



# An introduction to UK visas

Requirements for students  
studying English in the UK

# What will be covered?



- Who needs a visa?
- The different visa types for study
- Right to study checks
- Making a successful visa application
- Covid-19 concessions and requirements

# Who needs a visa?

UK visa requirements for students depend on three factors:

- the student's nationality
- how long they want to study for
- which course they want to take

UKVI puts nationalities into two groups: visa nationals and non-visa nationals.

- **Visa nationals** always need to apply for a visa before travelling to the UK.
- **Non-visa nationals** do not need to apply for a visa if they are visiting the UK for up to six months. This group now includes all EU, EEA and Swiss nationals. Some of the key ELT source markets in this group are Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea and Hong Kong.

# Types of visa for study



Three possible visas for English language students:

- Standard visitor: up to six months
- Short-term study (English Language) visa: for courses between six to 11 months
- Child / Student visa: for courses of longer than 6 months

# Standard Visitor Route



- Any course(s), any accredited provider(s) but must be completed within six months
- No minimum age requirement, no language requirement, no minimum number of hours of study per week
- Students can change course or provider during their stay
- No prior course booking required for visa application
- No work rights – volunteering possible
- No set amount of funds needed but must demonstrate funds are available
- Cost - £100 for visa nationals; no application for non-visa nationals
- Long-term visa holders: should not intend to study for more than six months

# Short term student (English Language) route



- English language courses only for students aged at least 16
- Study for 6 to 11 months; at least 10 hours of study per week (recommended)
- Study permitted at any level but only on the course and with the provider named on the application form
- Course can be extended – e.g from 7 months to visa end date (11 months)
- No work rights
- Cannot be renewed or changed in the UK
- Visa required in advance - £200 (all students)
- International health surcharge payable at point of application - £470
- Temporary entry visa issued and BRP to be collected after arrival; EU nationals are issued an e-visa

# Student Route (Points-based system)



- For any course longer than six months
- Must be taken at recognised sponsor on the register of licenced sponsors
- Minimum English Language level required (B1); to be evidenced via a Secure English Language Test (SELT).
- Work may be allowed when studying with a sponsor with track record
- Cost: £363 plus International Health Surcharge - £470 per year, an additional £235 is payable for every additional six months period that the visa is valid for
- Can bring dependants
- Can apply for a new visa in the UK; new course must be at a higher level

# Child Student Route (Points-based system)



- For students aged 4-17 and studying with an independent school
- The school should be on the register of licenced sponsors
- Students aged 16 and 17 can work; 10 hours during term-time
- Cost: £363 plus International Health Surcharge - £470 per year, an additional £235 is payable for every additional six months period that the visa is valid for
- Can apply for a new visa in the UK; new course must be at a higher level



# What is a SELT?



For a Student visa application, the student must prove their English language level with a Secure English Language Test. Both the test provider and the test centre must be approved by UKVI.

Five test providers that offer approved tests:

IELTS SELT Consortium

Trinity College London

LanguageCert

Pearson PTE

PSI Services (UK) Ltd (must be taken outside of the UK)

# Track record of compliance



- Applies to licensed sponsors offering courses at level 4 and above
- Must maintain Educational Oversight and pass the Basic Compliance Assessment for four consecutive years to be eligible
- Licensed sponsors in England must also register with the Office For Students (n/a to centres in the devolved administrations)

# Applying for a visa (I)



Information and documents required when submitting an application:

- As much information about the reasons for doing the course now and in the UK. For example list any previous English language study or job opportunities if relevant and include the evidence where possible
- Financial documents which are thorough: income should match payslips; additional evidence for recent deposits
- The course confirmation letter

# Applying for a visa (II)



- A letter from education provider/employer confirming permission of absence and the period of agreed leave
- Evidence of the intention to leave the UK at the end of the course if possible; does not have to be a return flight
- Parental consent for under 18s
- Host family/ accommodation details, especially for under 18s
- All documents submitted must be in English

# Avoiding a visa refusal



Caseworkers will assess whether the student genuinely intends to visit/study in the UK by looking at:

- Previous immigration history, including visits to the UK and other countries
  - Is there evidence the student has complied with immigration rules?
- Duration of previous visits especially if there were any extensions of stay
  - What were the reasons given for the number and duration of the visits?
- Financial circumstances of the applicant and family members if relevant
  - How much money is available; where does the money come from; what proportion of income/saving is being spent who is paying for the course; are there other dependants;
- Personal and economic circumstances in the home country
  - Is the student working or in education?

# Avoiding a visa refusal? How you can help as a language centre



- Find out more about the student's reasons for studying and check their current level of English (especially for direct bookings)
- Include the following information on the course confirmation letter:
  - Course start and end date; not just the number of weeks of study
  - Any holiday the student intends to take during the course
  - Student's current level of English and the target level upon completion of the course
  - Total cost of the course and amount paid to date (NB: no need for fees to be paid in full)
- Read and share the caseworker guidance with your ETO network and students

# Right to study checks



- Check to ensure student has the right visa and that it covers the duration of the course
- Non-visa nationals studying up to six months: check stamp in passport or alternative evidence of arrival in the UK
- EU nationals without a visa and studying for more than six months: ask for details of their pre/settled status
- Make a note of visa end date and ensure permission to stay in the UK is renewed if necessary

# It's good to know (I)



- Not all visas permit study!
  - E.g marriage visitor visa and Parent of Child Student Visa
- CTA – Common Travel Area between Republic of Ireland and the UK
  - Since 1 January 2021 non-visa nationals arriving from Ireland are automatically allowed to stay in the UK for six months
- Number of hours of study
  - No minimum number of hours under the visitor and short-term study; however at least 10 hours of study recommended when studying for more than six months
- Electronic visa waiver (EVW)
  - For nationals of Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates and from 1 June 2022, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain
  - Valid for up to six months but limited to a single entry
  - Cost £30



# It's good to know (II)



## Covid-19 concessions

- Exceptional assurance scheme for those who are unable to leave the UK by the end date of their visa and cannot apply for a new visa in the UK; free of charge

## Visa delays

- most types of visa applications affected. Processing time is currently about 6 weeks. UKVI expects to return to service standards (15 days; 3 weeks) by July.

## Visa processing

- Study visas are processed in the UK; visitor applications are processed at regional hubs

# What's new for EU/EEA and Swiss nationals?



- Since 1 January 2021 a visa is required to work in the UK
- No visa required for tourism or study visits up to six months
- Must apply for a visa to stay longer than six months – and pay the International Health Surcharge
- Since 1 October 2021 the ID card cannot be used to enter the UK unless they have pre/settled status. The ID card can still be used on exit if used to enter the UK
- Anyone who claimed pre/settled status is free to work and study
- Almost impossible for EU nationals to be au-pairs
- Can use e-gates where available

# Key sources of information



[Visit Caseworker guidance](#)

[Short-term Student \(English language\) caseworker guidance](#)

[UKCISA](#)

[EnglishWithConfidence](#)

[Right to study checks for EU/EEA/Swiss nationals](#)

[Immigration rules](#)

[Sponsor guidance](#)



Any questions?