



## Graduate Route: FAQs for University of Oxford student visa holders

This information is relevant only to University of Oxford student visa holders, if your visa is sponsored by another university you must contact them for advice.

Overview: What is the Graduate route and who can apply?

The Graduate route is a new visa that allows students who have completed an undergraduate or postgraduate degree to apply for a visa to stay on and look for or start work. Under the route, permission will be granted for two years, or three years if you completed a DPhil. You do not need a job offer or to be sponsored for the visa and you can do any level of job.

Where we refer to 'student visa' throughout this document it includes both Tier 4 visas (applied for before 5 October 2020) and Student Route visas (applied for on or after 9.00am 5 October 2020), but not short-term study visas.

### Frequently Asked Questions

Please check these FAQs and resources mentioned first but if you cannot find the answer you need, email us: our contact details are at the end of this document.

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## A. Eligibility criteria

### 1. What date will this visa route be open for applications?

It will be open for applications from 9.00am 1 July 2021.

### 2. What are the requirements to be resident in the UK to be eligible for this visa?

The table below shows the 'normal' residence in the UK requirements from the Home Office to be eligible for the visa, but see the current exceptions to this because of the pandemic in question 3.

Total length of your course	Minimum period to study in UK on a student visa (apart from permitted study abroad programmes)
12 months or shorter	Full duration of course
Longer than 12 months	At least 12 months

### 3. I have been away from the UK because of COVID, will I be able to apply?

Some periods where you have been studying remotely will be allowed without affecting your eligibility to apply. This is the provision the UK government has made for this (as updated) :

- Students who began a course of 12 months or less in 2020 or 2021 via distance learning, and who have not previously entered the UK to study that course will be able to make a Graduate application if they make a successful Student visa application and arrive in the UK either before their visa ends or by 27 September 2021, whichever is sooner.
- Students who began a course of 12 months or less in 2020 or 2021 who have existing permission as a Student to study that course, and who have already travelled to the UK during that period of permission, will be able to make a Graduate application as long as they are present in the UK before the end date of their permission.
- Students sponsored for a course lasting longer than 12 months will not be prevented from being eligible for the Graduate route as a result of any distance learning that took place either in the UK or overseas between the period of 24 January 2020 and 27 September 2021.

Source: [Covid-19: Guidance for Student sponsors, migrants and Short-term Students](#)

As well as meeting the residence requirements as modified by the concessions above, students will still need to have extant (*remaining time left*) permission as a Student visa holder i.e. a still valid BRP (Biometric Residence Permit) for either Tier 4 or Student Route permission when the Graduate Route starts and meet all the other eligibility criteria.

### 4. What kind of course do I need to have completed to apply for this visa?

The route is for students with a Tier 4 or Student route visa who have completed an undergraduate or masters degree or a Post Graduate Certificate in Education. Students completing certificates, diplomas or other non-degree qualifications will not be eligible, even if the qualification is "degree-level".

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## **5. I transferred course part-way during my studies, am I still eligible to apply?**

If you are allowed, under the immigration rules to switch to a different course in the UK without having to obtain a new visa, then you can base your Graduate route application on completion of this new course. For information on which course switches are allowed in the UK, see [Changes in student status | University of Oxford](#)

## **6. What do I need to apply?**

You need to meet the following requirements:

- have successfully completed your course (the University will notify the Home Office);
- have studied in the UK (subject to allowed absences due to COVID or permitted study abroad);
- have a still valid Tier 4 or Student visa at the time of application;
- in some circumstances have written consent from your funder if they were a Government or international scholarship agency – see FAQ 17;
- have a note of the CAS number you used for your most recent student visa application. You will have entered this into your last student visa application but if you do not have a record of this number ask your college (for undergraduate students) or Department (for postgraduate students) who will be able to remind you of the last CAS number you were issued.

You do not need to show any financial evidence for your living expenses.

