

Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneur Scheme FAQs

What is a Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) Visa and what does it allow?

The Tier 1 (Graduate entrepreneur) route is for UK graduates identified by Higher Education Institutions (HEI) as having developed genuine and credible business ideas and entrepreneurial skills to establish one or more businesses in the UK

Who can apply for the scheme through Lancaster University?

Lancaster University offers the scheme to the following categories of applicant:

- LU overseas graduates who have completed their studies within the last 12 months
- Doctoral researchers working at LU on a tier 2 visa
- LU overseas current students, however, an endorsement will only be provided upon successful completion of your degree programme

How do I express interest in the scheme?

Complete the online questionnaire available [here](#)

What criteria do I have to meet to receive an endorsement from the University?

The minimum requirement for a T1 (GE) visa endorsement is the production of a robust and viable Business Plan. In order to receive an endorsement from Lancaster University, you must have engaged with the University's Enterprise Team to ensure thorough validation of this Business Plan, and to demonstrate your capability in delivering it. This validation will typically be undertaken via an intensive start-up development programme that takes place annually, at the end of the Summer Term. However, early engagement with the Enterprise Team may enable you to work through the different validation stages over the course of your academic programme of study instead.

Further information on the 2018 start-up development programme will be published [<HERE>](#). If you would like to receive a notification when the programme details are announced, please write to enterpriseteam@lancaster.ac.uk to be added to our mailing list. As a subscriber, you will receive regular newsletters that will be of relevance to you as a prospective business owner.

The business plan you develop will be for submission to an expert panel for consideration. If your proposal successfully passes the panel, you will be recommended for an endorsement letter. The issuing of the endorsement letter is subject to satisfactory background checks by the University's visa & Immigration team.

What's the deadline for application onto the start-up development programme?

Please refer to the webpage [<HERE>](#) for full details.

Are there any restrictions on the type of business that can be set up on the scheme?

You cannot be considered for the scheme if your business proposal will be mainly engaged in property development or property management.

Can I take over an existing business?

Yes, you can take over an existing business of any type or any scale. You can also take on a franchise of an established brand.

Is there a set structure to the Business Plan?

We do not dictate a strict structure to the Business Plan; however, in engaging with the Enterprise Team to support you in producing the Business Plan, you will be asked to produce a Business Model Canvas and a series of other documents. This collection of documents will comprise your final plan, and guidance will be provided on how best to structure these in order to ensure the key messages are communicated early for the benefit of the reader, depending on your specific business model. A Business Plan Writing Mentor will be allocated to you if you are successful in your progress through the start-up development programme.

Can more 2 or more people apply for the scheme together with the same business plan?

Yes. If your application to secure an endorsement letter is successful, each person will be given a separate endorsement letter with his or her own unique endorsement number. When submitting your visa application, you should make reference that you have a business partner/s, noting their endorsement number in your visa application.

Can I engage in business activity without being in breach of my T4 visa terms?

If you are studying on a tier 4 visa, you cannot be self-employed or engaging in business activity unless you have submitted a visa application for leave to remain as a tier 1 (graduate entrepreneur) migrant and you are awaiting the decision on that application.

Engaging in business activity is defined in the tier 4 policy guidance document as follows:

318. You will be considered to be engaging in business activity where you are working for a business in which you have a financial or other significant beneficial interest in a capacity other than as an employee.

319. This would include the following:

- setting up a business as a sole trader or under a partnership arrangement and that business is either trading or establishing a trading presence;
- being employed by a company in which you hold shares of 10% or more (including where the shares are held in a trust for you); or
- working for a company where you also hold a statutory role, such as a director.

This is not an exhaustive list but provides examples of the types of circumstance in which you will be considered to be engaged in business activity

Under no circumstances should you register a UK business or register yourself as self-employed in the UK whilst on a tier 4 visa.

You may carry out activities via the Enterprise team to validate your business idea. This may include undertaking small-scale user testing of a prototype such as giving a product you have developed to a group of class mates for free to see if the concept works. You cannot receive any financial gain from any user testing unless you have submitted your application for your T1 GE visa.

If you are a business owner in your home country, or if you are a member of a family business, please approach the Visa team for further guidance with regard to your personal circumstances.

What should I do once I have received an endorsement letter?

You will have 3 months from the date stated on the endorsement letter to submit a visa application. You should also submit your visa application at least one month before your current visa is due to expire. If you fail to submit your application, the endorsement letter will no longer be valid, and you will be required to submit a new application to be considered again for a further endorsement. There is no guarantee that you will be provided with an endorsement letter again.

Visa FAQs

How much does the Visa Cost?

How much you pay for a Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) visa depends on your situation, where you are and how you apply:

| Who you're applying for | Apply (outside the UK) | Extend or switch by post in the UK |
|--|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Yourself | £363 | £493 |
| If you're a citizen of Turkey or Macedonia | £308 | £438 |
| All dependants | £363 each dependant | £493 each dependant |

Do I have to pay the NHS health surcharge?

Yes. You should pay the current fee, which you can check here: <https://www.gov.uk/healthcare-immigration-application/how-much-pay>. Dependants usually need to pay the same amount as you.

How much funds do I need to apply for the visa and how long do I need to have held them for?

