



Foundation for International Education

LONDON VISA GUIDE

You will need to apply for a visa if any of the following statements apply to you:

1. If you will be undertaking an unpaid internship, service learning, or volunteer placement as part of the programme.
2. If you will be studying in the UK for 6 months or more.

It is important to submit your visa application as soon as possible to allow for processing time. Processing times can vary and for this reason we urge you to complete all of the steps in this process as quickly as possible. You can check the visa processing times for the USA on this webpage:

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/countries/usa/?langname=UK%20English>

(You cannot start the application more than 3 months before the start date of your programme.)

If any documents are missing or incorrect, your application will be refused and you will have to go through the entire process again, including paying a second fee and biometric testing.

This document provides details on the process for obtaining your visa.

It is highly recommended you read the official guide for all Tier 4 students on the following website:

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/applicationforms/pbs/Tier4migrantguidance.pdf>

FIE will continue to keep abreast of any changes on immigration rules and inform students and coordinators alike accordingly. You as the student are ultimately responsible for visiting the official websites quoted in this document and adhering to the latest rules.

If you don't have a visa in time for your departure from the US, you will not be allowed to participate in an internship in London.

STEP 1 Complete Online Application & Payment and Arrange Biometric Appointment

The very first step has three parts that all occur at once:

- a) Completing and submitting your online visa application via the website below:

Website to make the application: <http://www.visa4uk.fco.gov.uk/ApplyNow.aspx>

From the lists select:

→ **PBS Tier 4 Student**

→ **Tier 4 (General) Student**

Refer to the following website for guidance on filling this out

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/applicationforms/visas/vaf9-guidance.pdf>

- b) Paying for the visa application – **Fee £289**
c) Arranging your biometric appointment, where your fingerprints will be taken (more on this in Step 5 below).

Upon completion, you must print out the whole application and a confirmation page with a barcode on it. This confirmation is taken to the biometrics test where the barcode is scanned so the fingerprints, etc. are added to the application details. The confirmation page is then stamped to show biometrics have been taken.

N.B: If your application is not saved, it will be deleted after 2 days. You will then have to start the application from the beginning. Once your application is saved, it will remain active for 7 days. Each time you log in and save the application, it will stay active for a further 7 days.

STEP 2 Receive CAS Statement Email from FIE

The Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) takes the form of a unique reference number which FIE generates using the UK Border Agency's (UKBA) online system.

The CAS reference number confirms that you are enrolled in a course in the UK at an educational institution, and therefore serves as the core piece of information you need to get approved for a student visa.

FIE will generate your CAS and send you an email called Your CAS Statement. This contains your CAS number and the information you need to complete the Appendix 8 form (see Step 3 below).

- The email will go directly to you, copying the coordinator at your school. You should check that all the personal information listed for you is correct. It will also include:
 - Your CAS number
 - The title of your course of study.
 - The method used to assess your application to the programme.
 - Your course fees
 - Whether we have received any of your course fees.
 - Whether we have received payment of your accommodation fees.
- If you do not receive your CAS statement email please contact your coordinator or studyabroad@fie.org.uk

STEP 3 Complete Appendix 8: Tier 4 (General) Student Self-Assessment Form

This form needs to be completed for course details and proof of funds. It is completed in paper copy and sent in with supporting documents (see Step 6 below). This section is unique to the Tier 4 General Student Visa application and is essential. Your responses must match the details sent to you by FIE, and **you therefore should not submit this form until you have received your CAS statement from us.**

You can print the form from the website below:

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/applicationforms/visas/vaf9-app81.pdf>

Please read the official guide for Tier 4 students before completing the form:

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/applicationforms/pbs/Tier4migrantguidance.pdf>

ABOUT THE FORM:

Note that you only need to complete Part 2 if you are under 18 years old.

You will need additional guidance on the following sections of this form. The guidance will be included in the "Your CAS Statement" email.

STEP 4 Begin collecting "Supporting Documents" for your visa application

The following documents may take longer to obtain so make sure you request these from the relevant officials ASAP.

Most students applying to FIE will qualify for special differentiation arrangements set out by the UK Border Agency. This means you will not have to provide certain supporting documents with your Tier 4 visa application.

