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Illustration credit: Ewelina Skowronska, UAL graduate

Schengen visas for travel in Europe

Many students take the opportunity to travel to other European countries during their time studying in the UK, to visit friends, take part in a class trip or simply for tourism. This factsheet is for students who have a UK visa and who require a visa to enter other European countries.

Checking if you need a visa

The embassy for the country to which you wish to travel will state who needs a visa, which depends on factors such as nationality. Web addresses and contact details can be found in the London Diplomatic List; search for 'foreign embassies in the UK' at gov.uk. Students who need a visa may be able to apply for a Schengen visa.

Schengen visa

A Schengen visa allows travel to, and between, all countries in the Schengen area:

Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

Types of Schengen visa

There are different types of Schengen visa:

- **Short stay or travel** visa which allows a visit of up to three months in any six-month period, and is suitable for tourism, visiting friends or attending conferences, exhibitions and shows. This type of visa is usually **'single-entry'**, meaning that it can only be used to travel to the Schengen area once. A **'multi-entry'** allows to enter and leave the Schengen area more than once, but a documents relating to every trip will have to be shown; see the Supporting Documents section below.

- **Airport transit visa** which allows transit through the international transit zone of an airport of a Schengen country on the way to the next destination.

Applying for a Schengen visa

When to apply

It usually takes around 15 days for a Schengen visa application to be processed, but sometimes it can take longer. You are advised to apply at least one month before your trip.

Where to apply

Some countries accept applications directly to their embassy in London; others have contracts with private visa application centres (for example VFS Global or TLS Contact) at which you must submit your application; check the website for the relevant country's embassy.

If you are travelling to more than one country in the Schengen area you must apply to the embassy or visa application centre for:

- The first country you will visit, if you are planning to stay in each country for an equal duration
- The country in which you will be spending the most amount of time, if you are planning to spend different amounts of time in each country.

How to apply

The application process usually consists of these steps, but check with the relevant embassy or visa application centre for specific information:

1. Gather the relevant supporting documents.
2. Complete an application form.
3. Book an appointment at the relevant embassy or visa application centre and pay the fee.

4. Take your completed application form and supporting documents to your appointment.
5. Receive the result of your application, usually within 15 days, but sometimes later.

Supporting documents

The documents provided with your application form generally consist of the following, but check with the relevant embassy or visa application center for specific information:

- Original passport or official travel document
- Recent photograph(s)
- Evidence of the purpose of the visit. For example, tickets/bookings for events, or an invitation letter from a conference organiser which may have to be verified by their local town or city hall (which can take a while).
- Evidence of all travel arrangements, for example, tickets or confirmed bookings.
- A valid UK visa (Biometric Residence Permit). Most countries specify that this must be a 'UK resident's permit' such as a Tier 4 (General) visa, which must continue to be valid for at least three months from the date you intend to return to the UK. Note that a Short-Term Student visa is not a 'UK resident's permit'.
- Evidence of enough money to support yourself for your whole stay in the Schengen area, for example, bank statements. There is no amount of time for which you need to have held the money in your bank account, and some countries do not specify the exact amount of money required. You should, therefore, carefully consider your likely costs and ensure you have enough money in your bank account.
- A 'student status' letter proving that you are a full-time student. You can get this at your own College, from the CSM Student Centre, LCC Information Centre, LCF Student Administration office at JPS or Camberwell, Chelsea and Wimbledon Student Contact Desks.
- Travel insurance. Good places to look are www.endsleigh.co.uk (endorsed by the National Union of Students) and www.moneysavingexpert.com. Check the country's requirements carefully before buying this.

Trips arranged by UAL

If you are going on a trip arranged by UAL, you are responsible for making your own visa application. However, the UAL staff member who arranged the trip can provide (or can ask the travel agent to provide) the following supporting documents:

- A receipt for the payment you have made for the trip
- A signed letter on letter headed paper, confirming: that they have arranged the trip; the purpose of the trip; the hotel's name, address, phone number and check-in and check-out dates; travel dates and times; a list of students going on the trip, with your name highlighted; and the cost of the trip for each student.
- UAL's travel insurance policy confirmation letter, insurance summary document and a letter from UAL's Insurance Administrator, confirming the list of students going on the trip and that they are covered by the policy. Note that these will only be provided where UAL's travel insurance policy meets the requirements of the country to which you are travelling.

Travelling back to the UK

Whenever you leave the UK, you must carry a particular set of documents to present at the border on returning to the UK; search 'travelling abroad' at arts.ac.uk.

You **should avoid returning** to the UK after your course end date (as shown on your CAS), even if your Tier 4 (General) visa is still valid. This is because you have fulfilled the purpose of your visa already and may be prevented from entering the UK at the border. If you have a CAS to start another course and wish to return to the UK to extend your visa, you should seek advice from the Student Advice Service.

Student Advice Service

your money and immigration specialist

student.advisers@arts.ac.uk

Tel: 020 7514 6250

Search for '**Student Advice**' at arts.ac.uk

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