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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 29 July 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 expired between 24 January 2020 and 31 July 2020

If you had a visa that expired between 24 January 2020 and 31 July 2020 you were able to request an extension if you were not able to return home because of travel restrictions or self-isolation related to coronavirus (COVID-19).

Now travel restrictions are lifting globally you will no longer be able to extend your visa automatically on this basis and you are expected to take all reasonable steps to leave the UK where it is possible to do so or apply to regularise your stay in the UK.

If you decide to leave the UK

To allow time to make the necessary arrangements to leave the UK, if you have a visa or leave that was due to expire between the 24 January 2020 and 31 July 2020, you will be given an extra month's grace period within the UK to 31 August 2020.

During the grace period the conditions of your stay in the UK will be the same as the conditions of your leave. So, if your conditions allowed you to work, study or rent accommodation you may continue to do so during August 2020 ahead of your departure.

You do not need to contact the Home Office to tell us you are able to leave the UK during the grace period up until the 31 August.

If you intend to leave the UK but are not able to do so by 31 August 2020, you may request additional time to stay, also known as 'exceptional indemnity', by contacting the coronavirus immigration team (CIT).

The indemnity does not grant you leave but will act as a short-term protection against any adverse action or consequences after your leave has expired.

The Coronavirus Immigration Team will provide you with further advice on what you need to do to request an indemnity. This will include providing details of the reason why you are unable to leave the UK and supporting evidence, for example, a confirmed flight ticket with a date after 31 August or confirmation of a positive coronavirus test result.

If you intend to stay in the UK

If you decide to stay in the UK, you should apply for the necessary leave to remain in the UK. You will also be able to submit an application form from within the UK where you would usually need to apply for a visa from your home country.

You will need to meet the requirements of the route you're applying for and pay the UK application fee. This includes those whose leave has already been extended to 31 July 2020 and the grace period until 31 August 2020.

The terms of your leave will remain the same until your application is decided. If you are switching into work (<https://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/work-visas>) or study (<https://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/student-visas>) routes you may be able to commence work or study whilst your application is under consideration .

If you have overstayed your leave

If your visa or leave expired between 24 January 2020 and 31 July 2020 there will be no future adverse immigration consequences if you didn't make an application to regularise your stay during this period. However, you must now do so from 1 August.

Application and Service Centres in the UK

Some UK Visa and Citizenship Application Centres ([UKVCAS](https://www.gov.uk/ukvcas)) have reopened for existing customers. You can check which [UKVCAS](https://www.gov.uk/ukvcas) centres are open (<https://www.gov.uk/ukvcas>).

Service and Support Centres (SSCs) are offering a reduced number of appointments because of coronavirus. As more appointments are made available UKVI will invite you to arrange an appointment by email or post (<https://www.gov.uk/visas-and-immigration-service-and-support-centres>).

If you've given your fingerprints before

If UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) can reuse the fingerprints you've already given, you'll be emailed with instructions on how to send them an image of your face and your supporting documents.

This will mean you do not have to attend a UKVCAS or an SSC service point appointment to provide biometric information.

If you cannot send the information through the instructions given, you'll be able to book an appointment.

English language testing centres in the UK

Some English Testing Centres are resuming services. For more information on how you can book your English Language Test, contact either:

- your test centre
- Trinity College London (<https://www.trinitycollege.com/qualifications/SELT/UKVI>)
- International English Language Testing System (IELTS) (<https://www.ielts.org/book-a-test/find-a-test-location/location-list/united-kingdom/ukvi>)
- LanguageCert website (<https://www.languagecert.org/uk-visa-exams>)
- Pearson Test of English (<https://pearsonpte.com/>)

If you've already made an appointment

We have contacted you if you made an appointment to attend a UKVCAS or SSC that is still temporary closed to let you know it has been postponed. You'll be contacted 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're 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. The 12 month period you're required to employ someone for can be made up of multiple jobs across different months.

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

If you've not been able to employ staff for 12 months by the time your visa expires, you'll be allowed to temporarily extend your stay to give you time to meet the requirement.

These arrangements will continue for applications made after 31 May 2020, where the jobs you're relying on were disrupted due to coronavirus.

