

Working after studies

Last modified: 09 April 2024

The information we provide is focused on Student visa holders in the UK, and what rights they hold. There are a variety of immigration options available to work in the UK. Where we discuss a particular route, we provide you with helpful guidance and links to the appropriate application forms.

For schemes sponsored by an employer or endorsed by your university or another body, the sponsor or endorsing body itself is normally the best source of advice. Some law centres, and other advice centres have immigration specialists who will provide some basic advice free of charge. Some private solicitors also specialise in immigration law, although they will charge you a fee for their advice. We have further information on seeking advice [here](#).

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Finding employment in the UK

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What is it like to find employment in the UK after graduation?

International graduates from across the UK have shared their experiences of seeking employment in the UK after graduation in short case studies.

They've shared their experience of:

- Applying for the Graduate route and Skilled Worker route visa.
- Getting support from their universities.
- Knowledge and attitudes of the Graduate route from UK employers.
- Useful tips and advice for anyone looking to apply to the Graduate route after graduation.

[Read their stories](#)

When can I work after I complete my studies?

Last modified: 20 December 2023

Most students have immigration permission that extends beyond the end of your studies. You can work full time during this period after you have completed your course. The student work restrictions continue to apply, unless you make a work application.

You can normally work full-time when:

- your course is complete
- the course end date on your CAS has passed
- you are no longer in term-time

You should not start a permanent full-time post (this means a job without an end date) on your Student visa. The only exceptions are if you have made a valid Skilled Worker or Graduate route application (our [Graduate route](#) and [Skilled Worker](#) visa pages give information about when you can start working if you are moving to one of those immigration routes).

You can start a part-time post that is permanent or temporary, or a temporary full-time post.

[Early course completion](#)

If you complete your course before the course end date on your CAS, your student sponsor may report this to the Home Office. They may report this as either a "change of circumstances" or a "withdrawal of sponsorship". Your work entitlement differs depending on which they have used:

- **Your sponsor has reported it as a change of circumstances:** you can start working more than your usual term-time hours from the new end date that your sponsor has reported to the Home Office.
- **Your sponsor has withdrawn sponsorship:** the Home Office will usually cancel (curtail) your immigration permission. This will bring the end date of your immigration permission forward. You can work between the new end date of your course and the new expiry date of your immigration permission.

Your sponsor has not reported early completion

If you complete your course before the course end date on your CAS and your sponsor does not report this to the Home Office, you should wait until after the course end date before you start working more than your term-time hours (10 or 20 hours a week). Talk to your sponsor if this is a problem for you.

Employers and requests for evidence

In the majority of cases (but especially when you are switching to a work route from a Student visa in the UK), employers will need confirmation from you or your student sponsor that you have now completed your course of study. This can take usually take the form of a confirmation letter, a transcript, or a highly likely to succeed letter.

It is a common misconception amongst employers that you must provide evidence that you have “**successfully** completed” your studies, or that you **must always** be awarded/graduated before you can start working. **This is not the case.**

Typically, to start working on your Student visa after your course of study is complete, the only requirement is that you can prove your course of study is complete. The Home Office have confirmed that completion can be taken to mean when you have had your final teaching contact point, sat your last exam, and submitted your final pieces of work that were due. Therefore, to prove completion, you can use either the course end date on your CAS, or an earlier date if you have completed your studies and you are able to provide supporting evidence of this from your Student sponsor.

The Skilled Worker route does have specific requirements about when you can start working and when you can make a valid application, and these are explained on our dedicated [Skilled worker visa](#) page. It is not the case however that you can only apply, or start working for an employer after making an application, once you are awarded, have graduated, or have “successfully completed” your course of study.

Only the [Graduate route](#) requires “successful completion”. You do not need a job offer or sponsorship from an employer for the Graduate route therefore you should not be required to provide any evidence to prove your successful completion from any prospective employer once you find a job. The “successful completion” requirement is proven to the Home Office by your educational institution completing a report on your behalf.

The [Employer’s guide to right to work checks](#) provides clear guidance to employers in respect of hiring those on, or coming from Student leave. Page 48 explains the following:

Students who have the right to work are permitted to work full-time before their course starts, during vacations or during the period they hold permission for after they have completed their course.

Study term times may end on any day of the week, depending upon the education provider. Therefore, if the educational institution's term time ends on a Friday, full-time work would be permitted from the next day (in this scenario, a Saturday). Students should confirm with their sponsor what the term end date is and verify this with their employer as part of the right to work checking process when considering working full time hours. This will allow employers to ensure students are not in breach of their visa conditions.

