

THE POINTS-BASED IMMIGRATION SYSTEM FOR STUDENTS – TIER 4 VISA APPLICATIONS

The points based immigration system (PBS) was introduced on 31st March 2009 and various changes have been introduced since this date. These pages aims to identify some of the things you need to think about in preparation for making an application under Tier 4 (General) of the points based immigration system.

There are two different types of Tier 4 (General) application, depending on where you are applying:

- **Entry clearance** - This means applying in your home country, also known as a "visa application".
- **Leave to remain** - This means applying in the UK, sometimes called a "visa extension"

Can I apply switch to the Tier 4 (General) visa without leaving the UK?

You can switch into Tier 4 (General) without leaving the UK if you have, or were last given, permission to stay in one of the following categories:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tier 1 (Post-study work) • Tier 2 (General) • Tier 2 (Intra company transfer) • Tier 2 (Minister of religion) • Tier 4 (Child) • prospective student • student (under the rules in place before 31 March 2009) • student re-sitting an examination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student nurse • students writing up a thesis • student union sabbatical officer • work permit holder • postgraduate doctor or dentist • Science and Engineering Graduates Scheme • International Graduates Scheme • Fresh Talent: Working in Scotland Scheme
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If you are currently in the UK in any other immigration category, including student visitor, you must leave the UK and apply for a Tier 4 (General) visa from your country of residence.

Points-based assessment

To successfully obtain a tier 4 visa, students must meet the full requirement of the Immigration Rules and also have 40 points in total as awarded below:

- 30 points will be issued for having a **CAS** from a licensed sponsor (Writtle College is a licensed sponsor with Highly Trusted Sponsor Status); **and**
- 10 points if you can show you have enough finances to cover your fees and monthly living expenses (known as **maintenance**).

What is a CAS?

A CAS (Confirmation of Acceptance of Studies) has replaced the unconditional offer letter; this is now the only route to gaining a tier 4 student visa. It is a unique 14 digit alphanumeric reference number, not a paper document.

Your CAS will not be issued until you have met all the conditions of your offer (if applicable) and we receive your deposit or Government sponsorship letter. The deadline is 1st August to allow good time for your visa formalities.

Writtle College will send you a 'CAS statement' by email. The CAS statement itself is not required for your Tier 4 application, but it gives you a lot of information that you will need to complete the entry clearance application form. You must check this carefully as any differences between the information we have given UKBA and what you provide on the application form could mean that your application is refused.

What is a licensed sponsor?

If you are able to meet all the academic requirements Writtle College will become your educational sponsor while you are in the UK. Your sponsor is responsible for you, and must tell the UK Border Agency (UKBA) if you do not arrive for the start of your course, withdraw from your course, defer or suspend your studies, or if you do not attend for significant periods of time. Writtle College has achieved Highly Trusted Sponsor Status.

How much money do I need to meet the 'Maintenance' requirement?

Before you can apply for your visa, you will need to show that you have a fixed amount of money in a bank account in your name. There are two levels of maintenance. One is for students studying 'inside London' and the other is for student studying 'outside London'. Students applying for visas to study at Writtle College will need a lower amount of maintenance as the college is 'outside London'.

Length of course	Maintenance (Finances) needed
If you are making an initial application from inside or outside the UK for a course of longer than 9 months (e.g. Undergraduate degree/ Postgraduate Masters)	First Year of Course Fees plus £600 per month of the course up to a maximum of 9 months. (Course Fee + £5400)
If you are making an initial application from inside or outside the UK for a course less than 9 months e.g. Post Graduate Certificate/ Diploma	Course Fees plus £600 for each month of the course
If you are already studying on a course and need to renew your visa from inside or outside the UK, or you have completed a course within the last four months which was longer than 6 months a lower maintenance fee applies.	
If you are renewing a visa for a course longer than 9 months.	One year's course fees + £600 per month for a maximum of 2 months (one year's course fee + £1200)
If you are renewing a visa for a course less than 9 months	Full course fee + £600 per month for a maximum of 2 months (Course Fee + £1200)

"Low Risk Nationals"

From 4th July 2011 low risk nationals studying with a Highly Trusted Sponsor are not required to provide evidence of their funds. However, they still have to meet the immigration requirements relating to funds and be able to provide evidence if the UKBA asks them for it. It may be good practice for low risk nationals to have the evidence at hand in case it is requested as failure to provide the evidence would result in delayed application process or a refusal. Please refer to 'Appendix A'.

