



## Coronavirus (COVID-19) factsheet: visa holders and short-term residents in the UK

19 June 2020

Guidance on immigration provisions made by the Home Office for individuals affected by travel restrictions associated with coronavirus (COVID-19).

### Key lines

- The Home Office has [published guidance on GOV.UK](#) on immigration provisions for individuals affected by travel restrictions associated with coronavirus (COVID-19).

### Extending a visa

- If the individual already has leave in the UK and planned to remain and apply to extend their leave when it expired, they must continue to do this.
- No individual who is in the UK legally and whose visa expired, or is due to expire, between 24 January 2020 and 31 July, will be regarded as an overstayer or suffer any detriment in the future if they cannot leave the UK because of travel restrictions related to coronavirus.
- A visa will be extended to 31 July 2020 if an individual cannot leave the UK because of travel restrictions or self-isolation related to coronavirus.
- Individuals must [update their records with the Coronavirus Immigration Team \(CIT\)](#) if their visa is expiring and were not planning to stay in the UK. The Coronavirus Immigration Team will aim to reply to an individual's application within 5 working days.
- Once individuals whose leave expires between 24 January 2020 and 31 July 2020 have submitted the online e-form, their status in the UK is secure.
- Once an individual has requested an extension, they won't need to make another request if UKVI extends the visa further due to coronavirus. Their visa will be extended again automatically.
- Individuals are expected to take all reasonable steps to leave the UK before 31 July.

### Switching visas

- Until 31 July 2020 an individual can apply from the UK to switch to a long-term UK visa if their leave is expiring between 24 January 2020 and 31 July 2020. This includes applications where they would usually need to apply for a visa from their home country.



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- They will need to meet the requirements of the route they are applying for and pay the UK application fee.
- This includes those whose leave has already been automatically extended to 31 July 2020.
- They can apply online. The terms of their leave will remain the same until their application is decided.

## Completing their application

- Some UK Visa and Citizenship Application Centres (UKVCAS) have already reopened for existing customers. Customers can [check which UKVCAS centres are open](#).
- Service and Support Centres (SSCs) are offering a reduced number of appointments because of coronavirus. As more appointments are made available [UKVI will invite you, via email or post, to arrange an appointment](#).
- We have already contacted customers who have made an appointment to attend a UKVCAS or SSC to let them know their appointment has been postponed due to the centre being temporarily closed. Customers will now be contacted when they can book a new appointment.
- A customer's immigration status in the UK will not change as a result of them not being able to attend an appointment.

## English language testing centres in the UK

Some English Testing Centres are resuming services. For more information on how you can book your English Language Test, contact either:

- your test centre
- [Trinity College London](#)
- [International English Language Testing System \(IELTS\)](#)
- [LanguageCert website](#)

## If an individual applied for a Tier 4 visa and is waiting for a decision on an application

An individual can start their course or studies before a visa application has been decided if:

- an individual's sponsor is a Tier 4 sponsor
- an individual has been given a confirmation of acceptance for studies (CAS)
- the individual submitted an application before their current visa expired and show evidence to their sponsor of this



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- the course they start is the same as the one listed on their CAS
- the individual has a valid [Academic Technology Approval Scheme](#) (ATAS) certificate if required

If an individual's application is eventually rejected as invalid or refused the individual must stop their course or studies.

### **More information about the measures in place for students and their sponsors**

Read detailed guidance on the temporary measures in place for Tier 4 sponsors, their students and short-term students in response to coronavirus.

### **If an individual applied for a Tier 2 or 5 visa and is waiting for a decision on an application**

Individuals can start work before a visa application has been decided if:

- an individual has been assigned a Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS)
- an individual submitted an application before their current visa expired and show evidence to their sponsor of this
- the job they start is the same as the one listed on their CoS
- If an individual's application is eventually rejected as invalid or refused the sponsor will stop sponsoring them and individual must stop working for the sponsor.

