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Guidance

Coronavirus (COVID-19): advice for UK visa applicants and temporary UK residents

This is advice for visa customers and applicants in the UK, visa customers outside of the UK and British nationals overseas who need to apply for a passport affected by travel restrictions associated with coronavirus.

Published 24 March 2020

Last updated 3 April 2020 — see all updates

From:

Home Office (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office>) and UK Visas and Immigration (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration>)

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If you're in the UK and your leave expires between 24 January 2020 and 31 May 2020

Your visa will be extended to 31 May 2020 if you cannot leave the UK because of travel restrictions or self-isolation related to coronavirus (COVID-19).

You must contact the Coronavirus Immigration Team (CIT) to update your records if your visa is expiring and you were not planning to stay in the UK.

You should provide:

- your full name (include any middle names)
- date of birth (dd/mm/yyyy)
- nationality
- your previous visa reference number
- why you can't go back to your home country, for example if the border has closed

The email must be in English.

We aim to reply to your email within 5 working days.

If you're applying to stay in the UK long-term

You can apply from the UK to switch to a long-term UK visa until 31 May 2020. This includes applications where you would usually need to apply for a visa from your home country.

You'll need to meet the requirements of the route you are applying for and pay the UK application fee.

This includes those whose leave has already been automatically extended to 31 March 2020.

You can apply online. The terms of your leave will remain the same until your application is decided.

Application and Service Centres in the UK

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

You cannot book an appointment.

If you've already made an appointment

If you've already made an appointment to attend a UKVCAS or an SSC, you will be contacted to be informed that it has been cancelled. You'll be advised when you can book a new appointment.

Your immigration status in the UK will not change as a result of you not being able to attend an appointment.

If you are on a Tier 1 Entrepreneur visa and your business has been disrupted

You no longer need to employ at least 2 people for 12 consecutive months each. The 12 month period you are required to employ someone for can be made up of multiple employees across different months.

Time when your employees were furloughed will not count towards the 12 month period.

If have not been able to employ staff for 12 months in total by the time your visa expires, you will be allowed to temporarily extend your stay to give you time to meet the requirement.

If you're a doctor, nurse or paramedic working for the NHS

Your 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 you will not have to pay the immigration health surcharge.

You do not need to apply. We will contact NHS employers to identify staff eligible for this extension.

We will tell you and your employer if you have received an automatic extension.

Changes to the current restrictions on the number of hours you can work or volunteer

There is no longer a limit on the number of hours you can work or volunteer each week if you work for the NHS as a doctor, nurse or paramedic and you are a:

- tier 4 student
- tier 2 worker and your NHS job is a second job
- visiting academic researcher
- holder of a short-term visa and are permitted to volunteer

If you are a pre-registration nurse in the UK

The deadline for you to sit the Occupational Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) has been extended to 31 December 2020.

If you're outside the UK

All UK Visa Application Centres (VACs) are closed. For updates to the status of VACs in your country, contact:

- TLS contact (<https://uk.tlscontact.com>) if you're in Europe, Africa and parts of the Middle East
- VFS global (<https://www.vfsglobal.co.uk>) for all other countries

In some areas UKVI cannot send visa vignettes across borders and routes due to restrictions.

If you have an appointment and the VAC is now closed, you'll be contacted and told your appointment will not take place.

English Testing Centres are also affected. Visit the International English Language Testing System (IELTS)'s website (<https://www.ielts.org/news/2020/covid19-information-for-our-global-test-taker-community>) or contact your test centre for more information.

Getting your documents

Due to worldwide border, travel and public health restrictions it may not be possible to return your passport at this time.

If you have submitted your passport and would like it returned, you must contact the visa application centre where you logged your application to see if courier return is available in your location.

British nationals abroad who need to apply for a passport

If your country's VAC is closed, you won't be able to apply for a British passport. If you urgently need to travel to the UK, you can apply for an emergency travel document (<https://www.gov.uk/emergency-travel-document>).

If you are applying for a Global Talent, Start-up or Innovator visa

If your endorsement from an endorsing body has expired because you have not been able to travel to the UK you may still be eligible for a visa. You should make your application as planned and we will consider all applications on a case by case basis.

Coronavirus Immigration Help Centre

If you have immigration queries related to coronavirus, please email the Coronavirus Immigration Help Centre.

Email: CIH@homeoffice.gov.uk. Your email must be in English.

We aim to reply to your email within 5 working days.

You can also call the Coronavirus Immigration Help Centre. If you've emailed the help centre already, please do not contact them by phone.

Telephone: 0800 678 1767 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

Calls are free of charge.

If your query doesn't relate to immigration provisions associated with coronavirus, please contact the general immigration helpline (<https://www.gov.uk/contact-ukvi-inside-outside-uk>).

Published 24 March 2020

Last updated 3 April 2020 + show all updates

1. 3 April 2020

Guidance added for NHS staff, holders of Tier 1 Entrepreneur visas and those applying for a Global Talent, Start-up or Innovator visa.

2. 27 March 2020

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

3. 25 March 2020

Updated to add information on the 5 working day response time for helpline emails.

4. 24 March 2020

First published.

Related content

Collection

- Coronavirus (COVID-19): immigration and borders (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-immigration-and-borders>)

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- Visas and entry clearance (<https://www.gov.uk/entering-staying-uk/visas-entry-clearance>)