

BRITISH VISA REQUIREMENTS

INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

The British Government warmly welcomes people from overseas who want to study and train in the United Kingdom.

This leaflet explains:

- o the UK Immigration Rules for overseas students
- o what a visa is for
- o which nationals must have a visa
- o how to apply for a visa

This leaflet is only a brief guide. It does not cover all the rules for immigration entry. The law is mostly set out in the Immigration Act 1971 and the Statements of Changes in the UK Immigration Rules. The Rules for entering the UK differ if you are a national of a Member State of the European Economic Area (the Member States of the European Union, Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein) or if you can claim British Citizenship or other connection with the UK, for example by ancestry. Details are available from the nearest British mission which offers a visa service.

WHAT IS A VISA?

If you need a United Kingdom visa you must apply for one before you travel to the United Kingdom. Even when you hold a visa you will still need to pass through immigration control when you arrive. But if you are holding a visa you will not be refused permission to enter unless there has been some change in your circumstances or you gave false information or did not disclose important facts when you obtained the visa. Holders of visas may also be refused on medical grounds, if they have a criminal record, if they are subject to a deportation order or if there are other exceptional reasons why they should not be admitted.

When you arrive in the United Kingdom, you may be questioned by an Immigration Officer so take all relevant documents in your hand luggage.

DO I NEED A VISA?

If you are a national of one of the countries listed in leaflet INF 1 or if you are stateless or hold a non-national travel document or a passport issued by an authority not recognised by the UK you must have a valid UK visa on each occasion you enter the UK, unless you qualify for exemption as explained in INF 1. It is not possible to switch from visitor to student status once in the UK. You must therefore have the correct visa before you travel.

Other nationals do not have to have a visa to study in the UK. However, you will have to satisfy the immigration officer on arrival in the UK that you qualify for entry. If you are in any doubt about your eligibility you are advised to apply for a visa before you travel.

THE RULES

You must be able to support and accommodate yourself and any dependants and pay for your studies without working in the UK and without recourse to public funds, except that:

- o it is acceptable for support and accommodation and the cost of your studies to be provided by relatives or friends in the UK; and
- o the income from part time work provided and guaranteed by a publicly funded institution of further or higher education in the United Kingdom at which you are studying may be taken into account when assessing your financial means.

It is not necessary to have finalised your arrangements but you must intend to study at a university, a publicly funded college of further or higher education, independent school or other genuine private educational institution. You must also be able to follow your intended course.

Your course of study should occupy the whole or a substantial part of your time (at least 15 hours a week organised daytime study of a single subject or of directly related subjects leading to a particular qualification).

You must intend to leave the UK when your studies are completed.

HOW TO APPLY FOR A STUDENT VISA

If you wish to apply for an entry clearance you should fill in form IM2A (and related forms if applicable) which you can get free of charge from the nearest British mission offering a visa service. You can only apply at the British mission in the country where you are living. Where there is none in the country concerned, or it does not offer a full service, another British mission will have been designated to handle applications.

Your application form may be submitted by hand or by post together with:

- # your passport*
- # two recent passport-sized photographs
- # the visa fee, which is non-refundable

- # any relevant diplomas or educational certificates which you hold
- # a letter from the University, College or School confirming your acceptance for the course of study in the UK and a statement of charges for the course
- # evidence of Government sponsorship (if appropriate)
- * In certain countries it may be inadvisable to send your passport through the post.

Fees must be paid in local currency (i.e. the currency of the country in which the British mission is located). You should not send cash through the post, but bank drafts, postal or money orders payable to the mission may be enclosed.

The visa officer may then be able to decide your application without further enquiries. However, you might have to attend an interview. In addition to the documents listed above you may be asked for:

- # evidence of funds to pay for your stay and your course of studies in the UK or
- # a letter from your host or sponsor in the UK to say that s/he will support and accommodate you during your course of studies, together with evidence that s/he can do so.

YOU SHOULD NOT BUY A TICKET OR PAY ALL OR PART OF THE COST OF A COURSE OF STUDIES IF DELAY OR REFUSAL OF YOUR APPLICATION WILL RESULT IN FINANCIAL LOSS. THE VISA OFFICER MAY ASK YOU FOR OTHER DOCUMENTS: PRODUCTION OF THOSE LISTED ABOVE DOES NOT GUARANTEE THAT A VISA WILL BE ISSUED.

If in doubt, you can obtain advice from the nearest British mission.

DRUGS WARNING

The UK has severe penalties against drug smuggling. Drug traffickers may try to bribe travellers. If you are travelling to the UK avoid any involvement with drugs.

CUSTOMS & EXCISE

Advice on importing personal effects and goods into the UK may be obtained from:

HM Customs and Excise
Dorset House
Stamford Street
LONDON SE1 9PY

IMMIGRATION ADVISORY SERVICE (IAS)

The IAS is an independent charity which gives free and confidential advice, assistance and representation to persons who are applying for an entry clearance for the UK. Their address is:

County House
190 Great Dover Street
LONDON SE1 4YB
Telephone: 44 171 357 6917
Duty Office 24 hrs: 44 181 814 1559
Fax: 44 171 378 0665

HEALTH INSURANCE

Before you travel, please check that you have adequate health insurance cover. Medical treatment in the UK can be expensive and visitors are not covered by the United Kingdom's national health insurance scheme (unless they are covered by a reciprocal health care agreement or they are enrolled on a course that is of six months duration or longer).

Printed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (SG) 7/99

WHILE EVERY CARE HAS BEEN TAKEN IN PREPARING THESE LEAFLETS THEY ARE INTENDED ONLY FOR GENERAL GUIDANCE, AND MAY, IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES, HAVE BEEN OVERTAKEN BY EVENTS. HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT CANNOT ACCEPT ANY LIABILITY FOR ANY LOSS OR DAMAGE ARISING IN RESPECT OF ANY STATEMENT CONTAINED IN THIS LEAFLET. APPLICANTS SHOULD ALWAYS CLARIFY THEIR POSITION WITH THE BRITISH MISSION BEFORE TRAVELLING. IN THESE GUIDANCE LEAFLETS, THE TERM VISA REFERS TO VISA ,ENTRY CERTIFICATE OR OTHER ENTRY CLEARANCE AS SPECIFIED IN THE IMMIGRATION RULES.