

International Travel Documentation - Best Practices and Possible Problems

**From an Outline of the
United Kingdom's Entry
Regulations and Visa
Procedures**

Step 1 - Identify if a visa will be required.

NAFSA's Visa Education Subcommittee has a list of links to contact information for each country with consulates in the U.S. <http://www.nafsa.org/regulatoryinformation/default.aspx?id=25906>

For the U.K.

Begin by finding out the students nationality or the country they hold a passport from. If they do not hold a passport, obtaining a passport will be the first step.

Are they a member of the European Economic Area? Check <http://www.ukvisas.gov.uk/en/howtoapply/infs/inf18eeaswissnationals#22862675>.

Students with passports from these countries do not require a visa to enter the UK for any reason. Having a letter of acceptance or documentation on attending school in the UK could be helpful, but should not be required.

Are they nationals of a country that always requires a visa to enter the UK? Check <http://www.ukvisas.gov.uk/en/doineedvisa/visadatvnationals>. Students with passports from these countries will need a visa and you can move on to step 2, determining which visa is needed.

Students whose nationality is not on either of these lists are called Non-Visa nationals. **This includes U.S. passport holders** and requires additional information to determine if a visa is required. If any kind of work is planned in the UK, including a paid job, an internship, or unpaid volunteer work, a visa **MUST** be applied for. Those staying over 180 days **MUST** apply for a visa.

Non-Visa nationals who are not working, interning or volunteering **AND** are staying less than 180 days can enter the UK as Student Visitors. An acceptance letter and proof of financial support may be requested by the immigration officer in the UK upon arrival.

Step 2 - Determine which visa will be required

Some countries include detailed information on their website to help applicants determine which visa is needed. This can be found for China at <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/ywzn/lsw/vpna/rap/t710627.htm#WhichType> and for Brazil at <http://www.brazilconsulatechicago.org/en-2-10-14.html> .

For the UK:

Some confusion can develop due to the fact that both Visa Nationals and Non-Visa Nationals can fall into the Student Visitor category. The difference is that Visa Nationals, those that always require a visa, require a Student Visitor Visa. Non-Visa nationals can just enter the UK as Student Visitors, without a visa.

If a student's nationality is on the list of Visa Nationals, and they are NOT working, interning or volunteering, and they are staying in the UK for less than 180 days they can apply for the Student Visitor Visa.

Any student whose nationality is not part of the European Economic Area, and is attending school for more than 180 days will require a PBS Tier 4 Student Visa. (Students with passports from the EEA do not require a visa for any reason)

Any student whose nationality is not part of the EEA, and will be working, interning or volunteering while attending school will require a PBS Tier 4 Student Visa.

Any student whose nationality is not part of the EEA, and is NOT attending school, but will be interning or volunteering with a program in the UK will require a PBS Tier 5 Temporary Worker Visa.

Step 3 - Begin to assemble supporting documents required for the visa.

Be aware of the time frame for the visa process. The application cannot be submitted too early, but students need to be aware of what documents are needed and how long it might take them to get those documents so they have what is needed to submit the application. The actual processing time of the visa must also be taken into consideration so that the application is not submitted too late.

A UK visa may be issued up to 3 months prior to the start date of the program in the UK. Some of the documents below must be issued within 28 days of submitting the application to the consulate. Students will need to be sure they are not getting their documents too early.

Be sure the passport is signed, valid for the duration of the stay in the UK and has at least 1 blank VISA page.

Obtain 1 passport quality photo. Be sure it meets the guidelines found at <http://www.ukvisas.gov.uk/resources/en/docs/12160810/Photoguide>.

For Non-U.S. passport holders be sure they have proof of legal status in the United States. Either a valid visa with **original** I-94 or I-20, or an **original** Alien Registration Card. Also include a copy of the documentation. Students who will be returning to the U.S. will also need to be sure that their documentation remains valid beyond their return date to the U.S. Students can NOT plan to renew a U.S. visa while they are abroad. The U.K. requires proof that a student can enter their destination country after their stay in the UK.

For PBS Tier 4 Student visas:

Obtain a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) number from an authorized sponsoring institution in the UK. A CAS is an electronic reference number. A paper document is not required. The CAS # must be written on the the top of the application, after it is completed.

