

Permitted Paid Engagement (PPE) – What Is It?

Good question! As of April 13th (the new visa went live on April 6th 2012) we have the following information:

PPEs are for limited (one month or less) paid engagements in the UK (this will include music, e.g. a performance at a festival).

PPEs are meant as an alternative (but not a replacement) to Tier 5 Certificates of Sponsorship (CoS) for short stays and this is a direct result of lobbying from various UK arts organisations.

PPEs are visas and as such must be obtained directly from British Embassies.

These are the links we've found on the UKBA website:

PPE Information <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/visiting/paid-engage/>

PPE How to apply <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/visiting/general/apply/>

As this is a visa it is issued by British Embassies. It is our understanding after making enquiries with the UKBA that the pricing is dependent on the Embassy used. Alas there are no published rates at time of writing this so it would appear enquiries would have to be made directly to individual Embassies (<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/find-an-embassy/>)

The questions not answered to our satisfaction are:

1. How do you actually apply?
2. What is the fee?
3. Can you apply as a group and does that affect the fee?
4. What kind of turnaround time is guaranteed for processing of the application?
5. What documentation is specifically required?

How CME Artist Service will Respond:

1. Naturally, we have no choice but to drop most of our fees significantly in line with the fees we believe the UK Embassy will be charging for PPEs.
2. We will be charging more than PPEs for larger groups as it is not economically for us to process large groups at a low fixed rate
3. We will offer a faster turnaround for CoS than for PPEs in all cases including larger groups where we will have to charge
4. We will still charge an expedited rate for rapid turnarounds of CoS
5. We will guarantee a 100% success rate in CoS issuance if we have accepted you application
6. We may raise our fees back to levels that are sustainable for our business if we notice:
 - a) PPE is more expensive than us
 - b) PPE turnaround times are unacceptably long

c) PPE issue rate is considerably less than 100% of applications received

Conclusion:

The verdict is very much still out regarding the effectiveness of PPEs.

Despite obviously declaring an interest as we are a business that profits from issuing CoS we believe the UK Government has made a critical error in charging a flat fee for PPE processing.

Before the new point based system was introduced a similar flat fee was levelled at agencies and sponsors such as ourselves AFTER we had done all the hard work of producing the application. The UK Government merely rubber stamped our work. Now they're going to have to do it all themselves.

We predict that agencies such as ourselves will have no choice but to pass on larger groups (our cut off is probably 6 or more) to the UK Government who will find themselves unable to meet the demand and a backlog will develop.

This may mean we can start to take larger groups back on again, at an increased but reasonable fee, in order to help shift the backlog they've created.

Still, early days!

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