## **7. Do I need to be sponsored to apply for the Graduate Route?**

You do not need to be sponsored by Oxford University or by an employer. We do need to confirm to the Home Office before you apply that you have successfully completed your course. The Home Office requires the University to report when *all* visa holders have completed their studies, in case you wish to apply for this visa, and the Student Immigration team will run a report each Friday, every week of the year to do this. You will receive an email on the Friday of the week you complete your studies, to confirm this has been done.

## **8. Do I need a job offer to apply for the Graduate Route?**

No, the permission will be for you to work, or look for work, in any area and at any skill level without needing to have an offer of work before you apply under the route. An employer will not need to sponsor you for the Graduate route.

## **9. I've been studying in the UK but not on a Tier 4 or Student visa, can I apply for the Graduate Route?**

Not usually, because you need to meet the requirement in question 2 above while holding a Student or Tier 4 visa and you need to still have this type of visa when you apply. If you are on a course that is longer than 12 months, it may still be possible to apply if you switched to a student visa for at least the last 12 months of the course.

## **10. Can I apply for the graduate route if I am studying part-time?**

It is only possible to apply if you have held a Student or a Tier 4 visa for study. Although this could include part-time study on either Tier 4 or a Student Route visa, the University is only able to sponsor student visas for a very small number of part-time courses and only in exceptional circumstances.

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### **11. I had to suspend during my course, will that affect my eligibility to apply for the Graduate route?**

We hope you will still be able to apply for the Graduate route if you are enrolled after your suspension and returned to the UK and successfully completed your course on a valid Tier 4 or Student visa and you meet the requirement in question 2, however we need to wait until guidance is published close to 1 July 2021 before this can be confirmed.

### **12. I have nearly completed my DPhil, should I apply for DES (the Doctorate Extension Scheme) or the Graduate Route?**

The DES Scheme will be closed to applications when the Graduate route opens, but if you are due to complete your DPhil before 1 July 2021 you will need to work out whether to apply for DES or wait for the Graduate route.

The Graduate route for DPhil students is 3 years and DES is only one year. If you are eligible to apply for the Graduate route one disadvantage over DES is that it will be more expensive because you will need to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge for a longer period and at a higher rate. However, DES may be your only choice if you are due to complete and your visa expires before the Graduate route becomes available.

To be eligible to apply for DES you must do so before you receive leave to supplicate, meaning you would normally need to apply just after your viva. You may be wondering whether, if you miss this window, you will be able to apply for the Graduate route?

You should be eligible to apply for the graduate route if:

- The end date on your current visa is on or after 1 July 2021;
- You have not already had leave to supplicate which has been reported to the Home Office or received notice that your visa is to be curtailed because of early completion.

If you would like help working out whether you will be able to apply for the Graduate route or you need to apply for DES, please contact us (see details at the end of this document)

### **13. I've already applied for DES, can I apply for the Graduate Route?**

You cannot apply for the Graduate route if your DES visa has been granted. If you have a DES application pending, contact us if you are considering withdrawing it so that you can apply for the Graduate route instead.

If you are still waiting for the outcome of your DES application at the time the Graduate route becomes available, you may be able to change the basis of your application by quickly submitting and paying for a Graduate route application. This will replace the DES application for which you will eventually get a refund. Please contact us immediately if you are in this situation and need advice (you will find contact details at the end of this document).

### **14. Do I need ATAS for the Graduate Route?**

You do not need an ATAS certificate to apply for a Graduate Route visa but you may need one if you are going to be working in certain areas of research.

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## **B. Application process**

### **15. How much does it cost to apply for the route?**

The visa application fee is £700 and then you will need to pay the immigration health surcharge at the same time as you apply for the visa at the rate of £624 per year i.e. £1,248 for 2 years and £1,872 for DPhil students who will receive a three-year visa.

If there is at least six months left on your existing visa, you may be able to get a refund of IHS paid in respect of that part of your student visa.

