



**SECURING
OUR BORDER
CONTROLLING
MIGRATION**

STUDYING IN THE UK ESSENTIAL VISA INFORMATION

**THIS IS A GUIDE FOR NON-EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA (NON-EEA)
STUDENTS COMING TO THE UK TO STUDY.**



THE STUDENT VISITOR ROUTE

The student visa route is for students whose course of study in the UK lasts for 6 months or less. There is also an extended student visitor route available exclusively for English language students. This enables students to stay in the UK for up to 11 months.

You can apply for a student visitor visa if:

- Your course of study in the UK is for 6 months or less.
- You do not want to work in the UK or undertake a course-related work placement.
- You have no intention of extending your stay in the UK.

EXTENDED STUDENT VISITOR VISA ROUTE

The extended student visitor visa route is for English language courses up to 11 months. It is:

- For students on 100 per cent English language courses only, who do not intend to work or extend their stay.
- For courses over 6 months but not exceeding 11 months.

- The other requirements and restrictions are the same as the 6 month student visitor route, except that all students wanting to enter under this route must apply for a visa prior to travelling to the UK. This includes all non-visa nationals.

VISA NATIONALS AND NON-VISA NATIONALS

Different rules apply to visa nationals and non-visa nationals.

If you are a non-visa national and your visit is for 6 months or less, you do not usually need to apply for a visa. You will however need to satisfy the UK Border Agency officers on arrival that you meet the requirements of this category. However if you are applying for the extended student visitor visa you will need a visa.

If you are a visa national you must have a visa to travel to the UK.

For a full list of visa nationals and non-visa national countries please see the agency's website.

THE POINTS-BASED SYSTEM

As an alternative route, Tier 4 of the points-based system is for:

- Students who want to stay in the UK for longer than 6 months.
- Students who want to work in the UK while they are studying.

The Tier 4 (student route) has 2 categories:

1. **General student** – this is for students coming to the UK for post-16 education.
2. **Child student** – this is for children between 4 and 17 years old coming to the UK for their education. Children between 4 and 15 years old may only be educated at independent fee paying schools.

! There are specific guidelines for children and young people travelling to the UK. Please see the agency's website for more details.

USEFUL TIP


Further changes to the Tier 4 of the points-based system are planned for April 2012 and the end of 2012. To keep up-to-date with these changes you can subscribe to the UK Border Agency RSS news feed, or visit the agency's website. 

www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-and-updates/newsfeeds

Students must meet the full requirements of the Immigration Rules and have 40 points in total as shown in the table below:

Points required: 40	
Having a valid confirmation of acceptance for studies from a Tier 4 sponsor	30 points
Having enough money to cover course fees and monthly living costs (also known as maintenance or funds)	10 points

CONFIRMATION OF ACCEPTANCE FOR STUDIES (CAS) – 30 POINTS

-  You need a confirmation of acceptance for studies (CAS) number from your chosen place of study.

The CAS contains details about:

- You.
- The course you are about to study.
- Evidence of your qualifications.
- Confirmation, where necessary, of your English language skills.

The CAS is only valid for 1 application. If you have to re-apply for a visa you will need a new CAS.

The following courses can only be offered to Tier 4 students, by sponsors who hold the highly trusted sponsor status:

- Courses at National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 3 or equivalent.
- Courses at Qualifications and Credits Framework (QCF) level 3 or equivalent.
- Courses at NFQ level 4.
- Courses at NFQ level 5.
- Courses that contain work placements.

Level 3 of the NQF is equivalent to a UK 'A' level. Level 6 of the revised NQF is equivalent to a UK bachelor's degree.

From **April 2012** only highly trusted sponsors will be able to sponsor new Tier 4 students.

USEFUL TIP

You can check whether your Tier 4 sponsor has the correct licence by looking at the Tier 4 register of sponsors on our website.

www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk

FINANCIAL MAINTENANCE - 10 POINTS

To meet the financial maintenance requirements you must provide:

- Evidence that you have enough funds to study in the UK. This includes money to cover your course fees and living expenses.
- Evidence (original bank statements) of your funds and evidence that you have held these funds for 28 days before you made your application.
- The bank statement, dated within 1 month of your application date.

Your required monthly living costs will depend on where you will be studying in the UK, but it will be between £600-£800 per month.

In addition you will need to sign a declaration on your visa application form confirming that the funds are genuinely available to you in the UK. We may refuse your entry to the UK if we suspect deception in the declaration of available funds.

