Student Visa Guide – Entry Clearance

If you need to apply for a visa to study in the UK, please use this guide to help you. This guide is for applicants and students who are applying outside the UK. If you plan to make a visa application in the UK, please visit this webpage for more information.

Do I need a visa for the UK?
If you are a national of a European Economic Area (EEA) country or Switzerland, you do not need Entry Clearance (a visa) to travel to the UK. You can travel freely through EEA states using your passport or national identity card.

What visa should I apply for?
If you are coming to the UK for a short period of study (6 months or less) you may choose to apply for a “short-term study visa” or a Tier 4 visa. If you are studying for 6 months or more you must apply for a Tier 4 Student visa. You will find more information about the short-term study visa on this webpage.

Tier 4 (General) Student visa
You apply for a Tier 4 visa in your home country (either the country you are a national of, or a country you are resident in - If you are living somewhere temporarily you cannot normally apply in this country). Most nationalities must apply online first, and then give biometrics (your photo and fingerprints) and attend an interview at your nearest Visa Application Centre. The online form is available here.

Make sure you apply for your Tier 4 Adult (General) Student visa in plenty of time. Bear in mind that thousands of students apply for visas to begin studies in the UK in September/October each year, so allow plenty of time for your visa to be processed. You should be able to find out how long it normally takes for a visa to be issued here. You must start your course on the date stated on your CAS Statement. The University must report any non-arrivals to the Home Office. Failure to arrive on time could mean you are not allowed to register on your course.

Please note, if you are starting a new course, you will not be able to travel to the UK until your visa start date, and you visa start date will be no earlier than 1 month before your course start date (as stated on your CAS).

In order to successfully apply you must show that you can claim 40 points. To obtain these points you must have:

1) Confirmation of Acceptance of Study (CAS) (worth 30 points) from the University of Strathclyde
If you are commencing a new course of study your CAS will be issued by the Admissions Team. The CAS will be issued when you have firmly accepted our Offer of Study, paid the University’s advance deposit of £2,000 *(if applicable to you) and satisfied all conditions of study detailed in our Offer of Study letter.

*If you have an Official Financial Sponsor i.e. Her Majesty’s Government, your home government, the British Council, or any international organisation, company or university, you are not required to pay the University’s £2,000 deposit. However you have to send a copy of your sponsor’s letter to the University’s Finance Office before your CAS will be issued.

*Exchange students who will not be paying tuition fees, and all European students, are also exempt.

When applying for your Tier 4 Adult (General) Student visa you must submit the
originals of all the documents mentioned in your CAS Statement along with your application form. Failure to do this may result in your application being refused.

IMPORTANT: The University also needs to see these original documents when you are registering for your course - so be sure to bring them with you otherwise we will not allow you to register on your course.

If you are currently studying with the University of Strathclyde and you require more time to complete your current course of study your CAS will be issued by the International Student Support Team. You should complete a CAS request form (for full details please see here on page 9/10).

2) Maintenance (funds) (worth 10 points)
In order to obtain these points you must have:
   a) enough money to cover your outstanding course/tuition fees for the first year of your study (course/tuition fees or deposit that have already paid can only be deducted from your total if this amount is shown on your CAS)
   b) living costs/maintenance of £1015 for every month of the course up to a maximum of 9 months. If your course is 9 months or more, you must show £9135. If your course is 9 months or less you must work out the months of study using the start and end date on your CAS. If your study period includes a part month, you must round this up to a full month (for example a study period of 5 months and 1 week means you must show 6 months of maintenance).

What financial evidence do I need?
The most common reason for visa refusal is financial and the Home Office are very strict in checking that you have the required funds and that the documents you provide as proof are in the correct format. If you do not meet the financial requirements, your visa will be refused regardless of your circumstances. If you have enough money but your documents do not meet all the requirements below, your visa application will be refused. It is very important to read the Tier 4 Policy Guidance for further information on maintenance requirements and evidence required. We have summarised the most important information below:

Official Financial Sponsor - If you have an Official Financial Sponsor they must give you an original letter on official headed paper that confirms your sponsor’s name and contact details, and it should contain their official stamp. The letter should state how much they are giving for tuition fees and/or living costs. They should also confirm how long they will sponsor you for. Your sponsor letter must show a recent date, if it is older than 6 months, you should ask your sponsor to provide you with a new letter. If you receive financial sponsorship but it does not cover your tuition fees and living costs in full, you will need to provide one of the forms of evidence described below, to show you have access to the remaining financial requirements.

If you are not currently receiving financial sponsorship, but you have, in the past 12 months, received full funding (i.e. funding for your full fees plus living costs) from a government or international scholarship agency, then you will need a letter of permission from your previous sponsor. The letter should confirm that your sponsor has no objection to you staying in the UK until you have completed your studies.

Self-funded (bank statements)- If you are funding yourself, you must submit bank statements showing that you have held the required amount of money (in cash funds- stocks, shares, credit cards, pension funds and overdrafts are not acceptable) in your account for at least 28 days before the date you submit your visa application.

