



Working on a Tier 4 (General) Student Visa - June 2016

This guidance is based on frequently asked questions. It is not intended to be used on its own and you should always refer to the guidance on the ISVAT web pages. It is very important that you pay close attention to the working conditions of the Tier 4 visa. A breach of these conditions can have serious consequences.

How many hours can I work during term-time?

If you are on a degree programme, you can work a maximum of 20 hours per week (paid or unpaid) during term-time. This is in total and not per employer.

If you are on a Tier 4 visa for a Language Centre programme you are only able to work a maximum of 10 hours per week (paid or unpaid).

How can I find out what the term dates are?

You can find the LSE term dates [here](#). Don't forget if you are a 12 month Masters student, you do not have a summer vacation.

PhD students should check with the PhD Academy for information on when they can take vacations.

Can I work full time during "Reading Week"?

No. Reading week is still term time and you are expected to be preparing for your assessments. It is not vacation.

Is there any work I cannot do whilst on Tier 4?

- You cannot be self-employed; this means that you cannot set up your own business or work freelance or as a consultant on a self-employed basis.
- You are not permitted to work as a professional sports person/sports coach, entertainer or doctor or dentist in training.
- You should be very careful if you are offered freelance or consulting work that you are not self-employed as this is breaking the immigration rules.
- You cannot take a permanent (open-ended) contract.

Are there any exceptions to the self-employment condition whilst on a Tier 4 visa?

Yes, but only for:

- PhD students who have successfully completed their studies and hold a Tier 4 (Doctorate Extension Scheme) visa; and
- Those who have received an endorsement for a Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneur and have submitted their visa application.

Am I allowed to have multiple contracts?

There is no limit on the number of contracts you have in place but you must not exceed your working permission. However, it is your responsibility to ensure:

- The amount of work you do in a single week does not come to more than your permitted hours. This includes unpaid work, such as assisting with research in your department.
- If you think there is a risk that you may be expected to work more than 20 hours across your positions, you must speak to your employers. Working too many hours can put them at risk as well as yourself.
- Plan ahead to avoid overworking.

What is my "official programme end date" so I know when I can start working full time at the end of my studies?

Your official programme end date is the sponsorship end date that was given on your CAS. This is the date that the Home Office have on record for you completing your studies.

I'm a PhD student. I've submitted my thesis and I'm waiting for my viva. Can I work full-time?

If you have been issued with a new CAS number to attend your viva, you will be unable to work full-time after submitting your thesis. By issuing you with a new CAS, your official programme end date has been extended and you are restricted to working 20 hours per week maximum until after your viva date has passed.

The same applies if you are issued with a new CAS number to complete corrections on your thesis.

What does "unpaid work" mean?

Unpaid work means exactly that. You cannot work 20 hours for an employer and then work an extra two hours which you do not receive payment for. If there is a record that you have worked more than your permitted hours, but are only paid for the permitted hours, this is still a breach of the immigration rules.

What about voluntary work?

You can do voluntary work, but this and any other work that you do must not exceed the number of hours you are permitted to do per week.

There is a difference between voluntary work and volunteering:

- Voluntary workers have contractual obligations and are usually remunerated in kind.
- Volunteers usually:
 - Do not have a contract;
 - Must not take the place of an employee
 - Must not receive payment in kind
 - Usually held a charity or public sector organisation.

Do I need a National Insurance number?

You do not need a National Insurance number until you begin working. However, you must apply for one when you start your job. You can find more information on [National Insurance and tax on the UKCISA website](#).

I've submitted a Tier 4 (General) extension application before my current visa expires. How will this affect my right to work in the UK?

If you have applied for a new Tier 4 (General) visa before your current visa expires, you will be covered by Section 3C leave, even if your visa expires whilst you are waiting for the decision. The conditions of your previous visa will continue, which means you will be able to work.

You can show them evidence of your application in progress, but you will need to show your employer your new visa once it is successfully granted.

If you did not apply for your new visa before your current visa expired and you became an "overstayer", you lose the right to work. Contact us immediately for advice as you may be unable to continue your studies.

My visa doesn't show that I have the right to work/the number of hours I am permitted to work is incorrect. Can I just work 20 hours without doing anything about it?

No. If your visa does not show you have the right to work or has the incorrect number of hours, you will need to get it corrected before you can work your permitted hours during term time. You can find out more about getting your visa corrected [here](#).

I am working in the UK for an employer who is based outside the UK. How does this affect my working permission?

[UKCISA advise](#) that even if your employer is outside the UK, any work you undertake in the UK for them still counts towards your permitted hours per week during term time.

My employer has asked LSE to provide a letter confirming the number of hours I am able to work. Can you provide this to me?

Your visa is your evidence of the number of hours you are permitted to work. However, employers are required to do checks for illegal working. The documents we are able to provide are listed on working during your studies page. You may also find our guide for employers helpful.

Your department will be unable to provide this for you.

What are the consequences of illegal working in the UK?

Think about whether the potential outcomes of a short-term risk are worth the impact in the long-term. There are consequences for both you and your employer if you are found to be working illegally in the UK.

- Your employer may face a civil penalty of up to £20,000 and a prison sentence if they are found to be recruiting staff illegally.
- You can be:
 - Taken to court;
 - Fined up to £5,000
 - Sent to prison for up to six months;
 - Liable for deportation from the UK;
 - Banned from the UK from between 1 – 10 years. You would need to declare this ban on visa applications for other countries.

You should also note that as part of our sponsor licence agreement, the LSE is required to report any breaches of the immigration rules to the UKVI. This includes if we are aware that any of our students are working illegally.

I have a new passport. Does this affect my right to work?

Yes. Your employer must check that your visa is linked to your current passport. If you have a new passport, you will need to apply for a Transfer of Conditions even if your visa is in the form of a BRP. Find out more [here](#).

What if I am working overseas during term-time?

If your employment is overseas you are not restricted by the conditions of your Tier 4 visa. However, you are expected to be attending during term-time as you have been granted a visa for a full time programme. The Tier 4 visa is not intended for you to reside overseas because you are working and commute to attend your teaching. In some cases, you may have permission to reside overseas (e.g. PhD students) but it may not be possible to keep your Tier 4 visa in place.

Further guidance

For information on finding jobs in the UK and overseas contact [LSE Careers](#).

External employment law and immigration law special specialists:

- www.oisc.gov.uk
- www.ilpa.org.uk
- www.lawsociety.org.uk

Who do I contact for help? For further immigration advice [contact the ISVAT team online](#). If you have questions about your CAS, contact the team who issued your CAS.