Applying for your student visa from overseas

Introduction

Any non-EEA/Swiss nationals coming to the UK as students must hold valid immigration permission which allows them to study for the full duration of their course. Generally, students coming to the UK either apply for a short-term student visa or for a Tier 4 (General) visa. The type of visa you will apply for is normally based on the length of your course in the UK.

Short-term student visas

International students entering the UK for a period of six months or less such as one semester study abroad students or split-site PhD students are normally advised to obtain a short-term student visa. Depending on your nationality, you can either apply for a short-term student visa on arrival in the UK or you will have to apply for your visa before you travel to the UK.

To determine your situation, check online: www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa

If the above website states that you “do not need a visa” it means that you don’t need to obtain a visa prior to travel. Actually, you will still need to make a visa application on arrival at the UK border.

Note to students on a presessional course

Students studying a presessional course at the Centre for English Language Education (CELE) and who are planning to register on a degree program upon completion of their English language course can only apply for a short-term student visa in certain circumstances:

- where the course is less than 11 months long
- where the course ends at least three months before the start date of the academic course.

Students in this situation should also note the following:

- at the end of the presessional course, you will need to return home to apply for a Tier 4 student visa for your academic course.
- if you need to extend your presessional course, you may need to return home to make a new visa application.
- you may not be able to defer the start of your presessional course.

Note to current students

The information in this guide is primarily for students coming to the UK to start a new course. However, current students extending their visas from overseas will also find information specific to them at the back of this guide.
About the short-term student visa

It is important to note the restrictions attached to a short-term student visa:

- the visa is for a maximum of six months and cannot be extended
- the visa holder should intend to leave the UK at the end of their period of study, or the end of their visa (whichever comes first)
- the visa holder is not allowed to undertake any kind of paid or unpaid work while in the UK
- the visa holder will not have access to the National Health Service (NHS) and should arrange private medical insurance
- dependants are not able to accompany short-term students to the UK

Obtaining a short-term student visa on arrival to the UK

Dependant on nationality, some students can be issued with a short-term student visa when they arrive in the UK*. This will be issued as a stamp in your passport. In order to issue a visa for a maximum of six months, the immigration officer at the airport will ask to see documentation such as:

- a short-term student visa letter from The University of Nottingham, plus;
- proof of finances available (e.g. recent, original bank statements belonging to you, or your parents or details of any scholarships / official financial sponsorship)

Also, if your study in the UK is part of your degree overseas, you will need:

- a letter from the overseas course provider confirming that the tuition or research is part of, or relevant to the course of study that you are enrolled on overseas

These documents must be in your hand luggage to show to immigration officers at the airport.

It is also helpful to show return tickets so that you can prove that you do not intend to stay in the UK.

* If you have a complex immigration history or previous experience of being refused a visa, you should consider applying online before you travel. Please contact the Visa and Immigration Team if you have any questions about this.
Tier 4 (General) student visas

International students entering the UK for a period of more than six months should apply for a Tier 4 (General) student visa. Regardless of nationality, this visa should always be applied for before departure from your home country (or country of residence), it cannot be applied for on arrival to the UK.

If you are already in the UK with a valid Tier 4 visa for another institution and are applying to switch to The University of Nottingham or to start a new course with us, please see our information guide on Extending your Tier 4 student visa in the UK. The Visa and Immigration Team runs a visa checking and sending service and if you are eligible, we can check your application and documents are correct and post them to the Home Office for you.

Preparing for the Tier 4 visa application process

In preparing and applying for your Tier 4 student visa, you will find it helpful to refer to our postcard of the steps involved at: www.nottingham.ac.uk/internationalstudents/7steps

When to expect your CAS

Students starting new courses automatically receive a CAS a maximum of four months before their course start date when they are holding a firmly accepted unconditional offer and have paid any necessary tuition fee deposits.

CAS numbers are only valid for one visa application and expire six months after they are issued.

If your visa application is refused, you will need a new CAS number to make a fresh application.

Paying tuition fee deposits

Students on taught postgraduate programmes and foundation programmes are required to pay a £2000 deposit before they can receive a CAS. For full details on how to pay, please visit: www.nottingham.ac.uk/paying

The deposit requirement is waived for students receiving funding from officially recognised sponsors where they provide a sponsor letter to sponsorship-assistant@nottingham.ac.uk and students receiving US federal loans.

