



Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP
Chair, Education Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

10 September 2020

Dear Robert,

Earlier this year, in February and July respectively, the Government published two documents – “[The UK’s Points-Based Immigration System: Policy Statement](#)” and “[The UK’s Points-Based Immigration System: Further Details](#)”. These documents set out the Government’s vision and plans to fulfil our commitment to the British people to take back full control of our borders by ending free movement and introducing a single, global immigration system which attracts talent from across the world and delivers a high skill, high wage and high productivity economy.

Today, we have taken the first major step towards realising this vision. We have laid [Immigration Rules](#) which contain the new, points-based Student and Child Student routes. These routes will come into effect on 5 October and will replace and improve upon the existing Tier 4 (General) and Tier 4 (Child) student routes. Launching these routes in October will enable us to carry out live testing of new technology as part of the user journey for applicants in the new system.

The Government welcomes international students and places no limit on their number. This will not change under the points-based system. We are committed to increasing the number of international higher education students in the UK to 600,000 by 2030 and the new Student route will support us in achieving this aim.

From 5 October, all prospective international students, including those from the EU, coming to study in the UK after the end of the transition period will need to apply to the Student route before coming to UK. To help prepare EU students who will need to apply through the points-based immigration system in order to commence their studies here from January 2021, we have created tailored guidance, which can be found [here](#).

The route will be streamlined and simple. Students must demonstrate they have an offer from an approved education institution, speak English to the required standard for the course and be able to support themselves financially during their studies. The main differences between the new Student route and the previous Tier 4 are outlined below:

- EEA nationals will be incorporated into a global application system. EEA nationals will be required to meet the same requirements to study within the UK as non-EEA nationals and will need to apply under the Student rules;

- There will be a new set of simplified Immigration Rules for the Student and Child Student routes, in line with the recommendations made by the Law Commission;
- Students will be able to apply for permission to come to the UK six months before they plan to travel;
- There are increased switching permissions within the Student route and increased switching between routes within the new points-based immigration system. Students will be able to apply for further permission from within the UK, provided they meet the academic progression requirement and the new course of study commences within 28 days of the expiry of the current leave. This enables clearer pathways for students studying at all levels;
- The eight-year time limit on studying courses at postgraduate level has been removed. There is no longer a limit on the time an individual can spend studying postgraduate courses;
- Those applying for permission to stay in the UK on the Student route will not need to demonstrate funds if they have already been here with valid permission for 12 months or longer at the point they apply;
- Students applying for leave as a Student Union Sabbatical Officer or to study on a recognised Foundation Programme will not be required to prove evidence of maintenance funds, as it is accepted these individuals will be earning an income during the validity of their visas;
- Students at higher education providers with a track record of compliance will not routinely be required to provide evidence of academic qualifications used to obtain the offer of sponsorship;
- Students who have passed relevant qualifications in English language or literature in the UK whilst studying under the age of 18 will be able to meet the English language requirement; and
- EEA and Swiss nationals, and nationals of the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Singapore and South Korea, will be exempted from having to apply for an Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) certificate to study certain sensitive subjects in the UK.

To recruit international students, educational institutions must have a Home Office approved [sponsor licence](#). Institutions who are already Tier 4 sponsors will automatically become Student sponsors.

We also want to ensure we retain the brightest and the best students to continue to contribute to the UK post-study, which is why we are launching the Graduate route in Summer 2021. This new route will allow those who have completed a degree at a UK higher education provider, with a track record of compliance, to stay in the UK for two years (three years for PhD graduates) and work at any skill level, and to switch into work routes if they find a suitable job.

Alongside the new Student and Child Student routes, we are also laying new rules on how applicants meet English language and finance requirements in immigration applications. These rules will only apply to the Student and Child Student routes initially, but will in time apply to all immigration routes.

We will be publishing guidance to accompany the new rules in the near future. There will also be a further Immigration Rules change later this year to facilitate the launch of further new routes, including the flagship Skilled Worker route.

With my very best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Foster', with a large flourish extending to the right.

Kevin Foster MP
Minister for Future Borders and Immigration