



www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/studyingintheuk

Studying in the UK

Your guide to the new
UK General Student visa



Make your education count
Study in the UK



Are you ready for a great experience...?

The UK has long been a popular destination for international students, with a history of educational excellence that dates back hundreds of years. Add to that some world-class institutions and a rich and diverse culture, and you are promised a fantastic experience. A qualification from the UK could be a great selling point when you are looking for work in the future!

International students like you have always been an important presence in the UK, enriching the country both culturally and socially.

If you intend to study in the UK and want to stay for longer than six months you will need a General Student visa. You will also need a General Student visa, regardless of how long you want to stay, if you want to work alongside your studies, undertake a course-related work placement, or if you think you may want to extend your stay whilst you are in the UK.

With the introduction of the new points-based immigration system, applying for a General Student visa is more straightforward than ever. You will be able to check to see if you qualify even before you apply.



Tip: This leaflet will give you important details on what a UK General Student visa provides. It will also give you information to help you apply.

What is a visa?

A visa is a secure sticker that is put into your passport or travel document which gives you permission to enter the UK for a specified period of time. Depending on the type of visa you have, you may also be able to work in the UK.

What kind of visa is available to me?

There are two different visas available to students – the **General Student visa** or the **Student Visitor visa**. Which one you choose depends on how long you plan to study in the UK, and whether you plan to work and/or undertake a course-related work placement while you are in the UK.

You will need the **General Student visa**:

- if your course is longer than six months
- if you want to work part-time, or undertake a course-related work placement
- if you think you may decide – after entering the UK – that you wish to extend your stay.

This leaflet gives you more details about the above visa.

You will need the **Student Visitor visa**:

- if your course is six months or less
- if you do not want to work or undertake a course-related work placement
- if you do not wish to extend your stay in the UK.

Please see the Student Visitor visa leaflet for more information, or visit www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/studyingintheuk

Haven't made up your mind yet?

If you want to come to the UK to look at schools, colleges or universities before deciding where you apply to study, you can apply for a **Prospective Student visa**. This is valid for up to six months, but it does not allow you to study or work in the UK during this time.

However, it does allow you to extend your stay in the UK when you have decided where you want to study and have obtained the necessary support from your chosen institution.

You can then make an application to the UK Border Agency to extend your stay in the UK as a General Student. With a Prospective Student visa you do not need to return to your country to make this application.

For more information about the Prospective Student visa, visit www.ukvisas.gov.uk

30+ 10



Tip: Before you prepare your application, check if you have enough points to apply for a General Student visa.

You'll need 40 points to qualify for a UK General Student visa

10

You will earn 10 points if you pass the Maintenance (funds) test and show that you have sufficient funds to cover your course fees and living expenses

The General Student visa

A **General Student visa** allows overseas students to live and study in the UK for the duration of their course. Students with this visa can undertake a course-related work placement during their stay, and can also work part time during term time and full time during the holidays. The General Student visa is part of the UK's new points-based system.

What is the points-based system and how does it affect me?

To get permission to come to the UK to work or study, you now need to pass a points-based assessment. The points-based system is made up of five tiers, and as a student, you apply under Tier 4 of the new system.

The points-based system aims to make the application process simpler and clearer to understand.

How many points do I need to qualify for a General Student visa?

You will need 40 points to qualify, and you can check how many points you have before applying. You earn the points as follows:

30 points: Visa letter from your sponsor (place of study)

You will need to be sent a visa letter from your chosen place of study that confirms your acceptance to studies, and contains details about you and the course you are about to study.

This letter is very important – it shows that your education provider will act as your immigration sponsor, is confident that you are capable of doing the particular course of study and will accept responsibility for you while you are in the UK.

10 points: Maintenance (funds) test

To gain enough points to pass the Maintenance (funds) test you will need to show that you have sufficient funds to support yourself through your studies. This includes money to cover your course fees and living expenses. The maintenance you require will depend on where you want to study and how long your course is.

