Except as required by these Regulations, the QFC Employee shall leave the State within thirty (30) days of the termination of the employment for which he was granted the entry visa or residence permit.

ARTICLE 21 – OBLIGATIONS OF EMPLOYER

(1) The obligations of the Employer are:

- (A) if the QFC Employee fails to leave the State as required by these Regulations or any applicable laws, rules or regulations of the State, to cooperate with the Immigration Office and relevant State authorities as may be required;
- (B) to cooperate fully with the Immigration Office and relevant State Authorities in connection with any criminal or security proceeding involving the QFC Employee; and
- (C) to bear the expenses of preparing and burying the body of his deceased QFC Employee in the cemeteries designated for that purpose in the State, or, at the request of a legitimate heir of the deceased or any other party, to transport the body to the native country or permanent place of residence of the deceased QFC Employee, whatever the reason of death might be.

(2) Except as provided in any QFC Regulation enacted under the QFC Law or unless expressly consented to in writing by the Employer, no Employer shall be liable for any civil obligation or civil liability incurred by its Employees or their Family Members in the State.

ARTICLE 22 – DEPORTATION OF QFC EMPLOYEES

(1) The Ministry of Interior may issue a resolution for deporting any QFC Employee or Family Member whose residence proves threatening to the security of the State and public safety, whether domestically or abroad, to its economy, public health or accepted standards of behaviour or if he constitutes a cost to the State.

(2) Consistent with Article 18(1) of the QFC Law, any final deportation decision issued by the State criminal courts shall be executed in accordance with State laws, rules and regulations.

PART 5 – GENERAL PROVISIONS

ARTICLE 23 – PENALTIES

The Immigration Office may impose fines in accordance with rules to be provided by QFCA for contraventions of these Regulations, provided however, that no such fine may be issued in respect of a matter which is the subject of a fine or penalty under the law, rules or regulations of the State.

ARTICLE 24 – APPEALS

A person directly affected by a determination, decision or fine of the Immigration Office may appeal the determination, decision or fine to such court, tribunal or other juridical body established under the QFC Law and empowered to hear matters arising under these Regulations. In such a case, the person must first exhaust any procedures made available by the QFC Authority to review the decision of the Immigration Office.

PART 6 – INTERPRETATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

ARTICLE 25 – INTERPRETATION

- (1) In these Regulations, a reference to:
 - (A) a provision of any law or regulation includes a reference to that provision as amended or re-enacted from time to time;
 - (B) an obligation to publish or cause to be published a particular document shall, unless expressly provided otherwise in these Regulations, include publishing or causing to be published in printed or electronic form;
 - (C) a calendar year shall mean a year of the Gregorian calendar;
 - (D) a month shall mean a month of the Gregorian calendar;
 - (E) the masculine gender includes the feminine and the neuter;
 - (F) writing includes any form of representing or reproducing words in a legible form;
 - (G) references to a person includes any natural or legal person, body corporate or body unincorporated, including a branch, company, partnership, unincorporated association, government or state.
- (2) The headings in these Regulations shall not affect their interpretation.
- (3) A reference in these Regulations to a Part or Article by number only, and without further identification, is a reference to a Part or Article of that number in these Regulations.
- (4) A reference in these Regulations to an Article or a Part using the short form description of such Article or Part in parenthesis are for convenience only and the short form description shall not affect the construction of the Article or Part to which it relates.
- (5) A reference in an Article or other division of these Regulations to a paragraph, sub-paragraph or Article by number or letter only, and without further identification, is a reference to a paragraph, sub-paragraph or Article of that number or letter contained in the Article or other division of these Regulations in which that reference occurs.
- (6) Any reference in these Regulations to “include”, “including”, “in particular”, “for example”, “such as” or similar expressions shall be considered as being by way of illustration or emphasis only and are not to be constructed so as to limit the generality of any words preceding them.

ARTICLE 26 – DEFINITIONS

In these Regulations, the following words and phrases shall have the meanings shown against each of them, unless the contrary intention appears:

Employment Regulations	the Regulations enacted by the Minister relating to employment in the QFC
Family Member(s)	the female partner of a male QFC Employee or a male partner of a female QFC Employee and minor children of a QFC Employee who are sponsored by that QFC Employee
QFC Employee	a non-Qatari employee of an Employer
Minister	the Minister of Economy and Commerce of the State
Ministry of Interior	the Ministry of Interior of the State
Person	includes a natural or judicial person, body corporate, or body unincorporate, including a branch, a company, partnership, unincorporated association or other undertaking, government or state
QFC	the Qatar Financial Centre
QFC Authority	the Qatar Financial Centre Authority established pursuant to Article 3 of the QFC Law
QFC Employer	the QFC Authority, the Regulatory Authority, the Appeals Body, the Tribunal or any other QFC Entity or a QFC Institution which employs one or more employees
QFC Entity	any company, branch or partnership established in or licensed to do business in the QFC
QFC Institution	the Companies Registration Office or any other institution or body created under Article 6 or Article 9 of the QFC Law
QFC Law	Law No. (7) of 2005 of the State
Regulatory Authority	the Regulatory Authority of the QFC established by Article 8 of the QFC Law
Sponsored Employee	an employee who is not of Qatari nationality and who is not sponsored in the State by a member of his family and is therefore sponsored in the State by his employer
State	the State of Qatar
State Sponsor	The Person in the State sponsoring a Sponsored Employee