

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

These FAQs are specifically for University of Oxford students. If your visa is sponsored by another university you should contact them for advice.

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

**NOTE:** You can only apply for Graduate Route when you have received your official results/leave to supplicate and Oxford has notified the Home Office of your successful course completion. The Student Immigration Team run a report of the week’s completions every Friday and email the students who have been included. Do not apply before receiving your confirmation email.

The Graduate Route opened on 1 July 2021 to allow students who have successfully completed an undergraduate or postgraduate degree to apply for a visa to stay on to work, be self-employed or run a business. 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 take any level of job.

Where we refer to ‘student visa’ throughout this document this 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 Standard Visitor visas used for study.

# **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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## **Eligibility**

**1. What is the ‘Study in the UK requirement’ to be eligible for this visa?**

The table below shows the period of time, depending on your course length, for which you must have held a student visa for the course and have been in the UK for all study apart from permitted study abroad. If you cannot meet the requirements but this was only because you were distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, see FAQ 2.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Total length of your course** | **Relevant period of Student permission granted during which all study took place in the UK** **(apart from permitted study abroad programmes)** |
| 12 months or shorter | Full duration of course |
| Longer than 12 months | At least 12 months |

Being away from the UK during vacation periods does not affect your eligibility.

[Home Office caseworker guidance for the Graduate route](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/graduate-caseworker-guidance) explains that if you are switching your visa type in the UK to a Student visa and you submit your Student visa application before the course starts, then the period during which you are studying but waiting for your Student visa to come through will be counted towards the study in the UK requirement. For courses of 12 months or shorter it is essential that you either had your Student visa in place before the start of the course or had at least submitted the application for it.

For a course of longer than 12 months, if you study part of your course on a different visa type you can only meet the Study in the UK requirement if you are able to switch to a student visa for at least 12 months to complete the course.

If you need to suspend study during your course, for example for medical reasons, and apply for a new student visa to return, the periods of study on the two student visas can be added together for the purposes of the Study in the UK requirement.

**2. I have been away from the UK because of COVID-19, will I be able to apply?**

If you had to be away from the UK but still followed your course by distance learning during the pandemic, your eligibility for the Graduate Route may be protected.

If you were either in, or outside of, the UK and following your course by distance learning, between 24 January 2020 and 27 September 2021 this will not affect your eligibility. If you were outside the UK following your course by distance learning at any time between 27 September 2021 and 30 June 2022 this will also be disregarded so that it does not affect your eligibility.

Following such a period of COVID-19 -related absence, you need to have returned to the UK to continue your studies by **30 June 2022** at the latest.

Source: [Covid-19: Guidance for Student sponsors, migrants and Short-term Students](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/993023/Student_Guidance-_Covid-19_response_11052021_FINAL.pdf)

As well as meeting the Study in the UK requirement including the COVID-19 provisions, to be eligible to apply you also need to have still-valid Student or Tier 4 visa permission at the time you apply and to be in the UK when you apply.

**3. What kind of course do I need to have completed to apply for this visa?**  
  
You need to have completed a ‘relevant qualification’. At Oxford this means an undergraduate degree, masters degree, a DPhil or a Post Graduate Certificate in Education. Certificates, diplomas or other non-degree qualifications will not be eligible, even if the qualification is "degree-level".   
  
There are other ‘[relevant qualifications](https://www.gov.uk/graduate-visa/course-you-studied#:~:text=the%20%E2%80%98Status%E2%80%99%20column.-,Your%20course,-You%20usually%20must)’ listed by the Home Office not available at Oxford but that you might be going on to study. These include certain professional legal qualifications, medicine and dentistry foundation programmes, a Postgraduate Diploma in Education and some degree-level regulated professional courses. These are mentioned here in case you might want to apply after one of these courses instead.

**4. I transferred course part-way during my studies on the same visa, 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](https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/visa/during/changes)

**5. What do I need to apply?**

You need to meet the following requirements:

* You have successfully completed your course meaning you have received your final results/leave to supplicate;
* Oxford must have notified the Home Office of your successful completion. The Student Immigration Team run a report of the week’s completions every Friday and email the students who have been included. Do not apply before receiving your confirmation email;
* You must have studied in the UK with a student visa for the required period – see FAQ 1;
* You must have still-valid student visa permission at the time of application;
* You might need written consent from your funder if they were a Government or international scholarship agency – see FAQ 17, and
* You can only apply in the UK