Your bank statements must be issued no more than 31 days before you submit your application. Bank statements must be originals that contain your name, account number, bank name and logo. If you are using online banking print-outs you must take these to the bank to have them stamped on every page. Please note that, if you are using bank statements from Bangladesh, Cameroon, Ghana, India, Iran, Pakistan, Philippines or Sri Lanka you must check the financial institution meets the Home Office requirements. Please check the Home Office website for further information.

International Student Support Team
Updated 13 March 2018
Parents/legal guardians’ bank statements - If your parents are providing you with money, you must provide your parents’ bank statements (in the same format as above) and your original birth certificate. Your parent must also provide a letter confirming you are their daughter/son and that they are allowing you to use their bank statements to make your application. You cannot use bank statements from any other relative.

Chinese Certificates of Deposit
If you intend to use a Certificate of Deposit (commonly issued in China) please note that these certificates must still meet the Tier 4 financial requirements. These certificates commonly show that money will be held until a certain date in the future. This is not enough to meet the Tier 4 requirements as you must show you have held your financial requirements for the PAST 28 DAYS. The Certificate should therefore show that at least 28 days have passed since the date of deposit. Please also note that the certificate must not indicate that the funds are frozen or inaccessible. Finally, the certificate must not be more than 31 days old (from the date you submit your visa application).

Loan - A loan in your name will only be accepted if the loan is provided by “your national government, their state or regional government, a government sponsored Student Loan Company or is part of an academic or educational loans scheme.” The only condition your loan may have before release, is a successful Tier 4 application. Unless the loan is provided by your country’s national government, the loan funds must be accessible to you before you travel.

If you receive a William D Ford Federal Direct Loan, the confirmation of your loan is issued by the Finance Department at the University of Strathclyde. A letter will be sent to you automatically once the loan process is complete.

All Applicants - If you are using overseas currency, the Home Office will expect you to show (in writing on the document) the closing balance in pounds sterling. Use the official exchange rate on the OANDA website to calculate this.

Any documents that are not in English must be accompanied by a fully certified professional translation. You will find further information on the translation requirements in the Tier 4 Policy Guidance.

Do I need a TB Test?
A TB test will be required if you are resident (i.e. you are living in) any of the countries listed by the Home Office and you are coming to the UK for 6 months or more.

If you have lived in the UK for 6 months or more, and you have returned to a country that requires TB testing, you are not required to get a TB test unless you have lived in that country for 6 months or more. If you have been there for 6 months or more a TB test is required.

What kind of visa will I be granted?
When you apply for your visa you will initially be granted an Entry Clearance sticker (visa) inside your passport. This sticker will be granted for a period of 30 days and will show that you have been given permission to study at the University of Strathclyde. Once you arrive in the UK you will be required to collect your BRP during that 30 day period. Please remember to bring the letter issued to you with your Entry Clearance visa, this letter will explain where to collect your BRP. Please collect your BRP before you arrive to register for your programme. See the UKVI Guidance for further information.

Do I need an ATAS Certificate?
An ATAS (Academic Technology Approval Scheme) certificate is required if you are studying a course in certain areas of Sciences (including medicine, veterinary medicine, agriculture, mathematics, computer sciences), Engineering and Technology. If your course requires an ATAS certificate, you must obtain one before you apply for your Tier 4 Adult (General) Student visa. You do not require a CAS or an
unconditional offer in order to apply, you can apply for ATAS with a conditional offer for a programme of study. Full details and how to apply are on the Foreign & Commonwealth Office website.

Am I a “low risk” national?
Certain nationalities are considered, by the Home Office, to be “low risk.” Low risk nationals are not required to provide evidence of qualifications or financial evidence when applying for a Tier 4 visa. However, the Home Office confirm that they may ask for this evidence. If you are asked to provide this evidence you will have a very short time to provide it. Failure to provide requested evidence will result in a visa refusal. We therefore recommend that all low risk applicants prepare evidence of qualifications and finances, but do not submit these unless the Embassy/Visa Application Centre requests them. In order to qualify you must either be applying in the low risk country that you are a national of, or you must be applying from within the UK. Please visit this webpage for more information.

What is the Immigration Health Surcharge?
The Home Office introduced an Immigration Health Surcharge which must be paid in addition to the application fee for Tier 4 students and their dependants. The charge will be £150 per year of visa granted or part thereof for each applicant. If your visa will include part of a year that is 6 months or less you will be charge an additional £75 per applicant. Example: You are coming to study a 1 year Masters course and you will be granted 1 year plus 4 months leave – you will pay £225 in health charges for each applicant.

If you are applying from outside the UK you are not required to pay the Health Surcharge if the length of your visa will be 6 months or less. If you are applying within the UK you will be required to pay the Health Surcharge regardless of how long you are applying for your extension for. If you have your own private medical insurance you must still pay the surcharge, even if you do not intend to use the NHS.

Can I bring my dependants?
The Home Office consider dependants to be a partner (spouse/civil partner/unmarried partner) or child (children over 18 on the date of application are not eligible unless they are currently in the UK as your dependant). If you are bringing a child who will be 16 or over on the date of application you will require additional evidence to prove that your child is not “living an independent life”. Please see the Dependant Policy Guidance (link below) for more information.

