



Applying for a Tier 4 Student Visa – Masters Degree – August 2017

Contents:

- Tier 4 Document Checklist

- Part One: Before you Apply

- Are you eligible for a Tier 4 visa?
- Your Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) number
- Where can you apply for your Tier 4 visa?
- Do you need to pay the Immigration Healthcare Surcharge (IHS)?
- Preparing your supporting documents to avoid a refusal:
 - Differentiation for “Low-risk Nationals”
 - Understanding what money you need to show to avoid a refusal
 - What documents can I use as evidence of funds to avoid a refusal?
 - What original qualifications do I need to submit to avoid a refusal?
 - How can I prove I meet the English Language requirements?
 - Getting your document translated
 - Passport and photographs
 - TB Test Certificate
 - UK Police Registration Certificate

- Part Two: The application process

- Which Tier 4 application form should you use?
- What is the date of application?
- How much will your application cost and how long will it take to process?
- What are biometrics?
- Credibility Interviews
- Problems with your application (*including information on the impact of being refused*)
- Receiving your Tier 4 Visa
- Checking your Tier 4 Visa for errors

- Key Contacts

Tier 4 Application Document Checklist

Essential documents to be included by ALL students

- Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS)
- Immigration Health Surcharge reference number
- Current valid passport
- Signed, application coversheet
- Photographs

Documents which may need to be included by some students

- Any previous passport/travel document used for travel to the UK
- [Biometric Residence Permit](#) for the UK
- Up to date original [Police Registration Certificate](#)
- [Tuberculosis \(TB\) Certificate](#) – Visas of more than six months
- Original academic certificate/transcript for each qualification listed on your CAS
- Original evidence of your English language qualification if stated on the CAS
- Official translation of any document not in English
- Original financial documentation with the required amount of money in your bank account
- Original financial documentation showing that the required amount of money is in your parent(s) bank account; **and**
 - a) Original birth certificate; **and**
 - b) Letter of consent from your parent(s) confirming your relationship and consenting you to use their money
- Evidence of any scholarships (LSE scholarships are listed on your CAS)
- Loan letter (US/ Government/ Official educational loans only)
- Original, signed and stamped evidence of Official Financial sponsor or consent if you have been fully sponsored within the last 12 month

This guide is for students applying for a Tier 4 visa for an LSE taught Diploma or Masters degree programme. If you are on another programme at LSE, please read the relevant guide for your cohort.

Part One: Before you apply

Are you eligible for a Tier 4 visa?

Cap on degree level studies

IMPORTANT: Read the section *“Calculating periods of leave towards time limits”* in the [Tier 4 Policy Guidance](#).

UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) cap the amount of time that a person can spend studying in the UK on student immigration permission. We can only sponsor you for a Tier 4 visa, if your programme at LSE will not take you beyond five years study at degree level. You must provide details of all previous study at degree level in the UK to help Admissions assess this before issuing your CAS.

Read the UKCISA web pages on [“Time Limits”](#) to find out how the LSE will calculate if we can sponsor your visa.

Academic Progression

IMPORTANT: Read the section *“Academic Progression”* in the [Tier 4 Policy Guidance](#).

UKVI now require:

- justification for study at the same level which shows that the new course relates to previous study and aids the applicant’s career plans (you may also be required to justify this in a credibility interview);
- no study at a lower level is permitted – your application will be refused;
- students who fail to successfully complete their previous course of study can only apply outside the UK for the visa (those currently on a 12 month Masters please see below for your options). You may need transcripts from your previous course;
- academic progression does not apply if the applicant is applying from overseas.

If you think you are affected by this, please [contact ISVAT immediately](#) for advice.

Students studying a Pre-sessional English Language programme at another university

If you have chosen to study a pre-sessional English language programme at another university on a Tier 4 visa, you will need to:

- Inform Graduate Admissions that you are studying this programme – they may need to show evidence of this on your CAS;
- Successfully complete the pre-sessional English language programme – if you fail you may need to return home to apply for your new visa. Some institutions charge a deposit for their pre-sessional programmes so if you fail to be able to attend LSE, it may cost you more money and you may not have time to join your programme;
- Provide evidence with your visa application that you have successfully completed your pre-sessional English language programme.

Students studying a pre-sessional English language programme at LSE

If you have studied a pre-sessional English language programme at LSE to meet the conditions of your offer, you will need to successfully complete this programme to be able to apply within the UK. You will be required to attend a briefing on extending your Tier 4 visa before registering for your degree programme; to avoid the risk of being refused your visa.

Students attending the Summer School to meet the conditions of their visa

If you are required to attend the Summer School as a condition of your Masters degree offer (usually those who will study Economics), you will need to successfully complete your Summer School programme to be able to apply for a new Tier 4 visa in the UK. You will be required to attend a briefing on extending your Tier 4 visa before registering for your degree programme; to avoid the risk of being refused your visa.

Students currently studying a 12 month Masters degree at another university

If you are not going to receive official confirmation that you have completed your course in time to apply for a visa to study at LSE, please contact your current university to request a letter which states that, based on your performance throughout the course, the university deems that you are highly likely to complete the course successfully. Once you receive this letter please e-mail a copy to Graduate Admissions. You will need to submit the original in your visa application and you will also need to show it to register for studies at LSE.

Students currently studying a 12 month Masters degree at LSE

If you are a current LSE student who requires a letter from LSE to say that you are highly likely to be awarded your degree, you will only be able to obtain that after 1st September 2017 from Registry. If you intend to apply for your visa earlier than this, you will need to return to your home country to apply.

[Contact us for advice](#) on your options as you may find it more beneficial to apply outside the UK.