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

**6. What if I might not have finished my course or received my final course results before my visa is due to expire?**  
If you need more time to complete your course you may be able to apply for a further Student visa. You can then apply for the Graduate route if you successfully complete and get your results during the validity period of your new visa. It is not always possible to apply for a further student visa from within the UK, you may need to apply from your home country. Please read this page and seek advice if necessary: [Applying for a Student visa from within the UK | University of Oxford](https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/visa/during/extend). If relevant to your course, you will need a [new ATAS certificate](https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/visa/before/ATAS). It is not possible for Oxford to give you a Confirmation of Acceptance for Study for a further Student visa application if you have completed your course and you are only waiting for your official results or Leave to Supplicate. If your final assessments or course completion are going to be later than anticipated but still within the validity period of your visa you will need to find out when your results are likely to be, if necessary consulting your College or Graduate studies administrator. If they are likely to be after visa expiry and you want to stay eligible for the Graduate route, you will need to arrange to apply for a further student **visa before you have completed study and any final assessments.**

**Note for DPhil students:** You may need to allow at least 3 and up to 6 months between thesis submission and Leave to Supplicate. Speak to your Graduate Studies Administrator or your supervisor about the likely time-line, and follow any instructions about the appointment of examiners before thesis submission. If it is likely you will not receive leave to supplicate before visa expiry you may need to make a further Student visa application **before your viva**.

**7. What if I am going to be finishing my course earlier than expected?**

In some circumstances, we have to report early completion to the Home Office which might result in your visa being shortened, and you would need to apply for Graduate Route before the new shortened visa end date. For information on early completion see [Now that you have completed your course | University of Oxford](https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/visa/after/completion)

**8. 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, 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, and remind you of your CAS number. You can apply once you have received this email.

**9. 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.

**10. 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 FAQ 1 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.

**11. 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, Oxford is only able to sponsor student visas for a very small number of part-time courses.

**12. I had to suspend during my course, will that affect my eligibility to apply for the Graduate route?**   
  
The [Graduate Route guidance](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/997587/graduate-route-v1.0ext.pdf) confirms on page 11 that you can apply for the Graduate route if you are enrolled again after your suspension and you returned to the UK and successfully completed your course on a valid Tier 4 or Student visa and you meet the residency requirement in FAQ 1.

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**13. I’ve already had a Graduate Route visa or a Doctorate Extension Scheme (DES) visa, can I apply for the Graduate Route?**   
  
You cannot apply for the Graduate route if you have had a Graduate route visa or a DES visa before.

**14. Do I need ATAS for the Graduate Route?**   
  
You do not need an ATAS certificate to apply for a Graduate Route visa.

## **How to apply**

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

The visa application fee is £822. You also need to pay the immigration health surcharge (IHS) at the same time as you apply for the visa. For applications made on or after 6 February 2024, IHS will cost £2070 for a 2-year Graduate Route visa or £3105 for a 3-year Graduate Route visa.

If there is at least six months left on your existing visa, you may be able to get [a refund of IHS](https://www.gov.uk/healthcare-immigration-application/refunds) 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 Oxford to notify them of course completion of *all*student visa holders. 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 the Home Office has been notified. Be careful not to submit your Graduate route application before you receive this confirmation. You do not have to wait until your degree ceremony to apply.

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

You need funder permission if:

* Your course was funded by a scholarship or sponsorship and
* This was from a Government or international scholarship agency and
* It covered 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. This requirement also applies to Graduate route Dependant applicants if they have been studying. Chevening will not give permission for an application.

You can contact us if you have questions about this requirement.

**18. Can my family members apply as Graduate route dependants?**

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 in the UK during the validity period of your most recent student 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. A dependant who was studying may need permission for their funder, see FAQ 17. Each dependant will need to pay the visa fee and IHS.

**19. Can I apply from outside the UK?**   
  
No, you need to be in the UK and still have unexpired student visa permission.

**20. How do I make the application?**

The application starts from this Home Office page: [Graduate visa: Apply](https://www.gov.uk/graduate-visa/apply). Most people will be able to use an app to prove their identity by scanning their BRP or passport, but if you are not able to use the app you will need to book an appointment to give biometrics. Do not leave the Common Travel Area (meaning the UK, Jersey, Guernsey, the Isle of Man and Ireland) before your application has been decided because your application would be treated as withdrawn.

**21. Will I receive a Biometric Residence Permit?**

If you were able to use the app to apply and are a ‘non-visa national’ (not on [this Home Office list](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-visitor-visa-national-list)) you will not be sent a BRP but will get your Graduate permission as an eVisa with instructions on how to prove your status online.

If you are a ‘[visa national](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-visitor-visa-national-list)’ and used the app to apply, you will still be able to prove your status online, but you will also receive a BRP. This BRP will have a 31 December 2024 expiry date, after which UKVI should have made arrangements with airlines so that you can use your eVisa in your UKVI account for travel.

