



UNITED KINGDOM
ENTRY CLEARANCE (VISA)
FOR ALL STUDENTS

Instructions



The instructions below are intended to assist students applying for entry clearance to the United Kingdom. They are written by UCEAP staff and are not offered in place of instructions or information provided by the United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA). The UKBA is the final authority; UCEAP has no authority or impact on visa application requirements or decisions.

You must have a student entry clearance (visa) in order to have the legal right to study in the UK.

Non-US citizens: See this UKBA [tool for non-US citizens](#) to find out if there are any restrictions or additional requirements for your country of citizenship. There are two categories: “visa nationals” (who must apply for a visa before departure) and “non-visa nationals” (who may be able to follow the instructions for “low risk” applicants). “Visa nationals” can apply for either the Student Visa or the Student Visitor Visa before departure. Please do not contact UCEAP to ask if there are additional requirements or restrictions for your country of citizenship; UKBA policies can change frequently and UCEAP can monitor only the requirements for US citizens.

US citizens:

There are 2 types of entry clearance for students wishing to enter the UK, the Student Visitor Visa and the Points Based System (PBS) Tier 4 (General) Student Visa.

LSE Summer, Pembroke/King’s Summer, Sussex Summer, and UC Center London Fall students must obtain the Student Visitor Visa upon arrival in the UK.

Year Immersion students must apply for and obtain the Tier 4 Student Visa before departure for the UK.

Fall or Spring Immersion students may choose to obtain either one of the two types of visas noted above. The Tier 4 Student Visa will allow you to work, intern, or do volunteer work. It will also allow Fall Immersion students to “extend” their participation to a Year program by getting another visa from within the UK (instead of returning to the US to get another visa).

Regardless of the type of visa you obtain, it is granted only for the duration of your program. For example, a Tier 4 Student Visa will be granted for either a year-long program or a short-term program.

Instructions for Student Visitor Visa (upon arrival in the UK)

Do NOT travel through Ireland on your way to the UK. Doing so will prevent you from obtaining your visa upon arrival, thus making your stay in the UK illegal. More information on this travel restriction can be found in the EAP Program Guide.

Obtaining the Student Visitor Visa is relatively simple, but you must begin to gather the necessary support documents at least a few weeks before departure. Check all of your documents to be certain the information is correct; this includes but is not limited to your name, dates of your program, country of citizenship/nationality, birthday, etc. Remember, the UK format for birth dates is day/month/year. If you notice an error, contact the provider of the document immediately. Also keep the contact information for your EAP Study Center in the UK and for your host university (the international office) with your documents should the immigration officer have any questions.

After gathering the original documents listed below (no photocopies, faxes, electronic printouts, etc.), keep them in your carry-on luggage. When you arrive in the UK, you will go through Immigration before reaching the baggage claim area. When the Immigration officer asks you the purpose of your stay, you will tell him or her you are a Student Visitor. The officer will look over your documents to determine your eligibility for the Student Visitor Visa. Be sure to remember that you are a short-term (<6 months) student. Immersion students may need to explain they are “exchange” students.

Documents needed:

1. Passport
2. UK Host University Acceptance Letter
3. Proof that you will leave the UK within 7 days of the end of your program.
 - a. Flight or other travel itinerary proving you will depart the UK.
4. Evidence of Financial Support
Proof that you have enough funds to cover your expenses while in the UK, according to the UKBA formula for “maintenance” funds. Maintenance includes both accommodation (housing) fees and day-to-day living expenses. See *Program-specific Information* further below concerning accommodation fees.

The UKBA has estimated the minimum amount for maintenance to be £1000/month if studying in London and £800/month if studying outside London.

Provide evidence of financial support by showing one or more of the following documents, as long as the total amount of the funds you show reaches the minimum. (Stocks, bonds, market funds, etc., are not acceptable as the value of such accounts can fluctuate.) Include a note (either separate or directly on each document) showing the current currency conversion rate using <http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic>.