Registered students who have had a change in circumstances

Interruption of Study

If you have interrupted your studies, please contact ISVAT for advice on how to return to the UK at least three months before your expected date of return. As your previous visa is likely to have been curtailed, you should not be in the UK and will need to apply for the new Tier 4 visa from your home country.

Repeat teaching

Masters degree students rarely apply for repeat teaching at LSE due to the nature of the programme. However, if you are applying for repeat teaching, contact ISVAT for advice so that you can check when, where and if you can apply for a new Tier 4 visa. You will also need to check that you will not exceed the 5 year time limit by having repeat teaching.

Re-sit/deferral students with Lent Term Week Zero examinations

If you require a new visa, the LSE will not sponsor re-sit students under Tier 4 for Lent Term Week Zero examinations. You must apply to attend these examinations as a Short-term Student.

Re-sit/deferral students with examinations during the main assessment period

If you have opted to apply for a Tier 4 visa to undertake your re-sit/deferred assessments, you will only be sponsored from the start of the assessment period. You will need to request a new CAS from the Registry to apply for a new visa. If you return on a Tier 4 visa, the duration of your new visa will be included in the 5 year time limit; you should ensure that the new visa will not mean that you exceed the time limit.

Re-sit/deferral students who need to return to the UK for the dissertation

If you need to return to the UK for your dissertation, you may be able to apply for a Tier 4 visa if you are required to be present in the UK for your dissertation. If you are unsure, ask your department if you are required to be in the UK for supervision or to access facilities at LSE. You will need to request a CAS from Registry to apply for a new visa. . If you return on a Tier 4 visa, the duration of your new visa will be included in the 5 year time limit; you should ensure that the new visa will not mean that you exceed the time limit.

Programme Transfer

If you transferred to a new programme of study which is longer than your current visa before the 6th April 2016, it will not be possible for you to extend your Tier 4 visa in the UK. Contact us for advice on your options.

Your Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) number

Our team does not provide CAS numbers for your application and cannot expedite them with the relevant team. We are also unable to inform you when a CAS will be issued or updated, so please contact the relevant team for advice. During Summer 2016, LSE issued over 3500 CAS numbers to new students.

- If you are a **new student**, your CAS number will be issued by the Graduate Admissions Office once your offer becomes unconditional, you have completed the Financial Undertaking Form and have checked your pre-CAS statement;
- If you are a **registered student** with a change in circumstances e.g. re-take assessments, your CAS will be issued by the Registry and you must [request it online](#).
- If you are a **double/joint degree student**, please refer to our [Info Sheet](#).

Your eligibility for a CAS will depend on which programme you are doing, your previous study in the UK and the reason you require a CAS e.g. a refusal.

The Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) is the key 'document' that you need from LSE for your Tier 4 application. You cannot apply for a Tier 4 visa until you have received your CAS number. You only need the CAS number not a hardcopy of the document to apply for your visa.

A CAS is only valid for 6 months, and it can only be used once. The CAS links you to LSE. You can only use it to study at LSE. If you apply for a Tier 4 visa using a CAS from another university in your application, you will *not* be able to register for your programme at LSE.

LSE will issue your CAS a maximum of three months before the start of your programme. If you attempt to apply earlier than three months before the course start date stated on the CAS, your application will be refused.

IMPORTANT: If your Tier 4 visa has been refused, you will not receive a new CAS until you have been advised on how to avoid further refusals by ISVAT. LSE reserves the right not to issue you with a new CAS if we think you are at risk of further refusals.

Check your CAS number carefully when you receive it. If there are any errors on the CAS e.g. you have a new passport, you must contact the team who issued the CAS to get it amended. Errors on CAS numbers can lead to refusals, so it's important that it's right first time.

What if I am doing a pre-sessional course?

You may only be able to get a joint CAS which covers the pre-sessional and Masters degree programmes if your offer for the Masters is unconditional. If you have an unconditional offer for your main course but are planning to attend an English course at the Language Centre or one of LSE's Summer School programmes prior to the start of your degree programme, you should inform Graduate Admissions and they will confirm if you can have a joint CAS. If you are able to get a joint CAS, you will only need to make one visa application to cover both courses.

If your offer for your main course is conditional upon you completing a Language Centre or Summer School course, it is unlikely that you will be able to get a joint CAS to cover both your pre-sessional and main courses. Whether you are able to get a CAS for the pre-sessional will depend on which session you are doing and also whether it is a requirement or supplementary. Check with the Graduate Admissions Office if you are unsure.

Where can you apply for your Tier 4 visa?

You can apply up to three months before the start date of your programme as stated on your CAS. This is the earliest that you can apply (you can apply later). If you apply any earlier, your application may be rejected as invalid or even refused.

Applying outside the UK

You apply in the country where you are living. If you are just visiting another country (eg. as a tourist) you will need to return to your home country to apply for Tier 4. The visa application form is online (except in North Korea), but you will have to travel to a visa application centre to give your biometric information and submit your passport and supporting documents. There isn't a visa application centre in every country so you may need to travel to another country for the visa appointment.

Check on the UKVI website to find out where your nearest visa application centre is:

<https://www.gov.uk/find-a-visa-application-centre>

Many of the visa application centres are managed by private companies (such as VFS Global and Teleperformance) on behalf of UKVI. They may charge a fee to attend the appointment. The visa application centres manage the application process but do not make decisions on visa applications; decisions are made by UKVI employees.

Applying in the UK

IMPORTANT: Read the section “Who can switch into the Tier 4 (General) student category?” in the [Tier 4 Policy Guidance](#).

Not everyone is able to apply for their Tier 4 visa in the UK based on their immigration status and the expiry date and course start of their new programme. UKCISA have produced [helpful guidance](#) which advises if you are able to apply in the UK.

