

UCL Union

Rights & Advice Centre

A Guide to Renewing a Student Visa

A Guide to Tier 4 of the Points Based System

This guide explains the main rules of the Adult student visa scheme. The Rules may be changed by the UK Border Agency at short notice; always check you have the current version of the Tier 4 (General) application form before sending your application to the UK Border Agency. The form can be downloaded from the www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk website.

This note relates to the position of a student enrolled at UCL, or intending to enrol at UCL. If you are doing a course taught jointly by two institutions, then additional guidance is required.

SOME TERMINOLOGY

CAS - Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies

This is a number only, but indicates that UCL has accepted a specific person as a student and accepts responsibility for monitoring and reporting on their attendance.

SMS - Sponsor Management System

This is a computer database held by the UK Border Agency which records key information about each Tier 4 applicant.

BRP – Biometric Residence Permit

This is an ID card that shows your current immigration permission to be in the UK. This is only issued to a student, and their dependant, who apply within the UK for a visa.

General Student

The Tier 4 General Student route is also known as the Adult Student route.

Leave

This is the official name for permission to enter or remain in the UK. This is shown on the Identity Card, Entry Clearance certificate or Residence Permit. The date on which the Leave, or permission, expires is shown on these documents. The permission includes a condition that prevents a student from claiming public funds or social security benefits.

STUDENT APPLICATION PROCESS

You must complete the Tier 4 (General) application form and submit all of the required or specified documents and pay the application fee. A PBS (Dependant) application form is required for each dependant. You can only bring a dependant if you are sponsored by your Government for a course of more than six months; or you are doing a post graduate course that is of at least twelve months duration.

If you currently have a dependant in the UK, then your dependant may be able to extend their visa if your course will last for six months or more. Please contact the Rights & Advice Centre for more information.

If you apply in your home country the application is made using forms VAF9 and Appendix 8. A VAF10 application form is required for each dependant. An application in your home country cannot be made more than three months before the start of your new course.

Applying in the UK

You can only apply within the UK to renew your visa if there is less than one month between the expiry of the present visa and the start of the new course. You can also apply in the UK if you are continuing with your present course.

CAS number

UCL will issue a CAS number and statement to each student; the statement specifies which educational documents were used to obtain the offer of a place at UCL, these documents must be included with the application. The application must be made within six months of UCL assigning you a CAS number, but before the last date for starting the course.

Some students do not need to supply these documents, please see paragraphs 10 and 11 of the Border Agency's Tier 4 Policy Guidance, July 2012 version.

If you are continuing with an existing course, the CAS statement may say that UCL used your progress and attendance on the current course. In this case no educational documents are required.

Academic Progress

If you are starting a new course of study, UCL will have to confirm that the new course represents 'progress' from the previous course.

For a course to represent academic progress from previous study, the course must:

- be above the level of the previous course for which the applicant was granted leave as a Tier 4 (General) Student or as a Student, or

- involve further study at the same level, which the UCL confirms as complementing the previous course for which the applicant was granted leave as a Tier 4 (General) Student or as a Student.

Maintenance, Funds or Finance - Established presence in UK

Established presence means the student was last given permission to stay under the Tier 4 Rules, and s/he:

has completed a single course of study of at least six months duration with the present visa;

or

has been studying on the present course for at least six months;

The amount of money required has two components

First year tuition fees

Living expenses

Living expenses are £1,000 per month, up to a maximum of £2,000. Additional living expenses of £600 per month, up to a maximum of £1,200 for each dependant are required. A Dependant can use funds from an official financial sponsor, provided each dependant is named in the sponsor letter.

These amounts are reduced if evidence is produced to show that either the tuition fees or accommodation expenses have been paid in part or in full. Accommodation only relates to accommodation provided by UCL.

Maintenance, Funds or Finance

Initial Entry Clearance and some Leave to Remain applicants

This section applies to any student who does not have an established presence in the UK as a student.

The amount of money required has two components

First year tuition fees

Living expenses

Living expenses are £1,000 per month, up to a maximum of £9,000. Additional living expenses of £600 per month per dependant are required for each dependant. The maximum for each dependant is £5,400. A Dependant can use funds from an official financial sponsor, provided each dependant is named in the sponsor letter.