For answers to common questions visit: www.nottingham.ac.uk/finance/depositsfaq

Making payments to the University before you apply for your Tier 4 visa

Apart from required deposits detailed above, paying tuition fees to the University in advance is not a requirement of the visa process. If you choose to pay tuition fees to the University in advance please ensure that the payment is reflected in the CAS. Similarly, please ensure that any University scholarship is reflected in the CAS.

You must check this carefully as any remaining funds will need to be shown in your financial evidence with your visa application. If you make any further payments once you have verified your CAS information is correct, you should wait for an email confirming that your CAS has been updated before applying for your Tier 4 visa.

We do not include information on accommodation fees owed or paid as part of the CAS. These fields automatically show £0.00. Students are advised to keep money for their living expenses (including accommodation) in their bank account until after their visa application has been processed. Any damage deposits required in order to secure the accommodation must be paid, but will not be included in the CAS.
Amount of funding required

You will need to show funding for the tuition fees for one year of study, as shown in your CAS, plus £1015 per month for living costs for each month of your course up to a maximum of nine months (£9135).

Please remember: if your course is longer than one year, you must still ensure that you have access to funding for your tuition fees and living expenses for the whole of your course even though you will not need to show this evidence for your visa application. It is almost impossible to find more funding once you reach the UK or to rely on earnings from a part-time job.

Avoiding a visa refusal

Take extra time and care to ensure that your first visa application is your only visa application.

See how to avoid a visa refusal at: www.nottingham.ac.uk/internationalstudents/visa-refusals

Making your Tier 4 student visa application

When to apply

Applications can be submitted a maximum of three months prior to the start date of the course where applicants hold all of the necessary supporting documentation. Please do not apply before this time as your visa application could be refused.

Information on visa processing times in your country are available here: www.gov.uk/visa-processing-times

Applying online

To apply for a Tier 4 General student visa from overseas you will usually need to complete an online application. For the most up-to-date information about applying from your home country, please check: www.gov.uk/tier-4-general-visa/apply

You can also find out where the local visa application centre in your country is based: www.gov.uk/find-a-visa-application-centre

To ensure delivery of the Biometric Residence Permit to the University (rather than the Post Office), you should enter our Alternative Collection Location (ACL) code onto your visa application form. Our ACL code is 2HE427.

For more details on how the visa will be issued, please refer to page 8 of this guide

Cost

The cost of a Tier 4 General student visa application made overseas is £328 in equivalent local currency for both applicants and dependants.
The NHS health surcharge

The National Health Service surcharge is now being applied to each visa application submitted. For students the fee is £150 per year and each dependant is to be charged the same. It is expected that the total surcharge amount will be based on the whole period of the visa which could be granted and it will be payable upfront at the visa application stage. For full details please visit: www.gov.uk/healthcare-immigration-application

Methods of showing funding

There are several different ways of showing the financial evidence required in support of your application. It is important that you check that your financial evidence meets the Tier 4 requirements outlined in the Tier 4 Policy Guidance.

We strongly recommend you keep the funding you show in your account until after you receive your visa and then use it to pay your tuition fees and living expenses in the UK.

Also, you should check that your funds are held in a financial institution that can satisfy verification checks. UK Visas and Immigration have produced a list of acceptable and unacceptable financial institutions for some countries. www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-rules-appendix-p

Funding method 1 – for self-funding students

You can show original bank statements in your name, jointly in your name or in your parents’ names. The funds must:

- be in cash funds – **not** shares/bonds/investments/credit cards
- have been in the bank account for 28 consecutive days prior to your application. It cannot dip below the required amount, even for one day, otherwise your application will be refused.
- show a last **transaction date** within 31 days of your visa application. The immigration officials will not consider the closing balance on the day the statement was **printed**.

If you are using printed statements from the bank or internet, they must also:

- show the financial institution’s name and logo
- show your name and account number
- be stamped by the bank on each page

If your printed statements do not confirm the required details, you should supply a bank letter on signed, letter-headed paper which confirms the amount of money available to you and the dates it has been held in the account.