The amount of funds you need to show varies depending on where you make your visa application. In all cases, you must hold the funds for a minimum of 90 consecutive days prior to making your visa application:

| Who you're applying for | Apply (outside the UK) | Extend or switch by post in the UK |
|--|--------------------------|---|
| Yourself | £1890 | £945 |
| If you're a citizen of Turkey or Macedonia | £1890 | £945 |
| All dependants | £1260 for each dependant | £630 for each dependant (if you have been in the UK for more than 12 months) £1260 for each dependant (if you have been in the UK for less than 12 months) |

If I am applying with a business partner, can the maintenance funds be shown in a joint account?

The required funds can be shown in a joint bank account, only if the visa applicant is named as an account holder. The account must also hold enough funds for each person applying.

How do I apply for the Visa?

Applying from inside the UK:

You must have a current valid visa to apply from within the UK. The visa team will be able to tell you if your current visa allows you to make an application from within the UK. Download and fill in the [visa application form](#) and send it with your documents to the address on the front of the form. The documents you need to submit are as follows:

- An original endorsement letter from Lancaster University
- Bank statements showing you have held the correct funds for 90 consecutive days prior to making your application
- A current passport or other valid travel identification
- 2 recent passport-sized colour photographs
- Your tuberculosis test results if you're from a country where you have to take the test

You will also need to provide your biometric information. This costs £19.20.

Applying from outside the UK:

You must [apply online](#) for a tier 1 (graduate entrepreneur) visa.

You'll need to have your fingerprints and photograph taken at a [visa application centre](#) (to get a biometric residence permit) as part of your application.

You'll have to collect your [biometric residence permit](#) within 10 days of when you said you'd arrive in the UK (even if you actually arrive at a later date).

You may be able to get your visa faster or other services depending on what country you're in - check with your visa application centre.

How long does it take to receive my visa?

A decision will be made on your visa application within 8 weeks. In some cases, it may take longer than this and UKVI will contact you.

How long can I stay in the UK on this visa?

Once your visa has been granted, it is valid for 12 months.

Will I be monitored whilst I am on this visa?

Yes. You must maintain quarterly contact with the University, and will be required to provide a progress report and attend a meeting with the Visa/Enterprise team every 3 months. You must also keep your contact details and current address up to date with the University. You will also be required to adhere to the terms and conditions attached to the visa as set out by UKVI.

Failure to maintain contact with the University will result in this reported to UKVI as failing to maintain contact, where your visa will be curtailed and you will be required to return to your home country.

Do I have to undertake Quarterly Review Meetings?

Yes. The first Quarterly Review Meeting of the first year will coincide with the issuing of your BRP (Biometric Residence Permit) and the requirement from the University Visa & Immigration Team to take a scan of the original. At this meeting, you will be reminded of your compliance obligations, will agree provisional dates for subsequent meetings, and undertake a progress review/business plan update with a member of the Enterprise Team.

Do I have to attend Quarterly Review Meetings in person?

It is preferred as this enables a more insightful analysis of your progress and ongoing compliance with the terms of the visa. However, if you are based some considerable distance away from Lancaster and attending would be excessively costly or disruptive to your business operations, we can potentially conduct the meeting via Skype, FaceTime or similar. A telephone conversation would not typically be considered adequate.

You must attend the Yr1 Q1 meeting in person, and also the Yr1 Q3 meeting, as this when we are most likely to determine whether your progress to plan is sufficient to merit your renewal for a second year (this decision will need to be made before the Yr1 Q4 meeting).

Can I reclaim expenses incurred in attending Quarterly Review Meetings from the University?

No, these should be considered as business expenses and accounted for in your financial plans.

Am I able to work whilst on this visa?

This visa does allow you to be employed so that you may supplement your income. There is no restriction on the number of hours you may work per week, however, you must be spending majority of your time working on developing your business venture/s. You are therefore advised to seek only part-time employment.

Can I extend my stay in the UK on this visa?

You may be granted further leave to remain for another 12 months if Lancaster University agrees to sponsor you for this. Your progress will be assessed to determine if you are able to be offered a re-endorsement for a second year.

If LU is not able to sponsor you for a second year, you may have the option of switching into one of the following categories:

- Tier 1 (Entrepreneur)
- Tier 2 (General) OR Tier 2 (Minister of Religion) OR Tier 2 (Sportsperson)
- Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent)

At the end of your second year on the visa, you must switch into another visa category, usually the Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) Visa, providing you meet the eligibility criteria.

What progress do I need to make in Year 1 to be renewed for Year 2?

Your Business Plan acts as a performance indicator for your business. Progress will be measured against what you have set out to achieve by each quarter and by the end of each year. If you are significantly behind, you should ensure that you have amended your plan and strategy to address this within the time remaining.

Can you withdraw my visa at any time?

The University may withdraw endorsement from you at any time, which will result in your visa being curtailed by UKVI. You will be expected to agree to terms and conditions in order to be issued an endorsement. An endorsement will be withdrawn if:

- a. You are deemed to be in breach of the terms of the visa as set out by UKVI and those in the application form, e.g. not committing adequate time and attention to delivering the plan that you were endorsed to deliver.
- b. You are so far behind your planned progress at any given point that it is clear that the situation is unrecoverable.