You cannot switch from being a visitor to a Tier 4 student in the UK, so you should not plan to come to the UK as tourist and apply for your Tier 4 visa here. Your application will be refused.

If you do not think you can apply for your Tier 4 visa in the UK e.g. because your current permission does not allow you to switch, you must allow yourself plenty of time to return home and submit your application. Do not risk applying in the UK because if you receive a refusal, you may be unable to join or continue on your programme.

If you are a registered student who requires a visa extension following repeat teaching or a course change, please contact us for advice; depending on your circumstances you may not be able to apply for a visa from within the UK so it is important that you check with us before submitting an application.

If you are currently in the UK studying a 12 month Masters degree and are preparing to apply for a visa to do a second Masters degree, you must have successfully completed your current course before you can apply for a visa for the next course within the UK. Check the course end date on the CAS for your current course; if your new course will begin before the current course officially ends, you should [contact us for advice](#).

Overstayers

If your visa expires without you having made a valid immigration application, you will become an 'overstay' in the UK. This means that you have no legal status in the UK.

There is no ‘grace period’ of overstay; even one beyond the expiry of your visa is breaking the rules and may affect all future immigration applications. If you do become an overstay, contact ISVAT as soon as possible. We can advise you on your options, as it may affect your ability to remain in the UK and registered on your course. We will share this information with other LSE departments.

US and other non-visa nationals should note that when their Tier 4 visa expires, they do not automatically benefit from the permission to be a tourist (Standard Visitor) in the UK. You must leave and re-enter the UK to benefit from this. If your Tier 4 visa expires and you have not left the UK and re-entered as tourist you are an overstay.

Do you need to pay the Immigration Healthcare Surcharge (IHS)?

Details of the IHS and how to calculate it can be found on the UKVI website: <https://www.gov.uk/healthcare-immigration-application>. The sum is an annual amount and you will be charged the annual amount for each year of the maximum period of leave at the point you apply for your visa. For example, a 12 month Masters degree student is likely to have to pay £225 because they will have a visa which is valid for 17 months. It is not an optional charge and failure to pay or pay the correct amount can lead to your visa being refused.

The following groups are exempt from payment but will still need an IHS number:

- British Overseas Territories Citizens who are resident in the Falkland Islands.

- If you are in receipt of a scholarship from the UK Government (eg. Chevening, Commonwealth or Marshall), please contact your Programme Officer for information about IHS.

If you are applying from outside the UK for a visa of less than six months, you will not be required to pay the IHS. If you are applying for a visa extension of less than 6 months from within the UK, you will be charged £75.

Preparing your Supporting Documents to Avoid a Refusal

You must have all your documents in place before you apply. You can prepare before receiving your CAS number, but we advise you not to start the online application and book an appointment until you have all documents in place.

Differentiation arrangement for “Low Risk” nationals

IMPORTANT: Read the section “Documents you will need to send with your application” in the <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-application-for-uk-visa-as-tier-4-student>.

Some nationalities do not need to submit their financial or educational documentation with their Tier 4 application. However, you do need to have these documents and you may be asked for them at any time during the application process. You may see other low risk nationals say on social media, they weren’t asked for them so don’t worry about preparing the documents; please ignore this advice and prepare your application as if you need to submit the paperwork. Each immigration application is based on the individual.

The exception to the differentiation arrangements is for low-risk nationals extending their Tier 4 visa in the UK to start a new programme. You will be required to submit evidence of completion of the previous course you were issued a CAS for to show you are making academic progression. This may be the qualification stated on your CAS or if you have not completed your current programme, you will require a “highly-likely to be awarded” letter from your current institution.

The LSE has cases where low-risk nationals were asked to provide their paperwork as part of their application. Don’t get caught out by not being prepared. Equally, don’t submit incorrect documents as this may lead to a refusal. If you cannot provide documentation when requested, your application is likely to be refused, which will impact on your immigration history and your ability to study in the UK.

The UKVI Tier 4 Policy Guidance and the immigration rules call this 'differentiation arrangements' for “low risk” nationals. Appendix H of the immigration rules lists the nationalities. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-rules-appendix-h>

The rules for low risk nationals only apply if you are applying from your home country or in the UK. If you apply in a third country, you have to submit all required documents when you apply. **Read the sections on the financial and educational documents and then collect all supporting documents as if you have to submit them by the date that you submit your Tier 4 application.**

Understanding what money you need to show to avoid a refusal

IMPORTANT: Not meeting the financial requirements is the main reason students are refused a Tier 4 visa. You must read this section in full and if you have any questions contact us before applying.

What do I need to do?

1. You must read the essential sections of the Tier 4 Policy Guidance you are referred to.
2. Calculate how much money you need.
3. Decide which documents you are going to use as evidence and plan to get them dated near to the time you will apply.
4. Check that they meet the requirements of the Tier 4 Policy Guidance and obtain any translations required before applying.

IMPORTANT: Read the [Tier 4 Policy Guidance](#) from “Money (also known as maintenance or funds)” to “Money already paid to the Tier 4 Sponsor”

You need to show you have held the following funds in an accepted account for a 28 consecutive day period from the closing balance:

- Tuition fees for your programme as stated on your CAS ; plus
- £1,265 per month living costs up to a maximum of nine months (£11,385).

Tuition Fees

If you have not paid any of your tuition fees, you need to show that you have held the full amount of tuition fees in your bank account for 28 consecutive days from the closing balance of your bank statement. If you have paid some of your tuition fees this will show in your CAS statement and you will only need to show the remaining amount of fees that you have to pay.

If you have paid some of your fees and this is not shown on your CAS, reply to the CAS statement email to get this corrected **before** applying for your visa. If you include details of tuition fees you have paid in your application form and your CAS has not been updated, your application will be refused.