If you are showing your parents’ personal accounts, you must include:

- an original letter, signed and dated by the account holder confirming your relationship and that the funds are for you to use for tuition fees and/or living expenses while studying in the UK
- your original birth certificate

**Please note that parents’ business account statements will not be accepted.**
Applying for your visa from overseas

Funding method 2 – for applicants with official financial sponsorship

Students sponsored by the UK government, the student’s home government, the British Council or any international organisation, international company or university can rely on an original sponsorship letter issued within the last six months to demonstrate your funding. Please note that if the duration of your funding or permission to stay is shorter than your course, your visa will be granted to the shorter date.

Funding method 3 – for applicants with a loan

You must show formal evidence of a loan you may have taken out in your own name. The bank providing the loan must be regulated by an official regulatory body.

Funding method 4 – for applicants from ‘low-risk’ countries

If you are considered by UK Visas and Immigration to be a national of a low risk country you can tick a box on the application form indicating that you hold the required evidence but don’t need to include it with your application. You should still meet the requirements however as you may be asked to submit proof at a later stage.

This applies to nationals of:

Argentina, Australia, Barbados, Botswana, British National Overseas (BNO), Brunei, Canada, Chile, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Oman, Qatar, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Trinidad and Tobago, United Arab Emirates (UAE), United States of America

ATAS

If you need clearance from the Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS), it will be confirmed in your CAS. If you are a non-EEA or Swiss national planning to undertake study in the UK in certain science, engineering or technology disciplines, then you will need to obtain an ATAS certificate before you can apply for entry clearance or a visa extension. The application is made online at: www.gov.uk/academic-technology-approval-scheme

In the application you will be asked to include a statement outlining your area of research. This statement must be the same as the one held on file in your school and agreed with your supervisor. It will be issued to you by the Admissions Office once you hold an offer. An ATAS certificate is valid for six months only and if it is not used within this time, new clearance must be obtained before you make your visa application.

Generally, ATAS applications will be processed within 20 working days from the date received, but allow plenty of time to get the certificate before your visa application. Your visa application cannot be processed until you have received ATAS clearance. If your research changes during your studies, you are required to obtain new ATAS. If you wish to transfer to a course which requires ATAS clearance, you are required to obtain clearance before your transfer can be processed.

Overseas bank statements

When using overseas bank accounts, a foreign currency conversion must be printed and submitted with your application from www.oanda.com. Statements must be in English or accompanied by an official translation.
Tuberculosis (TB) testing

Nationals from some countries applying to come to the UK for more than six months will have to produce a certificate showing that they are free from infectious tuberculosis (TB) before their visa application will be considered. For more information, see www.gov.uk/tb-test-visa

Bringing your family with you as Tier 4 dependants

Your spouse/civil partner (and in some cases unmarried partner) may apply to join you as a Tier 4 dependant if you can show that:

• you are studying a postgraduate course of 12 months or longer at a higher education institution or

• you are a government-sponsored student on a course of six months or longer

You will need £680 per month for living costs for each month of your studies, per dependant, up to a maximum of nine months (£6120).

Sponsored students who receive financial support for their families will ideally be able to produce a sponsor letter with the names of their dependant family members as well as details of the specific amount that they receive. You should supplement the sponsor letter with your personal bank statements if the monthly stipend from your sponsor is not sufficient to cover all dependants.

If your dependants are applying to accompany you, you should include marriage and birth certificates to show their relationship to you. Please note that the immigration rules are likely to prevent one parent from applying for the visa alone with children (without the other parent) unless the other parent has a visa for the UK in another category, or they can prove sole custody for the child/ren, or that they are the sole surviving parent.

Document checklist

Once your online application form is complete, you should be presented with a check-list of documents which are specific to you, based on the way you have answered the questions. You can also check with the visa application centre if you have any doubt. You will, however, always need to provide:

• a completed online application form

• application fee

• new passport photograph

• original evidence of your academic qualifications referred to in the CAS

• evidence of your SELT (secure English language test) but only if referred to in the CAS

• ATAS certificate (if applicable this will be confirmed on your CAS)

• TB test certificate (if applicable to your nationality)

• evidence of funding such as personal bank statements and/or sponsor/scholarship letter

You do not need to provide a paper copy of your CAS document and can simply write the CAS number on your application form.

