



Graduate Route Visa FAQs – February 2023

This four-page info sheet of FAQs is based on what we've learned so in relation to the immigration rules and LSE student queries.

What is the 'Graduate Route' visa?

The Graduate Route will allow students who have successfully completed a programme at degree level or above to apply for a two-year visa for undergraduate and Masters students, or three years for PhD students. Applicants will not require a job or sponsor to be able to apply for the visa.

What is the earliest date I can apply?

You should not apply until:

- your results have been officially published by the School (not just provided to you by your department)
- you have received an email from LSE confirming that your successful completion has been verified to the UKVI;
- you are confident you meet the other eligibility requirements.

My friend told me that if I apply before I have been verified by LSE, then the UKVI will check directly with LSE that I am eligible? Why are you saying I must wait for an email from LSE, therefore delaying my application?

LSE verifies directly with the UKVI that you are eligible to apply for the Graduate Route. This can only be done by a bulk upload on a UKVI system and will be done after the official results release date for your degree. This will be done prior to the expiry of visas but you will need to wait until it is confirmed that your information has been verified to the UKVI before you can apply. You cannot use a transcript or letter as evidence of your successful completion.

The UKVI have been very flexible and when someone has applied too early and have been checking with LSE. However, whilst they planned to remove this flexibility, we have still had cases checked. You should not rely on this check happening and apply at a point you are not eligible. LSE can only give an accurate representation of your status at the point the check happens.

We know that you want the visa as soon as possible and that some employers are reliant on you getting the visa to issue your contract. However, verification to the UKVI by LSE is part of the application process. In the same way that you shouldn't apply for a Student visa until you get your CAS, you shouldn't apply to the Graduate Route without being verified. You need LSE to do its part first.

How will I know if I have been verified to the UKVI?

You will be sent an email to your LSE email address confirming we have verified your successful completion, which provides you with your previous CAS number. You need this CAS number for your application.

Verification should take place within five working days of the official results release date for your programme.

I haven't received an email within five working days of results release. What should I do?

LSE runs a report which should pick up all those students who need to be verified to the UKVI. However, there may be some reasons why you have not been verified to the UKVI:

- If you have a tuition fee debt with the School which means your results are withheld, we will not verify you or inform you that you have been verified for the route without permission from Fees, Income and Credit Control. This is because by informing you we have verified you for the route, we are effectively informing you that you have been awarded your degree.
- You are not on a Student visa – for example you were issued with a CAS, but it was not used for an application.
- You have a misconduct case against you meaning that your results are not fully confirmed.
- There is an issue with your record that means the report did not pick up your details.

If you have not received the email within five working days, please contact SAEM for advice.

Is it possible to get my individual request for verification expedited?

Given verification is done by a bulk upload, individual cases are unlikely to be expedited as this would slow the process down. The only time that a case is likely to be expedited is when an LSE error has meant that a student doesn't have sufficient time on their visa and risks not being able to submit on time e.g., your CAS may have been incorrect, and your visa now expires earlier than it should.

What if my Student visa expires before I am verified?

You will only be able to apply for the Graduate Route in the UK and with a valid Student/ Tier 4 visa. If your visa expires before you are verified, you will not be eligible.

Will I be able to extend my Student/ Tier 4 visa if I have completed my studies just so I can be eligible?

You will only be able to extend your Student/ Tier 4 visa so long as you have genuine studies to complete. LSE would be unable to extend your visa solely for the purpose of you becoming eligible for the scheme.

I am a 12-month MSc student with deferred/re-sit assessments in the January RDAP period. Can I extend my visa so that I have valid leave when results are released?

We will be able to sponsor you for the January RDAP assessments, but you will need to apply for your new visa before the last day of the RDAP week. After this date you will not be eligible to apply for your visa because there is no further academic engagement required.

I took an interruption of studies and had a break in my visas. Will I still be eligible?

The Graduate Route [caseworker guidance](#) states that all periods of time spent on a Student visa should be taken into consideration when calculating the minimum period requirement. The UKVI use 'deferred' for an interruption of studies, so this may not relate to deferred assessments and is likely to be at caseworker discretion.

Are all degree programmes at LSE eligible for the route?

No, not all degrees at LSE are eligible for example the Diploma in Accounting and Finance and two-year MSc Economics students who exit with a Diploma rather than a MSc, General Course and any student on a double-degree where year two is overseas.

If I transfer programme, will I still be eligible for the Graduate Route?

Only transfers that can be completed within the length of the visa are eligible programmes for the Graduate Route e.g., a 9-month MSc to another 9-month MSc. If your new programme requires you to extend your visa to be able transfer, then you will not be eligible for the Graduate Route.

