



Coronavirus (COVID-19) factsheet: visa customers outside of the UK

Tuesday 24 March 2020

Guidance on immigration provisions made by the Home Office for individuals affected by travel restrictions associated with coronavirus (COVID-19).

Key lines

- The Home Office has [published guidance on GOV.UK](#) on immigration provisions for individuals affected by travel restrictions associated with coronavirus (COVID-19).

Visa customers outside of the UK:

- Many of the UK's Visa Application Centres (VACs) are currently closed and we anticipate more closing. Many that are open are offering limited services.
- For up to date advice on services in each country individuals should access the relevant commercial partner:
 - Europe, Africa and parts of the Middle East visit: uk.tlscontact.com
 - All other countries visit: vfsglobal.co.uk
- Visa customers outside of the UK who are affected by travel restrictions associated with coronavirus should visit the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): advice for UK visa applicants and temporary UK residents](#) GOV.UK page for the latest information and guidance.
- Due to border restrictions affecting several countries across the globe, our commercial partners (TLS and VFS) consignment logistics are being affected. This means we cannot print and send visa vignettes across certain borders and routes.
- Where visa applicants have an appointment and the VAC is now closed, commercial partners are contacting customers to advise them the appointment is not going ahead.
- If customers have paid for courier return, commercial partners are sending passports back (where courier routes remain open to allow them to do so). If applicants are concerned about their passport, customers can contact [Coronavirus Immigration Team](#) for advice.
- If an individual's passport is currently held in a VAC but they have not previously arranged for it to be returned by courier, please contact either TLS contact or VFS global directly.
- English Testing Centres across the world are currently seeing restrictions by the relevant local and national authorities. For all the latest information, please visit



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the [International English Language Testing System \(IELTS\)'s website](#), or applicants can contact their test centre directly by email.

UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) has set up a dedicated email account for customers with immigration queries related to coronavirus, including questions about urgent, compelling, compassionate cases. Customers can contact: CIH@homeoffice.gov.uk

Additional Information

What guidance does Home Office have for those who have a valid visa but haven't travelled to the UK yet?

Applicants who hold a valid visa should check initially with their own government websites to ensure that they are up to date on latest travel restrictions from their current locations. In addition, applicants should check the Gov.UK website which is updated regularly.

How does Home Office plan to return passports to applicants in regions where there are VAC closures?

Applicants are advised that they should check the relevant Visa Application Centre (VAC) website relating to the applicant point where they submitted their passport. Where local permissions allow for customers have paid for courier return, Commercial Partners are sending passports back (where courier routes remain open to allow them to do so). If applicants are concerned about their passport, they can contact the Coronavirus Immigration Team at CIH@homeoffice.gov.uk. In countries where significant movement restrictions are in place some of our VACs are closed and our Commercial Partner is required to comply with all local restrictions.

If an individual has applied for a visa from overseas but would now like to withdraw their application, how do they do this?

The applicant can contact UKVI directly to discuss the withdrawal of their application. Please visit our gov.uk web pages at <https://www.gov.uk/contact-ukvi-inside-outside-uk> for further details. They may also contact the Visa Application Centre (VAC) via our Commercial Partner websites to ask for their application to be withdrawn. In countries where significant movement restrictions are in place, some of our VACs are closed which may make it difficult for us to return documents to them.



Coronavirus (COVID-19) factsheet: visa holders and short-term residents in the UK

Tuesday 24 March 2020

Guidance on immigration provisions made by the Home Office for individuals affected by travel restrictions associated with coronavirus (COVID-19).

Key lines

- The Home Office has [published guidance on GOV.UK](#) on immigration provisions for individuals affected by travel restrictions associated with coronavirus (COVID-19).

Visa holders in the UK:

- No individual who is in the UK legally, but whose visa is due to, or has already expired, and who cannot leave because of travel restrictions related to COVID-19, will be regarded as an overstayer, or suffer any detriment in the future.
- A visa will be extended to 31 May 2020 if an individual cannot leave the UK because of travel restrictions or self-isolation related to coronavirus (COVID-19). **Individuals must contact the Coronavirus Immigration Team email** to advise of their situation.
- The Coronavirus Immigration Team contact details are:

Email: CIH@homeoffice.gov.uk

Individuals should include the following in their email:

- Full name (include any middle names)
- DOB (dd/mm/yyyy)
- Nationality
- Existing visa details
- Reason that has required them to extend their stay (for example, the suspension of all flight to their place of permanent residence)

The email must be in English.

