THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

Student Advice and Engagement Team / Student Services Centre

Travelling during and after your studies –February 2024

This guidance is based on frequently asked questions and the recent experiences of LSE students. It is not a definitive guide but is intended to make you think before you travel overseas about the difficulties that you may encounter, particularly if you choose to travel after your course has ended.

Travelling during your studies

What do I do if I need to travel overseas?

If your Student visa is still valid, you can travel into and out of the UK as often as you like while you are on your course, if it does not affect your studies.

When you ask to re-enter the UK, a Border Force Officer (BFO) may check that you are currently registered and studying at LSE. You should carry a recent certificate of enrolment in your hand luggage. You can download a certificate of registration from the Student Hub.

Do I need to inform LSE of my travel plans?

If you need to travel during term time and you will miss classes, you will need to inform your academic department. If you must leave the UK in an emergency, you should contact your department from overseas.

Unauthorised absences can affect your visa and potentially lead to issues at the border if you do not have permission to travel during term time. Speak to your department about your circumstances and ask if they can grant an approved absence. An approved absence can only be for a maximum of three weeks.

Will overseas travel affect my eligibility for the Graduate visa?

The Graduate visa eligibility states that students must be in the UK for the duration of their programme and the UKVI will ask for your travel history as part of your visa application.

Short-term travel should not negatively impact applications for a Graduate visa as long as LSE does not have to withdraw sponsorship of your visa.

How do I find out if I need a visa to travel?

Contact that country's embassy in the UK for information about immigration, whether you need a visa and how to apply. See UKCISA's information on Schengen visas if you do not have an EU/EEA passport and will be travelling in Europe.

Quick links

UKCISA Travel in Europe information

Foreign Embassies in the UK: contact details

US State Department guide for visitors

Schengen Visa for European travel

Certain nationalities need a Schengen visa to travel in Europe. The Schengen visa is a single visa for travel in countries in Europe which have signed up to the Schengen agreement. The UK and Ireland are not in the Schengen zone.

What countries are in the Schengen space?

Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland.

There are different types of Schengen visa! Which one will I need?

Most students travelling within the Schengen space as tourists or to attend conferences need a short stay / travel visa for a visit of up to three months within any six-month period in all Schengen countries.
The other types of Schengen visas are the Airport Transit and Transit (through country) visas.

Where and how do I apply?

For a trip to several different countries, apply through the embassy/ consulate of the country where you will spend the most time. If you are staying an equal amount of time in each country, apply for a Schengen visa at the embassy of the first country that you plan to visit. Different countries have different rules for applying so to find out if you need a Schengen visa and how to apply by looking on the embassy website of the country where you plan to travel.

What documents will I need to provide?

Most countries ask for:

- Passport & UK visa
- Application fee (normally 60 EUR)
- Evidence of travel plans & accommodation
- Travel / medical insurance
- Evidence of your studies in the UK (visa & certificate of registration).

You should check the exact requirements with the embassy of the country you are applying to, as the requirements can vary slightly by country.

How do I get a certificate of enrolment?
You can print your own Certificate of Enrolment. Some countries ask for specific information on the letter so check this on the embassy web pages before requesting a letter containing this information.

I need a letter of 'no objection' for my Schengen visa application. Can LSE provide me with one?

A Certificate of Enrolment should work for these purposes for non-term time travel. If you are travelling during term-time you should be obtaining permission from your department, which you can use as evidence with your application.