- a. Bank statement for the prior one-month period.
 - i. The statement must be original, showing your name and account number. The amount you are proving must have been in the bank account for the full month. If the balance drops below the amount for even one day, the statement will not meet the financial requirement. The account can be a joint account, but your name must appear as a joint account holder.
 - ii. A printed-out online bank statement may be used, but you must also have an original letter from your bank verifying the amount in the account, your name, and account number.

- iii. A parental bank statement can be used but you must also submit a letter from your parents confirming they will provide the appropriate funds to finance your stay in the UK **plus** documentation confirming the relationship—i.e., original birth certificate, adoption certificate, or court document stating they are your legal guardians.
 - b. Bank Letter.
 - i. If a bank statement is not available, request a letter from your bank on letterhead that includes the bank logo and has the following information: your name; the account number; the date of the letter; the amount of money in the account; and confirmation that the money has been in the account for a minimum of 28 days.
 - c. Letter from your UC campus Financial Aid Office.
 - i. This letter must be no more than one month old. It must state that you **will** receive \$XX,XXX in financial aid and must list the types of aid (loans, scholarships, grants, etc.). The letter **MUST NOT** state that you are “eligible to receive up to \$XX,XXX.”
- 5. Official UC Transcript

Program-specific Information

London School of Economics students: Your acceptance letter from LSE will state your course fees are paid through the University of California to LSE. Because you pay your own accommodation fees directly to LSE, you will need to show proof that you have done so. If this fact is not included in your acceptance letter, be prepared to show that you have paid this amount directly to LSE in the form of a hard copy receipt. You would then be able to subtract the accommodation fees (up to a maximum of £1000) from the maintenance amount you must prove.

Pembroke/King’s Summer students: Your acceptance letter from PKP will state your course fees are paid through the University of California to PKP. Because you pay your own accommodation fees directly to PKP, you will need to show proof that you have done so. If this fact is not included in your acceptance letter, be prepared to show that you have paid this amount directly to PKP in the form of a hard copy receipt. You would then be able to subtract the accommodation fees (up to a maximum of £1000) from the maintenance amount you must prove.

Sussex Summer students: Your acceptance letter from Sussex Summer will state your course fees and your accommodation fees are paid through the University of California to the University of Sussex. You would then subtract the accommodation fees (up to a maximum of £1000) from the maintenance amount you must prove.

UC Center London Fall students: You will be provided with a letter from UCEAP stating that your course fees are paid through the University of California to ACCENT International. This letter will also state that your accommodation fees are being paid to UC and will list the exact amount of these fees. For your evidence of financial support you will need to prove that you have enough money to cover the amount remaining once accommodation fees are subtracted from the minimum maintenance required (£1000 x 4 months= £4000, then subtract the accommodation fees (up to a maximum of £1000) from £4000 for the remaining amount).

Fall or Spring Immersion students: As an [exchange](#) student, you do not need to prove that you have enough money for course fees at your UK university; you must however, prove that

you have enough money to cover your “maintenance fees” which include your accommodation and other living expenses.

Instructions for Tier 4 Student Visa

Do NOT travel through Ireland on your way to the UK. Doing so will prevent you from activating your visa upon arrival, thus making your stay in the UK illegal. More information on this travel restriction can be found in the EAP Program Guide.

There are 3 main steps to obtaining a Tier 4 Student Visa

1. [Online application](#) (plus payment of application fee)
2. [Biometrics](#) (digital photograph and fingerscans taken at a specific location)
3. [Submission of documents](#) (in-person appointments may not be available—plan to submit by mail)

How long will it take to process?

You cannot apply more than 3 months before your program begins and must apply within 6 months of your CAS being issued. The application date is considered to be the date that you pay the application fee. The UKBA recommends allowing at least 4-6 weeks for the application process; starting from Step #3 above. UCEAP recommends applying as soon as you can—the consulate becomes busier towards the beginning of program dates and processing time increases. Applications that are missing information or documents, or are incorrect will be denied. There is no appeal process and you will not be allowed to submit missing documents later. If your visa application is denied, you must request a new CAS number from your host university, and start the application over—including paying the application fee. Re-starting an application will add another 4-6 weeks or longer.

