

TIER 4 (GENERAL) VISA APPLICATIONS

As a non-EEA student you will need a visa to study at Writtle College. The points based immigration system (PBS) was introduced in March 2009 and various changes have been announced since this date, the latest of which came into force on 6th April 2012. The Tier 4 (General) category is for adult students who want to come to or remain in the UK for their post-16 education. These pages aim to identify some of the things you need to think about in preparation for making an application.

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Visa terminology

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.

Basic application requirements

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** which you get for studying a course at an acceptable level with an approved education provider (also known as a licenced sponsor) and for having satisfactory English language skills;**and**
- 10 points if you can show you have enough finances to cover your fees and monthly living expenses (known as **maintenance**).

Licensed sponsor

If you are able to meet all the requirements of your offer, Writtle College will become your educational licensed sponsor while you are in the UK. We have been awarded Highly Trusted Sponsor (HTS) Status which recognises our good history of working with international students and complying with the immigration rules. Our visa license number is 4TJPFDP34. It is also important to note that Writtle College is classified as a Higher Education Institution (HEI).

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 classes.

Confirmation of acceptance of studies (CAS)

The CAS 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 visa 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.

Visa fees

	Fee if you are applying by post in the UK	Fee if you are applying in person inside the UK	Fee if you are applying outside the UK
Main applicant	£394	£716	£289
Partner or child aged under 18 (if they apply at the same time)	£197	£358	£289

Applying within the UK

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 over-stayer, which is a criminal offence. If you become an over-stayer, any future immigration applications may be affected.

The appropriate forms and guidance can be downloaded from:

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/studying/adult-students/applying-inside-uk/>

As part of your application under Tier 4 (General), you will be issued a **biometric residence permit**. Your fingerprints and facial image (known as 'biometric information') will be stored on this permit. UKBA will send you a biometric notification letter after they have received your application. You should then attend one of the post offices across the UK who will gather this information from you.

The Post Office has prepared a website page to help you locate your nearest participating branch.

<http://www.postoffice.co.uk/counter-services/passport-identity/biometric-enrolment-foreign-nationals/branches>

Visa extensions will only be granted for students who can show progression. This means that each successive application should be for a course at an increasingly higher level. E.g. progressing from a Level 3 Qualification to a Bachelors Degree OR from a Bachelor's Degree to a Master's Degree.

Applying from outside the UK

If you successfully receive an offer to study at Writtle College you must return the acceptance forms, providing evidence that you have met any conditions (if applicable) and pay your deposit. You can then be issued with a CAS.

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 is issued.

Entry clearance application forms VAF9 and links to on-line application (if available) can be found:

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/studying/adult-students/apply-outside-uk/>

Information about the application process for UK visas in different countries and territories around the world can be found:

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/countries/>

Documents required

In addition to the application form and payment of your fee you will also be expected to provide various documents:

- Evidence required to get your CAS (eg. Academic transcripts, and proof of English proficiency if required)
- Evidence of your Money [see section below]
- Passport and photographs.

Documents must be original, on official stationery and issued by an authorised officer of the organisation.

If one of your documents is not in English, you must provide the original and a fully certified translation by a professional translator or translation company.

Do not allow an agent or anyone else to send an application for you unless you have seen everything written on it and all documents that are enclosed. Inclusion of false statements or documents could lead to you being barred from coming to the UK for 10 years.

English language proficiency

If you are applying to study a course at or above NQF 6 (degree level) you must be proficient in English to a minimum of CEFR B2. Writtle College can assess your English language ability using information you submitted as part of the admissions process. You do not need to include language certificates with your visa application.

If you are applying to study a course at a lower level, we must use an approved English language test to confirm your English language ability is CEFR B1 or above. You must include your test certificate with your application.

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

	IELTS [validity 2 years]	TOEFL iBT [validity 2 years]	PTE [validity 2 years]
Further Education [NQF level 3]	Overall score 5.5 Minimum 5.0 in all elements	Overall 71 With minimum * Reading 18 * Listening 13 * Speaking 19 * Writing 17	Overall 43 Minimum 43 in all elements
Foundation Degree / Diploma or Certificate of Higher Education [NQF level 4 & 5]	Overall score 5.5 Minimum 5.0 in all elements	Overall 71 With minimum * Reading 18 * Listening 13 * Speaking 19 * Writing 17	Overall 43 Minimum 43 in all elements
Undergraduate [NQF Level 6]	Overall score 6.0 Minimum 5.5 in all elements	Overall 87 With minimum * Reading 21 * Listening 22 * Speaking 23 * Writing 21	Overall 59 Minimum 59 in all elements
Postgraduate [NQF Level 7]	Overall score 6.5 Minimum 5.5 in all elements	Overall 92 With minimum * Reading 21 * Listening 22 * Speaking 23 * Writing 21	Overall 62 Minimum 59 in all elements
<i>Writtle College also accepts various tests of English as alternatives to IELTS, TOEFL or PTE provided they appear on the new approved English tests sheet issued by UKBA.</i>			

