



Adapting the Australian points test to contemporary notions of skill

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The Australian points test for skilled immigration has been in place since 1979 and has gone through numerous iterations. Historically, the focus has been on traditional notions of skill based on a skills occupation list and this remains an important component of the selection grid. At the same time, developments in education and training policy and the changing demands of employers have led to a greater focus on competencies and soft skills, alongside the qualifications and 'hard skills' developed through formal training. The points test for skilled immigration sits alongside employer-sponsored skilled immigration, where the predominate criterion is a job offer by an employer. That said, aside from sponsored visa categories and one mention of the consideration of competencies in an Australian Productivity Commission report, this approach has not been considered for points test design in Australia. This presentation will sketch the contours of skilled immigration selection in Australia and consider the relative balance between traditional 'hard' skills and more informal competencies and soft skills. It will draw upon analysis of survey data and interviews with employer and worker representatives, as well as desk policy analysis, to identify the possible role of competencies and soft skill in immigration selection in the future and the potential challenges this may present.