After attending your biometrics appointment, you must submit all supporting documents and your passport to the UK Consulate within 2 weeks (10 business days).

How much does it cost?

As of March 2012, the visa application fee is £289 (about \$460 US) + \$12 postage fee. The fee is nonrefundable, regardless of the outcome of the visa application.

How do I get the CAS number?

This process will occur once you are formally accepted by your host university. The timing is up to the host university—UCEAP does not have any control over this process.

Your host university is responsible for entering your CAS number and personal information into the UKBA database. CAS numbers are generated for Year Immersion students, but Fall or Spring Immersion students must request a CAS number from the host university if they wish to apply for a Tier 4 Student Visa.

Carefully read your offer letter from the host university—in most cases, there is a reply section where you must confirm the type of visa for which you will apply. If this is not included in the reply section, contact your host university’s international office to make sure they know what visa you plan on obtaining.

Your host university will confirm (likely by email) your information with you before they enter it into the UKBA database in order to produce your CAS number. Be very sure to look over the spelling of your name, your passport number, your birth date (DAY/MONTH/YEAR format), length of your program, course fees (should be £0.00 for all Immersion students), any maintenance (accommodation) fees already paid, etc. The information MUST match exactly the information in your passport. Confirm or correct the information with the host university as soon as possible. Incorrect information will likely cause your visa application to be denied.

Once the host university produces your CAS number, you will be sent an automatic email with the CAS number and other information. Save this email for your records, and keep a hard copy with you when travelling. It is very important that you check your email regularly and make sure this message is not lost in SPAM or not received because there is not enough space. If you notice an error, notify your host university immediately.

How do I start the application process?

The UKBA has recently stated that you do not need to submit all the supporting documents listed below unless the UKBA asks for them after you have submitted the online application. However, obtaining the documents takes time and planning. You would need to gather materials and documents from multiple sources. You will need to make the decision as to whether to obtain the documents ahead of time, or to wait until asked. It appears that the UKBA may not ask for the documents, but there is no guarantee.

When submitting documents, check all of them to be certain the information is correct; this includes but is not limited to your name, dates of your program, country of citizenship/nationality, birthday, etc. Remember, the UK format for birth dates is day/month/year. If you notice an error, contact the provider of the document immediately. Also keep the contact information for your EAP Study Center in the UK and for your host university (the international office) with your documents should the immigration officer have any questions.

Step #1 Online application: www.visa4uk.fco.gov.uk . You can save your application if you are not able to complete it in one sitting. However, it can remain in the system only for up to 7 days. If you do not return to complete the application within 7 days it will be deleted.

Notes to reference while completing the online application:

- Your “Country of Nationality” is the country which has issued your passport
- “Purpose of Application” is PBS Tier 4 (General) Student
- “Type of Application” is Tier 4 (General) Student
- When you select a biometrics appointment, if the appointment time/date given is not acceptable, try selecting a different location. There may be an alternate location a short distance away that can offer a better appointment time/date.
- When asked how you will submit your application, select “By Mail.” If you plan to use a third-party visa service (such as the A Briggs office in Los Angeles) ask the visa service agency for instructions.
- Keep a print-out of the GWF number which is emailed to the address you provide in the application if the application has been submitted successfully.

Step #2 Biometrics:

The biometrics instructions near the end of the online visa application require that you schedule a biometrics appointment to have a digital photograph and fingerscans taken.

This is NOT done at the UK Consulate. You choose the site and time of your appointment while completing the online visa application. Make sure you have your biometrics appointment confirmation stamped to confirm you attended the appointment.

Once your biometrics have been taken, you have 2 weeks (10 business days) to submit your application and supporting documents to the UK Consulate in NEW YORK. If you wait longer than 2 weeks to submit your materials, you will have to begin the application process again (including fee payment).