More information on maintenance requirements can be found at:
www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk?studyingintheuk/adult-students/money/

You must be able to show using original bank statements that you have held the money in an account in your name for at least 28 days and the end of that 28 day period can not be more than one month before the date of the application. If you do not comply with these two rules then the visa application will be refused. If you are using overseas currency you are expected to write the balance in pounds sterling. Please use the official exchange rate on OANDA website, which can be found at www.oanda.com/convert/clasic

Dependants

Since July 2011 the rules have changed on bringing dependants to the UK. Students can only have family with them in the UK only if they fall into one of the following categories.

- They are taking a course that is at least 12 months that leads to a qualification at NQF level 7 – Masters Level.
- They are a government sponsored student taking a course at any level that is longer than 6 months duration.

Please Note:

If you want to bring your dependants with you, you will need to show that you have a further £400 a month for each dependent that you bring with you up to a maximum of 9 months. (£400 is the sum per month for dependents of Students studying outside of London).

You will need to complete a separate form for each dependant and pay an additional fee. The dependant's application forms should be placed in the same envelope if they are applying at the same time as the main applicant.

How long can I apply to stay in the UK?

If you are studying at degree level or above, you can stay for the full duration of your course, up to four years. If your course will be longer than four years, you will have to apply for an extension from the UKBA to finish your course.

What documents do I need to apply?

- **Applying within the UK** – The policy guidance and application form for both student and their dependents can be downloaded from the UKBA website: <http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/studyingintheuk/adult-students/>
- **Applying from outside the UK** – Entry clearance application forms VAF9 and Appendix 8 for General students and VAF 10 for dependents can be downloaded from UK Visas website: www.ukvisas.gov.uk/en/howtoapply/vafs/

You will need to fill in the application form, pay your fee and include:

- A current passport or travel document
- A police registration certificate (if you are required to have one).
- 2 Passport Photographs (please see the photo guidance on the UKBA website at: <http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/studyingintheuk/adult-students/>)
- A CAS from a licensed sponsor
- Documents to show you have the right finances (maintenance available)
- Documents used by your sponsor when they accepted you onto the course including proof of English language if required.
- Your ID card if you have one and are applying from within the UK
- Your biometric details if you are applying from outside the UK

How much will it cost?

Visa applications made outside the UK	£255
Visa applications made inside the UK	£386 Postal £702 Public Enquiry Office (PEO)

Please Note: Any dependant's will have to pay an additional fee.

English Language Assessment (All students, new and continuing)

All students coming to study a course at **NQF level 6 (Degree level or above)** with a CAS assigned after 24/04/11 must be assessed at level B2 equivalent to IELTS 5.5 in all 4 components of English - reading, writing, listening & speaking. Writtle College can choose their own method of assessment and must indicate on the CAS that B2 level has been achieved. The student does not need to include any evidence with the T4 application form.

All students coming to study on a course which is **below NQF 6 (below degree level)** with a CAS assigned after 24/04/11 must be assessed at level B1 equivalent to IELTS 4.0 in all 4 components of English reading, writing, listening & speaking. The English language ability must be assessed using a secure English Language Test (e.g. IELTS) and the student must include the SELT certificate with their application. Writtle College must indicate on the CAS that the student has been assessed at Level B1 and which SELT method used.

NB. These do not replace the levels required by Writtle College's admission policy which can be significantly higher.

Can I work during my studies?

The number of hours you are allowed to work will depend on the level of the course you are studying.

- If you are studying at degree level and above you may work part time up to a maximum of 20 hours during term time and any number of hours during the vacation period. Term time means when you have timetabled study.
- If you are studying below degree level you may work part time up to a maximum of 10 hours during term time and any number of hours during the vacation period.
- You may work with no restrictions once your course is complete until your immigration permission expires as this is regarded as holiday time.
- You cannot do any work or work placement (even if it is unpaid) if you have 'no work' in your passport.

Advice for student applicants

Think very carefully before choosing your course. If you apply for a course using a CAS provided by Writtle College your visa will be issued to study at Writtle College only. If you decide to move to another college or university after you arrive in the UK, you will have to make a fresh application under Tier 4 to study at another college or university. Depending on the sponsor status you may not be able to start study at the new college or university until the new visa has been issued and this can take months at peak times.

Changing Institutions

Since 21/04/11 all Tier 4 students who applied for their visa before 5th October 2009 who wish to change institutions must apply in order to change sponsor. An email is no longer sufficient. Applications must be made on Form T4 (PTS) and pay a fee of £160. You can start the new course before the decision is made. All students wishing to change institutions with a T4 visa granted after 5th October 2009 will need to make a fresh T4 application and receive the visa before you can start studying unless their new sponsor is a Highly Trusted Sponsor. If the new sponsor has Highly Trusted Status you can start your studies whilst awaiting the outcome of the visa application.

