

1. Overview - Visa Information for the UK

This guide is for organisers of business related events or conferences in the UK where delegates from overseas may require visit visas. If your delegates will be receiving any payment for work in the UK, unless activities are included under paid permitted activities as a visitor www.gov.uk/permitted-paid-engagements-visa, your delegate will need to consider an alternative visa route. Our visa self-assessment will allow you/your delegates to identify alternative options: www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa

Whether your delegates need to apply for a visa to visit the UK depends on their nationality. If your delegate is on the list of visa nationals, they will need to apply for a visa before they travel to the UK. The visa national list can be found here: www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-visitor-visa-national-list

If your delegate is a national who does not require a visa to visit the UK, they do not need to apply for a visit visa to participate in UK hosted events if what they are coming to do is permitted under the visitor route - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-visitor-permitted-activities>. They can apply for entry on arrival in the UK.

If you are not sure if your delegate requires a visa for the UK, please check on our website at: www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa

2. The Visitor routes in more detail

Visitors (Standard and Permitted Paid Engagement)

All visitor visa applications are considered under the visitor Immigration Rules. As set out in the Rules, a delegate must satisfy the decision maker that they are a genuine visitor who will leave the UK at the end of their visit and will not make the UK their main home through frequent or successive visits – for instance that they have family, work or study ties in their home country. A visitor must also be able to show that they are able to support and maintain themselves during their visit. There is flexibility in the Rules for visitors to be maintained accommodated by friends, relatives or another sponsor. A visitor must not intend to work or study except where this is specifically permitted.

The Visit Guidance provides further information about the Visitor routes- www.gov.uk/government/publications/visit-guidance

Standard Visitor

Under the Visitor Rules, Standard visitors are permitted to undertake the following general business activities:

A visitor may:

- (a) attend meetings, conferences, seminars, interviews;
- (b) 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;
- (c) negotiate and sign deals and contracts;
- (d) attend trade fairs, for promotional work only, provided the visitor is not directly selling;
- (e) carry out site visits and inspections;
- (f) gather information for their employment overseas;
- (g) be briefed on the requirements of a UK based customer, provided any work for the customer is done outside of the UK.

A full list of the permitted activities is available here: www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-visitor-permitted-activities Visitors must not receive payment for these activities beyond expenses.

Permitted Paid Engagement (PPE) Visitor

Your delegate may also be able to apply under the Permitted Paid Engagement visitor route if they are undertaking a short paid engagement of no more than 1 month and have been invited to the UK by an organisation such as an arts or broadcasting organisation. Paragraph V 13.3 of Appendix V: Visitor has the full list of Permitted Paid Engagements - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-v-visitor>.

V 13.3. The following are permitted paid engagements:

- (a) an academic who is highly qualified within their field of expertise, coming to examine students and/or participate in or chair selection panels, and have been invited by a UK higher education institution, or a UK-based research or arts organisation as part of that institution or organisation's quality assurance processes; and
- (b) an expert coming to give lectures in their subject area, where they have been invited by a higher education institution; or a UK-based research or arts organisation, and this does not amount to filling a teaching position for the host organisation; and

(c) an overseas designated pilot examiner coming to assess UK-based pilots to ensure they meet the national aviation regulatory requirements of other countries, where they have been invited by an approved training organisation based in the UK that is regulated by the UK Civil Aviation Authority for that purpose; and

(d) a qualified lawyer coming to provide advocacy for a court or tribunal hearing, arbitration or other form of dispute resolution for legal proceedings within the UK, where they have been invited by a client; and

(e) a professional artist, entertainer, or musician coming to carry out an activity directly relating to their profession, where they have been invited by a creative (arts or entertainment) organisation, agent or broadcaster based in the UK; and

(f) a professional sports person coming to carry out an activity directly relating to their profession, where they have been invited by a sports organisation, agent, or broadcaster based in the UK.

