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Royal Government of Bhutan
Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Employment
Department of Labour



PUBLIC INFORMATION

Critical Skills Shortage List (CSSL)-2023-2024

1. Introduction

The Department of Labour is adopting a new method for approval of foreign workers known as the Critical Skills Shortage List (CSSL). This new approach marks a shift away from the previous closed occupations framework, which restricted certain job categories to foreign workers to foster employment opportunities for the local workers, primarily trained through TVET and other informal channels. This new approach will not completely close any occupation to foreign workers. Instead, it will evaluate the approval of foreign workers based on the presence of local skills, taking into account the regional or contextual availability.

2. What is Critical Skills Shortage (CSS)?

Critical skills shortage refers to a situation where there is a significant gap between the demand for certain skills/Occupations in the job market and the availability of local skills or supply of individuals possessing those skills. These skills are considered 'critical' because they are crucial for the functioning and growth of specific industries or sectors. Critical skills shortages can lead to difficulties for employers in filling key positions or vacancies, which may hinder productivity, innovation, and economic development.

3. How is CSS addressed?

The government, businesses, and educational institutions collaborate to address critical skills shortages by implementing targeted training programs and other initiatives aimed at boosting the local supply of critical skills. Concurrently, *labour and immigration policies are temporarily adjusted to facilitate the recruitment of foreign workers to address the skills gap.*



4. Why Critical Skills Shortage List (CSSL) Important?

The CSSL is important because it helps identify the specific skills that are in high demand within a particular region or industry or the country as a whole. This list serves several crucial purposes:

1. Addressing the labour market needs by pinpointing skills that are in short supply and informs the policymakers, employers, and training institutions to focus their efforts on addressing these gaps.
2. It guides the educational and TVET institutions the development of training and education programs to ensure that individuals are equipped with the skills needed to meet current and future workforce demands.
3. It informs the labour and immigration policies by identifying skills that are in demand but not adequately available domestically. This facilitates the recruitment of skilled workers from other countries to fill these gaps.
4. By ensuring that industries have access to the necessary talent, the Critical Skills Shortage List supports economic growth and competitiveness.
5. Overall, the list plays a vital role in aligning skills supply with labor market demand, facilitating workforce development, and supporting economic prosperity.

6. What is the existing CSSL?

The current Critical Skills Shortage List (CSSL) is developed by the Department of Labour through a study involving the mix of an online survey with employers and stakeholders, analyzing available labour market data, and consulting with various groups and individuals.



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Table 1: Critical Skill/Occupation Shortage List

Sl. No	Major Occupation	Occupation	Basis	Remarks
1	Managers	CEO	Specific projects necessitate the employment of skilled workers who possess expertise in their respective fields to effectively manage the company. Additionally, hiring foreign investors for such positions is also necessary.	FDI
2		Director		
3		General Manager		
4		Project Manager		
5		Production Manager		
6		Marketing Manager		
7		Human Resource Manager		
8		Business Analyst		
9		Finance Manger		
1	Professional	Medical Doctors	There is a shortage of many occupations in the country, necessitating the assistance of foreign experts to fill these positions and facilitate the transfer of skills and knowledge from experienced professionals.	
2		Medical Professional		
3		Nurse		
4		Teacher		
5		Professor		
6		Associate Professor		
7		Geologists		
8		Metallurgist		
9		Software Engineer		
10		Mechanical Engineer		
11		Electrical Engineer		
12		IT Consultants		
13		AI Engineer		
14		Plant Engineer		
15		Software Development		
16		Architect		
1	Associate Professionals and Technicians	IT Professionals	These occupations are recognized as facing a shortage of skills within the country and must be approved based on employer demand.	
2		AI Developers		
3		Database Administrator		
4		Data Manager		