Step #3 Submission of Documents, categories 1 – 8 below:

All documents must be **original and official**. Do not attempt to submit photocopies, faxed documents, or print-outs of emailed/electronic documents.

1. Passport, valid for your entire program length and signed (required)
Do not attempt to submit a photocopy of your passport. You must submit your actual passport. The visa will be affixed to a page in your passport and there is no way around this requirement.
2. CAS number: a print-out of the CAS number email from your host university (*not required unless requested by UKBA*)
3. Official, current UC transcript (*not required unless requested by UKBA*)
4. Appendix 8 Form (required)
 - a. [Sample \(for Immersion students\)](#)
 - b. [Sample \(only for Sussex Summer students with a CAS number\)](#)
 - c. [Form](#)
5. Evidence of Financial Support (*not required unless requested by UKBA*)
Proof that you have enough funds to cover your expenses while in the UK, according to the UKBA formula for “maintenance” funds. Maintenance includes both accommodation (housing) fees and day-to-day living expenses.

The UKBA has estimated the minimum amount for maintenance to be £1000/month if studying in London and £800/month if studying outside London.

Provide evidence of financial support by submitting one or more of the following documents, as long as the total amount of the funds you show reaches the minimum. (Stocks, bonds, market funds, etc., are not acceptable as the value of such accounts can fluctuate.) Include a note (either separate or directly on each document) showing the current currency conversion rate using <http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic>.

- a. Bank statement for the prior one-month period.
 - i. The statement must be original, showing your name and account number. The amount you are proving must have been in the bank account for the full month. If the balance drops below the amount for even one day, the statement will not meet the financial requirement. The account can be a joint account, but your name must appear as a joint account holder.
 - ii. A printed-out online bank statement may be used, but you must also have an original letter from your bank verifying the amount in the account, your name, and account number.

- iii. A parental bank statement can be used but you must also submit a letter from your parents confirming they will provide the appropriate funds to finance your stay in the UK **plus** documentation confirming the relationship—i.e., original birth certificate, adoption certificate, or court document stating they are your legal guardians.
- b. Bank Letter.
 - i. If a bank statement is not available, request a letter from your bank on letterhead that includes the bank logo and has the following information: your name; the account number; the date of the letter; the amount of money in the account; and confirmation that the money has been in the account for a minimum of 28 days.
- c. Letter from your UC campus Financial Aid Office.
 - i. This letter must be no more than one month old. It must state that you **will** receive \$XX,XXX in financial aid and must list the types of aid (loans, scholarships, grants, etc.). The letter **MUST NOT** state that you are “eligible to receive up to \$XX,XXX.”
 - ii. It is your responsibility to obtain the letter and ensure it meets UKBA guidelines. Your campus financial aid office will require you to accept your financial aid package before they are able to produce this letter. Keep in mind that your campus financial aid office is likely to be extremely busy—talk to your campus financial aid advisor early to find out the best way to get the letter on time.

Immersion students: As an exchange student, you do not need to prove that you have enough money for tuition/course fees at your UK university. For any part of the visa application that asks the amount of “tuition/course fees” you should fill in 0 (zero). However, you must prove that you have enough money to cover your “maintenance.” The amount you need to show depends on the length of your program in months. If your program includes a partial month, round up to the next whole month—example: for 5 ½ months, you must show enough for 6 months.

Examples:

- A student studying for the academic year (9 months) at King’s College London would need to prove they had £9000
 - (9 months x £1000)=£9000
 - A student studying for the Fall term (3 months) at Glasgow would need to prove they had £2400
 - (3 months x £800)=£2400
6. Stamped confirmation from your Biometrics appointment (required)
 7. A print-out of your online application form, signed. If you made any errors on the application, you can correct them by hand on the print-out. (required)
 8. Two passport-style photographs (required)

Within 10 business days of your Biometrics appointment, submit all supporting documents to:
 British Consulate-General
 845 Third Avenue
 New York, NY 10022

Failure to submit your documents within the 2-week period will likely result in your application being denied and you will have to begin the process again.