Documents for Visitors

Apart from a valid travel document, the Standard Visitor route does not require any mandatory documents (unless the individual coming to the UK for private medical treatment, to donate an organ, as an academic coming for up to 12 months, or is a child). This is because Visitors can come to the UK for a variety of reasons and each person will have their individual circumstances. Applicants are best placed to determine the documents they think best demonstrate that they meet the Immigration Rules.

It is, however, recommended that organisers inviting any delegates to their events in any of the Visitor routes provide invitation letters. An example is set out in Section 6 of this guidance.

PPE visitors **must** have a formal invitation letter from the inviting organisation based in the UK.

***Prepare the application and supporting documents carefully.* Submitting only an invitation letter in support of an application may not give the decision maker all the necessary information to be satisfied that the delegate meets the requirements of the Immigration Rules. To support their application, your delegate should gather evidence of their circumstances, employment, ability to meet the costs of the trip and details of where they will be staying and why they are visiting the UK.**

The supporting documents guidance provides some examples of the types of documents a visitor might choose to submit with their visa application or show to a Border Force Officer on arrival - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visitor-visa-guide-to-supporting-documents>.

3. Advice on visa applications.

If delegates of business related events or conferences in the UK are required to apply for a visa in advance of travel, please advise them to apply as early as possible. Applications can be made up to three months in advance of proposed date of travel.

Our service standard for processing standard non-settlement visas is 15 working days from when we receive an application (including biometric information) to when we send our decision to the applicant. Please advise delegates to allow as much time as possible in case of delays or if additional information is required. It is the delegate's responsibility to ensure the information on their form is accurate.

In many locations, for an additional fee, delegates may be able to use our Priority and Super Priority visa service. The service standards for these products are 5 working days and the end of the next working day respectively.

Full instructions on what your delegates need to do before, during and after applying for a visa, and what to do once they enter the UK can be found on our website at: www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/what-you-need-to-do

Your delegate must **apply and pay online** for the visa using the link at: www.gov.uk/apply-ukvisa.

Your delegate will be asked to book a biometric appointment with one of our visa application centres at the end of the online application and pay the visa application fee.

UK hosts of events should ensure that invitation letters are sent to their participants as early as possible before the event to allow them to apply for a UK Visa. If you are issuing an official letter of invitation to attend an event in the UK, we would recommend that your delegates include the original letter with their supporting documents. Supporting documents can be self-uploaded before a delegate's appointment at no additional cost. On the day of your appointment your delegate must go in person to the chosen Visa Application Centre with their passport, printed application form and any other supporting documents. Assisted scanning at the VAC is available for an additional fee. They will also be required to give their biometrics: digital photograph and fingerprints.

To find details of the nearest visa application centre use this link: www.gov.uk/find-a-visa-applicationcentre. Read our guidance carefully and encourage your delegates to apply for visas as early as possible. Applications can be made up to three months in advance of the planned date of travel.

4. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

How do my delegates apply for a visa?

Applications for visit visas are made online <https://visas-immigration.service.gov.uk/product/uk-visit-visa>

How do I make enquiries about a visa application?

You should be able to find the information you need about visit visas on our website (www.gov.uk/standard-visitor-visa) but if you need to contact us, our contact details are [here on GOV.UK](#)

Can my delegates apply in their own language?

The application form has been translated into a range of languages, however all answers must be in English. Supporting documents must also be in English or accompanied by a translation. Translation requirements are outlined on the guide to supporting documents:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/visitor-visa-guide-to-supporting-documents

Where should my delegate apply?

A visit visa application can be made from any country where we have a Visa Application Centre (VAC). The online form will ask which country a delegate is applying in, this then gives a list of available Visa Application Centres. An application can also be made online from a country where there is no VAC presence, but the delegate would need to travel to a VAC to complete the application process. Further details about our visa application centres are available [here](#)

When should my delegates apply?

Applications can be made up to three months in advance of the intended date of travel to the UK. Delegates are advised to apply as soon as possible. UK hosts of events should ensure that invitation letters are sent to the delegates as quickly as possible before the event to allow them plenty of time to apply for a visa.

