Applying for Your Student Visa: United Kingdom

What is a visa?
A visa is official authorization allowing you to enter a country and travel, work, live, or study there for a specific period of time. Generally, a visa is an elaborate stamp that is sealed onto one of the pages of your passport. Visas are issued to American citizens by a foreign country's Embassy or Consulate located in the United States. Every country has its own regulations governing the issuance of visas.

Do I need a visa to go to the UK?
There are two ways in which students can enter the UK to study: Student Visitor or Tier 4 Student Visa. If you are a United States citizen who plans to study in the United Kingdom for six months or less and do not wish to work (including a work-study position), intern, volunteer, or extend your stay once you have arrived in country, then you can enter the country as a Student Visitor without obtaining a visa. You will not be allowed to extend your visit if you enter the UK under this status. If you want to leave your options open to extend your stay, are planning to stay longer than 6 months, or wish to work, intern, or volunteer while you are abroad, you need to apply for a Tier 4 General Student visa.

If I am staying for less than six months and do not wish to work?
► Attention: Visa requirements change constantly! Verify this information the UK Border Agency. More information can be found at: http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/studying/

You do not need to apply for a visa, but you will need to submit the following documents upon your arrival in UK in order to gain entrance and receive your student visitor stamp in your passport. Plan to have with you:

- **Completed online Student Visitor visa application** at http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/visiting/student/apply/.
- **A valid passport** that will not expire while you are in the UK.
  ♦ Please see page 1 in the Study Abroad Handbook for information on how to apply for a passport.
  ♦ Apply early for your passport! It may take 6-8 weeks to process your application.
- **One passport sized color photograph.** For photo guidelines, visit: http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/applicationforms/visa-photo-guidance.pdf
- **Letter of acceptance:** The letter of acceptance from your host institution in the United Kingdom that states their accreditation, Confirmation of Acceptance of Studies (CAS) reference number, names the program you will participate in, and the program’s start and end dates.
- **Details of accommodation and return trip:** Proof of accommodation arrangements at your host university and an itinerary for the return trip with your name and information on them. This proves that you plan to leave before six months have passed.
- **Documentation of funds (only for non-US citizens)** to pay for your courses and support yourself for your entire stay (examples: a letter confirming scholarships or financial aid from your home institution, tax returns, or bank statements in your name showing the activity for the six months previous to your arrival in the UK). If you are a US citizen, then under UK classification you are considered "low risk" and you do NOT need to provide any financial documentation. In fact, you SHOULD NOT include any proof of funds. Including financial documentation when it is not required, may actually delay your visa processing because once it is included in the visa packet, even if it is not required, UKBA policy

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states that they must review it. To prevent any delays or confusion, as an American student, your student should NOT submit the financial information with her application.

- Visa fee of US$ 129.

► If you travel outside the UK during your study abroad semester, show the Immigration Officer your Student Visitor stamp and the institution letter when re-entering the UK.
► Please note: With a Student Visitor stamp, students cannot participate in internships, volunteering, or paid employment. Also, students will not be able to apply for an extension of the visa while in the UK, so if you are considering staying longer than six months, apply for a Tier 4 Student Visa.

**How do I obtain a Visa in the United States if I am staying six months or longer and/or I am participating in an internship or paid employment?**

► **Attention:** Visa requirements change constantly! Verify this information the UK Border Agency. More information can be found at: [http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/studying/](http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/studying/) or [http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/countries/usa/applying/?langname=UK%20English](http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/countries/usa/applying/?langname=UK%20English)

**Step 1. Obtain a letter of acceptance** for the study abroad program from your US university (University of Montana) stating your acceptance into the program, that the exchange university is an approved sponsor with their Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) reference number, details of the course, and your tuition and accommodation fees while abroad.

**Step 2. Fill out your Online Application**

Go to [http://www.ukvisas.gov.uk/en/applyonline/](http://www.ukvisas.gov.uk/en/applyonline/) to review the information and select “Apply for a visa online” on the upper right hand side of the page. You will need the following information with you when you apply:

- Your acceptance letter
- A valid passport
- Your address (if you know it) while in the UK
- Dates of intended travel/itinerary to the UK
- Email address
- A valid credit/debit card to pay the application fee, and the return postage for your visa and documents (if you do not pay for the return postage at this time, it will delay the arrival of your visa)
- Be sure to elect to have your documents returned “by mail” so your passport can be returned by UPS overnight delivery
- Access to a high-quality printer because you will be required to print all pages of your on-line application and biometrics appointment confirmation as you finish the application, making sure that the bar code appears on the final page. Remember to sign the application. After you have saved and submitted your online application, you will receive an email with a unique application ID number that starts with GWF. Keep your ID number for future reference.

**Step 3. Make your online payments.** After you have submitted your online visa application, you must pay your visa fee (US$477) and courier service fee online using a Visa or MasterCard. Make sure to print out confirmation of your payment and email message containing your application number (also known as a GWF reference).

**Step 4. Biometric Data Collection**

After you have made your online payments, you will be directed to make an appointment at one of the Application Support Centers in the US where you can enroll your biometric data (a digital photograph and fingerprints). You must bring your printed appointment confirmation, passport, and printed on-line application to the appointment. After the appointment, be sure to have your confirmation sheet stamped by the center.

**Step 5. Submit your application by mail to the UK Border Agency in New York.**
• Send the original of all documents (listed below), including your passport, in a FedEx, US Overnight Mail, or other express mail service that provides a tracking number for your parcel, to the UK Border Agency in NY:

**The UK Border Agency**
British Consulate-General
845 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022

These documents must be sent within two weeks after your biometrics appointment. **Keep a photocopy of all documents, including your passport, for yourself.**

**The following documents must be submitted by mail:** the online application system will send you an email to remind you about your supporting documents. You must submit the original documents and one photocopy of each document.

- Printed online application showing visa payment and courier fees paid
- Stamped receipt showing your biometric enrollment
- Passport (note: It should be the original document plus one copy, valid for your entire stay in the UK, and have at least one blank page in it to attach the visa)
- One passport size photograph, in color taken against a white background, clear and of good quality and not framed or backed, printed on normal photographic paper, full face without sunglasses, hat or head covering (unless it is worn for cultural or religious reasons)
- Your acceptance letter for the exchange from your home university and Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) from your UK university. Write your CAS reference number on your application form.
- Documents you used to obtain your CAS. You will need to know what evidence your Tier 4 sponsor has included on your CAS, so that you can include it with your application. You must get this information directly from your Tier 4 sponsor before you apply. Each certificate of qualification or transcript must by the original (not a copy). Further guidance on the CAS can be found at: [www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/studyingintheuk/adult-students/can-you-apply/cas/](http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/studyingintheuk/adult-students/can-you-apply/cas/)
- Evidence of funds (ex: bank statements in your name, or financial aid statements from your home university). When it assigns your CAS, your Tier 4 sponsor can include details of any money that you have already paid. If you have paid any money to cover your course and accommodation fees to your Tier 4 sponsor, but your CAS does not indicate that this has been paid, you must include evidence of payment in your application. The British Council estimates you will need a minimum of £800 per month within London, and £600 per month outside of London. You must show that you have held the required money for a consecutive 28-day period ending no more than one month before your application.

**General tips for applying for a Student Visa:**

Foreign embassies and consulates in the US receive hundreds of inquires every day so contacting them can be a trying experience. Due to the volume of work handled at their offices, the British consulates cannot answer telephone enquiries regarding the status of your application. For updates on new regulations, visit [http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/studying/](http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/studying/). The British Consulate offices cannot answer visa inquiries over the telephone. Comprehensive information on visas is available at the website above only.

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