

LEAVING THE UNITED KINGDOM FOR THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

GUIDING YOU THROUGH **THE NEXT ERA IN OFFSHORE BUSINESS**



EXITING YOUR CORPORATE SERVICE PROVIDER - SUMMARY GUIDANCE

Immigration into the United Arab Emirates is rarely only a visa. For clients leaving the United Kingdom, residence, banking, corporate presence and the holding of family wealth are usually decided together.

From our office in Dubai, Aston & Williams coordinates the visa pathway with trusted local professionals, and advises on the corporate and trust arrangements that should sit around it, in the UAE and outside it.

A MOVE THAT HAS TO WORK ON ARRIVAL

A residence visa allows a client to live in the Emirates. It does not, by itself, provide an operating company, a bank account, a holding structure, or a coherent position between the United Kingdom and Dubai.

Our clients instruct Aston & Williams where those questions arise together. Our Dubai office coordinates the immigration process. In parallel, we consider whether a UAE company is required, how family and business assets should be held, and which banking and professional introductions should be made before our client travels.

The issuing authority remains the Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs and Port Security, or the General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs in Dubai. We do not issue visas. We prepare the matter, coordinate the application through the appropriate local channel, and keep the wider structure in view while that application proceeds.

VISAS COMMONLY CONSIDERED BY CLIENTS LEAVING TO TAKE UP RESIDENCY IN DUBAI

Durations below follow the categories in general use. The official Golden Visa framework, updated on the UAE government portal on 28 July 2026, distinguishes a ten year visa for public investment from a five year visa for real estate. Dubai practice on particular property files should be confirmed with GDRFA at the time of application. Meeting a published threshold does not guarantee approval.

WHAT EACH VISA LOOKS FOR

GOLDEN VISA

The official categories include investors in public investments or real estate, entrepreneurs, exceptional talent and rare specialisations, outstanding students, and humanitarian pioneers and frontline heroes. Benefits published by the UAE government include a renewable five or ten year visa, no requirement for a sponsor, the ability to remain outside the UAE for longer than the usual six months, and sponsorship of spouse and children.



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- Investors: are required to provide a minimum capital of AED 2 million, or the real estate route at the threshold then in force.
- A further investor path sits with an establishment paying at least AED 250,000 a year in tax.
- Entrepreneurs investing in an innovative or technical project, evidence of value, and a letter from an incubator or the relevant authority.
- Talent and executive routes turn on nomination, qualifications and, where relevant, salary. A figure of AED 30,000 a month is widely applied to senior professionals; it is confirmed on the file.

COMPANY VISA ROUTE

For many clients leaving the United Kingdom, the practical route is a company in a free zone or on the mainland, with an investor or partner visa attached to it. This is often the right path where the client will trade, employ, or simply requires a local presence before a longer Golden Visa is realistic.

- A licence in a suitable free zone, including those used for holding and consultancy activity, or a mainland licence where the activity requires it.
- Shareholding and establishment documents in the applicant's name.
- Medical fitness, biometrics and Emirates ID after entry.
- The visa remains connected to the company, and is reconsidered if the shareholding ends.

EMPLOYMENT AND GREEN VISA

An employment residence is sponsored by the UAE employer and is the ordinary route for a client who has accepted a role. A Green Visa, where the category is open, is self sponsored and is used by skilled employees and freelancers who meet the income and qualification test then in force. It is less dependent on a single employer than a standard employment visa.

- Employment: offer, labour approval, entry permit, medical, Emirates ID.
- Green Visa requires a degree and the published income test, or a freelance permit and earnings history.
- Neither route removes the need to disclose matters that bear on character.

WHERE THE CLIENT IS NOT TAKING A LOCAL ROLE

A remote work visa suits a client who will keep an overseas employment and live in Dubai. Retirement suits clients of 55 and over who meet the emirate's property, savings or income test. Family residence is a second step, where the principal must usually be resident before a spouse or child can be sponsored, and marriage and birth certificates must be legalised for use in the UAE.

- Remote work does not permit employment with a UAE entity.
- Family files fail most often on attestation, not on the visa form.
- Parents, where sponsorable, attract a separate income and insurance test.

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BEFORE AN APPLICATION IS FILED

The authority is concerned with identity, health, the genuineness of the qualifying route, and character. Incomplete disclosure is more damaging than an awkward fact disclosed at the outset. The following are raised with every client before a file is prepared.

- Criminal convictions, cautions and ongoing proceedings. A UK conviction that is spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act is not necessarily treated as spent in the UAE. Offences of dishonesty, fraud, financial crime and matters of public order are of particular concern, and can lead to refusal.
- A police clearance or good-conduct certificate. Where one is required, it must usually be legalised. The absence of a certificate, or a certificate that does not match the disclosure, delays or stops the file.
- Bankruptcy, individual voluntary arrangements, undischarged liabilities and outstanding judgments. These do not automatically decide a visa, but they bear on investor and Golden Visa files, and they will be relevant to any bank that is asked to open an account alongside the move.
- Previous UAE immigration history. Overstay, a visa cancellation that was not completed, an absconding report, or an existing administrative or security restriction.
- Medical fitness. Residence applications include a medical examination. Certain findings, including HIV and active tuberculosis, result in an unfit outcome and the application does not proceed.
- Inconsistency between the passport, civil documents, corporate records and the source of funds described to the authority or to a bank.
- A qualifying asset that is not yet in the applicant's name, or a property valuation and title position that does not meet the threshold on the applicant's own share.

LEAVING THE UNITED KINGDOM

Clients moving from the United Kingdom are usually still UK resident when the first conversation takes place. The visa should not be treated as the only date that matters.

Tax residence in the United Kingdom is determined under the statutory residence test and is a matter for a United Kingdom tax adviser. The number of days in the United Kingdom, the timing of the departure within the tax year, and continuing ties can all affect the year of departure. We do not give that advice. We do make sure the immigration timetable and the corporate timetable are not set in ignorance of it.

Practical points we coordinate around the application include the legalisation of degree, marriage and police certificates through the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the UAE embassy; the position of any UK company the client will continue to own; schooling and accommodation evidence where a family will follow; and banking, so that the client is not resident in Dubai with no means of being paid.

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MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL HOLDING

Clients leaving the United Kingdom often wish to separate the business they will run in Dubai from the assets that should remain available to the family. A UAE operating company, a holding company outside the UAE, and in appropriate cases a trust, can do that. The Isle of Man office is used where an independent holding or trust jurisdiction is required. The Dubai office is used where the operating presence, and the visa that depends on it, must be real.

This is lawful structuring. It is not a means of putting assets beyond existing creditors, and it is not a substitute for disclosure. Insolvency law, in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, can look through transfers made to defeat claims. Undischarged bankruptcy and outstanding judgments are addressed before any structure is put in place, not afterwards. Banks and authorities are given a complete account of ownership.

Where a regulated step is required, including the provision of trustee services or licensed corporate services in the Isle of Man, that step is undertaken by a properly authorised person. Aston & Williams advises and coordinates. It does not itself provide regulated trust or corporate services.

COORDINATION, NOT A GOVERNMENT COUNTER

Aston & Williams is an independent corporate and trust advisory firm, with an office in Dubai Silicon Oasis and a principal office in the Isle of Man. The group is not required to be licensed or regulated, and it is not an immigration authority. Visa decisions are made solely by the competent UAE authority. Thresholds, durations and document lists change. What follows is a high level overview for discussion, and is confirmed against the current rules at the time of instruction.