A UK visa guide for overseas academics
Academics can use the Tier 5 (Temporary Worker - Government Authorised Exchange) category if they are being sponsored by a participating organisation under an approved scheme to come to the UK:

• For work experience or training purposes; or
• To take part in an Overseas Government Language Programme; or
• To carry out collaborative research or take up a fellowship through an approved government authorised exchange scheme.

If you are issued a visa in this category, you will be granted entry for up to 12 or 24 months, depending on the purpose of the approved scheme.

You must have a certificate of sponsorship from a licensed sponsor before you can apply to come to
the UK to work under these arrangements. Your work, training or research in the UK must relate to the work of your sponsor organisation.

A list of approved schemes, and their sponsoring organisations, can be found at www.gov.uk/tier-5-government-authorised-exchange

Please note that if your UK sponsor has not agreed to certify your maintenance, you must show evidence that you personally have the necessary funds.

**Standard visitor (academic)**

If you are not a sponsored academic, you may be eligible to apply as an ‘academic visitor’ under the Standard Visitor visa route if you want to visit the UK to:

- Take part in formal exchange arrangements with a UK counterpart. You should provide evidence that an exchange has been agreed by both institutions and that it will lead to a reciprocal visit by a UK academic to your home institution. Such exchanges can involve some collaborative research; or

- Carry out independent research for your own purposes, if you are on sabbatical leave from your home institution. Although this independent research may include some interaction with staff at a UK university or use of its facilities, you would not be allowed to take part in any collaborative research with UK-based academics. For example, you could not join a research group in the UK or take part in a research project hosted by the UK university; or

- Take part in research, teaching or clinical practice provided this does not amount to filling a permanent teaching post. This activity only
applies to medical doctors and dentists.

If you want to visit the UK for up to 12 months you must be:

- Highly qualified within your own field of expertise; and
- Currently working in that field at an academic institution of higher education overseas (not including private businesses).

Further details are available at [www.gov.uk/standard-visitor-visa/overview](http://www.gov.uk/standard-visitor-visa/overview)

**Standard visitor (business)**

If you are an academic but do not meet the above criteria, you may be eligible to apply as a ‘business visitor’ under the Standard Visitor visa route.

This enables you to travel to the UK for up to six months to undertake a permitted business activity, for example:

- Attend meetings, conferences, seminars, interviews; or
- Give a one-off or short series of talks and speeches provided these are not organised as commercial events and will not make a profit for the organiser; or
- Negotiate and sign deals and contracts; or
- Attend trade fairs, for promotional work only. The visitor must not directly sell their products; or
- Carry out site visits and inspections; or
- Gather information for their employment overseas; or
- Be briefed on the requirements of a UK-based
customer, provided any work for the customer is done outside of the UK.


**Permitted paid engagement**

Academics who are highly qualified within their field of expertise may come to the UK to do specific paid engagements for up to one month as a visitor, without having to be sponsored under the points-based system, if they are invited by a UK organisation to:

- Examine students and/or participate in or chair selection panels as part of the organisation’s quality assurance processes; or
- Give lectures in their subject area, provided this does not amount to filling a teaching position for the host organisation.

Further details are available at [www.gov.uk/permitted-paid-engagement-visa/overview](http://www.gov.uk/permitted-paid-engagement-visa/overview)

**PhD students**

If you are a PhD student who wishes to go to the UK to complete research for your thesis, you will not qualify under the routes above. Instead, you may wish to consider applying for a short-term study visa which is valid for up to six months.

If you are studying outside the UK and are accepted by a qualifying UK Higher Education Institution, this allows you to carry out a short period of research that is either part of, or related to, your degree course.
You can also consider applying for a Tier 4 study visa if your research is part of your PhD degree course overseas and will take longer than six months.

Further details are available at [www.gov.uk/study-visit-visa/overview](http://www.gov.uk/study-visit-visa/overview) or [www.gov.uk/tier-4-general-visa](http://www.gov.uk/tier-4-general-visa)

Further guidance for applicants

When applying, you should detail evidence of your proposed activities, for example your research plan, information about the formal exchange under which you are travelling to the UK, or any funding arrangements through organisations such as the Newton Fund.

Those wishing to come to the UK for more than six months may also require a tuberculosis certificate.

If you have a question not answered in this leaflet or online, please visit [www.gov.uk/contact-ukvi-outside-uk](http://www.gov.uk/contact-ukvi-outside-uk)