UNITED KINGDOM ENTRY CLEARANCE (VISA) Instructions

For UK FALL, YEAR, and SPRING programs only
(There are separate instructions elsewhere for Summer, Global Edge, and Multi-City programs)

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 Visas and Immigration (UKVI). The UKVI 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.

ALL STUDENTS: Every time you enter or re-enter the UK, regardless of visa type, you must have at hand in your carry-on luggage any documents used to obtain your visa, as Immigration officers may ask to see the documents. Also keep the contact information for your EAP Study Center in the UK and for your host university (the international office) with your documents.

Do NOT travel through Ireland on your way to the UK. Doing so will prevent you from obtaining your Student Visitor Visa upon arrival or activating your Tier 4 Student Visa, thus making your stay in the UK illegal. More information on this travel restriction can be found in the UCEAP Program Guide.

NON-US CITIZENS: GO TO THE LAST TWO PAGES OF THIS DOCUMENT

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.

Sotheby’s Institute of Art/without Internship and UC Center London Fall/without Internship students must obtain the Student Visitor Visa upon arrival in the UK.

Year Immersion, Sotheby’s Institute of Art/with Internship, and UC Center London Fall/with Internship students must 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, it is granted only for your specific 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)**

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.

After gathering the original documents listed below, 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. Fall and Spring students should mention they are a short-term (<6 months) student. Immersion students should explain they are “exchange” students.

Documents needed:

1. Passport
2. UK Host University Acceptance Letter
3. Proof that you will depart the UK before your Student Visitor Visa expires
   a. Flight/other travel itinerary or ticket.
4. Evidence of Financial Support

Proof that you have enough funds to cover your expenses while in the UK, according to the UKVI 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 UKVI has estimated the minimum amount for maintenance to be £1265/month if studying in London and £1015/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](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 $XXX,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 UKVI 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.

d. Bank statements for the prior six-month period (no dollar amount required). This is a new UKVI option which UCEAP does not recommend.

5. Official UC Transcript (does NOT need to be in a sealed envelope)

*Program-specific Information*

**UC Center London Fall students without Internship:** 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 (£1265 x 4 months= £5060, then subtract the accommodation fees (up to a maximum of £1265) from £5060 for the remaining amount).

**Sotheby’s Institute of Art students without Internship:** Your acceptance letter from Sotheby’s Institute will state your course fees are paid through the University of California to Sotheby’s Institute. Because you arrange and pay for your own accommodation, you would show proof that you had already done so if you made any payments before departure. Proof would be a hard copy receipt (a printed email is fine). You would then be able to subtract that amount (up to a maximum of £1265) from the maintenance amount you must prove.

**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; but you must prove that you have enough money to cover your “maintenance fees” which include your accommodation and other living expenses. Because you arrange and pay for your own accommodation, you would show proof that you had already done so if you made any payments before departure. Proof would be a hard copy receipt (a printed email is fine). You would then be able to subtract that amount (up to a maximum of £1265) from the maintenance amount you must prove.
Instructions for Tier 4 Student Visa

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 (submit by mail)

How long will it take to process?
You cannot apply more than 3 months before your program begins; allow at least 4-6 weeks for the application process; starting from Step #3 above. The UK 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 the required supporting documents and your passport to the UK Consulate within 2 weeks (10 business days).

How much does it cost?
As of January 2014, the visa application fee is approximately £328 (about $480 US). 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 UKVI 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 UKVI 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, tuition/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 UKVI has stated that you do not need to submit all the supporting documents listed below unless the UKVI asks for them after you have submitted the online application. Obtaining the documents takes time and planning. The UKVI usually does not ask for the documents, but there is no guarantee.

**Step #1 Online application:** [www.visa4uk.fco.gov.uk](http://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 7 days. If you do not return to complete the application within 7 days it will be deleted.

**Expedited visa processing:** If you apply one month or less before your departure, you must pay extra for expedited (“rush”) processing. See [here](#) for information on the priority service, costing approximately $170. Payment must be made online BEFORE submitting the online application.

Notes to reference while completing the online application:
- NEW as of April 2015: there will be instructions to make an online payment for an Immigration Health Surcharge via an IHS portal. The surcharge is 150 GBP for Year or 75 GBP for Short-term; it will allow students to access the free National Health Service (NHS) while in the UK so it is a valuable benefit. The visa application will not be processed if this surcharge is not paid.
- Refer to the Sample below (even if the application appears different; it is revised intermittently but usually the questions are the same):
  a. [Sample for UK Fall/Year/Spring students EXCEPT UC Center London Fall w/Internship students](#)
  b. [Sample for UC London Fall Internship students](#)
- 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 you to schedule a biometrics appointment in the US to have a digital photograph and fingerscans taken. The online application FIRST has you choose a site in the UK to pick up a Biometric Residence Permit. (You have 10 days after arrival in the UK to pick up the Permit.) SECOND the online application has you choose the site and date/time of your actual biometrics appointment in the US. The online application will suggest a location nearest the address that you provided earlier in the application. However, you can choose any other location if the suggested one is not
convenient or does not have a date/time open that is right for you. Make sure you have your biometrics appointment confirmation stamped to show 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.

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)

3. Official UC Transcript (does NOT need to be in a sealed envelope) (not required unless requested)

4. Evidence of Financial Support (not required unless requested)
   Proof that you have enough funds to cover your expenses while in the UK, according to the UKVI formula for “maintenance” funds. Maintenance includes both accommodation (housing) fees and day-to-day living expenses.
   The UKVI has estimated the minimum amount for maintenance to be £1265/month if studying in London and £1015/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](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 UK VI 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.

e. Bank statements for the prior six-month period (no dollar amount required). This is a new UKVI option which UCEAP does not recommend.