If you've applied for a Tier 4 visa and are waiting for a decision on your application

You can start your course or studies before your visa application has been decided if:

- your sponsor is a Tier 4 sponsor
- you have been given a confirmation of acceptance for studies (CAS)
- you submitted your application before your current visa expired and you show your sponsor evidence of this
- the course you start is the same as the one listed on your CAS
- you have a valid Academic Technology Approval Scheme (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academic-technology-approval-scheme>) (ATAS) certificate if required

If your application is eventually rejected as invalid or refused you must stop your course or studies.

If you've applied for a Tier 2 or 5 visa and are waiting for a decision on your application

You can start work before your visa application has been decided if:

- you've been assigned a Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS)
- you submitted your application before your current visa expired and you show your sponsor evidence of this
- the job you start is the same as the one listed on your CoS

If your application is eventually rejected as invalid or refused your sponsor will stop sponsoring you and you must stop working for them.

If you need more information about the measures in place for students and their sponsors

You can read detailed guidance on the temporary measures in place for Tier 4 sponsors, their students and short-term students in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-tier-4-sponsors-migrants-and-short-term-students>).

If you're working for the NHS

Some health workers and their families will get their visas automatically extended (<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-frontline-health-worker-visa-extension>) because of coronavirus. The extension will apply from the date your visa is due to expire.

If your visa is due to expire after 1 October 2020, you'll need to apply to extend your visa as usual.

These changes will apply to you if:

- you work for the NHS or an independent health or care provider
- your visa expires between 31 March and 1 October
- you work as a:
 - biochemist
 - biological scientist
 - dental practitioner
 - health professional
 - medical practitioner
 - medical radiographer
 - midwife
 - nurse
 - occupational therapist
 - ophthalmologist
 - paramedic
 - pharmacist
 - physiotherapist

- podiatrist
- psychologist
- social worker
- speech and language therapist
- therapy professional

If you'll be working at a different NHS site than your usual place of work because of coronavirus

You can work at any NHS hospital during the coronavirus outbreak if your sponsor can maintain their sponsorship duties.

Sponsors will not need to notify UKVI of the change in your place of work.

If you do any different or extra work due to coronavirus

You can carry out supplementary work in any role at any skill level during the coronavirus outbreak. There is no restriction on the number of hours you can work.

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're 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're 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 do not pass on the first attempt, you'll have until 31 May 2021 to pass the exam.

If you're working on coronavirus research

If you're a scientist researching coronavirus (COVID-19), you may be able to apply for a Global Talent visa using the UKRI endorsed funder option. Find out about the requirements for coronavirus researchers (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-applications-under-global-talent>).

If you're outside the UK

There are changes at the border because of coronavirus. Check what you need to do before you travel (<https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control>).

Some UK Visa Application Centres (VACs) are resuming services where local restrictions allow. Services will reopen in phases.

To support customers accessing their documents, a limited number of VACs are opening for passport return only, before resuming wider services where local restrictions allow.

The reopening of [VAC](#) locations remains subject to local circumstances. For updates to the status of [VACs](#), including opening times in your country, check with:

- 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

Ongoing global restrictions mean some UKVI services will remain closed. Where services are resuming, existing customers will be contacted.

Some English Testing Centres are also resuming services. Visit the International English Language Testing System (IELTS)'s website (<https://www.ielts.org/news/2020/covid19-information-for-our-global-test-taker-community>), the Pearson Test of English website (<https://pearsonpte.com>) or the LanguageCert website (<https://www.languagecert.org/uk-visa-exams>) or contact your test centre for more information on where we are reopening and how you can book your Secure English Language Test.

Getting your documents

As [VACs](#) reopen their services, we will prioritise returning customer passports.

If the [VAC](#) where you applied is still closed we will not be able to return your passport.

To support customers accessing their documents we are opening a limited number of [VACs](#) for passport returns only. Where a [VAC](#) is only open for passport return, you will not be able to submit a new application.

If your passport is in a [VAC](#), and a decision on your application has been made, the [VAC](#) will contact you to arrange collection.