Students are not permitted to fill a permanent full-time vacancy unless they are applying to switch into the Skilled Worker or Graduate routes during their study. Changes to the Immigration Rules allow students with valid applications for these routes to take up permanent, full-time vacancies either, up to three months prior to the course completion date for the Skilled Worker route, or once they have successfully completed their course of study for the Graduate route)

[...]

For students who have limited permission to work during term-times, you must also obtain, copy and retain details of their academic term and vacation times covering the duration of their period of study in the UK for which they will be employed. The dates should be provided by the sponsoring education provider, either directly or indirectly if the student is providing a letter or email, they have received from their sponsoring education provider setting out the required details.

Immigration options from within the UK

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All the following immigration routes can be switched to from a Student visa in the UK. Not all of these routes will be available to all students, so it is important to research the requirements of each route before trying to make an application.

[Graduate route](#)

See our dedicated [Graduate route](#) page for further information.

[Skilled Worker visa](#)

See our dedicated [Skilled Worker visa](#) page for further information.

[Global Talent](#)

[Global Talent visa](#): for those who are internationally recognised or likely to become world leaders in arts and culture, humanities and social sciences, natural sciences and medical science research, engineering or digital technology. Applications must be endorsed by a designated body. [UKRI](#) can work with the designated bodies to help you apply under this scheme if you are receiving a relevant Research Council fellowship. From 5 May 2021 endorsement is not needed if you are the holder of one of the prizes listed in [Appendix Global Talent: Prestigious Prizes](#).

[Innovator Founder](#)

[Innovator Founder](#): this new visa route was opened on 13 April 2023 and was brought in to replace the Start-up and Innovator visa routes. The route is designed for migrants that are either seeking to start a business in the UK, or for those with existing businesses endorsed by an approved body. For

those seeking to start a new business, the business idea should be "new, innovative, viable, and scalable". You will need an [endorsing body](#) to endorse your business idea. There are currently only 4 endorsing bodies for an Innovator Founder visa.

There is no need to provide evidence of business funding or capital; this was a requirement under the old Innovator visa, but it is not a requirement for the Innovator Founder visa.

This route can be a route to settlement, and dependents are permitted.

High Potential Individual

High Potential Individual: this new visa route is for individuals with an undergraduate or postgraduate degree from one of the top global universities from outside the UK. The qualification must have been awarded within the last 5 years. Successful applicants will be granted 2 years of immigration permission (3 years for those with a qualification equivalent to a UK PhD).

This lists of eligible institutions from 2018 to 2023 can be found in the [Global Universities List](#).

This route is not a route to settlement, and dependents are permitted.

Scale-up Worker

Scale-up Worker: this new visa route is for individuals with a certificate of sponsorship from a UK Scale-up sponsor. There are required salary requirements, similar to how the Skilled Worker route functions. Initial applications under this route must be sponsored, but subsequent extensions may be unsponsored.

This route is a route to settlement via the 5 year route, and dependents are permitted.

Global Business Mobility routes

Global Business Mobility has 5 separate routes within it:

- [Senior or Specialist Worker](#)
- [Graduate Trainee](#)
- [UK Expansion Worker](#)
- [Service Supplier](#)
- [Secondment Worker](#)

These routes were introduced on 11 April 2022, replacing some old routes and introducing one new route. They are designed for overseas businesses to establish a presence in, or transfer staff to, the UK for specific business purposes.

None of these routes are routes to settlement, and dependents are permitted.

Temporary Worker - government authorised exchange

Temporary worker - government authorised exchange: people who want to participate in an approved government authorised exchange scheme. The schemes are listed in [Appendix Government Authorised Exchange schemes of the Immigration Rules](#).

British National (Overseas) visa

British National (Overseas) visa: people from Hong Kong with a BN(O) passport who want to live, work or study in the UK

Immigration options from overseas

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All the following immigration routes must normally be applied for from outside the UK. You should apply in a country in which you are living. Some of these routes are temporary and cannot be extended, so it is important to check each route carefully to see which would be best for your situation.

Youth Mobility Scheme

The [Youth Mobility Scheme](#) is a flexible visa that allows both work and study, and after its expiry you must leave the UK.

Age requirement

You must be aged between 18 and 30 years old, or 18 and 35 years old if you are a national of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, or the Republic of Korea.

Nationality requirement

You may be eligible to apply for a Youth Mobility Scheme visa if you are a passport holder of the following countries: Andorra, Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Iceland, India, Japan, Monaco, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, San Marino, Taiwan, and Uruguay.

Hong Kong and Taiwan nationals must apply through the [Youth Mobility Scheme ballot](#) before applying for this visa.

You may also be eligible if you hold a British Overseas Citizens, British Overseas Territories Citizens and British Nationals (Overseas) passport. There are some additional criteria for holders of certain passports.