If you were not able to create a UKVI account at the beginning of the application, you can find information about how to register a UKVI account to view your immigration status here: [Online immigration status (eVisa) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/online-immigration-status-evisa)

**22. How long does it take to get a decision?**

The Home Office says you can normally expect a decision within 8 weeks. Feedback from students who have already applied is that they have sometimes received decisions much faster – some within a few days to a few weeks. Priority service and super priority service may also be available if you are able to confirm your identity through UK Immigration: ID Check app at the beginning of the application. See: [Get a faster decision on your visa or settlement application: Eligible visas when applying from inside the UK - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/faster-decision-visa-settlement/eligible-visas-when-applying-inside-the-uk). The priority service costs an additional £500 for a decision within 5 working days, the super priority service costs an additional £1000 for a decision within 1 working day.

You might want to choose to apply with the priority/super priority service if you have overseas travel plans, however you don’t have to use the priority/super priority service just because your Student visa is going to expire soon, this is because your legal status in the UK is covered by [Section 3C leave](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64da0b283fde6100134a51c8/3C_and_3D_leave.pdf) once you have submitted your Graduate route visa application while your Student visa is valid, and it is okay if your Student visa expires before a decision on your Graduate route visa application is made.

## **What type of work can you do?**

**23. Can I work while my Graduate route visa application is pending?**

Your Student visa gives you permission to work full-time following completion of your course until it expires and this includes the period while you are waiting for your Graduate route visa to be granted. You are not allowed to be self-employed or engage in business, work as a professional sportsperson (including as a sports coach) or work as an entertainer before your Graduate route visa is granted as this is not permitted on a Student visa. If you applied for your Student visa on or after 6 April 2022 then you are allowed to work full time in a permanent position/role while your Graduate route visa is pending, but if you applied for your student visa before this, then you can only work part time, or full time but on a temporary contract, until your Graduate route visa is granted.

**24. What work can I do on the Graduate Route?**  
You can do any kind of employment except work as a professional sportsperson.

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**25. Can I be self-employed while I am on the Graduate Route?**   
Yes.

**26. Can I start a business on this visa?**   
You can run a business while on the Graduate route as you can be self-employed.

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

You will need to consider the advantages and disadvantages of each route in your own situation. 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. Graduate route visas are for either 2 years or 3 years if you completed a DPhil. A skilled worker visa can be for up to 5 years.

**28. 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**

**29. 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](https://www.gov.uk/long-residence).

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

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. You would be allowed to study part time at undergraduate level or below, as this would not be eligible for a Student visa. You might also be able to study a graduate level course based on distance learning.

# **31. Can I leave the UK while I am on the Graduate Route?**

You can travel in and out of the UK during your Graduate Route permission. You must not leave the UK while a visa application is pending, as your application would automatically be treated as withdrawn. Once your Graduate route permission has been granted, you can spend time outside the UK, for example if you want or need to live outside the UK until you have a job offer. There is no restriction on the amount of time you can spend outside the UK although long periods spent outside the UK could affect your eligibility to apply for indefinite leave to remain – see FAQ 29.

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**32. Can I apply for a shorter Graduate Route visa or split the time spent on Graduate route?**

No, the only option is a 2-year Graduate route visa, or 3 years following a DPhil, even if you only need the visa for a shorter period of time. You do not need to use the whole period of the visa and you could go on to a different visa or leave the UK before it is finished, but you can only be granted a Graduate route visa once so you could not apply again if for example you only used it for a year.

## **E. After Graduate Route**

# **33. 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. If you are taking another course you can apply for a further Student visa.

## **F. Further information and advice**

**34. Where can I find detailed information about the Graduate Route?**

See the University webpages with visa options for [staying in the UK to work](https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/visa/after/work) after your studies.

UKCISA (UK Council for International Student Affairs) has useful information on the [Graduate route](https://ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Working/Graduate-route).  
You can read the UK Home Office’s [information on the Graduate route](https://www.gov.uk/graduate-visa): and their detailed information for caseworkers [Graduate Route guidance](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/997587/graduate-route-v1.0ext.pdf), and simple leaflet, [The Graduate immigration route](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1006443/Graduate_Immigration_Route_guide__July_2021_.pdf)   
For information on the COVID-19 arrangements, see UK Government concessions for [COVID and the Graduate Route](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/966653/Student_Guidance_-_Covid-19_response_03032021_FINAL.pdf) (page 16)

**35. Can I get help and advice from the University?**

If you have questions after reading these FAQs and the information in FAQ 34 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](https://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/uk-visas#collapse1568226).

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