In order to qualify for these arrangements you must meet **all** of the following criteria:

- Be a national of one of the following countries: Argentina, Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Hong Kong, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Trinidad & Tobago, the United States of America or a British National Overseas; and
- Apply for your Tier 4 visa in your country of nationality or within the UK.

You will have to confirm on your Tier 4 application that you meet the academic and financial requirements for Tier 4. The UK Border Agency reserves the right to request the documents below at any point during the application process. If you cannot provide them your application will be rejected.

If you do NOT qualify for the differentiation arrangements, you will have to provide the following:

- a) An official original transcript (for independent applicants only i.e. if your home institution does not have a partnership with FIE).

b) Proof of Funds:

- A bank statement that supports your online application. The purpose of this statement is to prove that you have sufficient funds to cover your expenses while in the UK.
- The UK Border Agency requires you to have **at least £1,000** (about \$1,570 US Dollars) for every month that you will be in the UK – this is referred to as Maintenance Funds. For example for the Fall semester you will need £4,000 in your account for the 4 month semester.

If your programme includes a part of a month, the UK Border Agency will round the time up to the next month when calculating Maintenance Funds. For example, if your programme is eight weeks and four days, you are required to have Maintenance Funds for three months.

If you are living in FIE accommodation you can deduct up to £1,000 of your accommodation fees against the required maintenance funds. However, you will still need to show you hold the remainder in a bank account. For example, if your required maintenance funds total £4,000, you will need to submit financial evidence to show you have £3,000 available as funds.

- **The funds must have been in your account for at least 28 days prior to your application being made. The funds cannot drop below the required amount during these 28 days.**
- Bank statements or letters should be **originals, in your name** and should be **dated not more than one month before you paid your fee as part of your online visa application**. If you use a print out of an electronic statement, you must ensure that the bank stamps each and every page.
- You can use bank statements in your parents' name. If parent(s)/guardian(s) are providing the proof of funds, they must give the student documentation to submit with the visa application. This includes:
 - i. Original or notarised copy of the document confirming the relationship (birth certificate, certificate of adoption, or court document confirming guardian status)
AND
 - ii. Original signed and dated letter from the parent(s)/guardian(s), confirming the relationship to the student applicant, the funds available, and they have given their consent to the student using the funds to study in the UK.
- The UK Border Agency is creating a list of financial institutions which they consider do not verify financial information to their satisfaction. Students will receive no points for maintenance funds if they submit documents showing that their funds are held in one of these financial institutions. You can find the list on this webpage:
<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/studying/financial-institutions/>

Full details of what counts as proof of funds are listed on pages 26 - 28 of the policy guidance:

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/applicationforms/pbs/Tier4migrantguidance.pdf>

In addition, all students who are not nationals of a majority English speaking country, or have not completed the equivalent of a UK bachelor's degree in a majority English speaking country will have to submit an original certificate of an English language test approved by the UK Border Agency.

A list of the approved English language tests can be found here:

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/applicationforms/new-approved-english-tests.pdf>

This English language requirement applies regardless of whether you qualify under the differentiation agreements listed above.

STEP 5 Attend Biometric Appointment

The biometric appointment is where your fingerprints and a photo will be taken. These are security measures for the UK that all visa candidates must fulfil.

YOU MUST SUBMIT YOUR VISA APPLICATION WITHIN 2 WEEKS OF COMPLETING YOUR BIOMETRIC APPOINTMENT

You will have to physically travel to the biometric centre in person to complete this step. You will select the date, time and location of your appointment when you apply for your visa online:

- You will select the state that you live in, and from there you will automatically be given location options.
- Once you choose the location you prefer you will then choose an available date and time for your appointment. You will want to write this information down.

You will be notified by FIE and/or your home institution when you will receive your CAS statement (see Step 2 above). We strongly recommend that you book your biometric appointment for a date after you will receive your CAS statement.