Visa details

The Youth Mobility Scheme visa is granted for 2 years and cannot be extended unless you are an Australian, Canadian, or New Zealand national, where you are able to extend your permission for one year. It permits work and study in the UK.

The [Home Office's guidance on where to apply for a visa](#) says that applications for the Youth Mobility Scheme can be made in any country (outside of the UK) where you are legally present. It is not clear if this is a concession on the more strict provision of [paragraph 28A of the immigration rules](#) which says that an application will only be accepted in a country (outside of the UK) where you have permission to live for more than 6 months.

India Young Professionals Scheme

India Young Professionals Scheme: this visa allows Indian citizens between the ages of 18 and 30 to live and work in the UK for 2 years. To apply for this visa you must first be selected in the India Young Professionals Scheme ballot. You cannot apply without being successful in the ballot first. There are some additional requirements for the visa such as holding sufficient finances and holding an eligible qualification. You cannot apply for this visa if you have already held leave under the India Young Professionals Scheme or the Youth Mobility Scheme.

Temporary Worker - other routes

Temporary Worker (T5) has five sub-categories:

- [creative](#)
- [charity worker](#) (voluntary work)
- [religious worker](#)
- [international agreement](#) (work covered by international law, for example, the General Agreement on Trade in Services, employees of international organisations or other countries' governments)
- [seasonal worker](#)

These schemes allow you to undertake specific types of work in the UK for a period of one or two years, depending on the scheme. The sponsor must issue a Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS). Sponsors are listed together with Skilled worker sponsors. In order to find sponsors with the type of sponsor licence you are interested in, open the [full list of work visa sponsors](#) and search for Creative & sporting, Voluntary workers, Religious workers, Exchange or International agreements.

UK ancestry

UK ancestry visa: a visa for Commonwealth citizens, British Overseas Territories citizens, British Nationals (Overseas), British Overseas citizens, or British subjects who intend to work in the UK. You must be aged 17 or over and prove that a grandparent was born in the UK, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, or on a British-registered ship or aircraft. You are also eligible if a grandparent was born in the Republic of Ireland before 31 March 1922.

Information for specific professions

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Some professions in the UK have certain immigration requirements attached to them. If you are thinking about working in any of the professions listed, take a look at our guidance to learn about any specifics.

Sabbatical officers

You can stay in the UK under the Student route if you have been elected to a full-time post as a students' union sabbatical officer at an education establishment where you are registered as a student. The Student route also covers you if you are elected to a post with the National Union of Students.

You will need to meet the requirements for a Student route application. However, the Home Office does not expect you to study during this period. The Home Office should give you permission to be in the UK for 12 months which you can apply to extend up to a two year maximum if you are re-elected.

You can find detailed information for you, the students' union where you are going to work as a sabbatical officer and your Student sponsor in [Student union sabbatical officers](#).

For the logistics of switching to the Graduate route before, during or after working as a students' union sabbatical offer, see our detailed guide to the Graduate route above.

Teachers

The UK government's Department for Education has a dedicated and detailed ["Get into Teaching" website](#) about teacher training in England. The information in this section is taken from that website.

For information about teacher training in other parts of the UK, see these websites:

- [Prospects: Teaching in Scotland](#)
- [Discover Teaching in Wales](#)
- [UCAS guide to Teaching in Northern Ireland](#).

In England there are two separate training routes:

- a **non-salaried** route where you study at a specific college or university for a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), or

- a **salaried** route where you work at a school, called School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT).

We do not offer individual advice about the Get Into Teaching programme, but the following guidance is based on their website.

Immigration & visas

If you need to apply for immigration permission to undertake teacher training under the **non-salaried** route, the college or university providing the PGCE will need to sponsor you for an application under [the Student route](#). The college or university providing the course can advise on enrolment issues, including what evidence of your immigration status they will need to see at enrolment.

If you need immigration permission to train under the **salaried** route, check your eligibility to switch from Student permission to the new Graduate route. The [UK government's guidance on teacher training for international applicants](#) suggests that Skilled worker visa sponsorship may be available on the salaried route, but in our experience this is rare.

Tuition fees, funding, bursaries, and scholarships

This is general information. For detailed information and figures, see the UK government's guide to [Funding: initial teacher training \(ITT\)](#).

On the **non-salaried** route, a trainee studying a PGCE with Tier 4 or Student permission is likely to pay tuition fees at the "overseas" rate but you can check your personal eligibility for the "home" fee rate in our detailed guide to [home or overseas fees](#).

A trainee on the **salaried** route is not eligible for any bursary or scholarship. Grants are only available for the school providing your training.

Lawyers

The Graduate route allows applications from those completing some law courses. You may also be eligible to apply under the Skilled worker route.

