

Applying for a Standard Visitor Visa for study in the UK

This guide is for students who need a Standard Visitor Visa to study a course of study at SOAS that is less than 6 months or you're studying on a longer course but need to repeat a period of study that is less than 6 months. It provides information on whether you need to apply before arriving in the UK or not, when to make your application, the documents you require and how to make your application. This guide should be read in conjunction with [Home Office Visit Guidance](#).

SOAS Student Advice Service endeavours to ensure that the information in this guide is accurate but please note that legislation is subject to change at short notice.

Non-visa nationals

If you're a non-visa national, you don't need to apply for your visa before travelling to the UK, instead you can apply to enter the UK as a Standard Visitor on arrival at the port of entry. To check if you can apply for a Standard Visitor visa on arrival, please use the [GOV.UK questionnaire](#).

In addition to requesting your visa on arrival, you will need to apply for an **Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA)** prior to travelling to the UK.

Arriving from 8 January 2025

From this date, non-European nationals will need to apply for an ETA before travelling to the UK. The ETA is not a visa and does not permit entry to the UK but will authorise you to travel to the UK.

Arriving from 2 April 2025

From this date, European nationals will need to apply for an ETA before travelling to the UK. The ETA is not a visa and does not permit entry to the UK but will authorise you to travel to the UK.

[Find out more](#) about the ETA and when you make your application.

If you request your visa on arrival, it will be for a single entry to the UK. If you leave the Common Travel Area (UK, Republic of Ireland and Crown Dependencies), you will need to request another Standard Visitor visa when you re-enter. You should carry all necessary supporting documents in your hand luggage.

You will need to produce all the documents outlined below to support your application to enter the UK as a Standard Visitor to the Border Force Officer when you arrive at the port of entry in the UK, unless you are eligible to use eGates.

Use of eGates

If you are an EU/EEA national or a national of Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea or the United States of America then you can use the [eGates](#) to enter the UK as a Standard Visitor for a period of 6 months. If you can use the eGate this means you will not receive a visa stamp in your passport. To use an eGate, your passport must have a biometric symbol on the cover. It's important that you keep some form of evidence of your date of arrival in the UK if you use the eGates such as an e-ticket or paper or electronic boarding pass. This will help you to remember the exact duration of your 6 months stay. This evidence is also required to complete your enrolment at SOAS.

Visa nationals - applying for Entry Clearance

If you're a visa national, you will need to apply for your 6-month Standard Visitor Visa before travelling to the UK (known as Entry Clearance). The application fee is £100. You cannot make an application more than 3 months in advance of your travel date. However, make sure you give yourself plenty of time to make your application and receive your visa. You can find out how long it takes to process a visa in your home country on the [UK Visas & Immigration \(UKVI\) website](#). Make sure you prepare all the evidence that you need as stated below. You must supply sufficient evidence to support your application. Decision making can be subjective so do not give them a reason to doubt the validity of your application

When you make your application, state when you wish the visa to start from (date you intend to enter the UK) otherwise they will start the visa from the date they issue the visa to you

Requirements for the application

You will need a current passport with a blank page for your visa. Your passport should be valid for the whole of your stay in the UK.

Below is a list of standard documents you are also likely to need to apply for your Standard Visitor Visa:

- Letter from SOAS - You should use your offer letter from SOAS confirming your course details, the dates you need to be in the UK and the course fees. The course must be less than 6 months in duration.
- If you are already enrolled but studying abroad and entering the UK for a short period as part of your course you should contact Registry or the Doctoral School (if studying a PhD) and ask them to provide a letter. This letter should confirm your enrolment and the periods you need to enter the UK for study or research.
- Finances, employment and insurance – You should prepare at least 3 months bank statements to show that you have funds to cover yourself whilst you are in the UK as well as the source of these funds as UKVI will assess where these funds came from e.g. employment, savings etc.

Whilst there are no specific requirements which state the amount of money you must show, you must be able to demonstrate that you have enough money to cover your course fees (where applicable) plus accommodation and living expenses. Using the Student maintenance figures as a guide only, it would be sensible to show that you have the equivalent of £1,334 per month (London rate) for the duration of your studies. If you will be staying with friends or family while in the UK to reduce your living costs then you can include evidence of this.

