



UK ANNOUNCES NEW RULES FOR STUDENT VISAS

Foreign students from outside Europe wanting to study in the UK will be required to meet new entry criteria from 3 March, the Home Secretary, Alan Johnson has announced. The new criteria only affects the Tier 4 General Student visa route and relates to:

- English language ability (for some courses).
- Working while studying.
- Dependants.

The new regulations are designed to crack down on those bogus students who use the points based student visa route to come to the UK to work not study. The UK continues to welcome genuine students from overseas.

English language ability

There will be a new requirement for all students to demonstrate a minimum level of English language ability if studying courses below degree level (excluding foundation degree courses). The new minimum English Language requirement is equivalent to B1 under CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) or a score of 4.5 under IELTS.

There are no changes for students who come to the UK to study a foundation degree, courses at degree level or above or for those coming here as child students at our independent schools, (except for a reduction in the number of hours a child student aged 16 or 17 may work).

Students coming to the UK for a pre-sessional English language course as preparation for a full degree will also be able to study English below the minimum level, where progression onto their main course is unconditional.

There are no changes to the student visitor visa route. Students who wish to come to the UK to study a course that is less than 6 months can still do so without having to meet any educational or language criteria. This means that South Korea students wanting to study beginner level English in the UK can still do so providing their course is for less than 6 months.

The UK welcomes these students and upon completion of their 6 month stay in the UK the students would, after returning home, be able to apply to join a higher level course under Tier 4 providing they meet the minimum criteria and have a positive immigration history in the UK.

Those students wanting to study English language courses longer than 6 months will now require a good standard of English (B1 under CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) or a score of approximately 4.5 under IELTS). These students will only be able to come to study English language courses at Level B2 and above. B2 is approximately 5.5 under IELTS.

16 & 17 year olds who come in under the Tier 4 **Child** Student Route to study courses below degree level (eg: GCSEs / A-levels, foundation courses) are exempt from the new minimum language requirements.

Other changes:

Other changes to the PBS Tier 4 Student General Route include:

- restricting the lowest level courses (A-levels and equivalent) to only the most trusted institutions;
- halving the amount of time a student studying below first degree level (except for those studying a foundation degree course), will be able to work, to just ten hours during term time;
- a ban on bringing in dependants for anyone studying a course for less than six months;
- a ban on dependants of anyone studying a course that is not a foundation degree course or that is below undergraduate degree level from working;
- a ban on foreign students studying below degree level if the course includes a work placement — unless that course is being provided by a university, college or training provider which has the status of "highly trusted sponsor";
- a requirement for students to demonstrate their English language ability by passing an approved secure test – this will apply to all students studying below degree level (except those on studying foundation degrees), including those coming to study English language; and
- introduction of tougher criteria for defining which course providers count as "highly trusted sponsors" of foreign students. We expect that all publicly funded universities and colleges will count as highly trusted, and we will ensure that there is a rapid but rigorous system for ensuring that private training colleges can also gain that status as soon as possible.

For more information on the new rules, please see the [full news report](#) on the [UK Border Agency website](#).