

Graduate route to open to international students on 1 July 2021

The new Graduate route will open for applications on 1 July 2021, allowing the UK to retain the brightest and the best international students to continue to contribute to society and the economy post-study.

International students must have completed an eligible course at a UK higher education provider, with a track record of compliance with the government's immigration requirements to apply to the Graduate route. Students on the Graduate route will be able to work or look for work after their studies for a maximum period of 2 years, or 3 years for Doctoral students.

The launch of the new Graduate route shows that the government is continuing to deliver on its key manifesto promise to implement a points-based immigration system, which will attract talent and ensure that businesses can recruit the most highly qualified from across the globe to drive the economy forwards.

The Graduate route will work for all corners of the UK, ensuring that communities in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland can benefit from talented individuals who want to stay after their studies.

Minister for Future Borders and Immigration Kevin Foster said:

As we rebuild from the global pandemic we want the world's brightest talent, who aspire to a career at the highest levels of business, science, the arts and technology to see our United Kingdom as the natural place to fulfil their aspirations.

The changes announced today will ensure once they have received a gold standard qualification from one of our world leading education institutions they can easily secure the status they need to continue living, working and fulfilling their dreams in the UK.

As detailed in the Immigration Rules laid in Parliament today (4 March), the new route will open for applications on 1 July 2021, to international students who successfully complete a degree at undergraduate level or above in the UK.

The Graduate route will be unsponsored, meaning applicants will not need a job offer to apply for the route. There will be no minimum salary requirements nor caps on numbers. Graduates on the route will be able to work flexibly, switch jobs and develop their career as required.

The new route will help the government to achieve the ambition set out in the International Education Strategy to increase the number of international students in higher education in the UK to 600,000 by 2030.

Coronavirus concessions for students unable to travel to the UK due to the pandemic have also been extended, recognising the continuing disruption many face due to international travel restrictions.

Applicants who began their studies in Autumn 2020 will now have until 21 June 2021 to enter the UK (updated from 6 April 2021) in order to be eligible for the Graduate route. Students who began their studies in January or February 2021 will need to be in the UK by 27 September 2021.

The Graduate route comes as the government also unveiled plans to launch another new immigration route that will help start-ups and fast-growing firms recruit the talent they need to innovate and grow at yesterday's Budget as part of a range of measures for highly skilled migrants. As part of the route, highly skilled migrants with a job offer from a recognised high-growth firm will qualify for a visa without the need for sponsorship or third-party endorsement.