

Studying English in the UK – students who need a visa (Visa Nationals)

This information is for advice only.

For the most up-to-date information, please contact your local embassy or visit <https://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/student-visas>

Do I need a visa to study in the UK?

For visa purposes, the world is divided into 3 areas:

1. EU/EEA/Switzerland

Citizens of one of these countries do not need a visa and can come and go as they please.

2. Visa nationals (VN)

A Visa National requires a visa to enter the UK for any reason and must get one before they leave their country. Visa National countries include Colombia, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Turkey.

3. Non-visa nationals (NVN)

A Non-Visa National needs a visa, but for stays up to 6 months does not need to apply for one before they leave their country. They can get a Short-term Student Visa (see below) for up to 6 months on arrival at a UK airport. A General Student Visa must be applied for and granted before departure. Non Visa National countries of relevance to us include Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Taiwan, Uruguay.

You can check whether you need a visa, go to: <https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa>

What type of student visa do I need?

If you need a visa to study, there are currently two types of visa available:

- Short-term study visa
- Tier 4 student visa

1 Short-term study visa

A short-term study visa allows people over 18 years old to study:

- a short course (including English language courses) for up to 6 months
- an English Language course for up to 11 months

You can apply for a short-term study visa up to 3 months before your date of travel and should get a decision within 3 weeks of application. Check the gov.uk visa processing times for more information.

To apply for this visa you must provide proof:

- that you have been accepted onto a course
- that you have enough money for your stay
- that you have money for your return journey

You can find details about eligibility for this visa and the documents you need to provide at www.gov.uk/study-visit-visa/overview

What you can and can't do

You can:

- do a short course of study in the UK, such as an English language course or a training course
- do a short period of research as part of a degree course if you are studying abroad

You can't:

- study at a state school
- work (including on a work placement or work experience) or carry out any business
- extend this visa
- bring family members ('dependants') with you - they must apply separately
- get public funds

How long you can stay

You can stay in the UK for:

- 6 months - for any short course (including English language courses), or short period of research if you're 18 or over
- 11 months - if you're 18 or over and taking an English language course

2 Tier 4 (General) student visa

You can apply for a Tier 4 visa if you are 16 or over and you:

- have been offered a place on a course
- can speak, read, write and understand English
- have enough money to support yourself and pay for your course - the amount will vary depending on your circumstances

What you can and can't do

You can:

- study
- work as a student union sabbatical officer
- apply from inside or outside the UK
- apply to extend your stay
- work in most jobs - depending on course level and what kind of sponsor you have

You can't:

- get public funds
- work in certain jobs, for example, professional sportsperson or sports coach
- study at an academy or a local authority-funded school (also known as a maintained school)
- You may be able to bring in family members (dependants).

Level of English

- You must prove your knowledge of the English language when you apply.
- This usually means passing a secure English language test (SELT).

Where you're studying	What you're studying	Knowledge of English needed	Level
Higher education institution (HEI)	Degree level or above	Reading, writing, listening and speaking	Equivalent to CEFR (Common European Framework for languages) level B2
Institution that's not HEI	Degree level or above	SELT in reading, writing, listening and speaking	CEFR level B2
Any institution	Below degree	SELT in reading, writing, listening and speaking	CEFR level B1

How long you can stay

You can arrive in the UK before your course starts:

- up to 1 week before, if your course lasts 6 months or less
- up to 1 month before, if your course lasts more than 6 months