CHANGES TO YOUR STUDENT CIRCUMSTANCES

How does this affect your Tier 4 Visa?

Contact Details

Lancaster University Visa and Immigration Team
visa-advice@lancaster.ac.uk or cas-enquiries@lancaster.ac.uk
01524 594214

Please find within this guidance, some notes to help you understand the implications for making changes to your course of study, produced by Lancaster University Visa and Immigration Team. Please notes this is in accordance with the UKVI Tier 4 Policy Guidance. You should also refer to the guidance before submitting any changes.


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1.0 Intercalation (suspending your studies)

Under the Tier 4 licence agreement, students are required to be studying FULL TIME in the UK. The University is also required to report to the UKVI any students who are not attending their course of studies. Therefore, should you need to suspend your studies, you will need to leave the UK during your intercalation and apply for a new Tier 4 Visa when you are ready to return.

You will need to email cas-enquiries@lancaster.ac.uk when you have met the conditions for your return, to request a new CAS for your Tier 4 visa application.

Please note that an intercalation cannot be back-dated therefore if you are experiencing difficulties with your degree course of studies you are advised to seek assistance from your department or/or Student Based Services as soon as possible.

2.0 Change of details or circumstances

If you change any of the following:

- contact details,
- name,
- change of marital status,
- change of UK address,
- receive a criminal conviction or
- renew your passport you must download the following form and send it to the UKVI: https://www.gov.uk/change-circumstances-visa-brp.

You will also need to inform us at visa-advice@lancaster.ac.uk

3.0 Changing your course of study if you are already a Tier 4 visa holder

For most students, the visa granted to you should cover the full period of your course. However, you may need to extend or apply for a new visa if, for instance, you change your course of studies. You may also be required to leave the UK to make your new Tier 4 visa application and you should refer to the Tier 4 Policy Guidance, in particular the rules concerning Academic progression, Page 20 and 73 of the Tier 4 Policy Guidance here:

4.0 Changing Degree Programme at the same level

For those students who wish to change degree programme at the same level, can be completed within your current visa length and have similar modules i.e. changing from BSc (Hons) Accounting to BSc (Hons) Accounting and Finance, is acceptable. This would be reported to the UKVI as a change of programme.

The change must first be reported to the Registry and the LU Visa and Immigration team. Your department will help you do this.

However, for students who are changing to a completely different programme, for example: MA in Media Culture Studies to MA Marketing, these students would have to get a new visa before changing to the new course and the new visa must be obtained from outside the UK in your home country.

This is in accordance with the following paragraphs in the Tier 4 Policy guidance:

350. If you applied for your current leave on or after 6 April 2016, you can only change your course without getting permission from us to start your new course if:

• your sponsor is an HEI with Tier 4 Sponsor status;
• your new course is at degree level or above;
• your new course is not at a lower level than the current course;
• you will be able to complete your new course within your current period of leave; and
• if you have previously been granted Tier 4 (General) leave, your sponsor confirms that:
  a) your new course is related to the previous course for which you were granted leave as a Tier 4 (General)Student, meaning that it is either connected to your previous course, part of the same subject group, or involves deeper specialisation, or
  b) your previous course and your new course in combination support your genuine career aspirations.

If you change your course, you must complete your new course within your existing period of leave; the only exception to this is if you are applying to resit exams or repeat modules or you require further leave because you have previously resat exams or repeated modules for your current course. You will need to provide evidence that you have attempted exams/modules when applying for leave (see the ‘Academic Progression’ section for further details). You will not be allowed to use this provision to undertake part/s of the course for the first time.

351. In any other circumstances, you must make a new Tier 4 visa application before you change your course.

5.0 Repeating a year of study

If you have permission from the University to repeat a year on your current (the same) degree course of studies for which you were granted your visa, you can do this on your existing Tier 4 visa and if you will need further time in the UK, you can apply for your visa extension from inside the UK before your current visa expires.
If you have permission to repeat the year, but on a different course, you will be required to return home to obtain a new visa, prior to starting your repeat year.

6.0 Changing course where you will complete within a shorter timeframe but the level will be lower (i.e. going from Integrated Masters course to an Undergraduate Degree)

This change will be made near the end of your third year which therefore means the Visa and Immigration Team will report this to the UKVI as an early completion.

The UKVI will then curtail your visa and you will have to leave the UK by the new end date of your visa. The UKVI will send an email advising of how long you have to remain in the UK, usually 60 days.

Should for any reason you need to change the course any earlier than the end of the third year you will be required to get a new visa for the course. This new visa must be applied for from outside the UK because you cannot meet the academic progression rules from within the UK.