When the consulate opens your documents, they will email you confirming receipt. Note that in August and September the consulate often does not open documents until a couple of weeks after the documents have arrived. They are extremely busy that time of year, so it is best to give extra time if applying after late July.

The consulate offers two options for expedited (“rush”) processing. See https://www.visainfoservices.com/Pages/Content.aspx?Tag=Services_PAGE for Priority Service for \$150 extra and Premium Service Appointment for \$100 extra.

When the consulate makes a decision about your visa application they will email the decision and tracking number of the return package. When you receive your passport with visa, it is very important to check that all information is correct. Remember, the date format in the UK is day/month/year. Be sure your visa is valid for your entire program length and all other information is correct.

Be sure to carry any supporting documents (that you were required to submit) with you in your carry-on luggage. The Immigration officer could ask to see these when you enter, even if you already have your visa in your passport.

Need more information? Look at the UKBA official guidance for Tier 4 applications: <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/applicationforms/pbs/Tier4migrantguidance.pdf>

Students can also telephone Worldbridge, the official visa service provider for the UKBA. Worldbridge can be reached (for \$3.00/minute) at 900-656-5000 (charged to your telephone bill) or 855-408-0343 (charged to your credit card). Worldbridge is not able to answer questions about the status of a submitted visa application, but will be able to help answer questions that may arise while completing the application.

Frequently Asked Questions:

[What is an “entry clearance” or a “visa”?](#)

[What is a CAS?](#)

[Can I contact the UK Consulate if I have more questions?](#)

[How long is my visa valid?](#)

[Am I an “exchange” student? What does that mean?](#)

[Can I work, intern, or do volunteer work while I am in the UK?](#)

[How do I get a visa for two back-to-back programs in the UK?](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

[What is an “entry clearance” or a “visa”?](#)

Basically, a visa is permission to enter or stay in a country for a specific time and for a specific purpose. It is stamped or affixed into your passport.

For all incoming international students, a UK visa is required to grant permission to study in the UK for a timeframe. The exact timeframe is specified by the host university. For example, a student accepted by a host university for the Fall semester will be issued a visa to cover only the Fall semester period, regardless of whether the visa issued is a Tier 4 Student Visa or a Student Visitor Visa.

Can I contact the UK Consulate if I have more questions?

You cannot call the Consulate directly about visa questions. If you have questions during your visa application, you should call Worldbridge, the official visa service provider for the UKBA.

Worldbridge can be reached (for \$3.00/minute) at 900-656-5000 (charged to your telephone bill) or 855-408-0343 (charged to your credit card). Worldbridge is not able to answer questions about the status of a submitted visa application, but will be able to help answer questions that may arise while completing the application.

Am I an “exchange” student? What does that mean?

If you are participating on a UK Summer (London School of Economics, Pembroke/King’s, or Sussex Summer) or UC Center London Fall program, you are NOT an exchange student and the paragraph below does NOT apply to you.

All students participating on a **UK Immersion program** are exchange students. This means that you don’t pay tuition/course fees to your host university. For any part of the visa application that asks the amount of “tuition/course fees” you should fill in 0 (zero). This is very important—if you write any other amount, it will conflict with your supporting documents and will result in your visa being denied or delayed.

What is a CAS or CAS number?

A CAS, or Certificate of Acceptance for Studies, is a digital certificate and a unique reference number (CAS number) that is given to each student record. Your host university enters your student information and your program information into a UKBA database. This confirms that the host university is your official Tier 4 sponsor so that you can apply for a Tier 4 (General) Student Visa and also confirms that you have been accepted into their institution for a specific period of study. You are given a unique reference number (your CAS number) to put on your visa application so the British Consulate can verify your student status.

- All Year Immersion students will be issued a CAS number by their host university.
- Most host universities will issue a CAS number to Fall or Spring Immersion students only upon request.
- LSE Summer, PKP Summer, and UC Center London Fall will NOT issue any student a CAS number. Sussex Summer may or may not issue a CAS number only upon request for a serious, extenuating circumstance.

