

Monday, 22 June 2020

Dear international students,

Subject: Studying in the UK from autumn 2020

As the Education and Universities Ministers of the four countries of the United Kingdom (UK), England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, we are proud that so many international students choose to study here each year. We are also aware that as thousands of students like you from around the world would usually be considering their next steps, a global pandemic has caused huge disruption to our daily lives.

We want new international students to benefit, as current students do, from a world-class education from our globally renowned universities and enjoy an unforgettable UK student experience. For this reason, we have worked closely with our universities and are pleased to inform you that they have made, and will continue to make, every effort to enable you to study in the UK next academic year and beyond.

The UK has a highly tolerant, multicultural society, with a rich diversity of cultures, languages, and faiths. International students contribute significantly to this enriching environment - which makes the UK such a brilliant place to study. Our universities consistently do their utmost to ensure international students feel welcome on campuses and beyond; they are clear that everyone with the talent and potential to succeed in higher education has the opportunity to do so, regardless of nationality, ethnic or national origins.

Recruitment for 2020/21 is happening now and our universities are very much looking forward to welcoming you.

UK higher education has a well-established reputation for high quality – our universities are among the best in the world. There are 4 UK providers amongst the top 10 in the world, and 18 providers in the top 100. Our universities also have a outstanding reputation for world-class research, which has been showcased during this global pandemic as many are at the forefront of global efforts to understand the coronavirus, provide specialist equipment and combat COVID-19.

Our graduates are proven to be among the most desirable in the world. Over 50 serving world leaders have benefited from a British education, and 83% of international graduates surveyed by Universities UK International (UUKi) said their UK degree helped them get their job. A UK education opens doors, wherever you go in the world.

The new Graduate route represents a significant improvement in our offer to international students that will enable you to work, or look for work in the UK, at any skill level for two years after graduation.

The Graduate route will be available to international students who successfully complete their degree at undergraduate level or above at a UK Higher Education Provider with a track record of compliance by summer 2021, or after. International students present in the UK before 6 April 2021 will still be eligible for the two year Graduate route, if you meet the other requirements of the route, even if you begin your course online before travelling to the UK in person. This is a fantastic opportunity for international students that will help you with your first steps into employment after graduation. More information about the Graduate route is available online: <https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2019/10/14/fact-sheet-graduate-immigration-route/>.

We are working to ensure that existing processes are as flexible as possible, so that international students who are planning to study in the UK can do so.

We recognise that embarking on a course of study at a UK higher education institution is a significant commitment, which is why we want to reassure international students who are considering study in the UK that they will be able to apply for, and will receive, their Tier 4 visas in good time before commencing their programme of study in the UK.

Despite some COVID-19 disruptions to visa processes and exam timetables, you can still get started with the process. For example, you can familiarise yourself with UK visa requirements and talk to your chosen universities about evidence you may need to supply for a visa application.

We continue to monitor worldwide border, travel and public health restrictions and are resuming normal services as soon as we are able. Some Visa Application Centres have reopened, with more to follow over the coming weeks. We recognise the importance of international students, and as local restrictions lift, and application centres begin to reopen we will look to process applications as quickly as possible.

UK degrees are of a globally high standard and are internationally valuable whatever form they take – whether they are delivered in person or have elements online.

Although admissions processes and modes of teaching might look slightly different this year, the UK's world-class universities are continuing to recruit international students and you are encouraged to apply even if you are unable to travel to the UK to meet usual timelines. Universities will be flexible in accommodating your circumstances where possible, including if you are unable to travel to the UK in time for the start of the academic year. We have seen some fantastic and innovative examples of high-quality online learning being delivered by institutions across the UK, and the sector is already working hard to prepare learning materials for the summer and autumn terms. If you have any questions about course delivery in 2020/21, we encourage you to contact your chosen or prospective universities - who are best placed to provide you with institution specific information.

The UK Government, which is responsible for higher education in England, has worked closely with the Office for Students, the independent higher education regulator in England, to ensure students are able to continue their studies, receive good quality provision and work towards a degree that they and future employers value. The Office for Students has, [released advice](#) which confirms that it will continue to regulate all registered providers in England, regardless of whether their current provision is online or not. In Scotland, the Scottish Funding Council is working closely with the Quality Assurance Agency and Education Scotland to monitor the quality of the student experience. The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, as the regulator for higher education in Wales, has similarly published a [circular](#) which reaffirms its expectations that providers will continue to meet their obligations for quality and standards. This should provide you with the assurance that the quality of a UK qualification will continue to be internationally valuable whether delivered face-to-face or online or in blended form. A [recent survey](#) of UK Universities found that 97% of universities surveyed are planning to provide some form of in-person teaching (in small groups) at the start of term, with 87% stating they will offer in-person social opportunities.

The UK cares immensely about the health and wellbeing of international students, and ensuring they are safe is our number one priority.

We would like to reassure you that all governments across the UK are adhering closely to the most up to date scientific advice and guidance, which is available publicly online. As this changes, our advice has, and will continue to change to match the level of the threat of the virus.