Information about documents

• All documents provided in your application must be original, not scans or photocopies

• If any of the documents are not produced in English or Welsh, you will need to provide official certified translations

• Provisional results statements are not acceptable in place of official academic qualifications

• If your name has changed, you will need to provide proof of this

• If you are under 18, you will need to provide a consent letter from your parents

• If you are using your parents’ personal bank account you will also need your birth certificate to prove your relationship and a consent letter to confirm your relationship and that the funds are for your education
Applying for your visa from overseas

Providing your biometrics

All applicants must enrol their fingerprints and facial photograph - known as 'biometric information' - as part of their visa application. It is most likely that you will first submit your application online and then attend an in-person appointment at the visa application centre to submit your documents and biometric information.

For more information about the process, you may like to refer to the visa application centre information in your country:
www.gov.uk/find-a-visa-application-centre

Credibility interviews

The 'credibility' interview is conducted at the same time as you give your biometrics, when you lodge your visa application.

This initial interview will only take around five minutes and will be via video link with the Home Office in the UK. The purpose of the interview is to check your credibility as a genuine student and the focus of this interview will be your reasons for choosing the UK, the University and your course as well as questions on the content of your course. The Home Office will record the interview and send a summary to the Entry Clearance Officer who will decide if a second more detailed interview at the Embassy is needed.

The Home Office expects most applicants to be able to prove they are genuine at the first stage and that this will in fact speed up the decision process on applications because fewer documentation checks will be required.

When your visa is issued

Your visa will be issued as a vignette (sticker) in your passport. In some instances this may be valid for your whole stay in the UK.

If your visa in the UK is longer than 6 months however, then the vignette in your passport should only be valid for 30 days.

This 30 days will start from the intended date of travel to the UK as entered on your visa application form, (or from the date that your visa is issued, if this is after your intended travel date). If you do not travel to the UK during this 30 day period then your vignette will expire and you will need to apply for another 30-day vignette if you still wish to travel to the UK. You will have to pay a fee for this new application and provide your biometric information again, but you will not have to submit a new Tier 4 application.

Your 30-day vignette will be accompanied by a letter. When you enter the UK you should show the border force officer your 30-day vignette and this letter.

Your full visa, referred to as your biometric residence permit (BRP) must be collected within ten days of arriving in the UK from the University. When you complete your visa application, the form will give you a choice of collection points for picking up your BRP.

To ensure delivery of the card to the University (rather than a Post Office), you should enter our Alternative Collection Location (ACL) code onto your visa application form.

Our ACL code is 2HE427.

There is more information on the UKCISA (UK Council for International Student Affairs) website. about the issuing of BRP cards. Please contact us if you have any outstanding questions.
Applying for your visa from overseas

The length of your visa

You can expect that your visa will be granted for the following period of time:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of course</th>
<th>Length of course</th>
<th>Length of stay given</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree level or above</td>
<td>12 months or more</td>
<td>The full length of the course plus four months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Six months or more, but less than 12 months</td>
<td>The full length of the course plus two months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-sessional English course</td>
<td>Six months or more, but less than 12 months</td>
<td>The full length of the course plus two months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less than six months</td>
<td>The full length of the course plus one month</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If your application for a Tier 4 visa is successful but you think there is a mistake in the length of stay that has been given to you, please contact us for assistance as a visa correction may be possible.

Refusals

Our advice is to take extra time and care to ensure that your first visa application is your only visa application. You may not have time to make another. See how to avoid a visa refusal at: www.nottingham.ac.uk/internationalstudents/visa-refusals

If your visa is refused, it is absolutely essential that you contact the Visa and Immigration Team immediately so that we can advise. Please scan and email a copy of your refusal notice to international-support@nottingham.ac.uk

The University of Nottingham can only issue a second CAS number for a fresh visa application when we are sure that the reason for your refusal has been corrected and that you are going to be able to make a successful application and arrive at the University on time. Students who receive a visa refusal need to be aware of the University’s latest date to issue a CAS. This is three working days before the official course start date or for CELE students, 11 working days before the course start date.

If your application is unsuccessful but a mistake has been made, we may advise you to apply for administrative review of the decision. Your request must be made within 28 days from the date you receive the refusal notice. The administrative reviewer will examine the evidence sent with the original application as copies are kept at the refusal post. You are not able to submit fresh evidence as part of this process. The administrative reviewer will inform you in writing of the decision within 28 days from the date they receive your administrative review request notice.