Western Union payment confirmations cannot be used as evidence of tuition fee payments. These are not official LSE documents.

Living costs

LSE is in *inner London* so the maintenance level is set at £1, 265 per month. If you are applying to come to the UK to study for the first time you will need to show £1,265 living costs for each month up to a maximum of nine months (£11,385). It does not matter if your course is longer, as this is all the UKVI require you to show. You must have held these funds for a 28 consecutive day period from the closing balance of your bank statement.

Accommodation fees

You can only deduct a maximum of £1265 from your living costs for accommodation. Not all residences are owned and managed by LSE. Non-LSE residences include Lilian Knowles, Urbanest Westminster Bridge, Urbanest Tower Bridge and Urbanest King's Cross. If you have paid money for non-LSE residences or any other private accommodation in London, you *cannot* deduct payments.

If you pay online, you should automatically be issued with an e-mail receipt for any accommodation fees paid in advance. You *cannot* use this as evidence of payment with your Tier 4 application, you need an original receipt. If you state on the application form that you have paid for accommodation, but do not provide evidence of this payment, your application will be refused. If you need a receipt, you can request one from residences.fees@lse.ac.uk.

What documents can you use as evidence of funds to avoid a refusal?

IMPORTANT: Read the [Tier 4 Policy Guidance](#) from “Documents need for Maintenance (funds)” to “Documents needed to show money available to you”.

Most refusals for Tier 4 (General) applications by LSE students are because the financial documents don't meet the requirements. The UKVI requirements are:

- the closing balance must be no more than 31 days before your date of application;
- your bank statements must show that the entire amount has been in your account for 28 consecutive days from the closing balance of your statement (check the transactions not just the dates of the statement);
- at no point in the 28 days must it go below the required amount or you will be refused;
- use www.timeanddate.com to calculate if you have held your funds for 28 days;
- you can only use personal accounts **not** business accounts;
- the money must be in a **cash** account (not stocks, shares, pensions, investments, credit cards or overdrafts);
- the documents must be issued by a bank that the UKVI accepts. You check can this in [Appendix P](#).
- if it is not a GB Sterling account, you must use the exchange rate on www.oanda.com on the day you submit your application.

When you submit an application for a Tier 4 visa, you are declaring that the money you are showing is genuinely available to you and will remain available to you unless used to pay fees and living costs. If you are interviewed as part of your application, you may be asked details about this.

IMPORTANT: Chinese Issued Certificates of Deposit

The main reason that students were refused a visa in Summer 2016 was because they submitted a Certificate of Deposit from a Chinese bank, which did not meet the requirements. We strongly advise that you do not use this type of document where possible. Read our guidance on [Certificates of Deposit](#) if this is the **only** option available.

Make your documents easy to understand. You can submit an explanatory note about your bank statements if you think that anything is unclear. For example, some savings accounts look like investment accounts. Although the UKVI say they will make checks with your bank, it rarely does so. It is in your best interests to make your statements clear and understandable.

Documents not in English: If your bank statements are not in English, you must provide an official translation that can be verified by the UKVI. If you are using an overseas account, include a conversion of the amounts on your statements using <http://www.oanda.com/>. It is possible to use overseas accounts when applying inside and outside the UK.

Multiple accounts: If you are using multiple accounts, the UKVI will look at the combined total of all your accounts during the 28 days before your closing balance. It will use the closing balance of the account that most favours you (has the highest amount of money) as the start of the 28 day period, so you should use the same date.

If you are using multiple accounts, you should complete the *Multiple Account Calculator* (available on the right of the [Tier 4 page](#)) to check you have the required funds for the 28 consecutive days.

My partner/spouse will be funding my studies; can I use their bank account as evidence of funds?

No, unless you are named as a joint account holder on their bank account. If you are not named as a joint account holder with your partner, you cannot use their statement even if you provide evidence of the relationship. If they will be funding your studies, you should ask if they can transfer the funds into your bank account. You must then hold the required funds in your own account for a consecutive 28 day period before applying for the visa.

Using your parents' / legal guardians' money or a joint account

IMPORTANT: Read the section "If you are using money held by your parents(s) or legal guardians" in the [Tier 4 Policy Guidance](#).

You can use your parents'/legal guardians' financial documents as proof that you meet the financial requirements. They must meet the same requirements as if you are submitting your own bank statements. In addition to submitting your parents' original bank documents, you must provide:

- your original or officially notarised birth certificate showing the name of your parents ; or
- certificate of adoption showing your name and the name of your parent(s);or
- court document stating the name of your legal guardian(s) and your name.
- a letter from your parent(s) or legal guardian(s) confirming their relationship with you and that they consent to you using their funds to pay for your tuition fees and living costs in the UK.

You cannot use:

- **bank statements from any other family members e.g. grandparents or siblings unless they are your legal guardian as recognised by the courts**
- **an affidavit confirming your relationship to your parents/legal guardian**

It is possible to use a joint account as evidence providing that you are named on the account. You do not need to submit the additional legal documents proving the relationship.

Scholarships

IMPORTANT: Read the sections "Official Financial Sponsorship or Government Sponsor" and "Documents needed to show official financial sponsorship or government sponsor" in the [Tier 4 Policy Guidance](#).

The UKVI Tier 4 Policy Guidance states that an **official financial sponsor** is 'Her Majesty's Government, the student's home government, the British Council or any international organisation, international company, university or UK independent school'. If

you are receiving financial support from another type of body or organisation, or from your relatives, this does not count as official financial sponsorship. Please note the following:

- **Current sponsorship/scholarships:** If you are receiving financial sponsorship or a scholarship to study on your current course, you will need to show evidence of this.
- **Past sponsorship/scholarships:** If you have received a scholarship from a government or an international scholarship agency within the last 12 months which covered all of your tuition fees and living costs, you will need to show evidence that they consent to you continuing to study in the UK and permit you to extend your visa.
- **If you are receiving an external scholarship:** You will need a letter from your official financial sponsor. If your home institution is sponsoring your studies, the letter must include the amount of money they are providing for tuition fees and living costs. Students were refused because this information was missing on sponsorship letters for non-US nationals.