### **NHS and frontline health workers**

- Some health workers and their families will get their [visas automatically extended](#) because of coronavirus.
- The extension will apply from the date an individual's visa is due to expire.
- If an individual's visa is due to expire after 1 October 2020, they will not get the free extension. An individual will need to extend their visa in the normal way.
- These changes will apply if an individual who:
  - works for the NHS or an independent health or care provider
  - has a visa expiring between 31 March and 1 October 2020.
  - works as a:
    - biochemist
    - biological scientist
    - dental practitioner
    - health professional
    - medical practitioner
    - medical radiographer



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- midwife
  - nurse
  - occupational therapist
  - ophthalmologist
  - paramedic
  - pharmacist
  - physiotherapist
  - podiatrist
  - psychologist
  - social worker
  - speech and language therapist
  - therapy professional
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- Individuals should check with their employer if they are not sure whether they work in an eligible profession.
  - Individuals can work at any NHS hospital during the coronavirus outbreak if their sponsor can maintain their sponsorship duties.
  - The individual's sponsor will not need to notify UKVI of the change in their place of work.
  - Individuals can carry out supplementary work in any role at any skill level during the coronavirus outbreak. There is no restriction on the number of hours they can work.
  - There is no longer a limit on the number of hours an individual can work or volunteer each week if they are a:
    - Tier 4 student
    - Tier 2 worker and their NHS job is a second job
    - visiting academic researcher
    - holder of a short-term visa and are permitted to volunteer
  - If an individual is a pre-registration nurse currently in the UK, the deadline for them to sit the Occupational Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) has been extended to 31 December 2020.
  - If individuals do not pass on the first attempt they will have until 31 May 2021 to pass the exam.

### Students

- International students who have been issued a Tier 4 visa and are in the UK are permitted to undertake distance learning and sponsorship does not need to be withdrawn.
- New international students can commence their studies overseas by distance learning, provided they will transition to face-to-face learning as soon as possible.



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- New international students who have not yet applied for a visa but wish to commence a course by distance learning do not need to travel to the UK to do so and therefore do not require sponsorship under Tier 4.
- This distance learning concession will be in place for the duration of the 2020-21 academic year. The concession will be subject to regular monitoring to ensure it is working as intended, and it will be subject to review at the end of the 2020-21 academic year.

### **Workers in the UK**

- We are aware that many workers sponsored under the Tiers 2 and 5 immigration routes are now working from home rather than their normal workplace due to the coronavirus pandemic.
- Tiers 2 and 5 sponsors are normally required to notify us of such changes of circumstances. However, due to the current exceptional situation, we will not require sponsors to do so if working from home is directly related to the pandemic. Other changes must still be reported as usual.

**UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) has set up a dedicated team for customers with immigration queries related to coronavirus, including questions about urgent, compelling, compassionate cases. For more information visit:**  
[Gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents)

## **Additional Information**

### **Why are you opening UKVCAS now?**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on all UKVI services. Until now, the lockdown restrictions meant UKVCAS could not operate safely or effectively. The UK Government has started to lift certain restrictions and we recognise that customers are keen to complete their applications where they are able but given the level of disruption to our normal operating model, this process will take time. Services will not return immediately or at full capacity. Instead, UKVCAS will reopen in some locations to assure ourselves that we can open safely, protect customers and staff, and can ensure every part of the application process can be delivered effectively. Only when we are confident that this is the case will we move to open more locations. Customers will be kept informed of UKVCAS openings via GOV.UK and the commercial partner website.

### **An individual had an appointment at a UKVCAS that was postponed. Will they be prioritised as you reopen application centres?**

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on all UKVI services. UKVI is taking a steady, phased approach to resuming operations, so we can be confident that we can open safely and deliver the service our customers expect. As UKVCAS reopen, UKVI will be prioritising activity to ensure those customers who had an appointment that was postponed as a result of the lockdown restrictions will be prioritised before we process new applications. Our commercial partner will contact you to arrange this new appointment as services resume.