The original documents that the sponsor used to obtain the CAS must also be included. These will be listed in the CAS and the sponsor must advise what they have included. Usually this includes original transcripts and these are the most common documents that are missing from applications.

Show evidence of money to cover the tuition fees and living costs. Living costs for the main applicant are calculated at £800 per month for study in the Inner London Boroughs, <http://www.ukvisas.gov.uk/en/howtoapply/infs/inf29pbsstudent#15332374>, and £600 per month for studying elsewhere. The simplest evidence is a letter from the institution organizing the studies stating that all tuition, fees and living costs are guaranteed by the institution. Otherwise the documents that are acceptable as evidence must meet very specific guidelines, <https://perryvisa.com/visaApps/United%20Kingdom%20Financial%20Requirements.pdf> .

For Student Visitor Visas:

Obtain a letter of acceptance from the UK educational institution on their official headed paper providing the name, duration, and cost of the course. A CAS is not required for a Student Visitor Visa.

Obtain information about finances such as bank statements showing what has been paid in and out of an account for up to the previous six months, and should name the account holder. There is no specific amount that must be met for a Student Visitor Visa. There are additional details at <http://www.ukvisas.gov.uk/resources/en/docs/1903073/supportingdocsvisituk> .

Step 4 - Begin completing the UK visa application

Many countries are moving to applications that must be completed online so that the information is submitted directly to a database. Because a paper application cannot just be printed and completed, students will need access to a computer and the Internet. Applications must usually still be printed, signed and submitted with additional documents

For the UK

This is an application that must be completed online via a U.K. Government Website. <http://www.visa4uk.fco.gov.uk/ApplyNow.aspx?Apply+Now=Apply+Now>. The UK visa fee will need to be paid as part of the online application with a credit or debit card and an appointment to get a biometric fingerprint scan from a U. S. Citizenship and Immigration office will need to be setup as part of the application.

Select the correct Purpose for the Application. Those applying for a PBS Tier 4 Student Visa will select that. Then under Type of Application the most common correct option is (General) Student. The biggest question concerning the application is students asking if they should select General Sponsored Student. A sponsored student in this case is one that has an official financial or government sponsorship and is not paying anything to anyone for studies.

Those applying for the Student Visitor Visa will select **Special Visitor**. Then under Type of Application select Student Visitor up to 6 months.

Enter the names exactly as they appear in the passport. If you do not go by any other names do not enter anything under other names. Leave it blank.

Questions regarding refusal of a visa or denied entry to the UK must be answered very carefully. Sometimes an application was rejected due to incomplete documentation and a student is applying for a second time. In this case the student needs to be sure and check yes they were refused a visa. There are cases where students did not realize this was the case answered NO and were banned from entering the UK, sometimes for up to 10 years.

Select how the application will be submitted. Applicants mailing their application to the consulate can select by Mail and will have a \$12 fee added to their cost for return delivery via Express Mail. Those who plan to setup an appointment at the consulate directly or plan to have a third party service assist with their application should select For Travel Agent Use only.

There is a guide with some frequently asked questions about the application at <http://www.ukvisas.gov.uk/en/applyonline/onlineapplicationfaqs#20738284>.

Step 5 - Prepare to submit Application

The Student will receive a receipt when they appear for their Biometrics Appointment. That receipt must be included with the documents being submitted.

Determine how quickly the passport and visa will be needed. Standard processing times can vary greatly depending on the time of year and how busy the consulate is. The UK gives some information on current expectations for standard processing at <http://www.ukvisas.gov.uk/en/howtoapply/processingtimes>.

The UK does offer additional options for faster processing. A student can set up an appointment to go in person to the UK consulate in New York. This is called Premium services and costs an additional \$100 but usually allows the applicant to get their visa in 1 day. There is also a Priority Service in which the UK consulate will try and process the visa within 3 days. This costs an additional \$150 but does not require a personal appearance.

To pay one of the UK rush fees go to <https://www.visainfoservices.com> . Select United Kingdom then select United States. In the menu on the left select Purchase Products or Services and then select either the Priority or Premium service and pay for that service. A receipt will be sent via email that will need to be printed and included with the rest of the documentation.

Step 6 - Send in Application