

Applying for a Tier 4 (General) student visa



EEA and Swiss nationals

If you are a European Economic Area (EEA) or Swiss national then you only need a **valid passport** or **national identity card** in order to enter the UK to commence your studies. If your family members are also EEA or Swiss nationals, they can come to the UK in the same way as you, without restriction. Further information for EEA, Swiss nationals and their family members can be found on the [UKCISA](#) website.

Who is this guidance note for?

This guidance document is for **non-EEA** students who will be undertaking one of LSTM's full-time **Masters degrees** or **Postgraduate Research degrees** (i.e. MPhil or PhD) and who will be making a visa application from **outside** the UK.

If you are **extending** or **switching** your visa from **inside the UK**, you are an **off-site Postgraduate Research student** or you will be attending one of LSTM's **Professional Diploma** or **short courses** then this guidance is **NOT** for you. Please contact the Academic Registrar for the **correct** advice.

The Points Based Immigration System

In order to be granted a student visa, you will need to score a total of **40 points** under a set criterion. This requirement is part of the UK's Points Based Immigration System. The points are broken down as follows:

1. A valid **Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies** and original supporting documents (**30 points**).
2. **Maintenance (funds)** (**10 points**).

Claiming points for Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies and original supporting documents

What is a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS)?

A CAS is a database record which has a unique fourteen digit reference number. A CAS is generated when information about you and your course of study is input in to a secure online database called the Sponsor Management System (SMS).

The SMS enables licensed sponsors such as LSTM to bring non-EEA students to the UK for the purposes of study. Only licensed sponsors and UKVI personnel have access to the SMS. You will need a CAS in order to apply for your visa.

When and how will I receive my CAS?

Your CAS will be sent to you by the Admissions Team when you meet all of the conditions of entry i.e. when you have been issued with a Confirmation of Place letter (sometimes known as an unconditional offer).

How long is a CAS valid for?

A CAS is valid for 6 months. Therefore, you **must** apply for your visa within 6 months of the date of issue. If you apply after the 6 months has lapsed, your application will automatically be refused and you will need to request a new CAS from your Admissions Officer. There are other situations when a CAS may be automatically withdrawn or become obsolete even if it is within 6 months of the date of issue. For example:

- LSTM may withdraw your CAS if you fail to register for your course within 10 days of the prescribed date of enrolment.
- Your CAS (Issued by LSTM) will automatically become obsolete if you apply for a visa using a CAS issued by another Tier 4 Sponsor (i.e. another University).

A CAS cannot be used more than once. If your application is refused, and you wish to make another application, you will need to request a new CAS from your Programme Administrator. The decision to issue a new CAS is at the discretion of the Academic Registrar and you will be asked to provide certain documentation (e.g. your refusal notice) before that decision is made.

What information will be contained my CAS?

Your CAS will contain information about you and your chosen course of study at LSTM. Although you do not need to submit the CAS with your visa application, you will need the information contained in it when completing your application.

On receipt of your CAS you must read it carefully, check that all the details are correct and that there are no errors/ omissions (such as your passport number or the amount of tuition fees paid). **In the event of an error/ omission, you must inform the Admissions Team immediately (and before you make your visa application) so this can be rectified.**

To claim the full 30 points required for a valid CAS you must also send with your application:

- The documents used to issue your CAS; and
- Your Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) Clearance Certificate (If applicable).

Documents used to issue your CAS

Your qualifications:

- Your CAS will specify the documents that LSTM used to assess your suitability for the course you have been accepted on (e.g. this could be your award certificate and/ or transcript). **You will need to provide the ORIGINALS when you come to make your visa application. If you fail to do this, your application will be refused.** The UKVI will not accept provisional certificates/ transcripts.

Your English language ability:

- Your CAS will also specify how LSTM assessed your level of English language. If you were assessed via a Secure English Language Test (SELT) or other means, you must include this with your application.

Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) Clearance Certificate

If you require an Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) Clearance Certificate, this will be indicated in your CAS. Information on how to obtain an ATAS Clearance Certificate can be found at: www.fco.gov.uk/atas. You must provide your ATAS Clearance Certificate with your visa application. If you fail to do this, your application will be refused. You will need to apply for your ATAS certificate **before** you apply for your visa. The ATAS process can take up to 20 working days so you need to apply in good time.