Length of course	Place of study	Maintenance (funds) needed
9 months or less	In London	Course fees + £800 for each month of the course
9 months or less	Outside London	Course fees + £600 for each month of the course
More than 9 months	In London	First year of fees + £7,200 to cover the first year in the UK
More than 9 months	Outside London	First year of fees + £5,400 to cover the first year in the UK

You will also need to show you have additional funds available to support any dependents if you wish to bring them with you. You can do this in a few ways. For example, you can produce statements to show you have the necessary funds in your bank account, or you can provide proof of a student loan or sponsorship.

Do I need to provide anything else?

You will also need to provide any education certificates/qualifications that you provided to your chosen UK institution in order to be accepted by them on their course.

Before applying

Where can I study?

To apply for a General Student visa, you must have been accepted to study a full-time course at a licensed institution listed on the UKBA register of sponsors, which you can view at:

www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/employersandsponsors/pointsbasedsystem/registerofsporsoreducation

The institution you choose will need to become your 'immigration sponsor' and provide you with your visa letter.

What can I study?

General Student visas will only be issued for full-time studies in the UK. To qualify, you must be accepted for full-time studies on one of the following types of courses:

- A full-time UK degree level course or above at a Higher Education Institution (HEI).
- An overseas higher education course that is recognised as equivalent to a UK higher education qualification.
- A course of study below UK degree level but at a minimum of National Qualifications Framework* (NQF) level 3 or equivalent. This should involve a minimum of 15 hours per week of organised daytime study (daytime study is 8am–6pm Monday to Friday).
- A course of study at a minimum of NQF* level 3, which includes a work placement element that is no more than 50% of the full length of the course.

If you wish to come to the UK to improve your English, then you will only qualify for a General Student visa where you can demonstrate that you have already started learning English. The minimum level of course acceptable for you will be at Common European Framework of Reference for Languages level A2.



Tip: Make sure you have decided on your course and place of study and have a letter of acceptance before you apply for your visa. If you want to change institutions once you have your visa, you will need to inform the UK Border Agency of the change. You can only study at a Tier 4 licenced institution.

*The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) sets out the levels against which a qualification can be recognised in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Level 3 is a minimum of A level.

30

A visa letter from your chosen place of study – which confirms your acceptance to study and also contains details about you and the course you have chosen – will earn you 30 points

16

You have to be over 16 years of age to apply for a General Student visa

Applying

What do I need to apply?

To apply for a General Student visa, you will need:

- a current passport or travel document
- a recent passport-sized colour photograph
- a visa letter from the institution (sponsor) where you are going to study
- proof of maintenance funds
- proof of any qualifications you used to be accepted onto the course
- the application fee.

Find out more about what you need to apply at www.ukvisas.gov.uk

How do I apply?

You need to apply in the country of which you are a national or where you are living. Making an application is a fast and simple process – you will be able to apply in person or online and we aim to issue your visa in 5 to 15 working days. If you apply online, you will still need to post in your supporting documents.

You can check how long visa processing is taking in your country by visiting:

www.ukvisas.gov.uk/en/howtoapply/processingtimes/

There are often periods of time when the visa application centres are very busy, so you should ensure that you leave sufficient time for your application to be processed.

To complete your application you will need to make an appointment to attend a UK visa office. This is because we need to take your biometric details – your fingerprints and a digital photo of your face – in order to process your visa application.

You should visit www.ukvisas.gov.uk for detailed guidance to help your application and for information about local visa offices.

Will I need to pay to apply for a visa?

Like many countries, you will have to pay a visa fee when you apply for a visa for the UK.

Your visa fee cannot be refunded and you must normally pay it in the local currency of the country where you are applying. For more information on current visa fees, go to **www.ukvisas.gov.uk/en/howtoapply/visafees**

Tip: Make sure all the documents you enclose with your application are original and genuine – this means you cannot include photocopies. You may be banned from applying for a UK visa for 10 years if you provide false information when you apply.



After applying

What happens after I have applied?

If your application is successful, you will be given a General Student visa in your passport.

If we refuse your application, you will be given a written refusal notice.

Can I extend my visa?