**Immersion and LSE Year 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:**

- For the academic year (9 months) at King’s College London, you would need to prove £11385 (9 months x £1265) = £11385
- For the Fall term (3.5 months) at Glasgow, you would need to prove £4060 (rounded up to 4 months x £1015) = £4060

5. Stamped confirmation from your Biometrics appointment (required)
6. 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)
7. Two passport-style photographs (required)
8. A self-addressed and pre-paid envelope (required): The British Consulate-General will use this envelope to return your passport and any relevant documents, so you should purchase a trackable service; you may choose the level of service (priority, expedited, next-day, etc.) depending on how quickly you need your visa.

Within 10 business days of your Biometrics appointment, submit all supporting documents to:

British Consulate-General
845 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022

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.
When the consulate makes a decision about your visa application they will email the decision. When you receive your passport with visa, it is very important to check that all information is correct. Check both the start date and the end date.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

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

You cannot call the Consulate directly about visa questions. Access the international enquiry service [https://ukvi-international.faq-help.com/](https://ukvi-international.faq-help.com/) to ask questions if necessary about your visa application process. The service is provided by Hinduja Global Solutions (HGS) working in partnership with UK Visas and Immigration. HGS can be contacted via email, telephone, or webchat. Contact by e-mail is free; speaking directly to an advisor costs £1.37 per minute on top of the cost of the call; and a ten-minute webchat will cost £4. Contact by telephone within the United States is 1-888-683-9699, 7:00am - 4:00pm EDT (4:00am -1:00pm Pacific time). HGS staff do not play any part in, or influence the outcome of visa applications.

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

All students participating on a **UK Immersion program** are exchange students. This means that you do not 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 that is given to each student record. Your host university enters your student information and your program information into a UKVI 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 CAS number to put on your visa application so the UK Consulate can verify your student status.

**How long is my visa valid?**

**Short-term students** (students studying 6 months or less): The Student Visitor Visa **upon arrival** will be valid for six months from date of entry to the UK. The Student Visitor Visa **before departure** may or may not be valid for six months from the date of arrival you chose to enter into the online UKVI application – check the end date when you receive your visa.

**Year-long students**: Your visa will be valid for up to 1 month before your course begins through 2 months after the program ends. [NEW as of April 2015: You must obtain a Residence Permit at a designated Post Office within ten days after arrival.]

**US citizens**: 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 or ticket) 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.

**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?

**UC Center London Fall/without Internship Plus 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.

**Sotheby’s Institute of Art/with Internship or UC Center London Fall/with Internship Plus UK Spring Immersion:** You will already have a Tier 4 Student Visa for the Internship so you can (1) extend the Tier 4 Student Visa from within the UK; (2) return to the US during Winter break to obtain another Tier 4 Student Visa; or (3) depart the UK, then re-enter the UK, and obtain the Student Visitor Visa upon arrival.

**Program Extension of Fall Immersion 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.

**Instructions for Non-US citizens:**
See this UKVI 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 US citizens). Please do not contact UCEAP to ask if there are additional requirements or restrictions for your country of citizenship; UKVI policies can change frequently and UCEAP can monitor only the requirements for US citizens.

The “tool” linked above may state that “you do not need a visa if you will be coming to the UK to study a course lasting up to 6 months.” THIS IS MISLEADING. All students need to obtain an “entry clearance” into the UK, also known as a “visa.”

-All Year students need to obtain the Tier 4 Student Visa.
-All Fall or Spring Immersion students need to obtain either the Tier 4 Student Visa or the Student Visitor Visa.
-All Sotheby’s Institute of Art/with Internship and all UC Center London Fall/with Internship students need to obtain the Tier 4 Student Visa.
-All Sotheby’s Institute of Art/without Internship and all UC Center London Fall/without Internship students need to obtain the Student Visitor Visa.

**Tier 4 Student Visa:** Follow the instructions found in previous pages of this document.

Note that non-US citizens may be required by the host university or program provider to submit an English Language Certificate (no more than 2 years old, showing your English language level of B2 or above), before they will issue the CAS number needed for the Tier 4 Student Visa. The UKVI is no longer accepting ETS tests (TOEFL) as evidence of English language ability. You should take a test with an alternative provider from this official list: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-applying-for-uk-visa-approved-english-language-tests.

**Student Visitor Visa:** Follow the steps below.

1) Go to Student Visitor Visa - How to Apply to find out how to apply online. DO NOT click on “Apply Online.”

2) Click only on the Visa4UK link to start your application.

3) Complete the registration process.
   Log in to your account.
   Select “Apply for Myself” to start your application.
   Review the information then click “Continue”
   Complete Application Details:
   -Location: United States
   -Country of Nationality: [country that issued your passport/travel documents]
   Select Visa type:
   -Reason for Visit: Study
   -Visa Type: Study (Non Points-Based System)
   -Visa Sub Type: Study – Short-term student 6 months
   Visa Confirmation Questions:
   -Is the main purpose of your trip to visit/stay with a close family relative who is settled in the UK?: NO
   -Do you intend to stay for more than 11 months?: NO
-Do you have a valid Confirmation of Acceptance to Study (CAS) reference number?: NO
Click “Create Application”

4) You will be taken to a new page that shows your application status. Complete the rest of the application as directed.

5) Detailed instructions concerning the biometrics appointment, submission of documents, and priority service for expedited processing are found in the Tier 4 Student Visa section of this document. Even though that is a different visa, biometrics, documents, and priority service are the same.