

A Guide for Desi Professionals Seeking Work in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

The GCC countries - **United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman** offer excellent career opportunities for Indian professionals. While each country has its own labour laws, employment rights and workplace culture, there are many common principles that every employee should understand before accepting a job.

Employment Contract

Before starting work, employees should receive a written employment contract outlining:

- Job title and responsibilities
- Salary and payment frequency
- Working hours
- Annual leave entitlement
- Probation period
- Notice period
- End-of-service benefits
- Other contractual benefits (such as accommodation or transport allowances)

Top Tip: Always ensure the salary, benefits and job title in your contract match the offer you accepted before signing.

Working Hours

Working hours vary between employers but generally follow these guidelines:

Country	Standard Working Week
UAE	Up to 48 hours per week (many office roles work around 40–45 hours)
Saudi Arabia	Up to 48 hours per week
Qatar	Up to 48 hours per week
Kuwait	Up to 48 hours per week
Bahrain	Up to 48 hours per week
Oman	Up to 48 hours per week

Working hours are often reduced during the holy month of Ramadan, particularly for Muslim employees and in government organisations.

Overtime

Where overtime applies, employees may be entitled to additional pay or time off in accordance with local labour laws and their employment contract. Overtime arrangements vary by country, sector and job level, and some managerial or senior professional positions may be excluded.

Salary Payments

Most GCC countries require employers to pay salaries electronically through regulated wage payment systems or approved banking channels.

Employees should expect:

- Monthly salary payments
 - Payslips where applicable
 - Payment into a local bank account
 - Clear records of deductions
-

Annual Leave

Paid annual leave is provided in all GCC countries- Typical entitlement:

- Around **25-30 calendar days** (or the equivalent under local law) after completing the qualifying service period.
 - Public holidays are generally separate from annual leave.
-

Public Holidays

Employees usually receive paid leave for major national and religious holidays such as:

- Eid Al Fitr
- Eid Al Adha
- National Day
- Islamic New Year (where applicable)
- Prophet Muhammad's Birthday (where applicable)

The exact number of public holidays varies between countries and from year to year because many are based on the Islamic lunar calendar.

Sick Leave

Employees are generally entitled to sick leave, although:

- Medical certificates are normally required.
 - Entitlements differ by country and length of service.
 - Some employers provide additional medical benefits beyond the legal minimum.
-

Maternity & Paternity Leave

All GCC countries provide maternity leave under labour legislation, although eligibility, duration and pay vary.

Some countries also provide paternity leave, though the entitlement is generally shorter.

Employees should review both their employment contract and the applicable labour law.

Medical Insurance

Most employers provide health insurance, particularly in the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar where employer-sponsored medical cover is widely required.

Before accepting an offer, confirm:

- Hospital network
 - Family coverage
 - Dental cover
 - Optical benefits
 - Emergency treatment
 - International coverage (if relevant)
-

Probation Period

New employees commonly complete a probation period lasting **three to six months**, depending on the country and employer. During probation:

- Performance is assessed.
- Notice requirements may differ from those after probation.
- Employees should understand any restrictions or obligations before resigning.

End-of-Service Benefits

Employees who complete the required qualifying period are generally entitled to an **End-of-Service Gratuity**, calculated according to local labour law and length of service.

This gratuity is intended to recognise long-term employment and is separate from monthly salary.

Notice Period

Notice periods are set out in employment contracts and labour legislation.

Typical notice periods range from:

- 30 days
- 60 days
- 90 days

Senior executives often have longer notice periods.

Workplace Environment in the GCC - A Multicultural Workforce

The GCC has one of the world's most diverse workforces, you may work alongside colleagues from:

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------|
| ▪ United Arab Emirates | ▪ Jordan |
| ▪ Saudi Arabia | ▪ Lebanon |
| ▪ India | ▪ United Kingdom |
| ▪ Pakistan | ▪ Europe |
| ▪ Bangladesh | ▪ United States |
| ▪ Sri Lanka | ▪ Africa |
| ▪ Philippines | ▪ Australia |
| ▪ Egypt | |

Respect for different cultures and backgrounds is highly valued.

Professional Behaviour

Employers expect employees to demonstrate:

- Punctuality
- Honesty
- Reliability
- Professional communication
- Respect for colleagues
- Teamwork
- Strong work ethic
- Commitment to quality

Professionalism is often considered just as important as technical skills.

Respect for Local Culture

Although GCC countries are modern and international, employees should respect local customs and traditions.

Examples include:

- Dressing professionally
 - Respecting Islamic holidays
 - Avoiding offensive language
 - Showing courtesy to colleagues
 - Being aware of local customs during Ramadan
-

Working Relationships

Many organisations have clearly defined management structures.

Employees are expected to:

- Respect managers and senior leaders
- Communicate professionally
- Raise concerns respectfully
- Work collaboratively

Decision-making may be more hierarchical than in some other regions.

Performance Expectations

Most employers assess employees on:

- Quality of work
- Productivity
- Attendance
- Customer service
- Teamwork
- Professional behaviour
- Achievement of objectives

Regular performance reviews are common.

Training & Career Development

Many employers invest in employee development through:

- Technical training
- Leadership programmes
- Professional certifications
- Online learning
- Mentoring
- Internal promotions

Employees who continue developing their skills often improve their career progression opportunities.

Workplace Etiquette

Employees are encouraged to:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| ✓ Arrive on time. | ✓ Follow company policies. |
| ✓ Meet deadlines. | ✓ Maintain confidentiality. |
| ✓ Dress professionally. | ✓ Respect cultural and religious practices. |
| ✓ Communicate respectfully. | ✓ Keep managers informed of progress. |
-

Employee Responsibilities

Employees should:

- Perform duties professionally.
 - Follow workplace health and safety procedures.
 - Protect confidential information.
 - Use company equipment responsibly.
 - Comply with company policies.
 - Respect colleagues and customers.
 - Notify their employer if they cannot attend work.
-

If Problems Arise

If you experience a workplace issue:

1. Review your employment contract.
 2. Discuss the matter with your manager or HR department.
 3. Keep copies of employment documents, payslips and relevant correspondence.
 4. If the issue cannot be resolved internally, you may be able to seek assistance from the relevant government labour authority in the country where you work.
-

Employee Rights Checklist

Your Right	Check Before Accepting a Job
Written employment contract	✓
Agreed salary and benefits	✓
Working hours clearly stated	✓
Annual leave entitlement	✓
Medical insurance	✓
Visa sponsorship confirmed	✓
Notice period explained	✓
End-of-service gratuity	✓
Accommodation allowance (if applicable)	✓
Transport allowance (if applicable)	✓
Annual return flight (if applicable)	✓

Top Tips for Desi Region Professionals

- Read every page of your employment contract before signing.
- Keep digital and printed copies of your passport, visa, employment contract and salary records.
- Understand the terms of your probation period.
- Clarify all allowances and benefits before relocating.
- Learn about the culture and workplace expectations of your destination country.
- Build positive professional relationships and maintain high standards of conduct.
- Continue developing your skills through training and professional certifications.

Important Note

Employment rights, leave entitlements, notice periods and other legal protections **vary by country, employment sector and contract type**, and labour laws are periodically updated.

Individuals should always refer to the latest legislation and the specific terms of their employment contract before making decisions about employment or relocation.