Claiming points for Maintenance (funds)

To claim **10 points** under the maintenance (funds) requirement, students must show that they have sufficient funds for their **tuition fees** and **living expenses**.

Tuition fees

Masters students must show that they have sufficient funds to pay the full tuition fee. Postgraduate Research students must show that they have sufficient funds to pay the full tuition fee for the first year of study. Please note, research project, research support and bench fees are part of your tuition fees.

What if I have fully paid or part paid my tuition fees before I make my visa application?

If you have paid an advance fee, which is a requirement for all Masters students, this will be indicated in your CAS. In this instance, when you make your visa application, you will need to show that you have sufficient funds to pay the remaining tuition fee balance (tuition fee minus advance fee). The remaining tuition fee balance will be indicated in your CAS.

If your tuition fees have been paid **in full** by the time you come to make your visa application and you can show these payments:

- in your CAS; or
- through an **official payment receipt**, you do not need to show that you have any funds available for tuition fees.

Living expenses

In addition to showing funds for **tuition fees**, **all students are required** to show that they have sufficient funds for their **living expenses**. If you are making an initial visa application you will need to demonstrate that you have £1,015 for each month of the course up to a maximum of 9 months. So, if you are registering for a Masters or Research degree, you will need to show that you have **£9,135 for living expenses**

Please note: Any fees paid in advance for your accommodation will **NOT be deducted** from the **total amount of funds which you are required to show for living expenses**, even if you can produce an official receipt. This allowance is for students studying at institutions that possess their own halls of residence - **LSTM does not**.

What evidence do I need to provide UKVI to show that I meet the maintenance (funds) requirement?

The **Tier 4 Policy Guidance** gives **very precise instructions** on the evidence you must provide to demonstrate that you meet the maintenance (funds) requirement. You should follow these instructions **exactly** or your visa application may be refused.

Differentiation Arrangements

Students of certain nationalities **may** qualify for the differentiation arrangements by virtue of them being classed as "low risk" nationals. This means that you may not have to provide *some* of the documentation normally required for a Tier 4 (General) visa application. If this applies to you then you must be aware that UKVI can ask to see these documents at any point during the application process, therefore, you should only apply if you can meet all the requirements at the time of making the application.

Restrictions on some students with official financial sponsorship

If you are **currently** being financially ***sponsored** by a **government** or an **international** scholarship agency, or this financial sponsorship ended within **12 months** of your visa application being made and you had permission to be in the UK in one of the following categories:

- Student; or
- Tier 4 (General); or
- Tier 4 (Child) Student; or
- Student Nurse; or
- Student Re-sitting an Examination; or
- Student Writing-up a Thesis; or
- Postgraduate Doctor or Dentist; you will need your sponsor's permission to stay in or re-enter the UK. You must provide your financial sponsor's unconditional consent in writing. This must confirm that the sponsor has no objection to you continuing your studies in the UK. If your financial sponsor does not give consent, your application will be refused.

**'Sponsored' means wholly supported by an award which covers both fees and living costs.*

Applying for your visa – getting started

Which visa do I need?

There are two types of visa under Tier 4 of the Points Based Immigration System; (General) Student and (Child) Student. You should apply for a **Tier 4 (General) Student visa**. You should apply for your visa in the country where you normally live.

When can I apply for my visa?

You cannot apply for your visa more than 3 months before the start of your course (As indicated in your CAS) even though LSTM may issue your CAS earlier. Students are advised to wait until they have obtained their visa before booking any non-refundable travel tickets.

How do I apply?

Before making your application, please ensure that you read all the information on the UKVI website including, the Tier 4 Policy Guidance and the relevant Immigration Rules. Check that you meet all the requirements **before** you apply:

<https://www.gov.uk/tier-4-general-visa>

The above link will also take you to the online application form. The online form asks you to specify which type of Tier 4 application you are making:

- Tier 4 (General): for most applications
- Tier 4 (sponsored): for applicants with an official financial sponsor (Her Majesty's Government, your home government, the British Council, any international organisation, international company, university or Independent School)
- Tier 4 (scholarship): for applicants with a Chevening Scholarship or Fellowship, a British Marshall Scholarship, a Fulbright Scholarship, or a Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships Plan

Supporting documents

When submitting your application, you must ensure that you include all the required documents and that the documents meet the **specific requirements** set out in the Tier 4 Policy Guidance.