- Locations: Fortunately there are many biometric appointment centres around the country. A list can be seen via the following link, however remember that you will select your appointment location during the online visa application process. Enter your zip code towards the bottom of this page to see where the centres are:
https://egov.uscis.gov/crisgwi/go?action=offices.type&OfficeLocator.office_type=ASC
- You will need to bring with you your passport and a printout of the whole online application including the confirmation page with a barcode on it.

DO NOT FORGET YOUR PASSPORT & APPLICATION PRINTOUT

If you forget to bring either of these things to your appointment, you will have to start the entire process over again by submitting a new online application and paying the application fee again.

STEP 6 Submit application materials to British Consulate

Once you have completed and paid for your online application, attended your biometric appointment and received CAS statement email from FIE, the next step is for you to submit your application materials to the British Consulate.

What to Submit:

1. **Passport** --- IMPORTANT --- Your passport must be submitted. Many students forget to include the passport but it is important to remember this because your visa will actually be pasted *into your passport*.
2. **Photo:** One recent (less than 6 months old) passport-sized (45mm x 35mm), colour photograph of yourself. This should be:
 - a) taken against a light-coloured background
 - b) clear and of good quality, and not framed or backed
 - c) printed on normal photographic paper, and
 - d) full face and without sunglasses, hat or other head covering unless you wear this for cultural or religious reasons (but the face must not be covered).
3. Proof of funds e.g. **bank statement** (if required).
4. Evidence of government **sponsorship or financial aid** (if appropriate). If you are privately sponsored (for example, by a college in the UK) a letter from your sponsor giving details of how they will support you during your studies, and evidence that they can do so.
5. Official **transcript** (students applying directly to FIE rather than through their home institution only).
6. Original certificate from an approved English language test (if required).
7. Stamped confirmation page from **biometric appointment**.
8. The printed version of your **online application form** showing online visa payment and return postage fees paid.
9. The printed version of your **Appendix 8: Tier 4 (General) Student Self-Assessment Form:**
<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/applicationforms/visas/vaf9-app81.pdf>

Where to Send:

Documents are sent to the British Consulate in New York. The address is given once the online application form is completed.

When to Submit:

Everything must be submitted within 2 weeks of completing your biometric appointment. You should send all your documentation as soon as you've completed your biometric appointment and collected supporting documents.

How to Submit:

There are three different services for visa application processing:

Regular Processing

- Additional UK service fee: \$0
- Processing time: 5-15+ business days
- Means of submission: applicant mails in documents
- You can still use an expediting agency to review documents prior to submission.

Priority Service

- Additional UK service fee: \$150 plus tax
- Processing time: typically 48 hours
- Means of submission: applicant mails in documents and Priority Processing receipt OR the expediting agency submits documents in person at consulate

Premium Processing

- Additional UK service fee: \$100 plus tax
- Processing time: typically same day as interview
- Means of submission: applicant has an in-person interview at the consulate
- You can still use an expediting agency to review documents prior to submission.

Further Information about the Priority and Premium Services can be found at:

https://www.visainfoservices.com/pages/Content.aspx?Tag=Services_PAGE

It is strongly recommended that you mail your documents using a registered service that gives you a tracking number. UPS, FedEx or USPS registered mail are recommended.

Applicants can also choose to have an expediting agency review their documents, no matter which processing service they want to use. It is important to reiterate that once an applicant has been refused a UK visa they can no longer expedite any other visa application to the UK. This makes the processing of reviewing the application prior to submission even more important.

Below are a few agencies that offer **expediting services** for a fee:

<http://www.abriggs.com/>

<http://www.globalvipservices.com/>

<http://visasasap.net/>

You must include ALL listed supporting documents as originals including your **passport**. Remember to make copies of everything before they are mailed.

STEP 7 Receive visa in the mail

The visa is a page pasted into the passport. That is why you are required to mail in your actual passport with your application.

The time it will take to receive your visa will vary and for this reason it is crucial to complete all of the steps above as quickly as possible.

You will only be able to travel into the UK from the start date on you issued visa. This is normally one week before the start of your programme.

When travelling you should make sure you carry a letter with you from your home university confirming that you are a student in the UK and giving details of your programme. Even though you will have a visa in your passport, UK airport officials do occasionally ask for additional proof.