These amounts are reduced if evidence is produced to show that either the tuition fees or accommodation expenses have been paid in part or in full. Accommodation only relates to accommodation provided by UCL. The maximum amount that can be used for accommodation fees already paid to UCL is £1,000.

In both situations the funds must be held in one of the following:

- 1) cash account in the student's name
- 2) in a joint cash account which includes the student's name;
- 3) by way of a formal loan in the student's name,
- 4) official financial or government sponsorship.
- 5) In the student's parent's bank account

The student must have held these funds for the 28 days prior to submitting the Tier 4 application. The bank statement, or other evidence, must be dated not more than one month prior to the date of submitting the application.

If the student is using money in their parent's bank account, they must provide their birth certificate that gives the names of both parents. Secondly, a parent named on the account must write a letter stating the student is their child and that the money in their bank account can be used for the student's maintenance, (living expenses), and tuition fees at UCL. Both of these must be in English, or with an official translation.

Some students do not need to supply these documents, please see paragraphs 10 and 11 to the Border Agency's Tier 4 Policy Guidance, July 2012 version.

Funds held in a currency other than sterling

These need to be converted into sterling using the official exchange rate. This can be found on the www.oanda.com/convert/classic website. The final balance must be converted into sterling and the sterling equivalent written on the bank statement.

Financial Sponsorship

If the student is currently receiving sponsorship from an official source, or has received sponsorship in the past twelve months, then the student requires the consent of the financial sponsor to make a fresh Tier 4 application.

If the financial Sponsor provides a time limit on the student's stay in the UK, then the immigration leave will not exceed that time limit.

Sabbatical Officer

A student may serve a maximum of two annual periods as an elected Sabbatical Officer. UCL will notify the UK Border Agency that the student has been elected to serve as a Sabbatical Officer.

The student does not need to submit a fresh Tier 4 application, unless their visa will expire before or during the time as a Sabbatical Officer.

Re-sitting an examination or repeating a module

A Tier 4 application can be made to re-sit an examination or to repeat a module provided UCL will permit the student, on academic grounds, to re-sit or repeat the module.

A Tier 4 application cannot be made solely to re-sit an examination until shortly before the date of the examination. Entry Clearance will only be granted to start one month prior to the examination date.

ATAS Certificate

The need to obtain an ATAS certificate depends on the JACS code for your course of study. The CAS statement will tell you if you require an ATAS certificate. If an ATAS is required you make the application on line at www.fco.gov.uk/atas. Before starting the application you need a statement from UCL Student Records that confirms your agreed research topic.

This certificate is only required by students in certain science and engineering subjects. It mainly affects research students, (PhD, MPhil and MRes), plus some taught Masters students, and few undergraduate courses leading to a Masters degree.

Other students do not require these certificates.

A full list of the relevant courses is available on the www.fco.gov.uk/atas website.

You will not require an ATAS certificate if you are only writing up a thesis and your present visa was issued before 30th November 2007.

Changing to a new university, or education provider

If you currently hold permission under the Tier 4 rules which was granted on or after 5th October 2009 then you need to make a fresh Tier 4 application before you start the new course. You can start a new course at UCL before you receive your new Identity Card. This application must be made in the UK.

If you currently hold permission under the Tier 4 rules and you applied before 5th October 2009 then you can either make a fresh Tier 4 application or you can request permission to change education provider by using form Tier 4 (TPS). Using Form Tier 4 (TPS) will not give you extra time in the UK.

Please remember there is a possibility the UK Border Agency will refuse your request to change education provider.

Changing courses within UCL

UCL will notify the UK Border Agency if you change to another course within UCL. If you require additional time in the UK, then a fresh Tier 4 application must be submitted in the normal way.

If your new course is for a shorter period of time, then you must email this fact to the UK Border Agency. The email address is migrantreporting@ukba.gsi.gov.uk

Travel to the UK

For courses of more than six months duration, or a pre-session course, you will be permitted to travel to the UK one month before your course is due to start.

For courses of less than six months, you will be permitted to travel to the UK seven days before your course is due to start.

Contact details

Each student is expected to promptly notify UCL of any changes in their contact details.

You need to inform the UK Border Agency if you change your address; use Form MCC.