### **16. How will the Home Office know I have completed my course and am eligible to apply?**

The Home Office requires the University to report when *all* student visa holders have completed their studies, in case you wish to apply for this visa. The Student Immigration team will run a report each Friday, every week of the year to do this. You will receive an email on the Friday of the week you officially successfully complete your studies, to confirm this has been done. You do not have to wait until your graduation ceremony. Be careful not to submit your Graduate route application before you receive confirmation from us we have reported your successful completion.

### **17. Will I need permission from my funder to apply?**

This will be required if you have:

- in the 12 months before the date of your application for the Graduate route been awarded a scholarship or sponsorship and
- the award is from a Government or international scholarship agency and
- The award covers both fees and living costs.

Then you will need to provide their written consent for you to apply for the Graduate route when you apply. Unless all the points above are true you don't need permission from your funder to apply.

### **18. Can my family members apply?**

Your partner or child (including the child of your partner) could only apply if they already currently have permission as your student dependant. A child born during the validity period of your most recent visa can also apply. Your dependants need to be in the UK to apply. Dependants eligible to apply will be given permission to work in the UK.

### **19. Can I apply from outside the UK?**

No, you need to be in the UK and still have unexpired permission as a Tier 4 or Student Route visa holder

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## C. What type of work can you do?

### 20. What work can I do on the Graduate Route?

You can do any kind of employment except work as a professional sports person.

### 21. Can I be self employed while I am on the Graduate Route?

Yes.

### 22. Can I start a business on this visa?

You can run a business while on the Graduate route as you can be self-employed. However, we don't yet know how this would affect your eligibility to later make a Start-up visa application based on a business you start while on the Graduate route.

### 23. My employer might be able to sponsor me for a work visa, should I accept this or apply for the Graduate Route?

When deciding, bear in mind that a sponsored Skilled Worker visa is only for a particular job and you cannot change employment unless you are recruited to and sponsored for another job. An advantage of the Skilled worker route is that you can qualify to apply for settlement after 5 years in this route. Time spent on the Graduate route does not count towards the five-year settlement route though it will count towards a 10-year settlement route. The dependants of Skilled workers can include family members who have not previously had visa permission as dependants.

### 24. Will my visa be cancelled if I do not find a job?

No. You can continue to use the visa until it expires even if you do not find a job or have breaks in employment.

## D. Other questions

### 25. Does time on this visa count towards indefinite leave to remain (settlement)?

Time on the graduate route does not count towards a five year settlement route, but if you have been in the UK continuously for a long time under different visa types then time on the Graduate Route could be counted towards the 10-year [long residence route](#).

### 26. Can I study while I am on the Graduate Route?

Study is allowed but you are not allowed to take a course with an education provider which is a Student sponsor, and which meets the approved qualification and level of study requirements of the Student route. This means that permission to study on the Graduate route is very restricted and is mainly confined to for example evening classes or courses for leisure.

### 27. Can I travel while I am on the Graduate Route?

You can travel in and out of the UK during your Graduate Route permission.

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## E. Further options after your visa finishes

### 28. What happens after the end of the Graduate Route.

You cannot apply to extend your Graduate Route permission, so to stay in the UK you would need to meet the requirements and apply for a different visa. You would need to check the particular route's requirements to find out whether you can apply for it from within the UK or whether you would need to return to your home country to apply. If you are offered a suitable job by an employer who is licensed to sponsor you, you can apply in the UK for a Skilled Worker visa for example. This may be for an employer you are already working for, or a different employer.

## F. Further information and advice

### 29. Where can I find detailed information about the Graduate Route?

See the University webpages with visa options for [staying in the UK to work](#) after your studies.

UKCISA (UK Council for International Student Affairs) has useful information on the [Graduate route](#)

UK Government concessions for [COVID and the Graduate Route](#) (page 16)

[UK government published regulations for the route](#) (pages 45-51)

### 30. Is there help and advice available from the University?

If you have questions after reading these FAQs and the information in question 29 above, you can email us: [student.immigration@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:student.immigration@admin.ox.ac.uk) please include Graduate route in the subject line and let us know your student number.

Oxford University's Careers Service hosts presentations about visas for staying in the UK to work approximately once per term, check their website for the [next date](#).

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