

EMPLOYMENT &
INCENTIVES

Graduate visa – International talent may be closer than you think

In a boost for employers, the Government has confirmed a new Graduate visa route will launch on 1 July 2021, giving greater access to nearly 500,000 international students currently living and studying in the UK.

The Tier 1 (Post Study Work) visa route formally closed in 2012, with many academic institutions experiencing a marked decline in international student numbers as a result. However, a desire to attract the 'best and brightest' was a key driver in the government's move to overhaul the UK's immigration system. In this article, we explore how the Post Study Work visa has been given a new lease on life as the Graduate visa and highlight some of the benefits for employers looking to unlock this existing talent pool.

2 MIN READ

Need to know

- From 1 July 2021, the Graduate visa route will be an option for international students holding a valid Tier 4 visa who have completed a degree at a UK Higher Education institution.
- The visa will allow qualifying applicants to stay in the UK and work, or look for work at any skill level – including self-employment; Graduates with an undergraduate or Master's degree will receive a two-year visa and those holding a PHD will be granted a further year.
- Graduate visa holders do not require sponsorship, allowing employers to avail of this talent pool with a significantly reduced administrative burden. Crucially, the Graduate visa will also allow holders to switch to the Skilled Worker visa if they find a suitable job. Licensed Sponsors looking to hire in those circumstances will be able to benefit from the 'new entrant' salary concessions (up to 30% reduction on 'going rate').
- The visa fee is £700 and the annual Immigration Health Surcharge will be payable.

Covid-19 Considerations

- International students who began their studies in the autumn of 2020 but were unable to travel to the UK due to restrictions now have until 21 June 2021 to enter the UK on their current Tier 4 student visa, in order to be eligible to apply for a Graduate visa. For those who began courses in January or February 2021, the deadline is currently 27 September 2021.

Overall, this new option presents positive opportunities for both students and employers alike. Employers are often put off by the initial costs of sponsorship, at a time when they have little real indication of a candidate's long-term suitability for their business. The Graduate visa will expand the pool of talent that employers will be able to target with limited immediate cost implications.

As Covid-19 restrictions ease, universities and colleges should see an upturn in numbers, as the UK becomes a more attractive option for international students weighing their education options. Employers should be mindful of this when considering graduate recruitment programs and budgets.

Key contacts

If you would like further information on the Graduate visa process, or key considerations when recruiting migrants who will be switching from Tier 4 to a Skilled Worker visa, please contact a member of our [Immigration team](#).



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