Please check our website for more information <http://www.writtle.ac.uk/English-Language-Requirements>

Maintenance

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, this is known as maintenance. 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 £800 per month of the course up to a maximum of 9 months. (Course Fee + £7200)
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 £800 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 because you have 'established presence' in the UK	One year's course fees plus £800 per month of the course for a maximum of 2 months (course fee + £1600)

Your deposit monies and any other sum of money already paid towards tuition fees will be taken away from the total amount of money you will need to show. With regard to accommodation fees a maximum of £1000 will be taken into consideration when calculating the amount of maintenance you are required to show. This applies even if you have paid more than £1,000 in advance for accommodation. These values will be clearly stated on your CAS and should be checked carefully.

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. **Please do not apply for your visa if you cannot meet this requirement – your application will be refused.**

Low risk nationals studying with at a HTS 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 is advisable to have the evidence available 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:

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/studying/adult-students/evidence/money/>

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/classic

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. When you arrive 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.

<http://www.bba.org.uk/publications/article/international-students-opening-a-uk-bank-account>

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.

Application forms and guidance can be found at:

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/studying/adult-students/family/>

Please Note:

If you want to bring your dependants with you, you will need to show that you have a further £600 per month maintenance for each dependent that you bring with you up.

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.

Length of stay

A Tier 4 (General) student is allowed to spend no more than **3** years in the UK studying below UK Bachelors degree level. UKBA cannot approve new leave for a Tier 4 (General) student to study below UK Bachelors degree level, if they have already been studying below UK Bachelors degree level for three years.

In addition to the 3 years of permitted study below degree level for Tier 4 (General) students and any time spent in the Tier 4 (Child) category, the time that a Tier 4 student can spend studying at or above degree level will be limited to **5** years, except in very few circumstances, for example PhD students.

Leave will be granted based on the dates provided on your CAS.

Length of main course of study	Length of stay allowed
12 months or more	The full length of the course plus four months after the end of the course
At least six months but less than 12 months	The full length of the course plus two months after the end of the course

A course will be considered to be 12 months long if it lasts a full calendar year. For example, a course starting on 1 January 2012 and ending on 31 December 2012 will be considered to be 12 months long.

When you are on your course

- Protect your Immigration Status by following the guidance produced by UKCISA:
http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/student/info_sheets/protect_t4_status.php
- Keep good attendance on your course and comply with the attendance monitoring scheme operated by Writtle College. Unauthorised absences will be reported to the UKBA.
- Report any change of address to the College immediately.
- Do not interrupt or defer or interrupt your studies; 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.

Working during your studies

Most students in the UK have immigration permission which allows them to work during their studies. Getting a job while you study in the UK can improve your language skills and enhance your CV. Writtle College Careers Service may be able to assist you so please do visit them in the Student Services Area in the main building.

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.
- For more information please read:
http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/student/info_sheets/working_during_studies.php

Changing institutions

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 several months at peak times.

Since 21st April 2011 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.

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.

Your documents

- 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 are added.
- If you are issued with a Biometric Residency Permit (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.
- Please ensure that you keep all the letters and any documents that you receive from the UK immigration authorities. You might need some of the details from them when you fill in an immigration application form in the future.

Further reading and information

- UK Council for International Student Affairs
http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/student/info_sheets/immigration_uk.php
- UK Border Agency (UKBA)
<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/applicationforms/pbs/Tier4migrantguidance2.pdf>

For enquiries please contact us; international@writtle.ac.uk; Tel: +44 (0) 1245 424200 ext. 25646

Appendix A - 'Low risk' applicants

To be considered 'low risk', you must be sponsored by a Highly Trusted Sponsor, and you must be already in the UK or applying for a Tier 4 visa in your country of nationality.

Additionally, you must be a British national (overseas) or a national of one of the countries below:

- Argentina
- Australia
- Brunei
- Canada
- Chile
- Croatia
- Hong Kong
- Japan
- New Zealand
- Singapore
- South Korea
- Taiwan (if you hold a passport issued by Taiwan that includes the number of the identification card issued by the competent authority in Taiwan)
- Trinidad and Tobago
- USA

We and UKBA will confirm your nationality using your passport. The list of 'low risk' nationalities is reviewed annually.