Visa conditions

If you enter the UK on a Tier 4 student visa there are certain conditions that you must be aware of relating to the duration of your visa, work restrictions and police registration. The conditions of your visa will be written on your immigration document (entry clearance sticker, letter or BRP card).

Duration

Your entry clearance / BRP card will include a start and end date. You must not try to enter the UK before the start of the visa/entry clearance or remain in the UK beyond the end of the visa (without extending it)

Police registration

Students from some countries are required to register with the police within seven days of their arrival in the UK. Police Officers are available on campus so that you can register easily. You can obtain more information on this process from the Visa and Immigration Team when you arrive at the University.

Working

Most Tier 4 students are allowed to work 20 hours a week during term time and full-time during vacation periods. For more information, please visit: www.nottingham.ac.uk/internationalstudents/guides for our Working during your studies guide.

Please note if you are studying a course below UK degree level, such as an English Language course at CELE, you are only allowed to work 10 hours per week. You must not work more than the number of hours permitted by your student visa/entry clearance.
Information for current students

Current students without a valid visa

Current students returning to the UK to continue a course in order to re-sit exams or after a period of interruption will need to apply for new entry clearance in the same way that new students starting new courses do. You should plan to show the course fees for your next period of study as well as maintenance for your next period of study up to a maximum of nine months.

If you are only returning to the UK for the purpose of re-sitting exams at the end of your course or will need to return for a couple of assessment periods, it may be more appropriate for you to apply for a short-term student visa and you should email the Visa and Immigration Team for further advice at international-support@nottingham.ac.uk

If you are applying for a Tier 4 student visa, you will need a new CAS number for your application and should request one according to the instructions provided below.

Current students extending their current valid visa

Some current students may choose to extend their current valid visa from overseas before it expires often because they will be already be at home during a University holiday period. Current students travelling overseas to extend their visa may wish to review their application and documents with the Visa and Immigration Team before travelling to increase the chance of a successful application.

Requesting a CAS

If you are continuing on your current course of study but you need extra time to do so, you will need to request a CAS via the Online Store:

store.nottingham.ac.uk (Product Catalogue> Student Documents and Letters> CAS - Existing Students)

When the CAS has been prepared, you will receive an email asking you to verify the details of your CAS. Check all the information included is correct.

- If the CAS is correct, print the document so you can refer to it when completing your application form, then click the ‘verify’ button
- If the CAS is incorrect, follow the instructions to report the error

The Visa and Immigration Team is required to review the financial evidence of all current students making visa applications. If you are applying from overseas, please scan and email a copy of your financial evidence to: international-support@nottingham.ac.uk.

If your financial evidence is suitable, your CAS number will be emailed to you. Please note that you must provide original financial evidence with your application, not scanned or photocopied documents.

For full information on obtaining a CAS, see www.nottingham.ac.uk/internationalstudents/obtaining-your-cas
Applying for your visa from overseas
We're here to help, get in touch:

We offer a professional and confidential advisory service to all international and EU students both before they join the University and once they have arrived.

You can contact us by email, telephone or in person. We run a regular service where you can meet an Immigration Adviser, Monday to Friday throughout the academic year. To find out more about our service times and locations, please visit: www.nottingham.ac.uk/internationalstudents/advisers

The International Office is located at:
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Jubilee Campus
Wollaton Road
The University of Nottingham
NG8 1BB

t: +44 (0)115 951 5247
f: +44 (0)115 951 5155
e: international-support@nottingham.ac.uk

We are always looking for ways to develop and improve our support service and welcome feedback from staff and students.

The information in this leaflet is given in good faith and correct at the time of writing. It has been carefully checked in line with UKCISA and Home Office guidance, but The University of Nottingham accepts no responsibility for the accuracy of the information.

If you would like any further information or assistance, please contact us. The advisors, Rosemary Gibson, Melanie Bentham-Hill, Ruth Hudson, Amy Newham, Meg Quinn-Edmondson, Hong Sun and Deborah Webb are authorised to provide immigration advice and services by an order made under Section 84 (4) (d) of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

If at any time you are not happy with the advice you have been given by the Visa and Immigration Team in the first instance you should raise this with the Immigration Process Manager or the Head of Specialist Services. If the matter is not resolved or you are still unhappy, you can make a complaint to the OISC (Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner) via their website www.oisc.gov.uk

If you require this publication in an alternative format, please contact us:
t: +44 (0)115 951 4591
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