You may also want to provide a letter from your employer as well if applicable. If you have a scholarship make sure you obtain a letter from your provider confirming their sponsorship for the period you will be in the UK. It would also be a good idea to show you have medical/travel insurance to cover the period of your study.

- Your accommodation and travel details - UKVI may expect you to provide some evidence of where you will be staying whilst you are in the UK. This can be a letter from a friend or relative, a letter from an accommodation provider or a hotel booking.
- Other information - It would also be a good idea to prepare some information to show that you intend to leave the UK at the end of your period of study. This may be proof of employment, proof of

property or strong family links in your country. This sort of information is usually more important for countries which the UKVI consider higher risk and will be more suspicious about a student's motives for entering the UK.

For further information on supporting documents please see the [Home Office Visiting the UK guide to supporting documents](#).

How to start your application

You will need to make your application on-line using the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/standard-visitor/apply-standard-visitor-visa>

- Click on '**Apply now**' and select the language: You can read the questions in a different language, but your answers must be in English
- Check available biometric enrolment locations and confirm.
- Read the information provided and when ready, click '**START NOW**'
- Register an email to create an account.

Remember to use a reliable email address that you can check daily. Keep a note of your password somewhere safe. You will be sent a verification email asking you to verify your email address. You will need to do this before submitting your visa application.

Completing the application

It is important that the information you provide on your visa application is complete and accurate. If you need time to find, check and gather the information you need then you can pause your application and continue when you have all the information you need. Make sure you always log out of your account when you are not working on your application. You will be sent an email containing a link to resume your application.

The form will ask you to confirm the main reason for your visit to the UK and so you need to select the option '*Short-term study (up to 6 months), including recreational course*'.

The form will also ask you to enter the date you plan to arrive to the UK and the date you plan to leave. Please check your course dates carefully and remember that your visa can be granted for a maximum of 6 months so you must be able to enter the UK and complete your course before your visa expires. It is not possible to apply for an extension of your Standard Visitor visa or to make an application for immigration leave under any other immigration category.

Proving your identity, biometrics, and submitting supporting documents

Once you have completed and paid for your application online you need to book an appointment at a Visa Application Centre (VAC). If you are from a smaller country or territory that has limited access to UK embassies you may be expected to travel to a neighbouring country to complete the application, so please give yourself ample time to make your application.

At your visa appointment, you will need to:

- prove your identity with your passport
- have your fingerprints and photograph ('biometric information') taken

- you may need to submit the required documents or upload them to a UKVI partner website. You will be advised of the local arrangements in your country of application when completing the application online.

The VAC may keep your passport and documents while processing your application.

After applying

After you have submitted your documents and had your biometrics taken, they will process your application. Visa application processing times vary from country to country but [GOV.UK](#) states that it is currently taking up to 6 weeks. You may be able to pay for additional services to have your application processed more quickly depending on availability. They will return your documents to you with your new visa by post unless otherwise notified.

Arriving in the UK

Read the [guidance](#) to familiarise yourself with entering the UK border and what you need to do before travelling.

Visa conditions

As a Standard Visitor, you have following conditions:

- You cannot do a course of study that lasts longer than 6 months
- You cannot undertake paid or unpaid work for a UK company or as a self-employed person.
- You cannot remain in the UK for long periods of time through frequent visits
- You cannot do a work placement as part of your study. If this is a requirement of your course, you may be eligible to apply for Student visa entry clearance instead.
- you have no recourse to 'public funds'. 'Public funds' are defined in paragraph 6 of the Immigration Rules as a list of specific benefits available.
- You cannot extend your stay in the UK, or switch into any other immigration category while you are still in the UK as standard visitor unless a specific exemption applies.
- Student visitors are not permitted to bring family members to the UK as their 'dependants'.

For more information about what you can and cannot do with a Standard Visitor Visa, please [visit GOV.UK](#). If you are applying as Standard Visitor and you have a spouse, partner, child or other person who wants to come with you to the UK, they must apply to come to the UK as a Standard Visitor in their own right.

Further support or questions

If you after reading this guidance you need further advice, please email adviceservice@soas.ac.uk with your full name, nationality, the name of the country in which you are making your application and the course dates you will be studying.