Please note this includes students who have added a year abroad that is not an integral and assessed part of your degree. This is because the Home Office consider the addition of a year abroad a new programme.

I have a visa for the MSc Global Media and Communications (LSE and USC). If I transfer to the MSc Media and Communications, will I be eligible for the Graduate Route?

If you applied for the MSc Global Media and Communications (LSE and USC), the visa you have is correct for the degree programme you applied to study. The sponsorship end date for the exchange with USC is earlier than other partner institutions because of the earlier start date at USC and eligibility for funding for those students who plan to go there.

If you transfer to the MSc Media and Communications, you will be unable to extend your visa. This is because the immigration rules only permit transfers when the new programme can be completed on the length of the current visa. The MSc Media and Communications ends in September. Therefore, your visa covers the full length of the programme, and you can transfer.

Your results will not be officially released until November and as verification for the route does not take place until after the official results release date for your degree (this is not the day you receive your final dissertation grade from your department), your visa will have expired before your successful completion has been verified. This means that you will not be eligible for the Graduate Route.

I am on a 12-month MSc, and I want to submit my dissertation in June to start a summer internship scheme. My employer has confirmed that they will need me to apply for the Graduate Route in the future. Will this be possible?

Early submission of your dissertation does not mean that you will receive your results in the summer. Your early completion would be reported to the UKVI, and your visa will be curtailed. Curtailed means shortened.

You would receive an additional four months at the end of your visa, but you would be unable to rely on your visa still being valid until January. There is a real risk that your visa could be curtailed before your results are released in November and you become eligible to apply for the Graduate Route.

Therefore, if your employer has confirmed that they will not sponsor you and you must apply for the Graduate Route, you will need to consider whether it is worth risking your visa being cancelled.

I am a PhD student. When will I be verified if there is no official results release date for my degree?

PhD students will be verified to the UKVI on a rolling basis depending on when your date of award is set by the PhD Academy. The PhD Academy will inform the Student Services Centre when you are due to be awarded and you will be verified individually to the UKVI. You will not be able to apply for the Graduate Route if you have already been granted the Tier 4/Student Doctorate Extension Scheme visa.

Please note that if you have completed your PhD early, LSE must first inform the UKVI of your early completion and then verify you for the Graduate Route.

Will I have to submit a new visa application for a Graduate Route visa?

Yes, you will have to submit a new visa application. You can only apply in the UK.

Dependents will only be able to apply if they are already in the UK with Student Dependant immigration permission and can make an application at the same time as you.

I keep hearing about a minimum period I need to be in the UK on a Student visa to be eligible for the Graduate Route. What does that mean?

The UKVI expect people to be in the UK studying for a minimum period on a Student visa to be eligible for the Graduate Route.

- 9/10-month MSc programmes – you will need be in the UK for the full length of your programme on a Student visa.
- 12-month MSc students, you will need to be in the UK on a Student visa for the full length of your programme.
- Programmes of more than 12 months – you must spend at least 12 months in the UK on a Student visa. As you need a valid Student visa to apply, this effectively means you will need to switch to a Student visa before the final year of your programme e.g., if you are currently on a dependant visa.

There are currently concessions in place due to COVID that state if you arrived in the UK by the 6 April 2022 (for programmes starting of 12 months or less) periods of online learning can be included. Therefore, if you arrived later than the official start date of your programme, you are still likely to be eligible.

Will I have to pay an application fee and the Immigration Health Surcharge again?

Applicants will need to pay the £715 application fee. You will also need to pay £624 IHS for each year of visa you receive. There are no exceptions if you don't plan to use the full time in the UK.

Will I be able to extend the visa after the 2/3-year period?

No, the visa will be granted for a non-extendable two-year period. You can only be granted a Graduate visa once.

Will I be able to switch to a Skilled Worker from the Graduate visa?

Yes, if students find a job for which they can be sponsored as a skilled worker, they will be able to switch from the Graduate visa to a Skilled Worker visa. The UKVI have confirmed that the time spent on a skilled worker visa can count towards settlement.

Can I have the Graduate Route visa more than once?

No, it is a one-time only opportunity. If you apply for the Graduate Route and it is successfully granted, but you choose to not use it for work, you will have lost your only opportunity to apply for the visa. There are no exceptions to this.

What's better the Start-up Route or the Graduate Route?

As you can be self-employed for two years both on the Start-up Route and the Graduate Route, there doesn't appear to be much difference. However, the Start-up Route requires you to be endorsed and monitored by LSE. If your business is failing, then your endorsement can be withdrawn. In contrast, you are not endorsed or monitored by LSE if you are on a Graduate Route visa so if things don't work out as planned your visa is not at risk.