You may bring your dependants if you (the main applicant) are studying a course at postgraduate level that is at least 12 months in duration. Alternatively, your dependants can join you on a course at any level, provided you are government-sponsored, and the course is over 6 months long. Please consult the PBS Dependant Guidance for further information on eligibility to bring dependants. Dependants should apply using the Dependant Application Link.

If you are currently in the UK with your dependants and you are about to start a course that is 6 months or less in duration your dependants must return home. If you plan to start an eligible course of study in the future your dependants will be able to apply (from home) for a Tier 4 dependant visa once your new Tier 4 visa has been granted. If you wish to return home to assist your family in applying for their visas please see the note below.

If you have children who you plan to bring to the UK, the Home Office UKVI require both parents to come to the UK. There are some limited exceptions and you can find more information here.

Maintenance for Dependents
In addition to your own maintenance requirements, you must show an additional amount of maintenance for any dependants who are applying with you. You must show £680 for each month from the VISA APPLICATION DATE to the end date of the VISA GRANTED (up to 9 months maximum = £6120), for each dependant. We recommend that all dependants show £6120 in total for maintenance. For more information please read the Dependant Guidance. The UKCISA website also explains how to calculate the dependant maintenance required.
If you are using bank statements to prove you meet the dependant’s maintenance requirements the money can be held in your bank account or the bank account of your dependant. If you have children, their maintenance can be held in your bank account or the bank account of your spouse/partner. If you receive Official Financial Sponsorship, your letter can state that your dependant’s maintenance/living costs will be covered in full or state an amount that will be paid per dependant (this must be equal to or higher than the maintenance requirements or you will have to use bank statements to show the difference). The letter must state the full names of all your dependants.

Note for students who intend to return home to bring family after completing an English Language Programme
Please read this information carefully if you are:

1. studying on a Foundation or Pre-sessional English programme, AND
2. you intend to return home to apply for your Tier 4 visa before your new course starts and you also intend to assist your family members in applying for a Tier 4 Dependant visa at the same time

Please note that you and your family will not be able to apply for their visas until your CAS for your main degree course has been granted. The end date of your English programme and the start date of your main degree course are very close together. You may have to wait some time before you receive your Tier 4 visa. Please be aware that, if you choose to return home, you may not be able to return to the UK in time to start your degree course. If this situation applies to you, you will need to contact your Department to ask if it is possible to arrive late and you should discuss the possible academic consequences with them.

How long can I spend studying in the UK?
If you have previously studied in the UK on a Tier 4 visa (or pre-Tier 4 Student visa) please note that you may be subject to a time limit (known as the CAP) on study in the UK. The standard limit is 5 years, in the UK, studying at degree level or above.

Longer study periods may be permitted if you meet one of the Home Office exemptions:

- If you have successfully completed a 4 or 5 year UG degree you will be allowed to study for 6 years if you wish to study a Masters
- There is no limit for PhD’s or Postgraduate research qualifications UNLESS you have previously completed a postgraduate research qualification (including PhD, MPhil, MRes or MLitt). If you have previously completed one of these qualifications you will limited to 8 years of study.
- If you are studying on Architecture, Medicine or certain Law courses (accelerated graduate LLB and a Diploma in Professional Legal Practice) you are exempt.

The University of Strathclyde will only issue you with a CAS if you are within the CAP for study in the UK.

IMPORTANT: Remaining compliant with your Tier 4 visa conditions
In order to protect the immigration status of Tier 4 students, and comply with the requirements of our Tier 4 sponsor license, the University will collect data on your engagement with your studies (including use of University facilities such as the library, computer and some online services) and your attendance at classes, tutorials and examinations.

You may receive an email from time to time asking you to visit your Department to confirm you are engaged with your studies. You should check your University emails regularly and follow the instructions in any emails you receive. Please let your Department know if you are ill or need to miss classes, or if you intend to leave the University for any reason (for example if you decide to visit home during your studies).

I plan to travel via the Republic of Ireland – what do I need to know?
When planning your journey to the UK, it is best to avoid travelling via Ireland (this is particularly applicable to students from the USA as many flights are routed through Ireland). Although the Republic of Ireland is not
part of the UK, we do have a common travel area agreement which minimises immigration checks. When you arrive in Ireland, your passport will be stamped in green by Irish immigration officials, this will indicate you are a visitor. However, when you pass through UK immigration on arrival in the UK your visa will NOT be stamped, as you have entered the UK through the common travel area. This means that your UK visa will not be activated or if you were looking to request a Short Term Study Visa on entry there would be no means to do this.

It is very important that you keep evidence of your flights and dates of travel (e.g. your boarding pass) as this is your proof of travel. If you want to travel outside the UK (such as to mainland Europe) you must take your travel evidence as you will pass through UK immigration control to come back to the UK. Your visa can now be endorsed.

Travelling through Ireland can be problematic and may disrupt your studies – we recommend avoiding travel through the Republic of Ireland, if possible. More information about travel through the Republic of Ireland is available here.