An Overview of Tier 4 Visas for Departmental Administrators

Julia Jago
Tier 4 Visas Officer
Aim: To give an overview of the key Tier 4 processes and responsibilities including:

1. The Basics of Tier 4 Visa Sponsorship
2. Teams Involved in the Tier 4 Process
3. Tier 4 Sponsorship Duties
4. Authorised Absences
5. Doctorate Extension Scheme
6. Who to contact
The Basics of Tier 4 Visa Sponsorship

- The Tier 4 student visa is part of the UK Government's points based system (PBS) for immigration
- Other Tiers cover skilled workers, temporary migrants and high value migrant i.e. entrepreneurs
- Yearly Basic Compliance Assessment - monitoring CAS refusal, enrolment and completion
- UKVI Inspections

2016/17 visa holding students = 2384 (2034 on RHUL Tier 4 visas)
Teams Involved in the Tier 4 Process

Admissions & Recruitment
- New students’ CAS letters and visa application

Student Administration
- Continuing students’ CAS letters
- Tier 4 student record validation
- Reporting Tier 4 students to UKVI

International Student Support Office (ISSO)
- Advise students on making visa applications and documents checks
- Support international students with welfare issues, including immigration related problems

Tier 4 Compliance Oversight
- Tier 4 Compliance Stakeholder Group
- PBS Steering Group

Student Responsibilities
- Police registration, if required
- Sharing documentation and contact details
- Meeting academic requirements
- Adhering to Tier 4 study conditions

Departments
- Monitoring and recording Tier 4 students’ attendance and engagement with study
- Informing Student Administration of any changes in study or concerns relating to Tier 4 students
What are our Tier 4 Sponsorship Duties?

To maintain up to date records, including:

- Current passport and visa scans
- UK address
- Authorised absence records
- Attendance
- Submission of work

Report changes to UKVI of a Tier 4 students’ study details within 10 working days, including:

- Change in start date before they enter the UK
- Non-enrolment
- 10 consecutive missed contact points
- Change in study location (e.g. studying abroad)
- Withdrawal from study
- Suspicion a student is breaching Tier 4 visa conditions – i.e. working over 20hrs/wk
- Suspicion the student is not a genuine student
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Non-enrolment** | - Dealt with in Student Admin  
- Department support required to contact student  
- Department inform Student Admin if student is no longer coming to study or has not arrived at start programme |
| **Course change** | - Contact Tier 4 Officer to see if this will fit with their current visa  
- Student may need to leave UK to make a new visa application  
- If Tier 4 student will complete new course by end date of current visa, Tier 4 Officer informs UKVI of change. |
| **Change in start date before they enter the UK (PGR)** | - Must be made before the student has obtained visa  
- Approved by department  
- Inform Research Degrees and Tier 4 Officer  
- Tier 4 Officer will report to UKVI  
- Research Degrees will update record |
| **Interruption of study** | - Complete interruption form process as normal  
- Student Admin will inform Tier 4 Officer to report and curtail student’s visa  
- Student will have 60 days to leave the UK |
| **Change in study location (e.g. studying abroad)** | - Department record approval  
- Inform Tier 4 Officer of address, and dates  
- Tier 4 Officer reports to UKVI  
- If sponsorship no longer required Tier 4 visa is curtailed. |
| **The College terminates a student’s record** | - Student Admin will be informed by AQPO  
- Student Admin inform Tier 4 Officer to report and curtail student’s visa  
- Student will have 60 days to leave the UK. |
| **Withdrawal from study** | - Complete withdrawal form process as normal  
- Student Admin will inform Tier 4 Officer to report and curtail student’s visa  
- Student will have 60 days to leave the UK. |
| **10 consecutive missed contact points** | - What is a contact point?  
- Department to raise concerns with Tier 4 Officer  
- Student will be contacted to come to interview in the SSC  
- Continued contact and evidence from department required  
- Student likely to be reported to UKVI and visa curtailed |
| **Suspicion a student is breaching Tier 4 visa conditions i.e. working over 20hrs/wk** | - Contact Tier 4 Visa Officer IMMEDIATELY  
- Student will be contacted to come to interview in the SSC  
- Continued contact and evidence from department required  
- Student likely to be reported to UKVI and visa curtailed |
| **Suspicion the student is not a genuine student** | - Contact Tier 4 Visa Officer IMMEDIATELY  
- Student will be contacted to come to interview in the SSC  
- Continued contact and evidence from department required  
- Student likely to be reported to UKVI and visa curtailed |
Working Restrictions

Students on a Tier 4 visa are limited in the number of hours they can work during term time, normally either 10 or 20 hours per week. The number is stated on their visa.

**UG** – Outside of the official term dates, UG students do not have any restrictions on the number of hours they can work in the UK.

**PGT** – Have the same term 1 and 2 dates and holidays as UG students so no restrictions on the number of hours they can work during the Christmas and Easter holiday periods. From the beginning of term 3 to the official programme end date in September, they remain limited to working the number of hours stated on their visa even if they submit their dissertation early.

**PGR** – Are expected to engage with their studies for the duration of their PhD, with the exception of holidays agreed with their supervisor.
Working Restrictions Contd.

PGT students dropping a Year in Industry/Business

PGT students on a programme including a Year in Industry/Business will have been issued with a visa valid for 2 years and their working hours will be limited over the summer of year 1 and for the duration of year 2 (not including the hours worked on their placement).

• Should a student change to the 1 year programme without the Year in Industry/Business, whilst we notify the UKVI of the change of programme at the point their student record is updated, the UKVI do not alter their visa conditions and the student continues to have the same working restrictions as if they were still on the 2 year programme.

• Once the student’s results are released after the College Boards in October/November we notify the UKVI they have completed their programme and at this point the UKVI change the visa conditions to allow the student to work full time until the new visa end date given by the UKVI.
Authorised Absences (PGR)

• UKVI require us to maintain records of any authorised absences

• Evidence needs to be kept to support the approval of the student’s absence

• A PGR student may be granted an authorised absence up to 60 days without UKVI reporting:
  o In place of an interruption
  o In extenuating circumstances, inline with UKVI guidance
  o Permits the student to remain in the UK/travel abroad
  o student completes the authorised absence form
  o Form signed off by department (Supervisor, Director of Graduate Studies, Head of Department and DM)
  o Return to Student Admin to forward for the Dean’s for approval
  o Include appropriate evidence e.g. a medical report
  o Formal interruption is required if absence exceeds 60 and reporting to UKVI
Doctorate Extension Scheme (DES)

The DES allows Royal Holloway to continue to sponsor Tier 4 PhD students to stay in the UK for up to 12 months once they have completed their course.

In this 12 months, these students can gain further experience, find a job, or set up as an entrepreneur.

To be eligible to apply for the DES a student must:

• Have a valid Tier 4 visa at the point they make their DES application;
• Have not yet completed their course;
• Have a CAS confirming we expect them to complete their course successfully;
• Be applying no more than 60 days before the end date of their course (award date).

Whilst sponsoring students on DES, the College must record at least 2 contact points within this 12 month period, which Royal Holloway has at months 3 and 9.
Contact Details

To provide updates on a student’s circumstances or if you have any general queries about Tier 4 sponsorship duties, email: student-administration@royalholloway.ac.uk

or

call Julia Jago, Visa Records Officer: 01784 276932