



## Coronavirus (COVID-19) factsheet: visa holders and short-term residents in the UK

Thursday 09 April 2020

Guidance on immigration provisions made by the Home Office for individuals affected by travel restrictions associated with coronavirus (COVID-19).

### Key lines

- The Home Office has [published guidance on GOV.UK](#) on immigration provisions for individuals affected by travel restrictions associated with coronavirus (COVID-19).

### Extending a visa

- If the individual already has leave in the UK and planned to remain and apply to extend their leave when it expired, they must continue to do this.
- No individual who is in the UK legally and whose visa expired after 24 January 2020, or is due to expire, will be regarded as an overstayer or suffer any detriment in the future if they cannot leave the UK because of travel restrictions related to COVID-19.
- A visa will be extended to 31 May 2020 if an individual cannot leave the UK because of travel restrictions or self-isolation related to coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Individuals must [update their records with the Coronavirus Immigration Team \(CIT\)](#) if their visa is expiring and were not planning to stay in the UK.

The Coronavirus Immigration Team will aim to reply to an individual's application within 5 working days.

- Individuals do not need to do anything else once they have submitted the online e-form and their status in the UK is secure from the point they have submitted. This requirement to contact Coronavirus Immigration Team applies to individuals of any nationality whose leave expires between 24 January 2020 and 30 May 2020.

### Switching visas

- An individual can apply from the UK to switch to a long-term UK visa until 31 May 2020. This includes applications where they would usually need to apply for a visa from their home country.
- They will need to meet the requirements of the route they are applying for and pay the UK application fee.



# Home Office

- This includes those whose leave has already been automatically extended to 31 March 2020.
- They can apply online. The terms of their leave will remain the same until their application is decided.

## Completing their application

- UK Visa and Citizenship Application Centres (UKVCAS) and Service and Support Centres (SSCs) are temporarily closed because of coronavirus (COVID-19). An individual's immigration status will not be negatively affected as a result of them not being able to attend an appointment.
- If an individual already made an appointment to attend a UKVCAS service point, or a Service and Support Centre (SSC), they'll be contacted and told what to do next. Their immigration status will not be negatively affected as a result of them not being able to attend an appointment.

## Additional services

- We have also temporarily suspended Priority and Super Priority services for UK customers.
- We will aim to meet the Priority/Super Priority service standard if an individual has already enrolled their biometrics. They will get an email when a decision has been made, followed by a decision letter.
- If we are not able to make a faster decision on an application due to the impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) on processing standards we will contact the individual and refund the priority service fee they paid.

## If an individual applied for a Tier 4 visa and are waiting for a decision on an application

An individual can start their course or studies before a visa application has been decided if:

- an individual's sponsor is a Tier 4 sponsor
- an individual have been given a confirmation of acceptance for studies (CAS)
- the individual submitted an application before their current visa expired and show evidence to their sponsor of this
- the course they start is the same as the one listed on their CAS
- the individual have a valid [Academic Technology Approval Scheme](#) (ATAS) certificate if required

If an individual's application is eventually refused the individual must stop their course or studies.



## **If an individual applied for a Tier 2 or 5 visa and are waiting for a decision on an application**

Individuals can start work before a visa application has been decided if:

- an individual have been assigned a Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS)
- an individual submitted an application before their current visa expired and show evidence to their sponsor of this
- the job they start is the same as the one listed on their CoS

If an individual's application is eventually refused the sponsor will stop sponsoring the them and individual must stop working for the sponsor.

## **Tier 1 Entrepreneur visa**

- If an individual is on a Tier 1 Entrepreneur visa and their business has been disrupted, they no longer need to employ at least 2 people for 12 consecutive months each.
- The 12 month period they are required to employ someone for can be made up of multiple employees across different months.
- Time when their workers were furloughed will not count towards the 12 month period.