How long will my delegates applications take?

We aim to process visit applications within **15 working days from submitting biometrics**, but we recommend that applications are made as early as possible allowing at least four weeks. In many locations, for an additional fee, delegates may be able to use our Priority and Super Priority visa service.

What is “biometric information”?

Biometric information consists of fingerprint scanning and a full-face digital photograph. Visa applicants must provide their biometric information **each time** they apply for a UK visa.

Can delegates do anything in advance to make the application process quicker?

Yes. When an application is started your delegate will be asked to supply an email address and create a password, they will then be emailed a link to return to the application at a later point. This means the form can be started more than three months before the planned date of travel.

What is Priority and Super Priority Service

Priority service means that we will aim to make a decision on your application in 5 working days, this service is available in over 200 locations. Super Priority service reduces this to the end of the next working day, this service is available in around 20 locations. Both services are charged at an additional fee. Some applications may take longer if they are complex, please check the [visa application centres](#) website for any further information.

Important note: Priority service does not imply or guarantee in any way that a delegate will be successful in their visa application. All visa applicants must meet the requirements of the UK immigration rules.

My delegate travels a lot and cannot be without their passport, are there any services that could help?

We offer a Keep My Passport service in over 40 locations, this allows the applicant to keep their passport while their application is being considered. If their visa application is successful they will need to provide their passport to the VAC for the vignette to be printed. This service comes at an additional cost and details of which services are available at each VAC are available on the Commercial Partner website.

Are there any other services available for the convenience of my delegates?

Yes, a wide range of services are available for customer convenience, popular services include peak time and weekend VAC appointments, SMS updates, photocopying, premium lounges and even the ability to submit biometrics in the comfort of your own home or office. Additional services such as travel insurance and UK sim card can also be purchased via commercial partner websites and in VACs. These are known as 'user pay' or 'added value' services, please see the website of the VAC your delegate wishes to attend to find out which services are available in their location.

Why aren't all services available in all locations?

Not all customers want all services, to provide the best value for our customers, our additional services are provided where there is a demand for them.

Is it possible for someone else to collect my delegates passport and documents on their behalf?

Passports must be collected by the applicant or a nominated representative. You can check if a visa application centre offers a courier service, which may be a more convenient way for passports and documents to be returned, this is an additional service for which the fee will vary upon location.

Can a delegate apply for a visa in one country and collect it in another?

No, however a small number of VACs do offer an out of country courier service at an additional cost, please check the VAC website to see if this service is available.

What travel date should be stated on the application form?

On the application your delegates should be specific in stating planned dates of travel to and from the UK. Delegates cannot arrive in the UK earlier than the start date on their visa. If your delegate tries to travel before this date, the airline may not let them board their flight, or they may be refused entry on arrival in the UK. It is not usually possible to make changes to the validity dates of a visa, after it has been printed. If plans change, your delegate may need to make a new visa application.

Are there any other ways to make my journey easier?

Nationals of some countries may be able to clear immigration control faster through our Registered Traveller Service. To be eligible delegates must have a visa or have visited the UK 4 times or more in the last 24 months.

For further information about the Registered Traveller Service, please visit our website:

www.gov.uk/registered-traveller.

What can I do if my delegates visa is refused?

A decision to refuse a visa is made only after careful consideration of all the facts by an Entry Clearance Officer, including the fact that the delegate is to attend or contribute to a specific event. If the application is refused, the refusal notice will provide details about the reasons for refusal. Your delegate is free to make a new application, but it is strongly recommended that they read their refusal letter carefully and fully address all the reasons for the initial refusal.

I am funding my delegates travel; do I need to provide additional information?

In most cases, providing details of your support on the visa invitation letter should be sufficient. However, if you send funds directly to your delegate it would be prudent to provide evidence to support the payments you have made

7. Visa Application Process

End to End, Customer Journey – this represents a generic high-level visa customer journey for an international visa applicant

