

Introduction of biometrics as part of the visa application process in India

Information note for visa applicants

As of 10 February 2015 the requirement to provide your biometric information will become part of the visa application process in India.

What is biometric information?

Biometric information refers to your fingerprints and a digital photograph of your face.

Does the requirement apply to all visa types? Does it apply every time you make an application?

This requirement will apply to all visa types: short stay, long stay and transit. It will apply to all visa required nationals located in India. It will apply each time that you submit a visa application.

Does it apply to all applicants?

Some applicants will be exempt from the requirement. The list of exemptions is set out below. If one of these categories applies to you, you will have the opportunity, when making your on-line visa application, to indicate that you are exempt.

What happens if you incorrectly claim to be exempt from the requirement to provide your biometric information?

If you incorrectly claim to be biometric exempt when completing your on-line application form you are at risk of:

- your application being refused without a right of appeal, and
- being prevented from making further visa applications for a period of five years.

Where do I enrol my biometric information?

If you are required to provide your biometric information as part of the visa application process you must attend at a visa application centre. When you have completed your on-line visa application the summary sheet generated by the system will tell you how to book an appointment at a centre that is convenient for you.

When you attend the visa application centre, you will need to provide your biometric information, which includes a digital photograph and a digital scan of your fingerprints.

Your digital photograph must be taken with full face and without sunglasses or tinted spectacles, or head covering unless it is worn for religious or medical reasons. Your face should be clearly visible with no hair across the eyes.

The collection of your biometric information at a visa application centre includes a digital finger scan (all 10 digits). The finger scan procedure uses an electronic scanner. No ink, liquid or chemical is used. You should ensure that your fingertips are free from any forms of decoration (for example, henna), cuts, abrasions or other markings as these may affect your ability to provide acceptable finger scans.

PLEASE NOTE: If you are required to provide your biometric information the visa application centre cannot process your visa application if you do not do so.

Who will enrol my biometric information?

Your biometric information will be collected by the United Kingdom Home Office or another authorised agent on behalf of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service of the Department of Justice and Equality of Ireland.

Are children required to attend at a visa application centre?

Children **who are under 5 years of age** are exempt from the requirement to provide their biometric information. Therefore they do not need to attend at the visa application centre. However, their parent /legal guardian or other adult must make an appointment to attend at the visa application centre for the purpose of submitting the documentation relating to their visa application.

Children who are **aged 5 years and upwards** are required to provide their biometric information and must attend at the visa application centre for that purpose and to submit the documentation relating to their visa application.

Children who are **under 16 years of age** must be accompanied by an adult when attending a visa application centre. The adult cannot be a member of VFS Global staff.

Who will your biometric information be shared with?

Your biometric information will be shared with the authorities of the United Kingdom and searched against Irish and UK immigration and police databases.

Your information and the results of checks carried out on relevant databases, may also be disclosed to other Irish Government Departments and/or Agencies, including An Garda Síochána (Irish Police), as well as to public authorities of the Member States of the European Union/EEA and/or other States, including for the purpose of confirming identity and/or immigration history/criminal history.

How long will your biometric information be kept?

Your biometric information will be kept for 10 years from the date it was provided, and will then be destroyed. This period is subject to review in accordance with Irish law.

What will happen on your arrival at an Irish Port of Entry?

Amongst other checks, an Immigration Officer may require you to provide fingerprints on arrival at an Irish Port of Entry for the purposes of confirming your identity and/or immigration history.

List of Exemptions

If one of the exemptions listed below applies to you it means that you are not required to provide your fingerprints and live capture facial image as part of your visa application.

The following categories are biometric exempt:

Age

- a. Children under 5 years of age on the date of the submission of their online visa application are exempt.

Status/class

- b. Heads of State and the members of their family forming part of their household whether travelling officially or privately and private servants and officials included in the delegations of such visitors are exempt. Members of their household include spouse/civil partner/children under 18 years.
- c. Heads of Government and Government Ministers of states recognised by Ireland, members of their family forming part of their household, and officials in the delegation travelling to the State for an official purpose are exempt.

Members of their household include spouse/civil partner and children under 18 years.

- d. Diplomats, administrative, technical and service staff and career consular officers, and members of their family forming part of their household, who are accredited to Ireland are exempt. Members of their household include spouse/civil partner/children under 18 years /dependent children up to the age of 25 years who are in full-time education.
- e. Diplomats transiting through the State to or from a country where they are accredited are exempt. Members of their family forming part of their household are also exempt. Members of their household include spouse/civil partner/ children under 18 years.
- f. Diplomatic couriers travelling to the State/transiting the State are exempt.
- g. Diplomats travelling to the State in their official capacity as part of the official party or delegation of serving Government Ministers or equivalent are exempt where their applications are accompanied by a note verbale from the sending authority (i.e. the relevant government department setting out the details of the nature of the visit and who is travelling) and an invitation letter from the inviting department in Ireland.

Note: Holders of official /service passports travelling to Ireland on the business of their government are not exempt from the requirement to provide their biometrics (unless they otherwise qualify for an exemption).

- h. Employees of intergovernmental organisations based, or with offices, in Ireland who have been recruited overseas are exempt as well as representatives and officials of intergovernmental organisations travelling to Ireland in their official capacity on the official business of that organisation where their applications are accompanied by a note from the intergovernmental organisation setting out the details and nature of the visit and an invitation letter from the inviting organisation in Ireland. Members of their family forming part of their household are exempt. Members of their household include spouse/civil partner/children under 18 years. Other people forming part of the official party or delegation of an employee of an intergovernmental organisation e.g. civil servants, secretaries and interpreters are also exempt.

Note: “Intergovernmental organisation” refers to organisations that are made up primarily of member states. Examples include Council of Europe (CoE), European Union (EU), International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Labour Organisation (ILO), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and

Development (OECD), Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), United Nations (UN), World Trade Organisation (WTO).

- i. Airline crew members who arrive as crew members of an aircraft and are under engagement to leave within 7 days either on the same aircraft or another are exempt.

Note: Airline crew transiting within a maximum of 24 hours do not require visas (unless they are nationals of a country that is scheduled for the purposes of transit visas).

Persons for whom it is physically impossible to provide biometrics

- j. Applicants for whom it is physically impossible to provide biometrics (e.g. Emergency “stretcher” cases) are exempt.

Note: Applicants with 1 or no fingers are exempt from the requirement to provide fingerprints. However, they are required to provide a live capture facial image and are therefore not biometric exempt.