



IMMIGRATION GUIDANCE – UK CAMPUSES

GRADUATE IMMIGRATION ROUTE – EFFECTIVE JULY 2021

Introduction

A new immigration route opened on 1st July which allows international graduates to remain in the UK and seek work after they have finished their studies at a UK university.

It forms part of the UK Points Based System but is not a “sponsored” route, meaning that graduates may apply for this visa on completion of their studies, whether or not they have secured a job, or a job offer.

This Guidance Note may be helpful for Hiring Managers who may wish to recruit a recent Graduate into any role; and for international students who are about to, or have completed, their studies, particularly if they do not already have a job offer under another Visa Route.

Who is eligible to apply?

You can apply for a Graduate visa if all of the following are true:

- you’re in the UK
- your current visa is a Student visa or Tier 4 (General) student visa and has not expired when you make the application
- you studied a UK bachelor’s degree, postgraduate degree or other eligible course for a minimum period of time with your Student visa or Tier 4 (General) student visa
- you’ve successfully completed that course (you do not have to have already graduated to be eligible to apply)

How long is the visa valid?

The Graduate visa is valid for 2 years or, if you have a PhD or other doctoral qualification, it will last for 3 years

You cannot extend your Graduate visa, but you may be able to switch into a different visa route, for example a Skilled Worker Visa or a Global Talent Visa if you meet the relevant criteria.

What work am I allowed to do under the Graduate Visa?

If you apply successfully for a Graduate Visa you will be provided with a full list of what you can and cannot do. However, in summary you may:

- look for work
- work in most jobs up to full time hours
- be self-employed
- continue living in the UK with your partner and children if they’re eligible
- undertake voluntary work
- travel abroad and return to the UK

What are the benefits of the Graduate Immigration Visa?

- If you successfully apply for the Graduate Visa, you do not have to have a job offer to stay in the UK.

- You may also be employed in jobs where it is not possible to sponsor you under the Skilled Worker Visa, as the skill level of the job and minimum salary restrictions do not apply.

It is a slightly cheaper visa than the Skilled Worker Visa though you still have to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge as well as the visa fee. You will not be restricted on the hours that you work, as is the case for Student Visas

Are there any restrictions?

- Although you do not have to have a job offer to stay in the UK, you will have to comply with the requirements of the job you apply for and go through appropriate recruitment and selection processes.
- Unfortunately, time spent on the Graduate Immigration Route does not count towards Settlement (Indefinite Leave to Remain) applications. However, you are able to switch into a Skilled Worker Visa from the Graduate Immigration Visa if you meet the relevant requirements. You may therefore need to consider whether you are eligible for, or it is more appropriate for you to apply for a Skilled Worker or Global Talent Visa
- You cannot apply for benefits or work as a professional sportsperson
- You cannot apply for this visa if you are still studying or eligible for a Student (Tier 4) visa. You can only apply for this visa once you have ended your studies.
- Therefore, if you are a student with a Tier 4 or Student Visa and you wish to take up casual work or employment, you will still be restricted to Student Visa terms (and restricted hours etc) until your course ends and you have successfully applied for the Graduate Visa.
- For further information about working with a Tier 4 or Student Visa, see this document:

[Guidance on Student Visa Working Hours](#)

What is the application process?

You must apply online here:

<https://www.gov.uk/graduate-visa/apply>

You will need to provide your CAS reference from Heriot-Watt University or other education provider.

After you have applied, you will get an email containing the decision on your application and what you need to do next.

If your application is approved you will be able to prove your right to live and work in the UK through an online check or, if you are provided with a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP), by showing that when asked for documentation.

You will not be allowed to work or be paid for work until you have demonstrated your right to work by showing the relevant visa. We need to see evidence via the online check or BRP; we cannot simply accept that you are a recent graduate.

Where can I find out more information?

The UK Government has published a booklet outlining the Graduate Immigration Route which you can find at this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-graduate-route-information-for-international-students>

Graduate Immigration Route Guidance July 2021

Further information about the route and how to apply is also on the Government website here:

<https://www.gov.uk/graduate-visa>

You will also find helpful information about different visa routes on the HR Hub [HR Hub Immigration Page](#) (staff intranet) and [here](#) for student information.