Scholarship from LSE

In most cases, a scholarship provided by LSE will be shown on your CAS. It may be shown as an overpayment of tuition fees; check the information on your CAS carefully. If your scholarship funding is shown on the CAS, you do not need to submit a scholarship letter with your visa application. If the scholarship is not on your CAS, contact the team who issued your CAS before you apply for the visa; they will be able to check and add it to the CAS if required. If the scholarship cannot be confirmed on the CAS, you must submit an official letter confirming the scholarship with your visa application.

External Scholarship

Scholarships not provided by LSE cannot be confirmed on the CAS so you will need to obtain an official letter from the scholarship provider. If you are in receipt of a UK Government scholarship (e.g. Chevening/Commonwealth/Marshall) you should be given an award letter to submit as part of your visa application; contact your Programme Officer at the scholarship provider if you have questions about the documentation you need to provide as evidence of funds. Refer to the section in the [Tier 4 Policy Guidance](#) with the heading '*Documents needed to show official financial sponsorship or Government sponsor*'.

Loans

You can only use a loan as evidence of funds if the loan is provided by your government or if it is part of an academic/educational loan scheme. Your loan letter must be no older than six months before the date of application and must clearly show:

- your name;
- the date of the letter;
- the financial institution's name and logo
- the money is available as a loan;
- *"the loan is provided by the national government, the state or regional government or a government sponsored student loan company or is part of an academic or educational loans scheme."* – this means that you cannot use personal loans as evidence.

Government Loans: If your loan is from your national government, the loan can be released to you when you register at your institution in the UK. If it is an educational loan from another source it must be released before you travel to the UK.

Educational loans paid directly to LSE (not US Federal loans)

If you are using an educational loan as evidence, which will be paid directly to the School, the UKVI have made a concession that these can be submitted as evidence. However, whilst you apply under the Tier 4 (General) route, you will be granted leave outside the rules. All of your Tier 4 conditions will be in place (working conditions etc.), but this concession will limit your ability to extend your visa in the UK and it is unclear whether it will count towards the cap on degree level study.

If possible, please try to avoid using a loan which is paid directly to the School as evidence, as this could affect your options in the UK.

US Loans: US Federal loans are an educational loan scheme. The US government is not your official financial sponsor.

If you are using a US Federal Direct loan which is confirmed in a letter by LSE, you can use this as evidence for your application. You should not apply for your visa until you receive your US loan letter from LSE because this is your official confirmation of your funding. <http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/LSEServices/financeDivision/feesAndStudentFinance/feesAndLoans/Home.aspx>

If you are using a non-Federal Direct loan which has not been verified by LSE, you will need to hold the required funds for your Tier 4 (General) application in your bank account for the required 28 days before applying for your visa.

All other loans: If you are using a loan from any other source (a bank, a personal sponsor a relative etc.) you cannot submit a loan letter as evidence. You must receive the funds and transfer them into your own bank account (or that of your parents or legal guardian) and wait 28 days before you can apply for your Tier 4 visa.

What original qualifications do I need to submit to avoid a refusal?

IMPORTANT: Read the section *“Documents used to obtain a Tier 4 (General) CAS “in the [Tier 4 Policy Guidance](#).*

LSE will list in your CAS any qualifications that we used to assess you for the programme. See the section ‘Evidence used to Assess Suitability’ to check which qualifications were used. **You must submit the original documents when you apply for your visa or your application may be refused.**

You can submit the actual certificate showing your qualification or the official transcripts confirming your award.

If your offer of study is based on a qualification that you do not yet hold (eg. if you are currently studying a 12 month Masters course and you have a conditional offer to study a Postgraduate Research course), you must contact Graduate Admissions for advice about your offer because you will not be able to apply for your visa unless you can provide evidence that you have been awarded the qualification that your offer is based on.

If you are currently in the UK studying a 12 month Masters degree and are preparing to apply for a visa to do an MPhil/PhD, you must have successfully completed your current course before you can apply for a visa for the next course within the UK:

Students currently studying a 12 month Masters degree at another university

If you are not going to receive official confirmation that you have completed your course in time to apply for a visa to study at LSE, please contact your current university to request a letter which states that, based on your performance throughout the course, the university deems that you are highly likely to complete the course successfully. Once you receive this letter please e-mail a copy to Graduate Admissions. You will need to submit the original in your visa application and you will also need to show it to register for studies at LSE.

Students currently studying a 12 month Masters degree at LSE

If you are a current LSE student who requires a letter from LSE, you will only be able to obtain that after 1st September 2016 from Registry. If you intend to apply for your visa earlier than this, you will need to return to your home country to apply.

How can I prove I meet the English language requirements?

IMPORTANT: Read the [Tier 4 Policy Guidance](#) from *“English language ability” to “Students studying at degree level and above”*

If you will only be studying a course at degree level or above, LSE can assess your English language ability based on the English language conditions. Please check how we have assessed your English language ability on the CAS. If you will only be studying a course at degree level or above, LSE can assess your English language ability based on the English language conditions. Most CASs will now state that you do not require a SELT and we have assessed your English and it is at level B2 or above.

You may have been contacted by Graduate Admissions advising you that you will be required to provide a NARIC Certificate of Compatibility as evidence of your degree. You can find more details on how to obtain this from the [NARIC website](#). The UKVI have confirmed you must choose the Blue Route for applications. If you have any issues with applying for a NARIC certificate, please contact us for advice.

