Guidance for new undergraduates:
Applying for a Tier 4 visa 2016/17

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Introduction

This document is intended to provide an overview of the UK student immigration requirements and to help you prepare for your Tier 4 (General) Student visa application.

International Student Team
The International Student Team provides student visa advice to applicants and students and has a responsibility for ensuring institutional Tier 4 compliance. The team can provide assistance with any queries relating to your Tier 4 visa application as well as check forms and supporting documents ahead of submission. If you are unsure of the requirements, it is very important you check prior to submitting your visa application. The team can be contacted by emailing internationalstudents@admin.cam.ac.uk.

UKVI and the Home Office
UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) manages the UK’s visa service and makes decisions on visa applications. UKVI is part of the Home Office, a UK government department which has responsibility for leading on immigration.
**Do I need a Tier 4 visa?**

Based on the nationality declared in your application, we believe that you require a Tier 4 (General) Student visa to study at Cambridge. Tier 4 is the main immigration route to study in the UK. You should not travel to the UK without obtaining a Tier 4 Student visa for Cambridge unless you have received confirmation from your College that you do not require one based on your current UK immigration status. Do not assume that you can study without a visa, even if you are allowed to enter the UK for a short period as a visitor/tourist. If you arrive at Cambridge without the correct immigration status for study purposes, the University cannot allow you to start your course.

If you believe that you do not need to apply for a visa, please inform your College immediately, giving reasons and providing a copy of any existing visa.

If you currently hold a Tier 4 status with a different institution, you cannot use that visa to study at Cambridge. A Tier 4 visa is attached to one Tier 4 Sponsor only. You will need to apply for a new visa prior to starting your studies at Cambridge. If you intend to apply for a new visa inside the UK, you can only start your course after you have presented either:

1. Your new Tier 4 visa showing our Tier 4 Sponsor Licence number; or
2. Proof that you have submitted an application for a new Tier 4 visa, using a CAS from Cambridge, prior to your previous visa expiring (in-time). You may then start your course at your own risk until you receive a decision on the application.

**Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS)**

A Tier 4 visa must be supported with a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) which is issued by the University. This will be emailed to you once you have met all the conditions of your offer (this includes both academic and financial conditions) and your College informs the International Student Team your offer is now confirmed. There is no hard copy document and you do not need to submit your CAS Statement with your visa application. The CAS includes information provided by the University directly to the Home Office including your personal details, information about your course and the basis of your acceptance. You must enter the CAS number in the relevant section of your online Tier 4 application.

Please check your CAS statement carefully and inform the International Student Team of any errors before making your visa application. If you do not request any necessary corrections before applying for your visa, the University cannot be held responsible for any subsequent problems with your application.

You may wish to compare your CAS statement against ‘Your CAS Statement Explained’ which explains the information contained in your CAS, including why some fields are blank:

[www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/files/your_cas_statement_explained.pdf](http://www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/files/your_cas_statement_explained.pdf)

Please note that for security purposes, the passport information is not included in the CAS Statement emailed to you.
Applying for a Tier 4 visa outside the UK

It is important you read the Tier 4 Policy Guidance before you apply for your visa: www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-application-for-uk-visa-as-tier-4-student

Where to apply
If you are applying from outside the UK you will need to apply in your home country or in a country where you have immigration permission other than as a visitor. You should check your eligibility to apply if you are in a country other than your home country.

When to apply
The earliest you can apply for a Tier 4 Student visa is three months prior to the start date of your course. Processing times vary depending on the visa application centre but it is advisable to apply as soon as possible once you have received your CAS and you have the necessary documentation to support your application. Visa processing times for applications made outside the UK are outlined at www.gov.uk/visa-processing-times.

How to apply
You must first apply online (except in North Korea where you must apply using the paper application form). A guidance document on how to complete the entry clearance visa application is available at www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/applying/uk-immigration/tier-4-entry-clearance.

As part of your online application, you will book an appointment at a Visa Application Centre to submit your supporting documents and provide your biometric information (photo and fingerprints). You can find your nearest visa application centre at www.gov.uk/find-a-visa-application-centre.