In addition to a recent certificate of enrolment, do I need to carry other documentation when I return to the UK?
Your BRP is your visa so you must carry it with your passport. It is also a good idea to carry current evidence of funding for your studies. This could include recent bank statements or receipts for tuition or rent payments. If you are travelling during term-time it is also a good idea to carry evidence of the reason for travel (eg: for field work, research, important family life events)

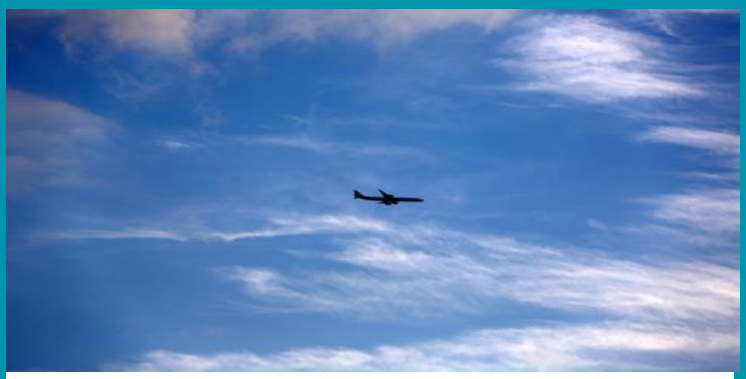
I have a valid visa / BRP. Why do I need to show additional documentation?
You should carry proof that you are an enrolled student to demonstrate that you are using the visa for its intended purpose. It is a condition of your Student visa that you have funding to maintain yourself in the UK during your studies, therefore Border Force Officers may ask to see evidence of funding any time you enter the UK on your Student visa.

Travelling after your studies

Can I return to the UK on my Student visa after my programme has ended?

If you completed your course as expected (i.e., do not complete early):
UKVI has confirmed that travelling in and out of the UK is permitted while you have a valid Student/ Tier 4 visa in place even after your course has ended. You should be prepared to be questioned at the UK border about your intentions. Border Force Officers retain the right to cancel your visa or refuse you entry if they do not believe that you intend to leave the UK before your visa expiry date.

If you completed your course early:
UKVI has confirmed that you will still receive the original, additional 'wrap up' time on your visa as if you had completed as expected. However, please be aware that as you have been reported to UKVI due to your early completion, you will be subject to the rules of curtailment. This means that should you leave the UK before your visa expires, your Student visa will lapse, and you will not be able to re-enter the UK on your Student/Tier 4 visa.
If you are a 'non-visa national' you may be granted entry as a Standard Visitor. Standard Visitors cannot work and cannot switch to any other status in the UK. You would not be able to apply for a Student visa extension or switch to Skilled Worker / Graduate Route visa, so please be very careful when considering early completion.



What if I just want to come back for graduation?
You can travel in and out of the UK at any time whilst your visa is valid. UKVI has confirmed that this includes the additional 'wrap up' period after you have completed your course, providing that you have completed the course as expected (i.e., not having completed your course early). If you are travelling to the UK just to attend your graduation ceremony, we suggest that you carry a graduation letter to show at the border if asked. You can request a visa letter for graduation here.

Please note that if you have completed your course early and been reported to UKVI, your Student visa will lapse upon leaving the UK and you will not be able to re-enter for graduation. If you are a non-visa national, you may be allowed to enter as a standard visitor although this is not guaranteed. If you are a visa national and wish to re-enter the UK after completing your course early, you will have to apply for new immigration permission to return (normally as a Standard visitor).

What if I want to return to the UK on my Student visa after the graduation ceremony has taken place?
The Home Office has confirmed that travelling in and out of the UK is allowed while you have a valid Student visa in place if you have completed your course as expected. You should however be prepared to be questioned at the UK border about your intentions and should answer any questions politely and honestly.
Border Force Officers retain the right to cancel leave or refuse you entry if they do not believe that you intend to leave the UK before your visa expiry date.

Can I return to the UK on my Student visa if I have been reported to the UKVI?
If the Student Advice and Engagement Team have reported to UKVI that LSE is no longer sponsoring you under the under the Student visa rules you should not plan to attempt to re-enter the UK on your Student visa. A Border Force Officer will be able to see the report that the LSE is no longer sponsoring your Student visa and will be aware that you have no studies at the LSE at the time.

For further advice on the immigration rules contact SAET online