You may need to provide evidence of your English language if you intend to do any courses below degree level in order to meet the conditions of your offer (eg. if you are required to attend a pre-session course). In those circumstances, you will be required to attend a Secure English Language Test for your visa application. [Contact ISVAT](#) for advice if required.

Getting your documents translated

IMPORTANT: Read the section “Documents you will need to send with your application” in the [Tier 4 Policy Guidance](#).

Any documents that are not in English or Welsh must have an original translation that can be independently verified by the UKVI. This includes bank statements if they are not bilingual.

The original translation must show:

- details of the translator / translation company credentials
- confirmation that it is an accurate translation of the original document
- the translator's contact details
- the date of the translation
- the translator's full name and signature or signature of an authorised official of the translation company

Passport and Photographs

You must submit any passport that you have used to travel to the UK and colour photographs. Check the [UKVI guidance](#) to ensure that you meet the requirements. The key points to remember are:

- do not smile
- the background colour must be white when applying outside the UK and light grey or cream when applying inside the UK
- the photos must be in colour
- the photographs must have been taken in last month and you cannot have used them for a previous application
- the head must measure between 29 – 34mm
- they must be UK standard size.

Tuberculosis (TB) Test Certificate

If your course is for more than 6 months and you are applying from a [country where TB testing](#) is required for visa purposes, you may need to obtain a TB certificate or you will be refused.

- If you are from a country which does not require TB testing **BUT** have been resident in a country which does require testing for six months immediately before apply, you must take a TB test;
- If you have been living in a country which does not require TB testing for more than six months before submitting your application, but are applying from a country which requires TB testing, you may not need a TB test certificate. Contact ISVAT to check.

If you have been living in a country which does not require TB testing e.g. the USA, make sure you get a re-entry stamp in your passport when you go home. Entry Clearance Officers use these stamps to check whether you have been in the country that requires a TB test for six months. You should also explain that you have been living/studying in a country that does not require a TB test and have been in the country of application for less than six months.

Get your TB test done as soon as possible. You can be tested from 6 months before you intend to travel to the UK. You can only be tested at specific medical centres approved by the UKVI. TB test centres are not available in every country. Check [the list](#) to find out where your nearest test centre is. If you are required to travel to another country to be tested, please ensure that you budget your finances accordingly to cover the travel costs.

UK Police Registration Certificate

If your current or most recent immigration permission has (or had) the condition to register with the police then you must submit your police registration certificate with your Tier 4 application.

Part Two: Your Tier 4 application

Which Tier 4 application form should you use?

Applying outside the UK

In most countries you can apply online. Go to the UKVI website to link to the form by selecting "[Apply](#)". You should also refer to the Policy Guidance when completing the application form.

Applying in the UK

Go to the UKVI website to link to the form by selecting "[Extend your Visa](#)". You should also refer to the Policy Guidance when completing the application form.

If you need to apply in the UK to be able to register for your programme, it is very important that you ensure you meet the rules before applying. Every year, students receive a refusal because they have not planned to apply in time and rush an application to register. Receiving a refusal can result in not being able to register on time, having to return home mid-programme to re-apply or even having to interrupt for an academic year. Before you take the risk, contact ISVAT for advice. We cannot guarantee sponsorship if you do not meet the rules again at the point of refusal.

What is the date of application?

Applying outside the UK

The date of application is the day you submit the online application form or pay the fee for your application. This varies between countries as it depends if you pay your fee when you submit your online application form or when you attend an appointment. ***If you need to pay your fee before attending an appointment, your documents must be dated before you pay the fee. Any documents produced after you have paid for the application will not be considered and you are likely to be refused.***

Applying in the UK

The date of application is the day that you submit and pay for your application online. If you do not have your supporting documents prepared, do not pay for your application until they are available to you. Upon payment you will receive a document checklist which confirms your date of submission and the documents you need to provide. You will also receive an email confirming your payment. Check your junk mail folder if you do not receive the email.

The document checklist doesn't currently ask for original qualifications, but you must submit these to be awarded your 30 points if they are stated on your CAS.

How much will your application cost and how long will it take to be processed?

Applying outside the UK

The current cost for a standard application made outside the UK is £335. You can get an indication of recent processing times at: <https://www.gov.uk/visa-processing-times>. The times are given in working days and you need to allow time for the return of your documents, as this can often delay the process.

In some countries it is possible to apply using a "premium" or "priority" appointment to get your application processed quicker. There is usually an additional cost for these services and the average processing times are seven working days. Priority service charges are normally in the local currency. You can find this information under the "*User Pay Services*" section of the visa application centre website.

If you receive any correspondence about your application and you are unsure what to do or if you require support, please [contact us](#).

Applying in the UK

The current cost for a standard application in the UK is £457. You should receive your decision within eight weeks of the date of application.

The current cost for a priority application in the UK is £916. You should receive a decision within 10 working days of the date of application. Your Biometric Residence Permit will arrive within 5 - 10 working days from the receipt of your decision. You can only apply through the priority service by submitting a request form. If you are allocated a place on the scheme, then you should apply online within 24 hours or you will lose your slot and have to re-apply the next day.

The current cost for a premium service application in the UK is £1047. You will receive a decision regarding your application on the same day but you will not receive your Biometric Residence Permit for another 5 – 10 working days. You will be unable to travel until you have received your Biometric Residence Permit.

What are biometrics?

As part of your Tier 4 application, you need to provide your biometric information (fingerprints and photograph). Where you provide your biometric information depends on where you are applying from.

