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Illustration credit: Ewelina Skowronska, UAL graduate

Graduation ceremony and visas

After all of your hard work in completing your course, graduation is an exciting time. This factsheet will help you to understand how to legally be in the UK for your graduation ceremony.

Tier 4 visa

Start by checking the end date of the Tier 4 visa. This will be on your biometric residence permit (BRP) or on the sticker in your passport.

If your graduation ceremony takes place **before** the end date of your current Tier 4 visa, you will be able to stay in the UK to attend it. You should not leave the UK in the period between finishing your course and the graduation ceremony.

In the following situations, you may need to apply for another type of visa to attend your graduation ceremony:

- Your graduation ceremony takes place **before** the end date of your current Tier 4 visa, but you leave the UK **after** your course finishes and intend to return to the UK for your graduation ceremony. Border officers may not allow you to enter the UK (even if your Tier 4 visa has not ended) because you have already completed your course.
- Your graduation ceremony takes place **after** your current Tier 4 visa expires. In this case you must leave the UK before the end date of your Tier 4 visa.

Electronic Visa Waiver

If you are a national of Kuwait, Oman, Qatar or the United Arab Emirates, you may wish to get an Electronic Visa Waiver (EWW). This allows you to visit the UK to attend your graduation ceremony without applying for a visa. Search for 'eww' at gov.uk.

Standard Visitor visa

A Standard Visitor visa allows you to visit the UK to attend your graduation ceremony.

Applications for this visa must be made from outside the UK. You can apply up to 3 months before you travel to the UK. It usually takes 3 weeks to get your visa. The visa will appear as a sticker covering a page of your passport.

People with a particular nationality may not need to apply for the visa before travelling to the UK. These include South Korea, USA, Brazil and others. In this case, you can request a Standard Visitor entry stamp when you arrive at the UK border. You would need to carry the same documents as people who must get the visa before travelling, to prove that you meet the Standard Visitor requirements. Search 'check if I need a visa' at gov.uk.

How to apply

Information about the application process, required documents and processing times for each country can be found on the UK Government website; search for 'standard visitor visa' at gov.uk.

In addition to the documents listed on the UK Government website, you must provide evidence for your main purpose of visiting the UK. You can use the confirmation email you receive after registering for your place at the graduation ceremony. Note that it will state your name, but not the names of your guests. Search for 'graduation' at arts.ac.uk for information about registering.

Your guests' visa application

As your guests will be coming to the UK to attend your graduation ceremony, you must provide them with the following documents to support their visa application:

- A copy of the ID page of your passport.
- A copy of your Tier 4 visa/Biometric Residence Permit.
- A student status letter from the University, if your guests apply before you complete your course. You can get this from the UAL Portal (sits.arts.ac.uk) or from the CSM Student Centre, LCC Information Centre, LCF Student Administration office at JPS or Camberwell, Chelsea and Wimbledon Student Contact Desks.
- The letter you received from the University confirming you have successfully completed your course, if your guests apply after you have completed your course.
- A letter from your landlord, giving permission for your guests to stay with you, if this will be the situation.
- Bank statements, showing that you can cover your guests' costs, if you will be providing financial support to your guests when they visit in the UK.
- An invitation letter written by you, inviting your guests to the UK for your graduation ceremony. See below.

Your invitation letter

The invitation letter that you write must be addressed to the Entry Clearance Officer at the British embassy where your guests will be applying for their visa. In your invitation letter you must state:

- The full name and date of birth of each of your guests and their relationship to you (for example your parent, sister, child or friend)
- That your guests will be visiting the UK to attend your graduation ceremony
- The dates on which they plan to arrive in the UK and leave the UK
- The address of the accommodation at which they intend to stay. The type, start date and end date of your UK visa.
- That you will provide all of the money that your guests will require during their stay in the UK, if they will be relying on you for financial support.

Example invitation letter

Entry Clearance Officer
British Embassy, Beijing
11 Guanghua Lu
Jianguomenwai
Beijing, 100600
China

12 May 2019

Dear Sir/Madam,

I recently completed a course at University of the Arts London and I would like the following family members to visit the UK in order to attend my graduation ceremony held on 9 July 2019.

Given name	Family name	Date of birth	Relationship
Chen	Jianyu	09/09/1969	My mother
Li	Xiaoli	15/01/1996	My friend

They plan to visit the UK from 7 July to 20 July 2019 and will be staying with me in my accommodation. The address is 33 Evington Road, London W5 7AP. This is a private rented house and I have included a letter from my landlord, which gives permission for them to stay with me during this period.

Note that I have a Tier 4 (General) visa that is valid until 14 October 2019.

Yours faithfully,

Your signature
Your name
Your date of birth
Your address

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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