Documents not in English or Welsh must be accompanied by a full translation which can be independently verified by UKVI. **All documents** must be **originals** and on **official letter-headed paper** or **stationery** of the organisation.

Submitting your biometric details

As part of the visa application process you will be asked to attend an office to give your biometric details (scans of all 10 fingers and a full-face digital photograph). Your application will not be processed until you have done this.

Compulsory TB screening

From July 2012, the UK Border Agency introduced mandatory tuberculosis (TB) screening in certain countries before a visa of more than 6 months will be issued: <https://www.gov.uk/tb-test-visa>

How much will my application cost?

Your visa application will cost £348 payable in your local currency. Some Visa Application Centres (VACs) charge an additional 'User fee' of £59. This is to allow smaller VACs to remain open. If you do not wish to pay this additional fee, you should attend a different VAC.

From 6 April 2015 visa applications that are for more than six months in duration will incur an Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS); this allows you to access NHS healthcare while you study on the same basis as a UK resident (The charge is compulsory and cannot be waived in favour of a private healthcare policy). The surcharge is calculated at £150 per year for each year of your visa. If your visa includes part of a year that is six months or less you will be charged an additional £75 for this period. If your visa includes part of a year that is more than six months, you will pay £150 for this period.

Therefore, for MSc students the charge would be £225 as the length of visa issued would be 16 months.

For students undertaking a PhD, the charge would be £675 as the length of visa would be 52 months. If you need to extend your visa from inside the UK for any length of time then you will have to pay the surcharge again.

The Tier 4 application will direct you to create an account for the IHS portal so that you can pay the required charge. Once you have done this **you will be given a reference number which you must write on the front of your Tier 4 application form**. If you do not pay the IHS, your application will be refused. The Home Office may contact you and request payment before refusing your application for this reason but you should not rely on this happening.

Note: some people are exempt from paying the immigration health surcharge, including British Overseas Territory citizens who live in the Falkland Islands.

For more information please follow this link: <https://www.gov.uk/healthcare-immigration-application/when-you-need-to-pay>

When can I come to the UK and how long will my visa be valid for?

Your visa will be issued as a vignette (sticker) in your passport. Applications for more than six months in duration will be valid for 30 days. This 30 days will start 30 days before the course start date on your CAS or seven days before the date that you specified on your application as your intended date of travel to the UK, whichever is later. If you do not know your intended date of travel at the time you make your application, it is best to state the date that is 30 days before the course start date.

If you do not travel to the UK during the 30-day period, then your vignette will expire and you will need to apply for another 30-day vignette if you still wish to travel to the UK. There is a charge for this. You must provide your biometric information again but you won't have to submit a new Tier 4 application.

Your 30-day vignette will be accompanied by a letter. When you enter the UK you **must show** the Immigration Officer at Border Control your **30-day vignette** and the **letter**.

You must collect your Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) from a Post Office within ten days of arriving in the UK. When you complete your visa application you will be given a choice of Post Offices from which to collect your BRP. The form will select Post Offices based on the addresses you provided in your application, that is, the address where you will be living and the address of LSTM. If neither of the suggested Post Offices are convenient for you then you have the option to enter a third postcode and select a different Post Office.

The letter that accompanies your 30-day vignette will contain the details of the Post Office that you selected. If you change your mind and would like to collect your BRP from a different Post Office, you will have to pay a fee. You do not have to make an appointment at the Post Office but you must take your **30-day vignette** and accompanying **letter** with you. If you do not collect your BRP within ten days of arriving in the UK, you may have to pay a fine and/or your visa may be cancelled.

LSTM are permitted to register you based on the **30-day vignette** and **letter**. However, if you present these documents at registration you will be required to show us your BRP before the expiry of the 30-day vignette. We advise students to collect their BRP before registration, if possible. **If you have not collected your BRP and your vignette has expired, we cannot register you.**

You are advised not to travel outside of the UK until you have collected your BRP. If you have an urgent reason for needing to do so, you should seek advice from the Academic Registrar.

More information about BRPs can be found

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/418271/v_9_overseas_BRP_leaflet.pdf

This document also includes information about what to do if you lose your letter and/or 30-day vignette before you have collected your BRP.

