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Student Immigration Team

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Working in the UK

A Guide for Tier 4 Visa Holders

**The main purpose of your Tier 4 visa is for you to study a course on a full-time basis in the UK. However your Tier 4 visa does allow you to work whilst you are in the UK, in certain circumstances, and under certain conditions.**

**You should read this guide carefully if you plan to work in the UK on a Tier 4 visa to ensure that you continue to meet your Tier 4 conditions and responsibilities during your stay. If you have any questions about this please contact us directly and we will be happy to help.**

This guide will cover the following areas:

- ❖ 1. Hours of work
- ❖ 2. Type of work & Prohibited activities
- ❖ 3. Volunteering & Voluntary work
- ❖ 4. Work placements
- ❖ 5. National Insurance number
- ❖ 6. Proving your right to work
- ❖ 7. Working after studies
- ❖ 8. Breaching your work conditions

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## Hours of Work

It is important to check your visa to confirm if you can work during your studies. Your work condition includes any paid work, unpaid work, voluntary work and internships.

- ❖ If your course of study is at degree level or above you are allowed to work up to a maximum of 20 hours per week during term time, and full-time during vacations.
- ❖ If your course of study is below degree level you will be able to work a maximum of 10 hours per week during term time, and full-time during vacations.

You can have multiple jobs but you must not work over your weekly hour limit. You must add all your work hours together and ensure that the total is below the limit.

### What are the vacation periods?

You must check the specific vacations for your level of course before working full-time during these periods, and you must ensure that you do not engage in prohibited types of work. UKVI includes the period after you have completed your course as vacation time. You can work full-time during vacation periods, but cannot pursue a career by filling a permanent vacancy.

Please note that reading week is considered term-time so you cannot work full-time.

**Undergraduate students:** You can work full-time during vacation periods at Christmas, Easter and during the summer. Please see the [University term dates](#) here to check when you are permitted to work full-time. You can also work full-time for four months after you have completed your course.

**Postgraduate Taught students (Masters):** You can work full-time during the Christmas and Easter vacation periods only. You cannot work beyond your 20-hour-a-week limit during the summer as you are still classed as being in full-time study while you work on your dissertation. You can work full-time once you have finished all of your taught components and you have submitted all assessed work including your final dissertation.

**Postgraduate Research students (PhD):** You are entitled to a total of 8 weeks' vacation per academic year. You can work full-time only during these 8 weeks of vacation and any vacation periods must be agreed in writing with your supervisor and School before you work full-time. You can then work full-time from your thesis submission until the day before your VIVA, and again after you have submitted your final corrected thesis via scholar after your corrections are approved. You are still restricted to 20-hours-a-week during your writing up period and from the day of your VIVA until you submit your corrected thesis in full.

## How to calculate a working week

UKVI's definition of 'a week' in terms of working under Tier 4 is 'any rolling 7 day period'. This means you need to count 7 days from the date you start working and ensure that you do not work more than your limit in this 7 day period. For instance if you worked 7 hours on Saturday, 7 hours on Sunday and then another 7 hours on the following Friday this would be in breach of your work limit under Tier 4. This is because the total hours in the 7 day period would be 21 hours.

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### Types of work & prohibited activities

As a Tier 4 student you are restricted from engaging in certain types of employment. You are not permitted to:

- ❖ be employed as a doctor in training (except on a recognised foundation programme);
- ❖ be employed as a professional sports person (including a sports coach);
- ❖ be employed as an entertainer;
- ❖ be self-employed or engage in business activity; or
- ❖ fill a full-time, permanent vacancy (except on a recognised foundation programme or as a students' union sabbatical officer).

If you are not sure about any of these definitions please contact us and we can advise in more detail.

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### Volunteering & Voluntary work

You can both volunteer and do voluntary work in the UK. However voluntary work contributes to your work allowance on Tier 4 and so any hours you do must not exceed your Tier 4 limit during term-time, either on its own or combined with other types of paid or unpaid work.

You should be aware of the difference between volunteering and voluntary work.