Telephone: 0800 678 1767 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

Calls are free of charge.

- The Coronavirus Immigration Team will update relevant details on UKVI databases. Individuals will be advised that UKVI have noted their details; they will not be subject to enforcement action; and this period will not be held against them in future applications.



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- This requirement to contact Coronavirus Immigration Team applies to individuals of any nationality whose leave expires between 24 January 2020 and 30 May 2020.
- Individuals who cannot leave the UK due to travel restrictions or self-isolation and wish to stay in the UK in the long-term would ordinarily need to apply for a visa from their home country.
- Where individuals would normally be required to return to their country of residence to apply for a visa in a different category, they'll now be able to apply from the UK to switch.
- Individuals will need to be switching from/to a published eligible route and will need to meet the same visa requirements and pay the same application fee.
- This includes those whose leave has been auto-extended to 31 March 2020.
- Applicants can apply online as usual and select a biometric submission appointment to attend if they are able to in line with public health guidance. We will process applications as quickly as we can but there are likely to be delays due to Covid-19. The terms of their leave will remain the same until their application is decided.
- Individuals will not be regarded as an overstayer or be subject to enforcement action if they are unable to attend a biometric appointment due to Covid-19 or if there are delays in processing your application.
- Please check www.ukvcas.co.uk for up to date advice on UK Visa and Citizenship Application Centres.

Students in the UK

- Tier 4 students are not normally permitted to undertake distance learning courses. However, due to the current exceptional circumstances, we will not consider it a breach of sponsor duties to offer distance learning to existing Tier 4 students in the UK or who have chosen to return overseas but wish to continue their current studies. Sponsors do not need to withdraw sponsorship in these circumstances. If a student has permanently withdrawn from, or formally deferred, their studies, the usual reporting requirements apply.
- New international students who have been issued a Tier 4 visa but have been unable to travel to the UK are permitted to undertake distance learning and sponsorship does not need to be withdrawn.
- New international students who have not yet applied for a visa but wish to commence a course by distance learning do not need to travel to the UK to do so and therefore do not require sponsorship under Tier 4.

These arrangements apply initially until 31 May, by which date they will be reviewed.



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Workers in the UK

- We are aware that many workers sponsored under the Tiers 2 and 5 immigration routes are now working from home rather than their normal workplace due to the coronavirus pandemic. Tiers 2 and 5 sponsors are normally required to notify us of such changes of circumstances. However, due to the current exceptional situation, we will not require sponsors to do so if working from home is directly related to the pandemic. Other changes must still be reported as usual.

UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) has set up a dedicated email account for customers with immigration queries related to coronavirus, including questions about urgent, compelling, compassionate cases. Customers can contact: CIH@homeoffice.gov.uk

Additional Information

How do foreign nationals get a status letter confirming a visa extension, or a new Biometric Residence Permit with a revised expiry date?

All nationals who need evidence of their extension should contact the Coronavirus Immigration Team.

Visit the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): advice for UK visa applicants and temporary UK residents](#) GOV.UK page for more information.

Can an individual now apply to switch visa types in the UK?

They'll be able to apply from the UK to switch to a long-term UK visa, including if they would usually need to apply for a visa from their home country. They'll need to meet the same visa requirements and pay the UK application fee. This includes those whose leave has been automatically extended to 31 March 2020.

They should apply online. They should select a biometric submission appointment to attend in line with public health guidance. The terms of their leave will remain the same until their application is decided.

They will not be regarded as an overstayer or be subject to enforcement action if you're unable to attend a biometric appointment due to coronavirus or if there are delays in processing your application.

What will happen to immigrants in the UK with regards to their jobs and finances?

- If you are a foreign national in the UK and have observed the terms of your visa prior to the coronavirus outbreak, your visa will be automatically extended to 31 March 2020 if your visa has an expiry date between 24 January 2020 and 30 March 2020.
- We understand that this is a difficult time and for this reason we are continually reviewing the situation to consider what more can be done for those in the UK whose immigration status has been affected by coronavirus.



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- There also is a dedicated helpline available for anyone who wishes to discuss their individual circumstances.
- Further guidance is available at: [gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents)

How can we trust the Coronavirus Immigration Team (CIT) email and logging of cases will work?

The Coronavirus Immigration Team is providing advice and support on a number of different scenarios. Should an applicant raise a specific case, in accordance with normal Home Office/UKVI procedures, details will be logged on the relevant casework system. All emails sent and received are being retained. We are continually monitoring the volume of enquiries and ensuring that appropriate staffing resources are in place to manage these.