The application process to apply for a UK visa in the USA differs slightly and a step by step guide is available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/usa-apply-for-a-uk-visa/apply-for-a-uk-visa-in-the-usa.

Visa application fee
The application fee is £328 (in local currency equivalent).

Interviews
You may be interviewed as part of the visa application process. The interview would be carried out at the Visa Application Centre as part of your appointment. The interview will be conducted by a Home Office official in the UK via video-link. These interviews allow the Home Office to determine whether applicants are genuine students and also to confirm English language ability; you will likely be asked to provide information on your course and your reasons for studying in the UK and at Cambridge. You may also be asked questions about your finances, previous immigration history, your education and plans for the future.

Collecting your visa (BRP)
When you apply for entry clearance and your application is successful, a 30 day permit will be issued in your passport which will enable you to travel to the UK. You will be required to collect your actual visa, in the form of a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP), within 10 days of arriving in the UK.

You must enter the UK during the 30 day validity of the permit which will be valid from either:
• 7 days before your intended date of travel, as stated on the visa application form OR
• 30 days from the date of issue if granted after your intended date of travel, as stated on your visa application form.

Please note the earliest the permit can be valid is one month prior to the start date of your course in line with Tier 4 policy. If you plan to arrive in Cambridge earlier than the start date of your course, you should check with your College when you are able to move into your accommodation as this may only be available from a certain date.

You cannot enter on your student immigration permission prior to the start of your permit. In addition, you cannot enter the UK earlier than this as a standard visitor (tourist) and then 'switch' inside the UK to Tier 4 even if the student entry permit is already in your passport. If you enter the UK as a visitor, you will need to leave the UK and re-enter to activate your immigration permission as a student.

Your BRP can be collected from the University but you will need to include a code in the relevant section of the visa application in order for this to be possible. It is important you read the information on the following webpage to find the code relevant to your course prior to submitting your visa application: www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/collecting-your-visa-brp

If you do not enter this code, you will need to collect your BRP from a designated Post Office. We advise you to use the University as the collection point unless you plan to enter the UK more than 10 days prior to the start of your course in which case collection from the Post Office may be preferable.

Under-18s: if you will not be 18 years old by 1 September 2016, it is particularly important that you enter this code on your Tier 4 application so that you can collect your BRP from the University unaccompanied. In order to collect a BRP from the Post Office, under-18s must be accompanied by a responsible adult. This adult needs to be authorised by the Home Office through an additional application process. Please seek advice from the International Student Team if you believe you will need to collect your BRP from the Post Office.

You will receive a decision letter outlining the conditions of your immigration leave. The letter confirms the expiry date of your BRP, and whether you have selected to collect your BRP from the University or the Post Office. You should check this letter carefully and bring it with you to the UK.

Applying for a Tier 4 visa inside the UK

It is important you read the Tier 4 Policy Guidance before you apply: www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-application-for-uk-visa-as-tier-4-student

Can I apply in the UK? 
You can only apply in the UK if you hold existing permission in certain visa categories. You cannot, for example, switch to a Tier 4 visa if you currently hold a PBS dependant visa, a visitor visa or a Tier 5 visa. If you are applying in the UK and do not currently have a Tier 4 visa, contact the International Student Team to check you are able to switch inside the UK.

If your current visa expires more than 28 days before the start date of your new course, the Home Office requires you to leave the UK and apply for new entry clearance from overseas. This would normally be
in your home country or in a country where you have immigration permission other than as a visitor. If you apply from within the UK, the Home Office will refuse your application.

If you are in the UK on Tier 4, you can only apply to extend your visa from inside the UK if you have obtained the qualification for which your current immigration permission was granted. If you have not obtained the qualification, you will need to apply for your new visa from outside the UK.

**How to apply**

To make an application from inside the UK:
- complete the online application form
- pay the immigration health surcharge
- pay the application fee
- submit your supporting documents either by post or by attending an in-person appointment using the premium service.

If you apply using one of the postal services, UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) will write to you after receiving your supporting documents and invite you to enrol your biometrics at a designated Post Office. You must wait until you have received this invitation before attempting to enrol your biometrics. If you choose to use the premium service, you will be asked to enrol your biometric information when you attend your in-person appointment.