If you are eligible for the Youth Mobility Scheme or UK ancestry scheme, you can apply in your home country then come back to the UK and train. Someone who is in the UK as a dependant can also train.

Pupil barristers might be eligible to apply under Temporary Worker: Government Authorised Exchange as the Bar Council is a Tier 5 sponsor. This is not an option for trainee solicitors.

Architects

Check your eligibility for the Graduate route or the Skilled worker route.

If you are eligible for the Youth Mobility Scheme or UK ancestry you can apply in your home country then come back to the UK and train. Someone who is in the UK as a dependant can also train.

Your course provider should be able to explain whether you can undertake work between Parts 1 and 2 of your course with Student leave.

Doctors & dentists

Both the [Graduate](#) and [Skilled Worker](#) routes are potential options for postgraduate doctors and dentists seeking to continue their training in the UK on the relevant foundation programmes. We are aware of reports that Health Education England no longer sponsor postgraduate doctors and dentists in training under the Student route.

Optometrists

Check your eligibility to apply under the Graduate route.

Otherwise, optometrists who wish to undertake pre-registration training can apply in the UK to switch from Tier 4 or Student permission to the Temporary worker: Government Authorised Exchange scheme. See further information on [provided by the College of Optometrists](#).

If you are eligible for the Youth Mobility Scheme or UK ancestry, or you are in the UK as someone's dependant, you can work with very few restrictions, including work as an optometrist.

Pharmacists

Check your eligibility to apply under the Graduate route. Otherwise, pharmacists are covered by the Skilled worker route. Pharmacist is [a shortage occupation](#) which means [the visa application fee is reduced](#).

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society no longer offers sponsorship under Temporary worker: Government Authorised Exchange (T5) for the Pharmacy Professional Sponsorship Scheme (PPSS).

If you are eligible for the Youth Mobility Scheme or UK ancestry, or you are in the UK as someone's dependant, you can work with very few restrictions, including work as a pharmacist.

Closed routes

Last modified: 24 October 2023

The routes listed below have now closed to new applicants. The information provided is for individuals that still hold valid leave under these routes.

[Start-up \(closed 13 July 2023\)](#)

The Start-up visa route was replaced by the Innovator Founder route in 2023. Some migrants in the UK may still have Start-up immigration permission as this route was closed quite recently to new applicants only. We have provided some information below for those still on this permission.

Your endorsing body is required to have contact with you after 6 months, and again after 12 months from the date your immigration application was granted. An endorsing body may wish to have contact with you more often.

At these contact points you will need to demonstrate that you are making reasonable progress with the business plan assessed in your endorsement. If you are no longer pursuing your original business idea, you must be pursuing a new business venture that your endorsing body is satisfied meets the criteria of being innovative, viable and scalable.

The [Home Office guidance for endorsing bodies](#) explains on page 29 the circumstances under which an endorsing body should consider withdrawing their endorsement:

- An applicant fails to stay in contact with you as requested.
- You discover that applicant has not been developing their business.
- An applicant's business has failed and they do not wish to start another business, or the business they intend to start is not, in your judgement, innovative viable and scalable.

It is very important that you do not miss a scheduled contact without first seeking your endorsing body's permission.

If you wish to extend your stay in the UK after your Start-up permission expires, you will not be able to extend your Start-up permission. This is because this route is now closed. You will need to apply under another immigration route to remain in the UK.

[Doctorate Extension Scheme \(closed 1 July 2021\)](#)

The Doctorate Extension Scheme (DES) is no longer active and was replaced by the Graduate route in 2021. When it was active, successful applicants were granted 12 months of immigration permission. It was only applicable to PhD students.

If you have held permission under DES in the past, it is important to note that this prevents you from being eligible for the Graduate route. This is because the Graduate route rules state (Appendix Graduate, GR 1.4):

“The applicant must not have been previously granted permission under the Doctorate Extension Scheme or as a Graduate.”

As DES only granted 12 months of immigration permission, there should now not be any migrants in the UK with this permission.

Resources

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UKCISA are not experts on all immigration routes, and do not provide advice on individual circumstances when applying for one of these routes. It is important that you speak to any prospective sponsor (where applicable) or an OISC registered immigration adviser about any concerns, questions, or issues you may have in respect of these routes and their immigration applications.

We have collated some resources that will hopefully give you further guidance to help you with these discussions.

[UKCISA - International Student Employability Group](#)

UKCISA chairs this group of sector bodies to conduct research into international student employability, engage with government and employers, and support education providers with international students and work.

[Study UK - Preparing for work \(MOOC\)](#)

The British Council have teamed up with Future Learn to provide this helpful MOOC on starting preparation for work in the UK.

Related content

[Finding work, employers and tax](#)
[Graduate route](#)
[Skilled Worker visa](#)

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