## **Doctors, nurses or paramedics working for the NHS**

- An individual's visa will be automatically extended by one year if it is due to expire before 1 October 2020. Family members with a visa due to expire before 1 October 2020 will also have their visa extended.
- The extension is free and they will not have to pay the immigration health surcharge.
- Individuals do not need to apply. We will contact NHS employers to identify staff eligible for this extension.
- We will notify the individual and their employer if they have received an automatic extension.
- There is no longer a limit on the number of hours an individual can work or volunteer each week if they work for the NHS as a doctor, nurse or paramedic and they are a:
  - Tier 4 student
  - Tier 2 worker and their NHS job is a second job
  - visiting academic researcher
  - holder of a short-term visa and are permitted to volunteer

If an individual is a pre-registration nurse currently in the UK, the deadline for them to sit the Occupational Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) has been extended to



31 December 2020.

## Students in the UK

- Tier 4 students are not normally permitted to undertake distance learning courses. However, due to the current exceptional circumstances, we will not consider it a breach of sponsor duties to offer distance learning to existing Tier 4 students in the UK or who have chosen to return overseas but wish to continue their current studies. Sponsors do not need to withdraw sponsorship in these circumstances. If a student has permanently withdrawn from, or formally deferred, their studies, the usual reporting requirements apply.
- New international students who have been issued a Tier 4 visa but have been unable to travel to the UK are permitted to undertake distance learning and sponsorship does not need to be withdrawn.
- New international students who have not yet applied for a visa but wish to commence a course by distance learning do not need to travel to the UK to do so and therefore do not require sponsorship under Tier 4.
- These arrangements apply initially until 31 May, by which date they will be reviewed.

## Workers in the UK

- We are aware that many workers sponsored under the Tiers 2 and 5 immigration routes are now working from home rather than their normal workplace due to the coronavirus pandemic. Tiers 2 and 5 sponsors are normally required to notify us of such changes of circumstances. However, due to the current exceptional situation, we will not require sponsors to do so if working from home is directly related to the pandemic. Other changes must still be reported as usual.

**UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) has set up a dedicated team for customers with immigration queries related to coronavirus, including questions about urgent, compelling, compassionate cases. For more information visit:**  
[Gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents)

## Additional Information

**How do foreign nationals get a status letter confirming a visa extension, or a new Biometric Residence Permit with a revised expiry date?**

All nationals who need evidence of their extension should contact the Coronavirus Immigration Team.

Visit the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): advice for UK visa applicants and temporary UK residents](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents) GOV.UK page for more information.



# Home Office

## **How can individuals give biometrics if their appointment has been cancelled?**

UK Visa and Citizenship Application Centres (UKVCAS) and Service and Support Centres (SSCs) are temporarily closed because of coronavirus (COVID-19).

If an individual already made an appointment to attend a UKVCAS service point, or a Service and Support Centre (SSC), they'll be contacted and told what to do next.

Their immigration status will not be negatively affected as a result of them not being able to attend an appointment.

**Customers who have an urgent query or application that they need resolved urgently they can contact: [CIH@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:CIH@homeoffice.gov.uk)**

## **Can an individual now apply to switch visa types in the UK?**

They'll be able to apply from the UK to switch to a long-term UK visa, including if they would usually need to apply for a visa from their home country. They'll need to meet the same visa requirements and pay the UK application fee. This includes those whose leave has been automatically extended to 31 March 2020.

They should apply online.

They will not be regarded as an overstayer or be subject to enforcement action if they're unable to attend a biometric appointment due to coronavirus or if there are delays in processing their application.

## **What will happen to immigrants in the UK with regards to their jobs and finances?**

If they are a foreign national in the UK and have observed the terms of their visa prior to the coronavirus outbreak, they must contact the Coronavirus Immigration Team who will then extend their visa to 31 May 2020 if their visa has an expiry date between 24 January 2020 and 30 March 2020.

We understand that this is a difficult time and for this reason we are continually reviewing the situation to consider what more can be done for those in the UK whose immigration status has been affected by coronavirus.

There also is a dedicated helpline available for anyone who wishes to discuss their individual circumstances.

Further guidance is available at: [gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents)

## **How can we trust the Coronavirus Immigration Team (CIT) and logging of cases will work?**

The Coronavirus Immigration Team is providing advice and support on a number of different scenarios. Should an applicant raise a specific case, in accordance with normal Home Office/UKVI procedures, details will be logged on the relevant casework system. All emails and e-forms sent and received are being retained. We are continually monitoring the volume of enquiries and ensuring that appropriate staffing resources are in place to manage these.