- If you are applying outside the UK, you should follow the instructions given as part of your application form.
- If you are applying in the UK using the standard or priority application process, you will be sent a letter advising you where you can provide your biometric information. It will cost you £19.20 to provide your biometric information.
- If you are applying in the UK using the premium service, your biometric information will be taken during your appointment.

You must provide your biometric information every time you apply for a new Tier 4 visa.

For visa applications of more than six months, you will be issued with a Biometric Residence Permit when you arrive in the UK/your application is successfully granted in the UK. When you are completing the application form overseas, you need to indicate where you wish to collect your Biometric Residence Permit on the application form.

Please avoid choosing Aldwych Post Office to collect your BRP. It may seem the most convenient option because it is next to LSE. However, students had to queue for nearly six hours to obtain their BRP and missed key induction events.

If you know where you will be living in the UK at the time you fill in the visa application form, we recommend that you choose your accommodation postcode in the first instance. You may choose a different postcode if you wish eg. if you are visiting family when you first arrive.

Credibility Interviews

As part of your application, you may be asked to attend a credibility interview. During an interview, the UKVI may ask questions about your course of study in the UK, your English language level, why you decided to study at the LSE, what other institutions you looked at, your finances and your future plans. This will usually be done via a video link to an office in the UK. If there are any concerns about your answers, you may be asked to attend a second interview in your country of application.

Problems with your application

- **Problems outside the UK**

Refusals

IMPORTANT: Refusals affect the LSE's Tier 4 Sponsor Licence. If you receive a refusal, you will not be issued with a new CAS number until you have been advised by ISVAT on how to avoid a second refusal. It is at the LSE's discretion if we wish to provide you with a new CAS based on your risk of further refusals.

Each year, students are unable to join the LSE or have to interrupt their studies because their visa application has been refused.

My application has been refused. What do I do?

1. Contact ISVAT immediately. Send a copy of your refusal notice to inform us why your application has been refused. ISVAT can advise you of your options.
2. Based on the advice given, decide if you are going to apply again or submit an administrative review.
3. Request a new CAS if you are applying again – it will only be issued after we have advised you on your options and informed the Graduate Admissions Office/Registry you have received advice from us.
4. Declare your refusal on your new application.

Administrative Review

If you think that the UKVI has made a mistake with your application (for example they may have misread or ignored a document), you can submit an administrative review. The UKVI state that they will make decisions within 28 days, however, it can take much longer. Please note that if *you* made a mistake, an administrative review will not be successful.

If it is successful, you will not get a refund for the application fee but it will be recorded on your immigration record that your administrative review was successful. However, even if the administrative review is successful, **you will have to declare the refusal each time you apply to the UKVI for a visa.**

You can only submit an Administrative Review or apply again, not both.

Administrative Review – credibility interviews

If your application has been refused on the basis of a credibility Interview, you will need to request an administrative review before you can apply again. This is because unless you can prove the first decision was wrong, the UKVI are likely to refuse your application again. If you have been refused on the basis of a credibility interview, it is not guaranteed that LSE will be able to issue you another CAS. Contact ISVAT for advice immediately.

Applying again

IMPORTANT! If you are applying again, you will need new bank statements which meet the requirements outlined in this guide if your previous statements are too old.

If you made a mistake with your application and/or you decide not to submit an administrative review, you can apply again. Your new CAS will not be issued until you have been advised by ISVAT. They will refer your refusal to us and we can advise you on how to avoid repeating errors before submitting a new application. You need to read the refusal notice carefully and gather new documents that meet the rules.

Invalid or returned applications

There are some errors that would make your application invalid, for example:

- You have applied more than three months in advance of your course start date on your CAS
- your photos do not meet the UKVI requirements
- you do not submit the mandatory documents within the correct timeframe.

This is not a refusal, because your application has not even been considered or processed under the immigration rules. It is simply returned to you. If this happens, usually the UKVI arranges a refund for the application.

• Problems in the UK

Refusals

IMPORTANT: Refusals affect the LSE's Tier 4 Sponsor Licence. If you receive a refusal, you will not be issued with a new CAS number until you have been advised by ISVAT on how to avoid a second refusal. It is at the LSE's discretion if we wish to provide you with a new CAS based on your risk of further refusals.

Each year, students are unable to join the LSE or have to interrupt their studies because their visa application has been refused.

- Keep the refusal notification and the envelope you received your refusal notice in;
- Check which documents the UKVI have returned to you;
- Check if it appears that the UKVI refused your visa in error so that you can decide whether you wish to apply for administrative review;
- **Contact ISVAT immediately for advice.**

You will receive a letter from the UKVI stating the reasons why your application has been refused. It is also likely that your supporting documents will be held by the UKVI and you may be asked to report to the Voluntary Departures team.

Your refusal notice will inform you if you are eligible for an Administrative Review. Please keep all the documents returned to you including the envelope the information was delivered in, as you may need to submit these. Please [contact ISVAT](#) immediately and we will advise you on your options. We may have to refer you for external specialist immigration advice.

It is essential that you also inform the CAS issuing team if your Tier 4 application is refused as your record needs to be updated with this information and LSE is required to inform the UKVI (the report is delayed if you apply for an administrative review). You will have to declare the refusal each time you apply to the UKVI for a visa.

Invalid or returned applications

There are some errors that would make your application invalid, for example:

- your photos do not meet the UKVI requirements
- there was a problem with your payment
- you do not submit the mandatory documents within the correct timeframe.

This is not a refusal, because your application has not even been considered or processed under the immigration rules; it is simply returned to you. If this happens, usually the UKVI arranges a refund for the application fee and IHS fee.

If your existing visa has not yet expired, you can apply again with fresh documents. This means financial documents must be dated no more than one month before the date that you are submitting the new application and the CAS must still be valid. If you have problems we advise you to contact ISVAT. We can advise you on how to avoid repeating errors before submitting a new application.