If your application has not been decided, we will not contact you to return your passport until it has. If you would like your passport returned, even if your application has not been decided, please contact the [VAC](#) to arrange collection.

To see if the [VAC](#) is open for passport return in your country, check with:

- 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

We are continuing to reopen more [VACs](#) where local restrictions allow and social distancing can be maintained.

British nationals abroad who need to apply for a passport

Her Majesty's Passport Office is accepting online passport applications.

If you're advised that you must book an appointment at your nearest [VAC](#) to submit your passport application, you should check if it's open (<https://www.gov.uk/find-a-visa-application-centre>).

If your country's [VAC](#) is still closed, you won't be able to apply for a British passport until it reopens.

If you urgently need to travel to the UK, you should contact the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to discuss your options. You can also check the latest travel advice (<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>) from the FCO.

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

If your endorsement from an endorsing body has expired because you've 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.

If your 30 day visa to work, study or join family has expired

If your 30 day visa to travel to the UK for work, study or to join family has expired, or is about to expire, you can request a replacement visa with revised validity dates free of charge until the end of this year. This does not apply to other types of visas.

This process will be in place until the end of 2020.

To request a replacement visa you can either:

- contact the Coronavirus Immigration Help Centre
- arrange to return your passport to your [VAC](#) if it has re-opened

Contacting the Coronavirus Immigration Help Centre:

You'll need to include your name, nationality, date of birth and your GWF reference number with 'REPLACEMENT 30 DAY VISA' in the subject line. If you've already contacted us about this, please let us know in your email.

We are dealing with a high number of requests and will reply as soon as we can. Please do not contact us again unless you need to tell us about a change in your circumstances.

Contact the Coronavirus Immigration Help Centre.

You'll be contacted when our [VACs](#) reopen to arrange for a replacement visa to be endorsed in your passport. Your replacement visa will be valid for 90 days.

Alternatively, you can arrange to return your passport to your [VAC](#) if it has re-opened.

Please do not travel to the [VAC](#) with your passport until you have checked our commercial partner websites for the process in place for re-submitting your passport for your replacement visa, as this may vary depending on your geographical location:

- 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

The guidance is different if you applied through an enrolment location operated by Immigration New Zealand (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-zealand-apply-for-a-uk-visa/apply-for-a-uk-visa-in-new-zealand#if-you-have-been-unable-to-travel-to-the-uk-due-to-coronavirus-covid-19>).

When you arrive in the UK you will not be penalised for being unable to collect your biometric residence permit (BRP) while coronavirus measures are in place.

If you're applying to enter the UK or remain on the basis of family or private life

There are temporary concessions in place if you're unable to meet the requirements of the family Immigration Rules (<https://www.gov.uk/uk-family-visa>) to enter or remain in the UK due to coronavirus. Up to 31 July 2020 applicants in the UK as a visitor or with leave of up to 6 months can switch into a

family or private life route provided the requirements of the Immigration Rules are otherwise met.

If you're unable to travel back to the UK due to coronavirus travel restrictions and your leave has expired, a short break in continuous residence will be overlooked. You are expected to make your next application as soon as possible.

Fiancés, fiancées or proposed civil partners

If you're here with 6 months' leave as a fiancé, fiancée or proposed civil partner and your wedding or civil ceremony has been delayed due to coronavirus, you can either request an extension until 31 July 2020 by updating your records with the Coronavirus Immigration Team (https://gov.smartwebportal.co.uk/homeoffice/public/ho_form.html), or apply to extend your stay for a further 6 months (<https://www.gov.uk/uk-family-visa/partner-spouse>) to allow the ceremony to take place.

Changes to the minimum income and adequate maintenance requirement

If you've experienced a loss of income due to coronavirus, we will consider employment income for the period immediately before the loss of income due to coronavirus, provided the requirement was met for at least 6 months up to March 2020.

If your salary has reduced because you're furloughed, we will take account of your income as though you're earning 100% of your salary.

If you're self-employed, a loss of annual income due to coronavirus between 1 March 2020 and 31 July 2020 will generally be disregarded, along with the impact on employment income from the same period for future applications.

If you're unable to provide specified documents

In some cases, we will be able to decide your application without seeing certain specified documents if you cannot get them due to coronavirus. Otherwise, you may be asked to submit the specified documents after the date of application.

Changes to the English language requirement

If you're asked to take an English language test as part of your application, you can apply for an exemption if the test centre was closed or you couldn't travel to it due to coronavirus when you applied.

If you want to cancel your visa

Read the guidance on how to cancel your visa, immigration or citizenship application (<https://www.gov.uk/cancel-visa>) because of coronavirus.

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.

You will usually get a reply within 5 working days. Do not send follow up emails - they may delay you getting a reply.

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 to this number are free of charge within the UK.

Check call charges with your phone provider if you're calling from abroad.

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>).

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1. 29 July 2020
Updated information if you're in the UK and your leave expired between 24 January 2020 and 31 July 2020.
2. 20 July 2020
Added information on how to request a replacement visa for if your 30 day visa to work, study or join family has expired.
3. 8 July 2020
Added Pearson Test of English to the list of English Testing Centres.
4. 2 July 2020
Updated process on biometric information.
5. 1 July 2020
Added link to guidance for applicants in New Zealand who applied through an enrolment location operated by Immigration New Zealand. Added information on concessions for Global Talent visa applicants who are working on coronavirus research.
6. 26 June 2020
Updated to clarify information for those in the UK whose visa will expire after 31 July 2020 but need to urgently make a new application.
7. 26 June 2020
Updated to clarify that the reopening of VAC locations remains subject to local circumstances.
8. 22 June 2020
Updated to add information on some VACs reopening.
9. 15 June 2020
Updated information on Service and Support Centres, English language tests, and 90 day validity of replacement visas.
10. 9 June 2020
Added a new section on temporary concessions if you're applying to enter the UK or remain on the basis of family or private life.
11. 8 June 2020
Updated information if you are outside the UK, getting your documents and for British nationals abroad who need to apply for a passport.
12. 29 May 2020

Updated section on applying for a British passport from overseas.

13. 28 May 2020

Response times updated.

14. 26 May 2020

Updated information on UK Visa and Citizenship Application Centres (UKVCAS) and UK Visa Application Centres (VACs). Added a link to guidance on how to cancel your visa. Added a link to the latest information on changes at the border.

15. 22 May 2020

Visa extensions for those unable to leave the UK because of coronavirus have been extended to 31 July 2020. The deadline for making an application from the UK to switch to a visa that would normally require you to apply from your home country has been extended to 31 July 2020.

16. 12 May 2020

Updated Secure English Language Test (SELT) contact information.

17. 7 May 2020

Updated information about calling the Coronavirus Immigration Help Centre: check call charges with your phone provider if you're calling from abroad.

18. 1 May 2020

Added further guidance for frontline health workers on working in different locations, carrying out supplementary work. The list of frontline workers affected has been expanded to include more occupations.

19. 28 April 2020

Added information on what to do if your 30 day visa to travel to the UK for work, study or to join family has expired or is about to expire.

20. 20 April 2020

Added a link to coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance: Tier 4 sponsors, migrants and short-term students.

21. 17 April 2020

Added link to Tier 2 worker guidance to explain that some NHS workers and their families will get their visas automatically extended because of coronavirus.

22. 14 April 2020

Information added about applicants who can start work or study in the UK before their visa application has been decided.

23. 6 April 2020

Added link to form for visa holders to update their information with the Coronavirus Immigration Team.

24. 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.

25. 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).

26. 25 March 2020

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

27. 24 March 2020

First published.

Related content

- **Coronavirus (COVID-19): travellers exempt from border rules in the UK**
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules>)
- **Family visas: apply, extend or switch** (<https://www.gov.uk/uk-family-visa>)
- **UK Visa and Citizenship Application Services** (<https://www.gov.uk/ukvcas>)
- **Provide your journey and contact details before you travel to the UK** (<https://www.gov.uk/provide-journey-contact-details-before-travel-uk>)
- **Register of licensed sponsors: workers** (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/register-of-licensed-sponsors-workers>)

Collection

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

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- **International travel, immigration and repatriation during coronavirus**
(<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-taxon/international-travel-immigration-repatriation>)