You may be asked for additional information by UKVI after you have submitted your application. This could be by telephone or you may be asked to attend an in-person appointment.

For successful visa applications made inside the UK, a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) is sent to you in the post. The BRP is the documentary evidence of your new visa.

**Visa application fee**

The application fee is:
- £448 if you submit your documents using the standard postal service
- £823 if you use the priority postal service
- £948 if you attend in person using the premium service

For a further explanation of these different services and to access the online application form to apply for a visa from inside the UK, visit www.gov.uk/tier-4-general-visa/extend-your-visa.

**Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS)**

The immigration health surcharge entitles students to free healthcare in the UK. Students are required to pay £150 per year of leave granted on their visa. If the leave includes part of a year that is 6 months or less, the amount payable for that year will be £75. The online payment procedure will calculate the amount you need to pay. You must ensure you enter the start and end date for your course as outlined on your CAS. It is mandatory to pay the surcharge as part of your visa application. Access to the payment procedure is via the visa application. If your application is not successful, you will automatically be refunded the immigration health surcharge (but not the visa application fee).
Supporting documents for the visa application

In addition to your passport, you are required to submit a number of documents to support your Tier 4 visa application. The requirements are specific and may vary depending on your nationality and where you are applying.

**TB Certificate**
If you are applying for a Tier 4 visa to come to the UK for six months or longer and you are applying from certain countries, you are required to provide a certificate with your visa application to show you are free from TB. You must establish whether you require this prior to submitting your visa application by checking [www.gov.uk/tb-test-visa](http://www.gov.uk/tb-test-visa).

**Evidence of Qualifications**
The Home Office requires you to include with your visa application the original version of any documents or certificates listed in your CAS statement. For most students this will be an official academic transcript or certificate of previous qualifications. If you are unable to include the document listed, contact us immediately.

If any of the required documents are not in English or Welsh, the original must be accompanied by a full translation that can be independently verified by the Home Office. The original translation must contain confirmation from the translator/translation company that it is an accurate translation of the original document; the date of the translation; the translator/an authorised official of the translation company’s full name and signature; and the translator/translation company’s contact details.

**Evidence of finances**
You are required to provide evidence that you hold sufficient funds to pay your course fees and living costs for the coming year. You will need to demonstrate that you have the course fees as stated on your CAS and a specified amount for living costs. Only certain documents are acceptable to evidence that you have the necessary funds.

**Fees**
Your CAS states the fees due. If you are receiving a bursary from the University, this will be deducted from ‘Course fees charged for the first year’ and you will see a lower figure in your CAS. If you do not think this is showing in your CAS, contact us immediately.

If you have paid some of your fees, you should see the amount paid stated on your CAS, under ‘Course fees paid to date’. The fee amount you need to show to the Home Office is the difference between ‘Course fees charged for the first year’ and ‘Course fees paid to date’.

**NB:** If you make additional payments towards fees, your CAS will not be updated automatically – you must request an update. If you need these payments to be reflected in your CAS, email the International Student Team. We will reply to inform you of any changes made to your CAS.

**Deposit for Accommodation**
You may make an advance payment for College accommodation if your College will accept it but should be aware the Home Office only allows the CAS to reflect a maximum deposit of £1265 against
accommodation. This amount can then be deducted from the amount you will need to show in living costs. Even if you pay more than £1265, your CAS cannot reflect a higher payment.

**Living costs**
The Home Office determines the amount you need to demonstrate for maintenance in addition to fees. You must show you have £1015 for each month of your course up to a maximum of 9 months. Therefore the maximum you need to show for living costs is £9135.

**Providing documents that meet the financial requirements**
You can evidence the required funds in UK Sterling (GBP) or any recognised world currency. If you use a currency that is not GBP, you must ensure you check the amount meets the minimum level requirements on the date of application using the currency converter: www.oanda.com/currency/converter

The documentary evidence to demonstrate you have access to the required funds will be dependent on how you are being funded. We strongly advise you to check the requirements for your circumstances using our online Tier 4 financial checker tool: www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/tier-4-maintenance-checker

Please note in particular that you will normally need to demonstrate that you have held the required funds (first year fees plus £9135) for a minimum consecutive 28 day period (finishing on the date of the closing balance) and the financial evidence used must not be more than 31 days old.