How long is my visa valid?

Short-term students (students studying 6 months or less): Due to UKBA restrictions, your entry clearance, regardless of whether you obtain the Student Visitor Visa or the Tier 4 Student Visa, will be valid only 7 days before your course begins and will end 7 days after the program. If you plan on arriving in the UK before your visa start date, you will need to enter as a general

visitor (e.g. tourist), then leave the UK before your program begins to go to another country (NOT Ireland), in order to re-enter the UK as a student. You should provide proof (travel itinerary) that you will be leaving the UK before you need to re-enter as a student. UCEAP recommends arriving on the official EAP start date if you are a short-term student.

Year-long students: Your visa will be valid for up to 1 month before your course begins through 2 months after the program ends.

Can I work, intern, or do volunteer work while I am in the UK?

Students must have a Tier 4 Student Visa to work, intern, or do volunteer work. Only students with a CAS number can apply for the Tier 4 Student Visa.

How do I get a visa for two back-to-back EAP programs in the UK?

Summer plus UC Center London Fall or Fall Immersion: Present admission letters from both host universities plus financial proof to cover both programs, and obtain a Student Visitor Visa upon arrival in the UK (if both programs total six months or less).

Summer plus Year Immersion: If possible, obtain a Tier 4 Student Visa before departure for the Year program, then obtain a Student Visitor Visa upon arrival for the Summer program.

This method may not be possible because you cannot apply for the Tier 4 Student Visa more than three months before the start of the Year program and also, you may not yet have received the CAS number you need from the host university. If you find that you must depart for the Summer program before you have received a Tier 4 Student Visa for the Year program, first ask Worldbridge what you should do. If the response from Worldbridge is not feasible at that time, ask your host university International Office. Each host university has a visa specialist on-site who most likely will be able to instruct you exactly as to what you should do.

UC Center London Fall to UK Spring Immersion: Before you submit the two online UCEAP applications for these two programs, be sure to check the calendars for each. Some UK Spring programs begin very early in January.

It is not possible to extend, renew, or receive two consecutive Student Visitor Visas. Because you will have a Student Visitor Visa for the UC Center London Fall program, you will need to obtain the Tier 4 Student Visa to study in a UK Spring Immersion program. You must return to the US during Winter break to apply for a Tier 4 Student Visa.

The Tier 4 Student Visa application is time consuming, involving a Biometrics appointment, and mail to and from the British Consulate in New York. You **MUST** pay for expedited service or you will not receive the Student Visa in time to return to the UK.

At the time of application to the UK Spring program, you must specify on your host university application that you require a CAS number (necessary for the Tier 4 Student Visa application). The host university will not automatically issue a CAS number for a Spring student, so you must request it specifically.

Fall Immersion Extension to Year Immersion:

(a) If you received a Student Visitor Visa upon arrival, you are required to return to the U.S. during winter break to apply for a Tier 4 Student Visa. The British Home Office has stated that students with a Student Visitor Visa cannot receive a second Student Visitor Visa upon or after arrival.

(b) If you have a Tier 4 Student Visa, you can either return to the U.S. to apply for a second Tier 4 Student Visa or you can apply to the British Home Office in London. (Students in Scotland can apply to the Home Office in Glasgow.) However, this method will cost at least \$570 to apply by

mail and at least \$1,000 to apply in person. In addition to the high cost, applying by mail requires you to submit your passport to the Home Office for several weeks, which means you cannot travel out of the country.

Warning: Do NOT give false information to the UK Consulate before departure from the US or to an Immigration officer upon arrival in the UK. You are a student, and your program is for a specific period of time, as noted in the admission letter or CAS number document from a British university. You do not want to be given the wrong visa or locked into a holding cell at the airport or returned involuntarily to the US. The wrong visa will prevent registration for courses at your host university. All these things have happened to EAP students who deliberately gave wrong information (for various personal reasons) to an Immigration officer upon arrival.