

# Latest Immigration News and Updates:

New immigration rule changes have been implemented by the UK Visa and Immigration unit (UKVI) since March 2015 with more changes due to take effect in November 2015. As these changes will have an effect on both prospective and current international students from outside the EEU, we are clarifying these new rule changes where they may apply to international students coming to the UK to study or are currently studying at Cardiff Met. For more information regarding the new immigration rule changes please visit the UKVI website at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

## **Changes from 6<sup>th</sup> April 2015:**

### **1) Immigration Health Surcharge:**

Students who apply for a visa to come to study in the UK on or after 6 April 2015 may need to pay an immigration health surcharge as part of their visa application, which will give them access to the National Health Service (NHS) in the same way as a permanent UK resident. The surcharge will ensure that students have adequate health cover for the duration of their stay in the UK. Students will however still need to pay for certain types of services including dental treatment and eye tests.

#### **Who has to pay the immigration health surcharge?**

The health surcharge will be payable by:

- Nationals from countries outside the European Union;
- Those applying for a visa to temporarily work, study or join family members in the UK for a period of longer than 6 months
- Applicants applying for further leave to remain from within the UK (eg. Tier 4 visa extensions)

Some students may be exempt from paying the health surcharge, including those who:

- Apply for entry clearance to come to the UK for 6 months or less (For example, students entering the UK to study a Pre-Sessional English course).

The following link provides more information on whether or not a student will be required to pay the immigration health surcharge: <https://www.gov.uk/healthcare-immigration-application/when-you-need-to-pay>

#### **How much do students have to pay?**

The health surcharge will be set at £150 per year for students and the total surcharge amount for the whole period of leave granted will be payable upfront. Dependants should also be charged the same amount as the student. The exact amount a student will be required to pay will depend on the length of visa the student will be granted to enter the UK to study.

#### **For example:**

- Students will be required to pay half of the yearly amount if their application includes part of a year that is less than 6 months or

- Students will be required to pay for a whole year if their application includes part of a year that is more than 6 months.

Students can calculate how much they will be required to pay as part of their visa application by clicking on the following link: <https://www.immigration-health-surcharge.service.gov.uk/checker/type>

#### **When do students have to pay?**

Students applying for a visa to enter the UK will be required to pay the health surcharge as part of the visa application process however they will be asked to pay separately to the visa application fee. Once this payment has been made, the student will be issued with an immigration health surcharge reference number which should be included on the visa application form. Failure to pay the health surcharge within 7 working days (for students applying outside the UK) is likely to result in their application being rejected.

**Those who are exempt from paying the health surcharge will still be required to obtain a reference number however they will not need to pay the surcharge.**

#### **When are students eligible to obtain a refund?**

The immigration health surcharge is automatically refunded to students if:

- Their visa application is refused and they have no option to apply for an administrative review, or their administrative review has been dismissed.

Further information regarding refunds can be found via the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/healthcare-immigration-application/refunds>

## **2) Secure English Language Tests (SELT's)**

Students who apply for a Tier 4 visa to come to the UK on or after 6 April 2015 who are required to obtain a Secure English Language Test (SELT) can now only do so from the following provider:

- **IELTS SELT Consortium**

The following tests have been approved for UK visas that require proof of English language level:

- **IELTS**
- **IELTS Life Skills**

Students should ensure they book onto an approved test ONLY. New IELTS certificates from approved tests and providers will confirm a unique reference number.

Students who come to study the following courses at below degree level at Cardiff Met will be required to submit a SELT in support of their visa application:

- **Pre-Sessional English**
- **International Foundation Course**
- **Higher National Diploma (HND)**
- **Foundation leading onto a main course of study**

#### **Transitional Arrangements:**

Students who have taken a SELT on or before 5 April 2015 with some previously approved test providers, will still be able to use their certificates until 5 November 2015. However from 6<sup>th</sup> April, students who require a SELT should only book a test with a provider on the [new approved SELT list](#) and must ensure they book their test at an [approved test Centre](#). From 6<sup>th</sup> April, tests taken with old providers and/or at non-approved test centre's throughout the world will not be acceptable for visa application purposes.

For a list of approved tests and providers from 6 April 2015 and for a transitional list of approved tests and providers please access the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-applying-for-uk-visa-approved-english-language-tests>

### **3) TB Screening**

From 6<sup>th</sup> April 2015, students who apply for Entry Clearance to come to the UK who have been present [for more than 6 months](#) in a country where tuberculosis screening is required, should now be screened. For more information about TB Screening and for a list of countries where tuberculosis screening is required please visit: <https://www.gov.uk/tb-test-visa>

## **Changes from 8<sup>th</sup> April 2015:**

### **1) Exit Checks**

From 8 April 2015 the UKVI will conduct exit checks on passengers leaving the UK in the same way as is the process for those entering the UK. Although the UKVI believe to have devised a suitable way to carry out exit checks on passengers with minimum disruption to their travel, we would still advise students to arrive at the airport in good time and to have their passport or travel document ready to be checked.

For more information about the Exit Check process, please access the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exit-checks-on-passengers-leaving-the-uk/exit-checks-fact-sheet>

## **Changes from 24<sup>th</sup> April 2015:**

### **1) Short Term Study visas**

From 24<sup>th</sup> April 2015 a new short term student route has replaced the student visitor route and therefore some students can now apply for a short term visa if they are coming to the UK to:

- complete a short course of study in the UK (for example a Pre-Sessional English course)
- do a short period of research as part of a degree course if they are studying abroad

Students can apply for a Short Term Study visa and come to the UK for:

- 6 months – if they are studying a short course including a Pre-Sessional English course, or a short period of research if the student is 18 or over.
- 11 months – if they are studying a longer English language course and they are 18 or over.