[LSE Generate](#) are happy to support any of our international students exploring entrepreneurship whether it's on a Graduate Route visa or the Start-up Route. Get in touch with them to find out how they can help you set up a business in the UK.

Will I be able to work in any job on the Graduate Route?

Yes, students will be able to work or look for work with any employer. You can be self-employed, but you will not be able to be a professional sportsperson or Doctor/Dentist in training.

The Graduate Route brings with it new opportunities for students who want to work in sectors that wouldn't necessarily have sponsored international graduates in the past due to costs. However, it also gives you more flexibility to change roles as you are not reliant on sponsorship.

Can I use the Graduate Route for further studies?

The Graduate Route cannot be used to study a programme where a CAS could normally be issued. This includes part-time degrees as it is possible to receive a CAS for these programmes.

You cannot split your time on the visa for further studies. You will be granted a visa for two/three years and cannot request a shorter visa. If you are planning to undertake further studies, you must seek advice on your options. You may either lose on your chance to complete further studies or you may have to lose your opportunity to access the Graduate Route.

I am fully sponsored for my degree programme. Can I apply for the Graduate Route?

If you were fully sponsored for your degree programme in the last 12 months, you will need permission from your scholarship provider to be able to apply. You do not need permission if you are sponsored by LSE only.

When can I start working on the conditions of the Graduate Route?

You will not benefit from the conditions of the Graduate Route until the visa is granted. Until that point in time you must adhere to the conditions of your student visa.

Will I get a digital status or a BRP?

All applicants will be asked to use the UK Immigration ID Check App. However, we are aware that some students have been asked to attend an appointment to provide their biometrics in-person.

If you are a ['Visa National'](#) you should be issued with a Biometric Residence Permit.

Is there a rule stating how long I can be outside the UK on the Graduate Route?

There are no rules specifying how many days you can be outside the UK before your visa may be cancelled. However, the intention of the visa is for you to be in the UK for two-years at the end of your studies to work. If you use the Graduate Route for frequent travel but reside overseas or you do not use it for its intended purposes, this could be considered as a change of intention and the visa may be cancelled at the border.

We advise against applying for the Graduate Route if your sole purpose for using it is to maintain a residence permit for the UK even if you are not living here.

I'm unsure if I am going to apply. Will you verify my eligibility to the Home Office anyway?

Yes, we will still verify your eligibility to the Home Office. They have said institutions must verify all eligible students regardless of whether they wish to apply for the scheme or not.

Are there any other things you think I should know?

- The latest date to apply for the visa is midnight on the day your BRP expires. However, you should never plan to leave it this late in case there are technical issues on the day preventing you from applying
- You can travel on your Student visa before it expires but once you have applied for the Graduate Route you should not travel outside the Common Travel Area (UK and Republic of Ireland) or you will be considered as withdrawing your application for the Graduate Route.
- We know how important this route is to students and that many of you may have funded your studies based on the opportunity to work in the UK. However, you should ensure that job hunting and finding out your visa options does not affect your studies. After all you need to pass your degree to be eligible for the route.
- There is no 'PSW Visa'. This is old terminology for the visa route that was closed in 2012. When looking for information or asking for advice, you should ask about the Graduate Route.

- We urge caution when speaking to previous LSE students who applied for the Graduate Route in 2021. The concessions were very different and may no longer apply at the point you are eligible to apply. For example, some people may have benefitted from Exceptional Assurance, but this may be removed given it is linked directly to travel restrictions caused by COVID-19.

Where can I get advice on the Graduate Route at LSE?

As with all student immigration, the only staff legally trained to advise on immigration at LSE are SAET. We have already had to manage the expectations of students who have been misadvised by non-SAET staff. Other staff members may wish to be helpful, but you are choosing to put your opportunity to apply for the visa at risk and SAET may not be able to assist if there are any problems.

You can contact SAET through the following methods:

- [SAET Enquiry Form](#)
- Drop-in Sessions: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 1:00pm to 2:00pm in the Student Services Centre
- Live Chat: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:00pm to 4:00pm

Do you have a guide to the form and can you check my application?

As with all other non-LSE work visas we do not have a guide to the form and will be unable to provide checks of applications. We can provide some advice, such as this infosheet, but the team is unable to provide detailed advice for those applying for the route. Our priority is those students still enrolled at LSE. You will therefore need to read the advice that is available from LSE and other external organisations.

Where can I get advice outside LSE?

UKVI: [Graduate Route information and application form](#)

UKCISA: [Working after your studies](#)

UKCISA: Graduate Route Presentation - [UKCISAFest](#)