If your visa has expired, you may be an 'overstayer'. We strongly advise you to contact ISVAT if your application is returned invalid and your visa has expired, as it may affect your ability to remain registered on your programme.

Receiving your visa

Immigration permission granted outside the UK

IMPORTANT: Check your decision letter carefully and do not throw it away. It will be in the envelope with your passport.

If your application is successful, you will be given a vignette (sticker) in your passport which will be valid for 30 days. This allows you to enter the UK for a short period of time so you can collect your [Biometric Residence Permit \(BRP\)](#). Your BRP is your visa so will show the full length of your programme. The vignette does not need to be extended to match the BRP. Once the expiry date has passed it no longer has any value for entering the UK.

You will be given a decision letter which informs you of the location of the Post Office where you will need to collect your BRP. Check this carefully and do not throw it away. You need it for registration.

If you are not able to travel to the UK within the 30 day validity period of your vignette, you must reapply for a new vignette only. This does not mean applying for a completely new visa therefore you do not need a new CAS. However you will need to pay to apply for a replacement vignette. Please contact ISVAT for advice if required.

You must ensure that you can collect your BRP from the nominated Post Office within 10 days of arriving in the UK (or in accordance with instructions your decision letter) in order to remain compliant with the conditions of the visa you have been granted. You may be unable to register for your course at LSE until you collect your BRP/visa. Sometimes, the BRP may not be there the first time you go. **Don't panic!** Ask the Post Office when their next collection is before reporting it as lost.

If you lose your passport or decision letter after arriving in the UK but before collecting your BRP, you must contact ISVAT **immediately**.

Your BRP is your evidence that you have immigration permission to study in the UK. It is an important legal document and you should not carry it as a form of identification e.g. to prove your age to enter bars. You should seek alternative forms of ID, as it can take up to eight weeks minimum to replace a lost/stolen BRP in the UK and we may not be able to expedite an application if the loss is due to an error made by the BRP holder. Advice on alternative forms of proof of age will be given during Welcome Week.

If you are required to register with the Police, remember that you will need to take your passport and new BRP to OVRO within 7 days of receiving the BRP: <http://content.met.police.uk/Article/After-registering-with-the-police/1400011320193/1400011320193>

Checking your Visa

Errors outside the UK

If you are issued with a Temporary Vignette and BRP

If the information on your decision letter is incorrect, we strongly recommend that you try to get this amended before travelling.

Check the vignette carefully as soon as you receive it and inform the visa application centre (where you applied) immediately if there are any errors on the vignette as they will need to be corrected before you travel. Instructions on how to do this will be included on your decision letter.

After you arrive in the UK, you will need to collect your BRP from the Post Office within 10 days of arriving in the UK. When you collect the BRP, [check it carefully](#). If there are any errors in your personal details, you will need to complete an [online report](#) within **10 working days** of receiving it. If you think that the conditions or expiry date are incorrect or if you have any concerns or questions, please contact ISVAT for advice **immediately**.

IMPORTANT: If you have studied a pre-sessional programme to meet the conditions of your offer at LSE, you should receive an additional month at the end of your visa. You must check your BRP to see if it has the additional month. Failure to get this corrected may affect your ability to join your main degree programme.

Correcting errors in the UK

If there is an error with your personal details on your BRP, you must complete an online report within **10 working days** of receiving the card or you may be charged for a replacement and have to apply again. If there is a problem with your grant of leave or you have been given the incorrect working permission, please contact ISVAT for advice immediately. You will need to submit an Administrative Review within **14 calendar days** of receiving your BRP. The Administrative Review will cost £80 and if it is successful, you will be refunded the £80 charge.

Check that you have been granted the correct amount of time and working permission as soon as you receive your BRP. We are unable to guarantee that any late Administrative Reviews will be accepted and you may lose your £80 application fee. This could affect the length of time you are able to remain in the UK at the end of your programme and the number of hours you can work during term time.

Key Contacts

LSE Contacts

- [International Student Visa Advice Team \(ISVAT\)](#) – contact us directly if you have any questions about applying for the Tier 4 visa. We are unable to speak to your parents or other family members about your Tier 4 application. If you have any questions, contact us directly to avoid any delays in our response.
- [Graduate Admissions Office](#) – you can contact them if you are a new student with questions about your offer, meeting the conditions of your offer or your CAS.
- [Registry](#) – you may need to contact Registry if you are a registered student and have questions about your CAS.

- [Fees Office](#) – contact the Fees Office if your US Federal Loan is being approved by the LSE.
- [Residences Fees Team](#) – contact them if you require an official receipt of university accommodation payments.

External Contacts

- [UK Visas and Immigration \(UKVI\)](#) – UKVI is part of the Home Office, which is the UK government department which writes the immigration rules. You should always refer to their policy guidance when applying for your visa.

Please note that if you phone the UKVI contact centre, you are not speaking to a member of staff from the Home Office or UKVI. The UKVI contact centre is provided by a third party company and our students have provided mixed reviews on the information they have received. Before contacting the UKVI contact centre, please get in touch with ISVAT as we may be able to help.

- [UK Council for International Student Affairs \(UKCISA\)](#) - UKCISA is the advocacy body for international student issues in the UK. You can find lots of information on their web pages from applying for a Tier 4 visa to how to deal with culture shock.
- [Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner \(OISC\)](#) – This is the UK Government regulatory body for immigration advice in the UK. Contact the OISC if you wish to find an external regulated immigration adviser or make a complaint about immigration advice you have received.
- [Immigration Law Practitioners' Association \(ILPA\)](#) – ILPA is a membership organisation for immigration law practitioners. You can find independent immigration advisers via the website.