

# Visas in China

In the People's Republic of China, there are a variety of different visas. This guide will take you through the legal working (Z) visa as well as the methods for obtaining a visa. It is critical that you are on the right type of visa to live and work in China legally.

## Required Documents for a Z Visa

In order to begin the process of obtaining a Z visa, you first need to have signed a contract of employment with an employer in China. Your employer then obtains two pieces of documentation. The first of these is the “**Work Permit**,” and the other is the “**Invitation Letter**.” Your employer requires *your CV, a reference letter, copies of your University degree, teaching certificates and a copy of your passport* to obtain these documents. Only schools that are legally allowed to hire foreigners are able to provide these documents. Furthermore, you will likely need to undergo a **medical check**, both/either in your home country and/or in China, and a **background check** in your home country.

## Obtaining a Z Visa

Once your employer has sent you the required documents, you may then apply for a Z visa. Along with your passport, you will need to submit these documents to the Chinese Embassy in your home country. Alternatively, if you are legally working in a country other than your home country, you can carry out the process from the embassy or consulate either in HK or at your home country. Depending on processing time, in a few days or a week you will get your passport back in mail with a temporary “Z visa” inside. This temporary visa is good for 30 days and is designed for you to enter China.

## Finishing the Process

Once you're in China, your school will assist you in converting your temporary visa into a “**Foreign Expert Certification**” or “**Alien Employment Permit**” along with a “**Residence Permit**”. This process could take around a month. In the meantime, the government requires you to have physical exam done. If you have already done one in overseas, you would likely have to do it again once in China.

## New Visa Policy

The government of Shanghai issued a new policy in 2015 for expats already in China, applying for Z visas in Shanghai. If you are travelling in Shanghai and then happen to find a job, your employer needs to apply for your “Work Permit” as usual. But there is *no need* to apply for the “Invitation



Letter” and the Z visa. You can move on directly to the “Foreign Expert Certification” or “Alien Employment Permit” along with your “Residence Permit”.

### **Registering with the Police**

Before and after your school applies for the “Foreign Expert Certification” or “Alien Employment Permit” along with your “Residence Permit”, you will **need to register with your local police station in China**. You will need your passport for this, and a copy of your lease if necessary. They will provide you with a “Registration Form of Temporary Residence.” Failure to obtain this document may result in steep fines. If you are residing in a hotel or hostel, the hotel staff can usually do this for you on the spot.