How long will my visa be valid for?

Visas for courses of 12 months in duration or more will be valid for the length of the course plus an additional 4 months (a course will be considered 12 months in duration if it lasts a full calendar year e.g. 1st September 2016 – 31st August 2017).

Visa conditions

- Study at the institution listed in your visa i.e. LSTM
- Students from certain countries will be required to register with the Police within 7 days of arriving in the UK. More information on this requirement can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/tier-4-general-visa>

<https://www.merseyside.police.uk/about-us/our-services/overseas-visitor-registration/>

- To qualify for a Tier 4 (General) Student visa, you need to be able to support yourself and any dependants **without claiming public funds**.
- Students following a course at degree level or above with a sponsor that is a Recognised Body or UK HEI will normally be given permission to work part-time during term-time and full-time during vacations. More information about working in the UK during your studies can be found:

<https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Working/Can-you-work>

What happens if my visa is refused?

If your visa application is refused, you will normally be given the right to an Administrative Review. This will allow you to have your application reviewed by the Entry Clearance Manager. The review is free of charge however; you must ask for it **within 28 days of receiving the refusal**. If your application is refused, please contact the Academic Registrar for advice.

Can my family join me while I study?

You can bring certain family members to the UK as your Tier 4 dependant if:

- You are government-sponsored and your course is longer than six months or;
- **You are doing a postgraduate level course of 12 months or longer at a publicly-funded Higher Education Institution or a 'recognised body' or;**
- Your current or most recent immigration permission was as a Tier 4 (General) student or a pre-Tier 4 student on a course longer than six months and all four bullet points below apply:

- your permission is current or expired no more than three months before this immigration application and;
- your new immigration application is for a course that is longer than six months and
- your dependants already have Tier 4 dependant or 'student' dependant immigration permission (or it is the most recent immigration permission that they had, and it expired no more than three months before this application) and;
- you apply for immigration permission at the same time as your dependant.

The other requirement you must meet is that you already have your Tier 4 (General) immigration permission, or you are applying for it in the same country where your dependant is making their application, at the same time as them.

Which family members can be a Tier 4 dependant?

Your partner

- your husband or wife
- your civil partner. This means you are a same-sex couple who has registered your partnership to gain formal legal recognition of your relationship. For information about partnerships in countries outside the UK that are treated as civil partnerships, see the [UK Lesbian and Gay Immigration Group website](#) [^]
- your unmarried partner or same-sex partner. To be unmarried partners or same-sex partners, you need to have been living together in a relationship similar to marriage or civil partnership for a period of at least two years. You will be expected to provide evidence of this.

Your child or children

- If your child is applying to come to the UK as your Tier 4 dependant for the first time, they must be less than 18 years old when they apply.

More information about dependant visas can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/tier-4-general-visa/family-members>

<https://www.gov.uk/tier-4-general-visa>

Record-keeping and reporting duties

As a licensed Tier 4 sponsor, LSTM must comply with a number of record-keeping and reporting duties during your stay in the UK. This includes keeping a copy of your passport, visa vignette, Biometric Residence Permit or other UK immigration status document and your contact details. LSTM must report to UKVI if:

- You fail to enroll on your course within the prescribed enrolment period (stated in your offer letter);
- You miss 10 expected contacts without LSTM's permission;
- LSTM withdraw from being your immigration sponsor (for example, if you move into an immigration category that does not need a Tier 4 sponsor);
- There are any significant changes in your circumstances (for example, if your course of study is shortened); or
- We (LSTM) suspect that you are breaking the conditions of your permission to stay

Further information

The UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA): www.ukcisa.org.uk

UK Visas and Immigration:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-application-for-uk-visa-as-tier-4-student>

<https://www.gov.uk/tier-4-general-visa>

This document is a **guide** to help you get **started** with your visa application. It is not intended to be a definitive representation of, nor is it intended to replace either the Immigration Rules or the Tier 4 Policy Guidance.

Immigration law changes rapidly. It is your responsibility to make sure you read and understand the current Tier 4 Policy Guidance and Immigration Rules thoroughly to ensure that you meet the requirements of the category.

For further help and advice, please contact LSTM's Senior Admissions Officer, Natalie Thompson at mylstm@lstm.ac.uk