**Avoiding a visa refusal on financial grounds**
Failure to meet the Home Office financial requirements is the most common reason for visa refusals. Common mistakes include:

- Submitting bank statements that do not evidence the funds have been in the account at the required level for a minimum consecutive **28-day period** (finishing on the date of the closing balance).
- Submitting financial evidence that is too old.
- Submitting financial evidence where the required money is not held as cash funds (for example, shares, bonds, overdrafts and credit cards are not acceptable).
- Showing evidence of lower funds than the amount required.
- Claiming to have paid more fees than stated in the CAS (i.e. not requesting an update to the CAS).
- Using a parent’s bank statement without providing an original birth certificate and a letter from the parent(s) confirming the relationship and giving permission for the student to use the money to fund their studies.
- Using a bank statement of a relative other than a parent.

We recommend that you start to think about this as early as possible – for instance, you might discover that you will need to transfer money into a bank account and wait 28 days to obtain a bank statement that will meet the Tier 4 requirements.

Applicants from Bangladesh, Cameroon, Ghana, India, Iran, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka should also check the following link to ensure that your financial evidence is from a financial institution accepted as meeting UK Home Office requirements: www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-rules-appendix-p

International Student Team

May 2016
**English language ability**
You do not need to include any documents in support of your English language ability, even if this was a condition of your offer. In the relevant section on the application form, you should select one of the statements listed below that is most relevant to you (please see your CAS if you are unsure):

- National of a majority English speaking country.
- Your sponsor is a Higher Education Institution, and has made its own assessment of your English language ability.

If you are making your Tier 4 application in the UK, the equivalent option is answering ‘yes’ to the question:
- If you are studying at a higher education institution, have they assessed that you meet the English language requirement or that you are a gifted student?

**Academic Technology Approval Scheme**
Certain four year undergraduate degrees in science and technology subjects require an ATAS (Academic Technology Approval Scheme) clearance certificate to support their visa application. You will have been informed by the International Student Team if you are required to apply for this certificate. The current processing time is 20 working days for a complete application and this time extends if you are required to provide further information. The ATAS certificate will be sent to you by email. You should print this out and include it with your visa application. The **UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)** manages this scheme.

**Differentiation Arrangements**
If you are a national from one of the following countries, you are subject to differentiation arrangements and do not normally need to provide evidence of your qualifications and financial documents with your visa application:

- Argentina
- Australia
- Barbados
- Brunei
- Canada
- Chile
- Hong Kong*
- Japan
- Malaysia
- New Zealand
- Oman
- Qatar
- Singapore
- South Korea
- Taiwan**
- Trinidad and Tobago
- United Arab Emirates (UAE)
- United States of America
- A British National Overseas*

*Where the applicant is a rightful holder of a passport which has been issued by the relevant competent authority and where the applicant is applying for leave to remain in the UK or for entry clearance in the territory related to the passport.

**Those who hold a passport issued by Taiwan that includes the number of the identification card issued by the competent authority in Taiwan.
Please note you are only eligible for differentiation arrangements if you are a national of one of the countries listed above and you are applying for entry clearance in your country of nationality or for leave to remain in the UK. If you are not applying in your country of nationality or the UK, you must submit all relevant supporting documents and these must meet the specific Tier 4 requirements.

Whilst applicants subject to differentiation arrangements do not need to submit these documents with their application, the Home Office is entitled to request them during the consideration process. Applicants should therefore make sure that they have all their documents ready and available at the point of application submission.

Nationals of all other countries will need to provide supporting documents with their visa application and must ensure they meet the specific Tier 4 requirements as outlined above.

**Have you previously studied in the UK?**

If you have previously studied at any time in the UK prior to the new course you are undertaking at Cambridge, there are further visa considerations.

**Academic Progression**

If you have previously studied in the UK, the Home Office requires us to include information in your CAS statement regarding ‘academic progression’. We must therefore refer to your previous study undertaken in the UK (at Cambridge or elsewhere) on a Tier 4 or pre-Tier 4 student visa. Without this information in your CAS, your visa application will be unsuccessful. If it is missing please inform the International Student Team immediately. Please note previous study in the UK undertaken on a Short-term study visa or Student Visitor visa does not need to be included.