Applying for your visa

- The date you apply for entry clearance must be in good time before your travel to the UK but no more than three months before the start date of your course and no later than six months after your CAS was issued.
- If you are applying for a visa extension you must apply before your current immigration permission ends. If you do not apply before then, you lose any rights of appeal against a refusal and you become an overstayer, which is a criminal offence. If you become an overstayer, any future immigration applications that you make may be affected.

- You will need to show/send the original documents which Writtle College used to issue you a visa letter when you make an initial visa application for your new course whether you are applying from inside or outside the UK.
- Do not allow an agent to send an application for you unless you have seen everything written on it and all documents that are enclosed. If the agent includes any false statements or documents, it could lead to you being barred from coming to the UK for 10 years.
- Keep all the letters and any documents that you receive from the UK immigration authorities on any applications you make to them. You might need some of the details from them when you fill in an immigration application form in the future.

When you are on your course

- Protect your Immigration Status by following the tips in the UKCISA article produced for International Students http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/student/info_sheets/protect_t4_status.php
- Keep good attendance on your course – unauthorised absences will be reported to the UKBA.
- Do not interrupt or defer your studies, become a part-time student or change course, college or university without talking to the International Student Adviser about how this could affect your immigration status.
- Do not work more than the hours permitted by your visa.

Your money

It could be difficult for you to produce the evidence that you may need for future immigration applications if you do not use a UK bank account whilst you are in the UK. You are advised to open a UK bank account in your own name rather than using a bank in your own country. Use the account regularly so that it shows money you are receiving as well as the money you are spending on your living costs. Do not use an internet only account, as this makes it difficult to provide the right evidence.

Your Passport

- Your passport is a valuable document – keep it somewhere safe. Take photocopies of all the pages of all the passports you use when you come to (or stay) in the UK. The only pages you do not need to photocopy are the blank ones. Keep the photo copies up to date, each time more stamps or stickers are added.
- If you are issued with a UK identity card, take a photocopy of both sides.
- When a passport expires keep it (unless your country requires you to give it back). You may be asked for it in connection with a future immigration application.
- If your passport has been marked with an instruction to register with the police, make sure that you do this, (Talk to the International Student Adviser, if you don't know what to do or where to go).
- If your passport is stolen, report this to the police (and take a note of where you reported it, which police station you reported it to and any reference number they gave you). Keep hold of any letters or documents the police give to you.

Further reading and information

- The United Kingdom Council for International student Affairs at: <http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/student/immigration.php>
- In particular please read: http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/student/info_sheets/protect_t4_status.php
- Also United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA) at: <http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/studyingintheuk/>
- For further enquiries relating specifically to applying under Tier 4 to study at Writtle College or extending your stay in the UK as a Tier 4 Student please contact the International Student Adviser (Dawn Taylor) based in International Admissions within the Registry Department. Email: dawn.taylor@writtle.a.c.uk Tel: 01245 424200 ext. 25646

Appendix A - “Low Risk Nationals”

Tier 4 Students who qualify for UKBA differentiation arrangements because they are considered to be “low risk” will normally be required to provide fewer evidential documents. Notwithstanding the differentiation arrangements, the UK Border Agency reserves the right to request the full range of documents from Tier 4 Students in all cases.

A Tier 4 Student qualifies for UKBA differentiation arrangements if he/she:

- is sponsored by a Highly Trusted Sponsor; and
- is applying for entry clearance in his/her country of nationality or for leave to remain in the UK; and
- is a national of:
 - Argentina
 - Australia
 - Brunei
 - Canada
 - Chile
 - Croatia
 - Hong Kong
 - Japan
 - New Zealand
 - Singapore
 - South Korea
 - Taiwan (those who hold a passport issued by Taiwan that includes the number of the identification card issued by the competent authority in Taiwan in it)
 - Trinidad and Tobago
 - United States of America or is
 - a British National Overseas

Writtle College and UKBA will confirm the Tier 4 student’s nationality using his/her passport.

The list of low risk nationalities will normally be reviewed on an annual basis.

Where an applicant is a dual national, and only one of their nationalities is listed above, he will be able to apply using the different documentary requirements that apply to these nationals, provided he is applying either for entry clearance in his country of nationality listed above or for leave to remain in the UK.