To keep number of transmissions in the UK as low as possible, and to protect UK residents and international students in the UK, all international arrivals are now required to supply their contact and accommodation information and self-isolate in their accommodation for fourteen days on arrival into the UK. We have been clear that universities are responsible for, and must support their students on arrival to the UK. We are proud that UK universities are already demonstrating how seriously they are taking this responsibility, in ensuring that their students are safe and well cared for both upon arrival and for the duration of their stay.

These measures will be reviewed regularly, to ensure they are in line with the latest scientific evidence and remain effective and necessary. International students should not worry - we are working with universities to ensure that you know what to expect before you travel to the UK and are welcomed and supported on arrival by your chosen university.

It is now also a legal requirement to wear a face covering on public transport in England and from 22 June will also be mandatory in Scotland, and across the UK you are encouraged to wear a face covering in other enclosed public spaces where social distancing is not possible and where you will come into contact with people you do not normally meet. The UK government has published the essential health and safety requirements that apply to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) used in the UK, and clear guidance on appropriate PPE, which is consistent with World Health Organization guidance for protecting from COVID-19. Further information on this, and staying safe outside your home can be found online:

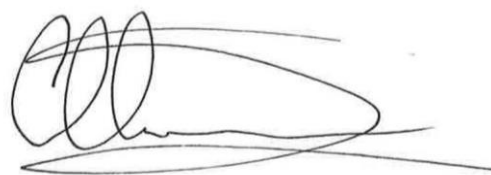
www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-safe-outside-your-home/staying-safe-outside-your-home

The UK is immensely proud of its amazing National Health Service (NHS). From the very start of the pandemic we have been clear that our priority is to safeguard the health, safety and wellbeing of all students – including international students – in the UK. In addition to support from their universities, NHS services are available to both domestic and international students. International students will always be able to access treatment that clinicians consider is immediately necessary or urgent at no upfront cost. No charges apply to testing for coronavirus, and as an international student in the UK, you will also be able to access specific COVID-19 advice through a new COVID-19 online service www.111.nhs.uk/covid-19.


Yours sincerely,



Michelle Donelan MP
Minister of State for Universities



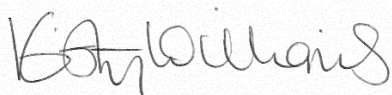
Graham Stuart MP
Minister for Exports – Department for
International Trade



Diane Dodds MLA
Minister for the Economy – Northern Ireland



Richard Lochhead MSP
Minister for Further Education,
Higher Education and Science - Scotland



Kirsty Williams MS
Minister of Education - Wales

ANNEX A: USEFUL RESOURCES

| Other resources for international students | | |
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| Study UK | Practical information and insight on UK education for international students. | www.study-uk.britishcouncil.org |
| Study in Scotland | Practical information about studying in Scotland as well as where to live and visit during your stay. | www.scotland.org/about-scotland |
| Study in Wales | Practical information about studying in Wales. | www.studyinwales.ac.uk |
| Office for Students (OfS) | The regulator and competition authority for the higher education sector in England | www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-students Information regarding OfS's role in assuring quality and standards in English Higher Education. www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/regulation/quality-and-standards/ |
| The Scottish Funding Council | Scotland's strategic body responsible for funding teaching and learning provision, research and other activities in Scotland's colleges and universities | www.sfc.ac.uk |
| Higher Education Funding Council for Wales | (HEFCW) regulates fee levels at higher education providers, ensures a framework is in place for assessing the quality of higher education and scrutinises the performance of designated providers. | www.hefcw.ac.uk/working_with_he_providers/coronavirus/coronavirus.aspx |
| UKCISA | Up-to-date information about immigration, fees, student support, working and living in the UK for current and prospective international students. | www.ukcisa.org.uk www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice Student Advice Line: +4420 7788 9214 (Opening times available online here: www.ukcisa.org.uk/About-UKCISA/Contact-us) |
| UCAS | The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service whose main role is to operate the application process for UK universities. | www.ucas.com |

| <u>Gov.uk</u> - The best place to find UK Government services and information | | |
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| UK Government | Latest Public Health England advice relating to COVID-19 | www.gov.uk/coronavirus |
| | National Health Service (NHS) | www.nhs.uk Online COVID-19 service: www.111.nhs.uk/covid-19 |
| | Visa and immigration advice | www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-immigration-and-borders . |
| | Entering the UK advice | www.gov.uk/uk-border-control |
| Northern Ireland Executive | Latest Northern Ireland Executive advice relating to COVID-19 | www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19 |
| Scottish Government | Latest Scottish Government advice relating to COVID-19 | www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/ |
| Welsh Government | Latest Welsh Government advice relating to COVID-19 | www.gov.wales/coronavirus |
| | Latest Public Health Wales advice | https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/ NHS Wales Online COVID-19 service: www.111.wales.nhs.uk/coronavirus(2019ncov) |