7.0 Adding a work placement/study abroad to your current course

If you have added a work placement to your current course and it is an assessed and integral part of your programme, or if you will be undertaking a new study abroad year as part of your studies, it is likely that you will need to apply for further time on your Tier 4 visa as a result.

It was previously the case that you were required to return to your home country to apply for your new Tier 4 visa. However UKVI decided that from 11 January 2018 you can make your new Tier 4 application in the UK to extend your visa to undertake your work placement or study abroad year.

From 6th July 2018 UKVI policy confirms that you can make your new Tier 4 application to extend your visa either before your work placement/study abroad year commences, or after your work placement/study abroad year ends. There is no longer the requirement to obtain your new Tier 4 visa before the work placement/study abroad year commences. Lancaster University would recommend you do it prior to undertaking your study abroad year to ensure you have leave to remain to re-enter the UK.

8.0 Extensions for Masters Programmes

If you require more time on your Masters Programme but your current visa does not cover the extension, you will need to return home in order to get your visa extension. This must be done from outside the UK because you have not yet completed your current programme within the time frame of the current visa and are not progressing up to the next level.

This circumstance will also apply to students who are moving on from PG Diplomas to the full Masters programmes.
9.0 Having completed the current programme for which your Tier 4 leave was granted, you are now moving on to a higher level programme

If you have successfully completed the programme of study for which your current Tier 4 leave was granted and you are now moving on to a different programme at a higher level, the UKVI will allow you to apply for your new visa from inside the UK, as long as there are no more than 28 days between the end date of your current Tier 4 visa and the start date of your next programme.

If you do have more than 28 days between your current visa expiring and the start date of your new course of studies you will have to return back to your home country to make the application.

10.0 Upgrades from undergraduate to a higher level (for example, you begin studying on a BSc Hons Physics and are upgraded to a PhD or from a BEng to a MEng) before completing the degree for which you were granted a visa – ATAS certificates

If you are doing an undergraduate course that leads to a postgraduate qualification you may need to apply for an ATAS certificate. Certain subjects require an ATAS certificate at a level above undergraduate (RQF6).

For example: if you began your studies at BSc level and are upgraded to a higher level (i.e. an MPhys or MEng level) you may be required to apply for an ATAS certificate before you can begin studying at the higher level.

You can find more information here: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academic-technology-approval-scheme

To get the correct course code (CAH3) please contact visa-advice@lancaster.ac.uk

If you also require further time to complete the new course or level of studies, you would be required to make a visa extension application from outside the UK.

11.0 Leaving the UK and returning on your Tier 4 visa

- If a student has completed their course as expected they will receive a wrap up period of up to 4 months, which will have been included in the length of leave shown on their visa, depending on their course type and sponsor. During this wrap up period they are entitled to leave and return to the UK as often as required and this has been conveyed to Border Force officers. Though, where a Border Force officer is not satisfied that they intend to adhere to the terms of their visa (for example they may not be satisfied they intend to leave before the end of their wrap-up period) they can make a decision to refuse entry, as with any other visa category.

- If a student completes their studies early and as a result has their leave curtailed, they will usually be given the same wrap-up period of leave after the new course end date as they were originally given for their original course end date. For example, where the student received their initial confirmation of acceptance for studies for a course of 18 months, even if they complete in less than 12 months, they will still receive a 4 month wrap-up period. In all other circumstances if the course finishes early and the student has not successfully completed their studies, the student’s permission to stay will be limited to 60 days, unless they have fewer than 60 days leave remaining.
• At the end of the curtailed period the student must either depart from the UK or apply for further leave to remain. Following the expiry of the curtailment period, if no application has been made their leave will lapse.

• Where a student has had their leave curtailed, including as a result of completing their studies early, they are then subject to the rules around curtailment. So despite a period of leave equivalent to the wrap-up period being awarded, if the student leaves the Common Travel Area (or is overseas at the time of curtailment), any remaining leave lapses. This means that if a student leaves the UK but wishes to return, for example to attend their graduation ceremony, they will be refused leave to enter unless they have sought an alternative means of entry (such as a visit or short-term study visa depending on their circumstances).

Disclaimer: Any information given is intended as a guide only and is not a substitute for appropriate legal advice. Whilst every effort is made to ensure that your visa application and documents meet the UKVI criteria for a valid application, by using our services you accept that your immigration status remains your responsibility and we cannot accept any liability should your visa be refused or rejected as invalid for any reason. By using our services, you give permission for Lancaster University to communicate with UKVI and related agencies regarding your immigration status record.