For further information regarding who is eligible to apply for a short term visa and how to apply please access the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/study-visit-visa/overview>

## **Changes from 14<sup>th</sup> July 2015:**

### **1) Biometric Residence Permits (BRP's)**

Since 18<sup>th</sup> March 2015, the Home Office has been rolling-out a new process for students who need to obtain a visa to come to the UK to study. Students are now issued with a short term vignette in their passport (valid for 30 days) which will allow them to enter the UK. On arrival to the UK students are then required to obtain a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) which will be issued confirming the full visa length covering the duration of the course they will be studying in the UK.

From 14<sup>th</sup> July 2015, students will be issued with Entry Clearance to the UK starting one month before the course start date as specified on the student's CAS, or seven days before the student's intended date of travel, whichever is the later. This also applies to students who apply for Entry Clearance to the UK who's applications were submitted before 14<sup>th</sup> July but which are still awaiting a decision.

### **How can a student ensure that their BRP is delivered to the University rather than a local Post Office:**

When completing their visa application form, students can choose either to have their BRP delivered to a local Post Office or directly to the university. We would discourage students from choosing to have their BRP delivered to a Post Office as this will inconvenience the student who will have to make the journey to collect their BRP from the Post Office within 10 days of arrival to the UK. Students who opt for collection at a Post Office who do not collect their BRP within the 10 day period may incur a financial penalty or cancellation of their leave to remain in the UK.

Fortunately, arrangements have been made at Cardiff Met to allow for students BRP's to be delivered to the university directly and distributed to each student once they have arrived at the university to enrol onto their course. Before making their overseas visa application to come to the UK, Cardiff Met's International Office will send each student an email attaching their Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) which will enable them to apply for their Tier 4 visa. The email will also include the following reference number which is unique to Cardiff Met.

Cardiff Metropolitan University's reference number is confirmed as **2HE467**. Students will be advised that this reference number should be inserted onto their visa application form in order to ensure that their BRP will be delivered to Cardiff Met directly. Students who's visa applications are successful will receive a decision letter confirming their full length of leave and this letter will explain the process for collecting their BRP in the UK. The student's decision letter will also confirm the date from which their BRP will be available to collect at Cardiff Met upon the students arrival to the UK.

Students will be informed that they should bring their passport and decision letter with them to the university on the day they collect their BRP.

For more information regarding this process please access the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/biometric-residence-permits/overview>

## **Changes from 10<sup>th</sup> August 2015:**

### **1) Academic Progression**

On 10<sup>th</sup> August 2015, the rules relating to academic progression are being clarified to make clear that students who wish to extend their Tier 4 (General) leave must be moving up a level on the National Qualifications Framework, unless their new course is related to their previous Tier 4 study, or the previous course and the student's new course together support the student's genuine career aspirations. Cardiff Met will be carefully considering applications for study at the same level to ensure there is a sufficient reason and explanation for study at the same level.

Students who apply for Tier 4 (General) leave who are applying to complete a PhD or other doctoral qualification can continue to study at the same level.

### **2) Time-limits for study in the UK**

For Tier 4 (General) applications made on or after 10<sup>th</sup> August 2015, the additional periods of leave before the students course start date and after the course end date will be included when calculating whether a student exceeds the time limit on periods of Tier 4 (General) and Student leave.

## **Changes from 12<sup>th</sup> November 2015:**

### **1) Time-limits for courses at below degree level**

From 12<sup>th</sup> November 2015 the time-limit for Tier 4 (General) students who study courses at National Qualifications Framework levels 3-5 (or equivalent) is being reduced from 3 years to 2 years.

### **2) Tier 4 maintenance Requirements**

The level of funds that Tier 4 (General) students at Cardiff Met and their dependents must maintain for living costs is increasing as follows:

	<b>Current Maintenance</b>	<b>Maintenance Requirement</b>
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	Requirement	from 12 <sup>th</sup> November 2015
Tier 4 (General)	£820 (outer London per month, up to a maximum of 9 months)	£1,015 (outer London per month, up to a maximum of 9 months)
Tier 4 Dependant	£460 (outer London per month, up to a maximum of 9 months)	£680 (outer London per month, up to a maximum of 9 months)

The maximum amount that can be deducted for accommodation from maintenance is also increasing from £1,000 to £1,265 from 12<sup>th</sup> November 2015.

### **3) Established Presence**

The provision for ‘established presence’ is being removed so that all students must show that they have enough money to support themselves throughout the duration of their remaining study, or for up to a maximum of 9 months. This is to ensure that all students can demonstrate that they can maintain and accommodate themselves for the full duration of their course, or up to nine months, whichever is shorter. However, students applying under the Doctorate Extension Scheme are still required to show only 2 months’ worth of funds for maintenance.

### **4) Preventing college students from extending their Tier 4 (General) visa or switching to other points-based routes**

Tier 4 (General) students studying a course at an FE college cannot extend their Tier 4 leave or switch into any other category in the UK unless they are studying at a college which UKVI classes as an “embedded college offering pathway programmes”, designed to prepare students for entry into higher education. Students who have studied at other colleges, who wish to start a course at Cardiff Met will be required to return to their home country and apply for fresh entry clearance to the UK.

### **5) Tier 4 Dependants and work**

Tier 4 Dependants who accompany students to the UK will be prevented from taking low or unskilled jobs, however they will still be permitted to take part-time or full-time skilled work.