Your visa will be granted for the whole length of your course, with some additional time at the end to allow you to settle your affairs.

You can only apply for an extension as a General Student to:

- complete your course (including sitting extra exams) or
- undertake further courses.*

You can apply for your extension while you are in the UK and before your previous visa expires. You will need to provide a new visa letter and proof of sufficient maintenance funds when you make your application.

Can I change course or institution?

Your General Student visa is linked to the sponsoring college or university at which you were granted a place to study. You can swap to a different course at the same institution without contacting the UK Border Agency.

However if you want to transfer to a different institution, you will have to seek permission from the UK Border Agency.

Permission will be granted to swap institutions if:

- the institution you wish to move to holds a Tier 4 (General) student licence
- the Border Agency is able to confirm that the new institution wishes to act as your new sponsor
- and the new course you are studying meets the requirements set out on p6 of this booklet.

Can I work while I study?

A General Student visa allows you to work part time (a maximum of 20 hours a week) during term time. You can work full time during the holidays.

You can also undertake a course-related work placement as part of your course – as long as it does not take up more than 50% of the total duration of the course.



*You can only be granted up to a maximum of three years for studies that are below degree level. At the end of three years you will be expected to have progressed onto a course that is at degree level or you will need to leave the UK.

You can work up to 20 hours a week during term time with a UK General Student visa

Where can I get more information?

To find out more about entry clearance and specific guidance to help you apply, and any other information, see our visa services website: www.ukvisas.gov.uk

You can also get more advice about studying in the UK from the following organisations:

British Council

The British Council provides information to help international students prepare for study in the UK.

Email: general.enquiries@britishcouncil.org

Website: www.britishcouncil.org or www.educationuk.org

English UK

English UK is the national association for accredited English language centres in the UK. This website has a wide range of English language courses (searchable by type, place, cost etc).

Website: www.englishuk.com

UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA)

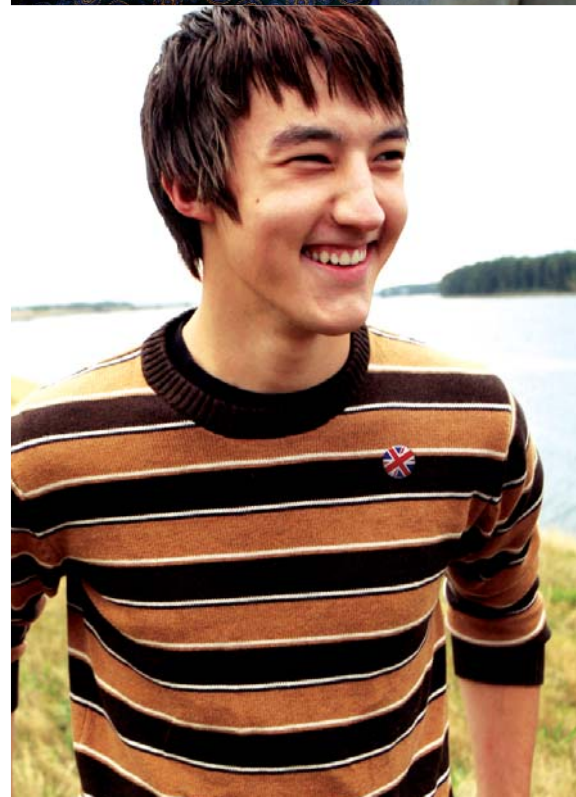
The UK Council for International Student Affairs is the UK's national advisory body, serving the interests of international students and those who work with them.

Website: www.ukcisa.org.uk

The Boarding Schools' Association

The Boarding Schools' Association is the UK association serving and representing member boarding schools, training staff and promoting boarding education.

Website: www.boarding.org.uk



The British Government is committed to a firm but fair migration system. The visa service receives over 2.5 million applications a year from people wanting to come to the UK. Those who try to gain access to the UK with false documents or deception will face an automatic ban of up to 10 years. Applicants who have previously breached UK immigration laws by staying in the UK illegally or working without permission will also be banned from coming to the UK.