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Sl. No	Major Occupation	Occupation	Basis	Remarks			
5		Data Engineer					
6		Data Visualization Officer					
7		Digital Marketers					
8		Creative Content Writers					
9		Masseuse					
10		Chef			Star 3 & above		
11		Pastry Chef					
12		Chartered Accountants (CAs)					
13		Core Assembler					
14		Mechanical Engineering Technician					
15		Chemical Engineering Technician					
16		Electrical Engineering Technician					
17		Electronic Engineering Technician					
1		Service and Sales Workers			Cook	These occupations are highly sought after in the service sectors due to a reluctance among youths or locals to step forward.	Star 1 & 2 Hotels
2					Bartenders		BTFW
3					Barista		BTFW
4					Food and Beverage Server		BTFW
5	Auto Mechanic						
6	Auto Electrician						
7	Waiter		BTFW				
8	Laundry person		BTFW				
9	Cleaner		BTFW				
10	Wet sweepers		BTFW				
11	Security guards		BTFW				
12	Foreign Childcare Giver						
13	Cobbler						
1		Carpenter					



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Sl. No	Major Occupation	Occupation	Basis	Remarks
2	Craft and Related Trades Workers	Painter	While some of these occupations are taught in TVET institutions, graduates often show reluctance to pursue them. Even after employment, employers face challenges with job hopping. This is why employers prefer foreign workers for these occupations. However, the country generally lacks the requisite skills in many related trades.	
3		Welder		
4		Mason		
5		Blacksmiths		
6		Gas Welder		
7		Metal Molder/Troe-Zop		
8		Mechanic		
9		Electrician (PLC & VFD)		
10		Metal Art		
11		Fabricators		
12		Upholsterer		
13		Machine Maintenance		
14		Life guards		
15		Furnace In-charge		
16		Furnace shift in-charge		
17		Furnace Melter		
18		Gas Cutter		
19		Rod Binder		
20		Auto Painter		
21		Fitter		
22		Mill Fitter		
23		Denter		
24		Sheet Metal Worker		
1		Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers		
2	Pre-mixer Operator			
3	Machine Operator			
4	Sawer			
5	Boiler Operator			
6	Machine operator			
7	Milling machine operator			
8	Plant machinery Operator			
9	Payloader Operator			



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Sl. No	Major Occupation	Occupation	Basis	Remarks
10		Crane Operator		
11		Pump Operator		
12		Thermax Control Operator		
13		Lathe Operator		
14		Operators (others)		
15		Turning Table Operator		
16		W-Channel Operator		
17		Cold Shear Operator		
18		Wire & Nail Operator		
19		Heavy Vehicle Driver		
20		Light Vehicle Driver		
1		Elementary Occupations		
2	Housekeeper		BTFW	
3	Foreign Domestic Helper			
4	Child Caregiver			
5	Kitchen Helper		BTFW	
6	Loading/unloading workers		BTFW	
7	Loader and Packer		BTFW	
8	Process Workers			
9	Concrete workers			

Table 1 shows the critical skills or occupations that are in shortage in the local market. Based on this list, the Foreign Workers Division will approve the foreign workers.

7. What is Non-Critical Skill/Occupation?

Skills or occupations not listed in the CSS are considered non-critical. This indicates either their lesser significance within the country or the presence of a sufficient supply of local workers. Approval for foreign workers in these areas will typically be restricted. *However, the Department of Labour or its Regional Offices may assess*



specific needs and grant exceptions for foreign worker approval, particularly in cases of unique industry or location requirements.

8. Will the CSSL be Updated and Continued?

The CSSL will undergo **biannual updates** to address local skills gaps by approving foreign workers, while also safeguarding the employability of local talent. Gradually reducing reliance on foreign workers is important to promote local employment opportunities, retain foreign currency within the country, and foster the development of a self-sufficient national workforce.

9. Dependency Ratio Ceiling (DRC)

The department intends to integrate the Dependency Ratio Ceiling (DRC) approach with the CSSL approach. The DRC, also known as a Quota, establishes the maximum proportion of foreign workers that an enterprise within a particular sector can employ relative to its total workforce. While the department has developed its initial sector-level DRC, it is not yet strictly enforced to accommodate the import of foreign workers amidst ongoing economic recovery and national transformation efforts. However, as recommended by the Foreign Workers Management Reform Study (2021), the department plans to integrate the critical skills shortages into the DRC framework in the future. This integration of CSSL with the DRC approach in the future, will contribute towards making the approval process for foreign workers more targeted and responsive to the specific workforce needs of different sectors. This approach will ensure a balanced and strategic approach to managing foreign labor inflows while prioritizing the development of a skilled domestic workforce.

Chief Labour Administrator