We will be publishing lists of financial institutions whose financial statements we are unable to verify. Please check the agency's website for details.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

If you are coming to study at degree level and above (NQF 6 and above) you will need an English language ability to a minimum of Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) level B2.

If you are going to a higher education institution they will assess your English language ability. If you are not, you will need to provide a secure English language test (SELT) certificate with your visa application to demonstrate your ability.

If you are coming to study any course at NQF level 3-5, you will need English language ability to a minimum of CEFR Level B1. You

will also need to provide a SELT certificate with your visa application to demonstrate your ability.

A SELT must be taken with a UK Border Agency approved provider, before you apply for a CAS from your education sponsor.

You do not need to provide a SELT certificate if you are from a majority English-speaking country or for a limited number of other exemptions. Please see the agency's website for more details.

We may refuse your visa or entry if you are unable to communicate without using an interpreter.

USEFUL TIP

Further information about the Secure English Language test and a list of approved providers can be found on our website

www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas

STREAMLINED PROCESS FOR LOW RISK NATIONALS

If you are applying for a Tier 4 student visa, to attend a course with a highly trusted sponsor:

- with a passport from a low risk national country; and
- you are applying in that country

You do not have to provide bank statements or educational certificates with your visa application, unless you are exceptionally asked to do so. Please see the website for full details of eligibility.

CAN I WORK AS A STUDENT WHILE IN THE UK?

Only the students listed below are allowed to work during their studies.

- Students sponsored by a higher education institution (HEI) who are following courses at degree level or above.
- Students following a short-term study abroad programme as part of an overseas HEI's qualification to a UK degree.

A short-term study abroad programme is 1 where the student is coming to the UK for no more than half of the total length of the course.

These students can work up to 20 hours a week during term and full time during holidays.

- Students sponsored by an HEI who are following courses below degree level.
- Students at publicly-funded further education colleges who are studying at any level.

These students can work up to 10 hours a week during term and full time during holidays.

USEFUL TIP

Details of higher education institutions (HEIs) can be found on the UK Border Agency's website.

The full list of publicly-funded further education colleges can be found on the Association of Colleges website at:

www.aoc.co.uk/en/about_colleges/index.cfm

WHAT ABOUT STUDY TO WORK PLACEMENTS?

The study to work placement ratio is currently 50:50. If you are studying a course below degree level you must have a highly trusted sponsor.

FROM APRIL 2012

If your sponsor is not a UK higher education institution, or an overseas higher education institution offering a short-term study abroad programme and you are a new student, the minimum ratio of study to work placement will be 66:33. This means a maximum of 1/3rd of your time spent at work.

CAN I BRING DEPENDANTS (PARTNERS AND CHILDREN) WITH ME?

Only the following students will be able to sponsor their dependants:

- Postgraduate students at higher education institutions on courses lasting 12 months or more.
- Government sponsored students on courses lasting longer than 6 months. These dependants will be able to work.

Family members who are already in the UK will be able to extend their stay, in line with existing restrictions.

HOW LONG CAN I STAY IN THE UK?

Your visa will be granted for the whole length of your course together with a period of time at the end of your course, dependent on its type.

A maximum of 3 years study is allowed for courses below degree level.

Any CAS issued will only cover a single course, either a foundation or a main course. A further application for leave will be needed in order to progress to study on the second course. Your sponsor will need to vouch that a new course represents genuine academic progression. If you are going on to degree level study you will have to meet the higher CEFR B2 English language requirement.

The only time a CAS can cover 2 courses is if you are sponsored by a higher education institution to undertake a pre-sessional preparatory course (maximum 3 months).

The conditions of the pre-sessional preparatory course are that:

- The pre-sessional preparatory course must begin immediately before the start of your main course. There must not be a gap of more than 1 month between these courses.

- The main course must be at degree level or above.
- Entry to your main course is not based on satisfactory completion of the pre-sessional course.

From April 2012 the maximum amount of time studying at degree level and above will be 5 years with exceptions for some courses and PhD students.

CAN I STAY IN THE UK AFTER MY COURSE?

The Tier 1 post-study work route has now closed to new applicants. If you are a student with a degree you can apply for a job with a licensed Tier 2 sponsor. However, you must apply before your student visa expires. You must also meet the Tier 2 criteria, but we will waive the resident labour market test (RLMT) requirement. Students switching as set out above will also not be subject to the Tier 2 limit.

MAKING AN APPLICATION

When making an application for any type of visa you must provide the originals of all supporting documents as well as a photocopy, unless you are a low risk national.

For further details on how to make an application you should contact your local visa application centre.

Comprehensive visa information and guidance is available at www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas