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immigration barristers

**IMMIGRATION
ROUTES**

**FOR
RESEARCH
AND
INNOVATION**



IMMIGRATION ROUTES FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

The UK is a world-leading destination for scientific research and innovation. Whether you are a researcher, academic, business founder or specialist technician, our immigration barristers are well versed in all the immigration routes available to those who lead, undertake and support research and innovation.

Our specialist immigration barristers assist companies, universities, charities and research institutes to ensure that their immigration requirements are met. Providing a completely outsourced immigration service, our barristers design immigration solutions that ensure that researchers and innovators can pursue their activities in the UK, in full compliance with UK immigration law.

General visa information

The UK's research base is responsible for 16% of the world's most influential academic papers and more Nobel Prizes than any other country bar America. This research base underpins an industrial sector with global reach. One eighth of the world's most popular medicines were developed in the UK and the technology that drives 95% of the world's smart phones, 80% of digital cameras, and 35% of all electronic devices was developed here.

The points-based system has special categories and rules for those engaged in research and innovation. In some categories you will need to be sponsored by an employer, whilst other categories allow research and innovation without sponsorship. If you are going to be in the UK for a single event or activity such as attending a meeting, conference or training, a visitor visa may be more appropriate.

The main immigration routes available to researchers and innovators are:

- Visit (Standard) - Business
- Permitted Paid Engagement
- Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent)
- Tier 1 (Entrepreneur)
- Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur)
- Tier 2 (General)
- Tier 2 (Intra-company Transfer)
- Tier 5 (Temporary Worker - Government Authorised Exchange)

Researchers and Innovators

If your company, university, charity or research institute wishes to employ a worker from outside the European Economic Area, the employee must obtain, or already have, permission to work. You will be required to check that all your employees have the required immigration permission to work for you in the UK.

The following categories of people have the right to work in the UK:

- British Citizens (This is the only form of British nationality where the holder automatically has the right to work. British Nationals, British Nationals (Overseas), British Overseas Territories Citizens, British Overseas Citizens, British Subjects and British Protected Persons do not normally have the automatic right to work in the UK);
- EEA citizens and citizens of Switzerland;
- Those with the right of abode in the UK;
- Those with no time limit on their stay in the UK; and
- Those with a visa or permission to remain in the UK which permits work (This may be subject to conditions, such as a maximum number of hours to be worked in a week, which must be complied with).

Students may have permission to work, but if they do, this will be limited during term time. Some individuals with applications pending with the Home Office may also have permission to work in the UK. In this case you will need to obtain a Positive Verification Notice from UKVI's Employer Checking Service.

	Visit (Standard) - Business	Permitted Paid Engagement	Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent)	Tier 1 (Entrepreneur)
Maximum length of initial visa	6 months* or 12 months if coming to do academic research	1 month	5 years	3 years
Extension	X	X	Extensions of 5 years for an unlimited period	Extensions of 2 years for an unlimited period
Settlement	X	X	✓	✓
Sponsor Licence required	X	X	X	X
Minimum salary requirement	X	X	X	X
Restrictions	Permitted Business Visitor activities only	Permitted Paid Engagements only	Must be endorsed. No work as a doctor or dentist in training	Can only work for own business
Dependants	X	X	✓	✓

* It is also possible to obtain a Visit (Standard) - Business visa for up to 1 year, 2 years, 5 years or 10 years. However, each visit must last no more than 6 months.

** A high earner is someone whose salary is £159,600 or more.

	Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur)	Tier 2 (General)	Tier 2 (Intra-company Transfer)	Tier 5 (Temporary Worker - Government Authorised Exchange)
Maximum length of initial visa	1 year	5 years	5 years	Initially 12 or 24 months, or length of engagement
Extension	Extensions of 1 year for up to 2 years in total	Up to 6 years in total	Up to 5 years in total (9 years for high earners**)	Up to 12 months if doing work experience or 24 months if doing research, training or an Overseas Government Language Programme
Settlement	X Possible to switch into Tier 1 (Entrepreneur)	✓	✓	X Possible to switch into Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) if sponsored researcher
Sponsor Licence required	X	✓	✓	✓
Minimum salary requirement	X	£30,000 (£28,000 for some applicants) or occupation minimum	£23,000 (Graduate Trainee). £41,500 (Long-term Staff)	X
Restrictions	No work as a professional sportsperson, doctor or dentist in training	Must work for sponsoring employer	Must work for sponsoring employer	Must undertake role sponsored for
Dependants	✓	✓	✓	✓

* It is also possible to obtain a Visit (Standard) - Business visa for up to 1 year, 2 years, 5 years or 10 years. However, each visit must last no more than 6 months.

** A high earner is someone whose salary is £159,600 or more.

Visit (Standard) Visa for Business

The Visit (Standard) – Business visa is designed for non-EEA nationals who wish to come to the UK for the purpose of undertaking business activities.

What are the main eligibility requirements?

In order to be granted a Visit (Standard) – Business visa, you will need to satisfy UK Visas and Immigration that you are a genuine visitor. This means that you:

- Will leave the UK at the end of your visit; and
- Will not live in the UK for extended periods through frequent or successive visits, or make the UK your main home; and
- Are genuinely seeking entry for a purpose that is permitted by the visitor routes and will not undertake any prohibited activities; and
- Have sufficient funds to cover all reasonable costs in relation to your visit without working or accessing public funds

Visit (Standard) – Business visa holders may undertake a wide range of business activities in the UK, including but not limited to:

General activities: attend meetings, conferences, seminars and interviews; give a one-off or short series of talks and speeches provided these are not organised as commercial events and will not make a profit for the organiser; negotiate and sign deals and contracts; attend trade fairs for promotional (not selling) work; carry out site visits and inspections; gather information for an employer overseas; be briefed on the requirements of a UK based customer, provided any work for the customer is done outside the UK.

Science and research: scientists and researchers may gather information and facts for a specific project which directly relates to employment overseas; share knowledge or advise on an international project that is being led from the UK, provided the visitor is not carrying out research in the UK.

Academia: academics may take part in formal exchange arrangements with UK counterparts (including doctors); carry out research for academic purposes if on sabbatical leave from a home institution; if an eminent senior doctor or dentist, take part in research, teaching or clinical practice provided this does not amount to filling a permanent teaching post.

Intra-corporate activities: an employee of an overseas company may advise and consult, trouble-shoot, provide training, share skills and knowledge on a specific internal project with UK employees of the same corporate group, provided no work is carried out directly with clients.

Prospective Entrepreneur: a visitor who can show support from a registered venture capitalist firm regulated by the FCA, an approved seed funding competition or a UK government department may come to the UK for discussions to secure funding to join, set up or take over a business in the UK.

Overseas roles requiring specific activities in the UK: Individuals employed outside the UK may visit the UK to take part in a wide range of activities in relation to their employment overseas.

What else do I need to know?

Most visitors will need to make an application for a visit visa from their country of residence, before travelling. However, nationals of some countries are exempt from this requirement and can simply apply for leave to enter as a visitor at the UK border.

A Visit (Standard) – Business visa will allow you to stay in the UK for up to 6 months. Within the period for which your visit visa is valid, you may enter and leave the UK multiple times, unless the visit visa is endorsed as a single or dual-entry visa.

You may visit friends and family and/or come to the UK for a holiday. You may also undertake a maximum of 30 days incidental study as set out in the Visit (Standard) – Short Term Study section.

You will not be permitted to work, receive payment from a UK source for any activities undertaken in the UK or undertake more than 30 days' non-incidental study in the UK.

If you intend to undertake a Permitted Paid Engagement then you should apply for a Permitted Paid Engagements (PPE) Visit visa.

You must have sufficient funds to cover all reasonable costs in relation to your visit without working or accessing public funds. This includes the cost of your return or onward journey, any costs relating to dependants, and the cost of planned activities.

Permitted Paid Engagement

The Permitted Paid Engagement visa is for non-EEA nationals over the age of 18 who wish to come to the UK for a short paid engagement.

What are the main eligibility requirements?

You will need to satisfy UK Visas and Immigration that:

- You intend to undertake specific paid work;
- You will leave the UK at the end of your visit;
- You have been invited by a UK-based organisation or client;
- You have sufficient funds to maintain and accommodate yourself during your visit.
- The work relates to your area of expertise or occupation overseas;

What else do I need to know?

The Permitted Paid Engagement visa category is open to researchers and academics.

You must be a highly qualified expert in your field and be invited by a UK Higher Education Institution or a UK based research organisation as part of that institution or organisation's quality assurance processes.

The engagement in the UK must be relevant to your expertise or employment overseas. UK Visas and Immigration will expect to see evidence confirming your expertise, qualifications and main job in your home country.

You will be allowed to stay in the UK for up to 1 month for one single visit.

During your stay you will be able to undertake certain specific activities. An academic who is highly qualified within his or her field of expertise may examine students and/or participate in or chair selection panels. An expert may give lectures in their subject area, provided this does not amount to filling a teaching position for the host organisation.

Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent)

The Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) category is for non-EEA nationals who are internationally recognised as world leaders in their field (exceptional talent) or recognised as having the potential to become world leaders in the future (Exceptional Promise).

What are the main eligibility requirements?

In order to apply for a Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) visa, you will first need to receive an endorsement from an appropriate endorsing body.

The British Academy, the Royal Academy of Engineering and the Royal Society cover a range of disciplines in the areas of science, engineering, humanities and medicine for active researchers in academic, industry or government research institutions. You will need to have a PhD or equivalent research experience, be actively involved in research and be personally recommended as a world leader or potential world leader in your field by an eminent person resident in the UK. If applying on the basis of Exceptional Promise you will also need to be at an early stage of your career and have been awarded a prestigious research fellowship.

In order to make your application you will need to:

- Provide a CV outlining your career and publication history;
- Provide a letter of personal recommendation from an eminent person resident in the UK;
- If applying on the basis of Exceptional Talent, provide evidence that you are either a member of a national academy, have been awarded a prestigious internationally recognised prize or have been recommended by a reputable UK organisation concerned with research in your field.

If you meet the eligibility criteria then your application will be placed before a panel of experts who will assess, amongst other matters, your track record/career history, the strength of the supporting statements and the expected benefits of your presence in the UK.

What else do I need to know?

The British Academy, the Royal Academy of Engineering and the Royal Society provide an accelerated endorsement process to allow international awardees of specific peer-reviewed Research Councils UK (RCUK), Wellcome Trust, British Heart Foundation, Cancer Research UK and UK National Academies research fellowships to apply with assurance once the recognised fellowship or award has been granted. Holders of other fellowships or grants are still eligible to apply following the usual process.

Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) visa applicants can decide how long they would like to stay in the UK for, up to a maximum of five years.

After spending five years in the UK as a Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) visa holder you may be eligible to settle in the UK.

There is a limit on how many applications can be endorsed each year of 1000. This is split between the different endorsing bodies. The limit has never been reached.

As a Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) visa holder you will have a full right to work - for an employer, as a director of a company or be self-employed.

Your partner and any children under the age of 18 may accompany or join you as your dependents.

Tier 1 (Entrepreneur)

The Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) category is for non-EEA nationals who want to set up or invest in a business in the UK. You will need to have access to £200,000 (or £50,000) and satisfy the Home Office that you genuinely intend and are able to be actively involved in the running of a viable UK business.

What are the main eligibility requirements?

You will need to show that you have access to:

- £200,000; or
- £50,000 if it is provided by a registered venture capitalist firm, UK entrepreneurial seed funding competition or UK Government Department or you are currently in the UK as a Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneur or as a Tier 1 Post Study Work migrant.

You will need to be competent in the English language to at least CEFR Level B1 (equivalent to IELTS 4.0 in reading, writing, listening and speaking) and have enough additional money to support yourself without relying on public funds.

You will also need to satisfy the Home Office that you genuinely intend and are able to be actively involved in the running of a UK business and that you have a viable and credible business plan.

If applying from overseas, you and any adult dependents will need to provide an overseas criminal record certificate for any country that you have lived in for at least 12 months in the last 10 years.

What else do I need to know?

Your initial Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) visa will be valid for either 3 years and 4 months (if applying from overseas) or 3 years (if applying from within the UK).

You will need to register as a director of a UK company or as self-employed within 6 months, then invest your £200,000 (or £50,000) and create at least 2 full-time jobs for members of the settled population that last for at least 12 months.

You will be able to extend your stay for a further 2 years, before qualifying for indefinite leave to remain (settlement) after 5 years. There is also an accelerated route to settlement after 3 years if you create at least 10 new full-time jobs or your business has a turnover of at least £5 million.

In order to settle in the UK, you will need to spend not more than 180 days outside the UK in each consecutive 12-month period and have sufficient knowledge of the English language and Life in the UK.

Your partner and any children under the age of 18 may accompany or join you as your dependents.

As a Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) visa holder you will not be permitted take any employment other than working for the business or businesses that you have established, joined or taken over.

Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur)

The Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) category is for non-EEA nationals who want to set up a business in the UK and who have been endorsed by a UK Higher Education Institution or the Department for International Trade as having a credible business idea and entrepreneurial skills.

What are the main eligibility requirements?

In order to qualify for a Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) visa you will need to satisfy UK Visas and Immigration that you have a degree, either from the UK or from an overseas education institution which has been confirmed as equivalent to a UK degree by UK NARIC.

You will also need to have an endorsement from a UK Higher Educational Institution or the Department for International Trade issued within the last 3 months.

Your endorsement must confirm that you have a genuine and credible business idea and that you will spend the majority of your time on your business venture.

You must be able to speak English to a required standard and support yourself in the UK without recourse to public funds.

What else do I need to know?

There is a limit of 2,000 endorsements which can be given each year. Of these, the Department for International Trade can only endorse 100 applications.

You will not be able to apply to enter this category if you have ever held leave as a Tier 1 (Post Study Work) migrant.

You can switch into this category if you have, or last held, leave as a Tier 4 (General) Student or a Tier 2 (General) Migrant. Individuals in other categories will need to leave the UK and apply for Entry Clearance as a Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur).

If your application for a Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) visa is successful, you will be granted leave for a period of one year initially, which can be extended for one further year.

At any stage after being granted leave as a Graduate Entrepreneur you will be able to switch into the Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) category, if you have access to £50,000. The Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) category can lead to settlement in the UK.

Your partner and any children under the age of 18 may accompany or join you as your dependents.

Tier 2 (General)

The Tier 2 (General) category is for individuals who have an offer of a skilled job in the UK from a licensed Tier 2 Sponsor. This category includes applicants coming to the UK to fill shortage occupations. You will need to have an offer of employment before applying for a visa.

What are the main eligibility requirements?

In order to qualify for a Tier 2 (General) visa, you will need to satisfy UK Visas and Immigration that:

- You have a job offer in the UK from an employer that holds a Tier 2 Sponsor Licence;
- The job you are sponsored for is at least graduate level or a specified creative profession;
- The job is on the Home Office's list of skilled occupations;
- You will be paid a minimum salary of £30,000 (£20,800 for some applicants) or the minimum for the exact job you are doing, whichever is higher;
- The job offer is a genuine vacancy and you are appropriately qualified or registered to do the job.

Your Sponsor will need to show that there is no suitable settled worker to fill the role. In most cases, they will need to prove that they have undertaken a genuine 'Resident Labour Market Test'. This normally means that they have advertised the role for at least 28 days in two places and no suitable settled worker has applied.

A Resident Labour Market Test is not required in cases where the job is on the Shortage Occupation List, or if you will be a high earner (annual salary of £159,600 or more). If you are switching from a Tier 4 (General) Student visa then your employer will usually be exempt from the Resident Labour Market Test.

You will need to be competent in the English language to at least CEFR Level B1 (equivalent to IELTS 4.0 in reading, writing, listening and speaking) and have enough additional money to support yourself without relying on public funds.

What else do I need to know?

If your application for a Tier 2 (General) visa is approved then your first visa can be valid for a maximum period of 5 years and 14 days, or the time given on your Certificate of Sponsorship plus 1 month, whichever is shorter. Your stay must start no more than 14 days before the start date on your Certificate of Sponsorship.

Your partner and any children under the age of 18 may accompany you as your dependents.

You can apply to extend your stay for up to another 5 years, as long as your total stay is not more than 6 years.

You can settle permanently in the UK after being in the Tier 2 (General) category for five years, and if you have been in the UK in certain other immigration categories you may be able to combine the time spent to count towards settlement.

If you have had a Tier 2 visa in the last 12 months, you may be subject to a 'cooling off period'. You will not normally be able to apply to re-enter the UK in this category from overseas during this period.

You can switch into the Tier 2 (General) immigration category if you are already in the UK under Tier 1, 2, or 4 of the point-based system.

If you are currently in the UK as a Tier 2 Intra Company Transfer (ICT) migrant, you will only be able to switch into the Tier 2 General category if your Tier 2 ICT visa was granted before 6th April 2010 and you are applying to change sponsor, or you have leave under the Tier 2 ICT: Established staff category granted before 6th April 2011 and are applying to change sponsor.

If you are currently in the UK as a Tier 4 (General) Student, you will need to complete and pass your degree level course before you are eligible to switch into the Tier 2 (General) category.

You can include guaranteed allowances to demonstrate that you meet the minimum salary criteria, as long as they would also be paid to a settled worker.

You must not own more than 10% of the shares of the company sponsoring you, unless your gross salary is £159,600 or more.

In most cases you will only be able to work for your Sponsor, though you may be able to do some additional part time work in certain circumstances.

Tier 2 (Intra-company Transfer)

The Tier 2 (Intra-company Transfer) category is for existing employees of multinational employers who need to be transferred to their UK branch for training purposes or to fill a specific vacancy. You will need to have an offer of employment in the UK from a licensed Tier 2 Sponsor before applying for a visa and the overseas employer must be linked by common ownership or control to the UK branch.

What are the main eligibility requirements?

There are currently two open sub-categories of the Tier 2 (Intra-company Transfer) visa: Long-term Staff and Graduate Trainee.

If you are applying in the Long-term Staff sub-category then you must have worked for your employer overseas for at least 12 months, unless you will earn £73,900 or more in the UK.

If you are applying in the Graduate Trainee subcategory then you will need to show that the role you are applying for is part of a structured graduate training programme, with clearly defined progression towards a managerial or specialist role within the organisation. Each Sponsor can only sponsor 20 people in this category per year.

You will need to show that you have a job offer in the UK from an employer that holds a Tier 2 Sponsor Licence. The organisation you are transferring from must be listed as a linked entity on your Sponsor's licence.

The job you are sponsored for must be at least graduate level or a specified creative profession, as well as on the Home Office's list of skilled occupations.

If you are applying in the Long-term Staff sub-category then you must be paid a minimum of £41,500 per year, or the minimum for your exact job, whichever is higher.

If you are applying in the Graduate Trainee sub-category then you must be paid a minimum of £23,000 per year, or the minimum for your exact job, whichever is higher.

You will need to have enough money to support yourself without relying on public funds.

What else do I need to know?

The maximum stay for the Long-term Staff sub-category of the Tier 2 (Intra-company Transfer) visa is either 9 years (if you earn more than £120,000 per year) or 5 years, 1 month (if you earn less than £120,000 per year) or the time given on your certificate of sponsorship plus one month, whichever is shorter.

The maximum stay for the Graduate Trainee sub-category of the Tier 2 (Intra-company Transfer) visa is 12 months or the time given on your certificate of sponsorship plus one month, whichever is shorter.

You will be able to work for your sponsor in the job described in your certificate of sponsorship and do a second job in the same profession and at the same level as your main job for up to 20 hours per week.

Your partner and any children under the age of 18 may accompany you as your dependents.

You can include some allowances to demonstrate that you meet the minimum salary criteria, as long as they would also be paid to a settled worker.

If you have had a Tier 2 visa in the last 12 months you may be subject to the 'cooling off period'. You will not normally be able to apply to re-enter the UK in this category from overseas during this period. You will be exempt if you will be earning at least £120,000. You will also be exempt if you previously had leave in the Graduate Trainee or (now closed) Skills Transfer or Short-term Staff sub-category and are returning in Tier 2 (Intra-company Transfer) Long Term Staff.

You cannot settle permanently in the UK, unless you applied for a Tier 2 (Intra-company Transfer) visa before 6 April 2011.

Tier 5 (Temporary Worker - Government Authorised Exchange)

The Tier 5 (Temporary Worker - Government Authorised Exchange) category is for temporary workers who want to come to the UK for a short time for work experience or to do training, an Overseas Government Language Programme, research or a fellowship through an approved government authorised exchange scheme.

What are the main eligibility requirements?

There are four types of scheme approved under the government authorised exchange sub-category:

- Work experience programme – this includes volunteering, job-shadowing, internships and approved work experience programmes;
- Research programme – this includes only those working on specific scientific, academic, medical or government research projects at UK higher education institutions or other research institution operating under the authority and/or financial sponsorship of a relevant government department;
- Overseas government language programme - this includes only schemes that are fully or partially funded by overseas governments or government sponsored organisations. They are for those undertaking development placements to build and / or enhance foreign language skills and foster good cultural relations in the UK;
- Training programme – this includes only those receiving formal, practical training in the fields of science and/or medicine, those receiving training by HM armed forces or UK emergency services, or those who:
- Lawfully obtained a UK recognised bachelor or postgraduate degree during their last grant of leave; and
- Are being sponsored to undertake a period of postgraduate professional training or work experience which is required to obtain a professional qualification or professional registration in the same professional field as the qualification described above; and
- Will not be filling a permanent vacancy.

Examples of Authorised Exchange schemes include the Sponsored Researcher (available to all higher education institutions), Sponsored Scientific Researcher Initiative (run by Shared Business Services (affiliated to Research Councils UK) and the BAE Systems Training, Intern and Graduate Programme. You will need to have a Certificate of Sponsorship from a licensed sponsor before you apply to come to the UK. Your sponsor can be an organisation running an approved exchange scheme, a higher education institution (if you are a sponsored researcher, visiting academic or examiner) or a government department or agency. Individual employers and organisations cannot sponsor anyone under this category. You will also need to prove that you can maintain yourself without recourse to public funds.

What else do I need to know?

You can stay in the UK for up to 12 or 24 months (depending on the scheme you are applying for) or the time given on your certificate of sponsorship plus 28 days, whichever is shorter.

You will be able to work in the job described in your Certificate of Sponsorship.

Any work undertaken must be equivalent to level 3 or above on the National Qualification Framework. The only exception to this is if you are coming to the UK through a scheme set up as part of the EU Lifelong Learning Programme, when you may undertake vocational education and training at a lower skill level.

This category does not lead to settlement in the UK. However, if you are in the government authorised exchange scheme for sponsored researchers then you can apply to switch into a Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) visa.

At Richmond Chambers LLP, our immigration barristers provide expert advice to the research and innovation industry on UK visa and immigration requirements. We assist researchers, academics, business founders and specialist technicians to visit and work in the UK.

For advice and assistance with applying for a UK research and innovation visa, contact our immigration barristers in London on **020 3617 9173** or by email to **info@richmondchambers.com**.