Voluntary workers:

- ❖ often have a contract with their employer e.g. you must attend at particular times and carry out specific tasks
- ❖ voluntary workers are usually paid in some way

Volunteers:

- ❖ do not have a contract of employment
- ❖ must not take the place of an employee
- ❖ must not receive payment (but travel or maintenance expenses are allowed)
- ❖ usually help a charity or voluntary or public sector organisation e.g. a registered charity

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## Work placements

On a Tier 4 visa you are permitted to undertake a work placement provided that is an integral and assessed part of your main course of study. An example of this would be if your course includes an industrial placement year and this was stated on your CAS.

If you are enrolled on a course at an overseas University and you are coming to the UK to do part of your course, you may also do a work placement as part of your course as long as it is no more than 50% of your study in the UK.

During your work placement you are able to work full-time and be paid as such. The University is still your Tier 4 sponsor and so it is important that you stay in contact with your School and keep your contact details up to date.

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## National Insurance Number

You will need a National Insurance (NI) number to work in the UK. This unique number is used to record your National Insurance contributions.

You can start working without an NI number and your employer may be able to create a temporary number for you, but you should apply for one as soon as possible to make sure you don't pay too much tax. If you are looking for paid work in the UK it is advisable to apply for an NI number as soon as possible as the application can take time.

It is free to apply and applications should be made by phone to the National Insurance Number application line. You may be required to attend an appointment at your local Jobcentre Plus.

Please see the [Careers website](#) for more information about how to apply for an NI number.

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## Proving your right to work

Your employer will need to check your right to work in the UK. Your Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) or visa vignette should be sufficient for this purpose. If you have a new passport and your visa is in your old one then you will need to transfer your visa to your new passport before you can work. To do this you need to apply for a [Transfer of Conditions](#), to receive a Biometric Residence Permit.

If your visa or Biometric Residence Permit is with UKVI because you have made a new visa application then your employer must contact the [Employer Checking Service](#) to get confirmation that you are permitted to work. Provided that you made your visa application before your current visa expired then your immigration permission continues and you can continue to work according to Tier 4 rules.

You may also need to show your employer evidence of the [University term dates](#). You are allowed to use a printout of the University website as evidence of this.

The University cannot provide a letter to confirm your right to work in the UK. This should not be necessary and your employer should accept the evidence above according to the [guidance for employers](#).

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## Working after studies

If you want to work in the UK after your Tier 4 visa expires or to do a type of work that is restricted under Tier 4 e.g. a full-time position, you will need to apply for a work visa .

[Doctorate Extension Scheme](#): This is available to PhD students on Tier 4 who are about to complete their course. The visa is valid for one year and allows you to find work without needing a job offer when you apply, set up as an entrepreneur, or to gain practical work experience in their field.

[Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneur](#): This allows graduates from the University, who have a viable and innovative business idea, to be supported to develop a business in the UK in conjunction with The University.

[Tier 2](#): This is the main category for employment in the UK. It requires you to find a job with an employer who has a Tier 2 sponsor licence. The advertised position has to meet certain criteria, such as a minimum salary, for sponsorship to be possible.

[Tier 5 Government Authorised Exchange](#): This visa allows you to undertake paid work experience or internship in the UK for a period of one or two years. There are a number of Tier 5 organisations who can act as visa sponsors as part of various government-approved schemes.

[Tier 5 Youth Mobility](#): The Tier 5 Youth Mobility is a visa that is valid for two years and it allows you to work or study. Only students with certain types of British nationality or from certain countries are eligible to apply, and you must apply from your home country.

[The Careers website](#) and the [Student Immigration Team website](#) include more information about these visa categories and other visa types that permit work.

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## Breaching your work conditions

There are serious consequences for working beyond your Tier 4 restrictions. The University is obligated to report any breach of your conditions to UK Visas & Immigration, including if you work more hours than you are permitted, or engage in a type of work that is not allowed.

You should check that your type of work is permitted and keep a record of how many hours you work per week to ensure that you are keeping to your Tier 4 conditions of stay.

You must stop working immediately if your visa expires or you stop studying, including if you take an interruption or leave of absence.

Please see [our website](#) for more information about Tier 4 visas during your stay in the UK.

The [Tier 4 Policy Guidance](#) includes more information about your work conditions and your responsibilities whilst on a Tier 4 visa.

The [UKCISA website](#) also contains useful information and guidance about working in the UK during and after studies.