

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?

United States citizens who plan to study in the United Kingdom will normally need to apply for a visa. From March 31st 2009, all applicants will apply for their visa under Tier 4 of new Points-Based System. On programs where you are applying to study for 6 months or longer, or you wish to work while on a shorter program, you will be able to enter the UK up to 1 month before the date you start school. If you are studying for less than 6 months, you will be allowed to enter the United Kingdom 7 days before the date you start school. If you will be studying for less than 6 months, and you do not wish to work, you should apply as a Student Visitor, and you do not need a visa.

If I am staying for less than six months and do not wish to work?

You don't need to apply for a visa, but you will need to submit the following documents upon your arrival in UK in order to obtain a Student Visitor Visa. Plan to have with you:

- **A valid passport**
 - ◆ 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.
- **A letters of acceptance**
 - One from your host institution in the United Kingdom stating the program you are on, its start and end dates, and the dates of any holiday breaks.
 - Certification letter (ISEP students only)
 - Nomination letter from UM
- **Proof of purchase of a round-trip airline ticket.**
- **Documentation of financial support** during your stay (examples: a letter confirming scholarship monies from your home institution, a bank loan, a bank statement, or parental support.) You should also bring bank statements going back over a period of several months.
- ▶ At the discretion of immigration officials, you may be required to undergo an impromptu medical exam at the airport upon arrival in the UK. This exam may include a chest x-ray. The British consulate recommends that you bring a doctor's report with you, but a doctor's report may not be sufficient to waive the airport medical exam.
- ▶ It is not possible to apply for an extension of your Student Visitor Visa. If there is any chance that you will work or that you will stay for longer than 6 months you need to apply for Student Visa Priority/Entry Clearance
- ▶ **Attention:** This list may not be all-inclusive! Verify this information with the consulate that has jurisdiction over your state of residence.

Please note: With a Student Visitor Visa, students cannot participate in internships 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 even possibly considering staying longer than six months, apply for a visa.

If I am staying for six months or longer?

You will need to apply for a visa in the U.S. Go to <http://www.visa4uk.fco.gov.uk/> to apply and pay online using the Fastrack Application system. Once you have submitted your on-line application you will still be required to provide, by mail, your original passport, supporting documents and the appropriate fees if you have not paid on-line. In addition to applying for a visa, beginning December 3rd, 2007, all applicants wishing to stay for 6 months or longer, or wishing to work while on a shorter program will require 'biometric' information as part of the visa application process. Montana residents will need to travel to the Department of Homeland Security office, 2800 Skyway Drive, Helena, MT, 59602, to provide the necessary biometric information.

- ▶ Apply for your visa no earlier than 3 months before the start date of your course. Your visa will be made valid for up to one month before your course starts.
- ▶ **Please note:** From January 1st, 2005 on, all applicants seeking a student visa in order to attend a course of study in the United Kingdom must ensure that the establishment at which they propose to study is registered on the Department of Education and Skills Register of Education and Training Providers. The register will be available at the web address below for students to make sure their institution is registered.

www.dfes.gov.uk/providersregister

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?

Step 1. Online

Go to <http://www.visa4uk.fco.gov.uk/> to apply and pay online using the Fastrack Application system. You will eventually need to mail your passport and supporting documents to the appropriate British Consulate.

Step 2. Biometric Data Collection

After completing your online application you will be directed to make an appointment at any of the 129 Application Support Centers across the US where you can enroll your biometric data. Applicants must bring printed appointment confirmation and travel documents to Application Support centers upon appointment. Montana residents will need to travel to the Department of Homeland Security office, 2800 Skyway Drive, Helena, MT, 59602, to provide the necessary biometric information.

Step 3. Submit your application by mail

- Send 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 consulate that has jurisdiction over your state of residence (For Montana residents, application should be sent to Consulate in Los Angeles). **Keep a photocopy of all documents, including your passport, for yourself.**
- If there is a fee for your visa, send a money order or certified check--consulates will not accept personal checks.
- Be sure all documents are in order. Missing documents may cause delays in the processing of your application.
- Enclose a *postage paid* FedEx/US Overnight Mail envelope *addressed to yourself*. The consulate will only return your visa and documents if you provide a return envelope.
- Do not leave the country until you have received your passport and visa.

Note: Mail Applications usually take up to 5 working days to process (excluding mail time) and it is the student's responsibility to provide the required documents.

The Following Documents need to be submitted by mail:

- Printed online application showing online visa payment and return postage fees paid.
- The receipt showing your biometric enrollment.
- Passport (note: It should be the original document and have ample validity)
- Two passport size photographs, 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).

- Evidence of your Immigration Status in the USA (if applicable) and permission to re-enter the USA after your trip (not necessary for US citizens). Please submit original documents. Examples include:
 - Permanent Resident Card
 - Valid US visa (e.g, H1B, F1)
 - Advance Parole Document
 - Employment Authorisation Card (does not permit re-entry to US)
 - Valid DS 2019 (Formerly IAP66)
 - Valid I-20 (must be signed on the reverse by designated school official)
 - Valid I-94
- A letter from the University, College or School confirming your acceptance for the course of study in the UK and a statement of charges for the course (i.e. ISEP Certification Letter; included in PPAF packet).
- Evidence of Government sponsorship (if appropriate)
- Evidence of funds (ex: loan approval, personal financial statements, financial statement and letter of support from sponsor if applicable). The British Council estimates you will need a minimum of £800 per month within London, and £600 per month outside of London.

► **Attention:** This list may not be all-inclusive! Verify this information with the consulate, as the application process can change or may even vary by consulate.

General tips for applying for Entry Clearance:

Foreign embassies and consulates in the US receive hundreds of inquiries 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.

In the US, the visa issuing posts are located at the British Consulates General in Chicago, Los Angeles and New York. Please visit www.britainusa.com/visas/visas.asp and click “Where should I apply” to find the consulate that serves your state of residency and for contact details. For updates on new regulations, visit www.britishcouncil-usa.org/learning/clearance.html.

British Consulate-General, Los Angeles

ADDRESS: 11766 Wilshire Blvd, Suite 1200, Los Angeles, CA 90025-6538

PHONE: (310) 481-0031 (Visa Information)

FAX: (310) 481-2960 (Visa fax)

British Consulate-General, Chicago

ADDRESS: The Wrigley Building, 400 North Michigan Avenue, Suite 1300, Chicago, IL 60611

PHONE: (312) 970-3800 (Visa Information)

FAX: (312) 970-3852

British Consulate-General, New York

ADDRESS: 845 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10022

PHONE: (212) 745-0200

FAX: (212) 754-3062