If you are in the UK on Tier 4, you can only apply to extend your visa from inside the UK if you have obtained the qualification for which your current immigration permission was granted. If you have not obtained the qualification, you will need to apply for your new visa from outside the UK.

**Time limit for study**

The Home Office limits the time you can study in the UK on a student visa. This includes periods of leave granted on a Tier 4 and pre-Tier 4 student visa. Detailed information is outlined at www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/applying/uk-immigration/time-limit-study

**Your family**

There are restrictions on bringing dependants to the UK under Tier 4. The Home Office only permits a student applying for an initial grant of leave under Tier 4 to apply to bring their dependent family members where the course is at least 12 months long and the course is at post-graduate level study (NQF level 7) or above. You may also be eligible to apply if you are a new government sponsored student whose course is longer than 6 months.

If you had planned to bring dependants to the UK and you believe these restrictions may affect you, contact the International Student Team.
If your course meets these rules, you must ensure you read the PBS Dependant Policy Guidance to understand the visa application requirements. Please note that you can bring your children with you to the UK if both parents will be living in the UK. If your partner will not be joining you in the UK and you do not have sole custody of your children, your children cannot apply as dependants.

Each dependant coming to the UK must be able to demonstrate that they have access to sufficient funds to cover their living costs for each month of your course up to a maximum of 9 months. The Home Office determines the amount dependants need to show in living costs. The rate is 680GBP per month for a maximum of 9 months. Therefore the maximum each of your dependants would need to show is £6120GBP.


Checking your visa expiry date

You should check that you have been granted the correct period of leave for your studies in the UK. If you have applied for your visa from outside the UK this will be outlined in the decision letter you receive with the outcome of your application. If you have applied inside the UK, you can check this on your visa (BRP).

The immigration leave granted under Tier 4 depends on the length of your course. For courses of 12 months or more, you should receive the length of the course plus 4 months.

You can confirm your course end date from your CAS statement. Examples of visa expiry dates for courses at Cambridge are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>CAS course end date</th>
<th>Tier 4 expiry date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 year undergraduate degree</td>
<td>30 June 2019</td>
<td>30 October 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 year undergraduate degree or</td>
<td>30 June 2020</td>
<td>30 October 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>integrated master’s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 year clinical degree</td>
<td>30 June 2022</td>
<td>30 October 2022</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you have not been granted the correct period of leave, this will need to be corrected. Contact the International Student Team as soon as this has been identified.

Protecting your Tier 4 immigration status

You need to be aware that there are certain conditions attached to a Tier 4 student visa. This includes presenting your immigration documents on arrival to Cambridge, reporting to your College each Term for registration, attending your studies and adhering to work restrictions.

It is very important that you fully understand and comply with your responsibilities under Tier 4. Please ensure you read the information at www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/tier-4-responsibilities.

Failure to comply with your responsibilities under Tier 4 could mean breaching the terms and conditions of your visa and may result in your visa sponsorship being withdrawn and your leave curtailed.
Working on a Tier 4 visa

Please be aware that both the Home Office and the University of Cambridge have strict regulations on employment during study. You remain subject to these restrictions at all times when registered as a full-time student at the University. If you intend to work at any time in the UK on your Tier 4 visa, you should be aware of the working restrictions of a Tier 4 visa as outlined at www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/studying/working-and-studying.

Sources of Further Information and Support

Please note that while this information is accurate, to the best of our knowledge, at the time of writing, the immigration rules and guidance are liable to change and we may not be able to inform you directly of any changes that may affect you and your visa application. Please familiarise yourself with the Tier 4 information on the website: www.gov.uk/tier-4-general-visa/overview.

For any queries on the visa application procedures or requirements, email the International Student Team at internationalstudents@admin.cam.ac.uk

Once you have received your visa, you may find it useful to read our pre-arrival webpages which include a downloadable International Student Guide providing practical guidance on coming to live and study in Cambridge: www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/arriving/pre-arrival-information

The University is a member of the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA), the UK’s national advisory body serving the interest of international students: www.ukcisa.org.uk