

How to make a successful visa application

If you are coming to the UK to study a course of more than six months, or a pre-session course, you will normally need to apply for a Tier 4 (General) visa. You must apply for this in your home country before travelling to the UK up to three months before the start of your course.

It is important that you understand the immigration requirements for students planning to study in the UK. Please read the <http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Visas-and-Immigration/Student-immigration-the-basics> guidance produced by UKCISA: the UK Council for International Student Affairs. This website contains very useful information for all new students traveling to the UK. Read as much of it as you can! You are also advised to read the information on the [UKVI website](#), with particular reference to the Tier 4 Policy Guidance which is contained in a link on the right hand side of the page.

One of the two main reasons for Tier 4 visa refusals is lack of proof that you meet the financial maintenance requirements; the second is failing the credibility interview which is covered in the next section.

Financial maintenance requirements:

www.ukcisa.org.uk has some very useful guidance on ensuring you meet Financial Maintenance requirements, in particular [Calculating Living Costs](#) and [Tier 4 Financial Requirements, and evidence required](#).

We have given you some summarised guidance below but **it is your responsibility to check up-to-date information**.

When preparing your financial documents:

- Make sure that you are holding the correct amount of money necessary for the required period. You must also show that you have either paid your tuition fee or have the full amount in your bank account.
- The funds must have been available to you for 28 days prior to your visa application
- The financial documents you are using should meet the UKVI's requirements – see webpage above. All documents used must be original and must not be more than one month old.
- Your financial documents must be from a reputable financial institution and not on the UK Visas and Immigration [lists of those that are unacceptable](#).
- If your financial documents are not in your name, they must not be from any family member except for your parents or legal guardian. Using documents from an uncle, brother, sister or close family friend will be refused as these are not eligible.

- If you are using your parents', or legal guardian's, bank statements, you must provide your birth certificate (or other official document confirming your relationship) and a letter from your parents, or legal guardian, confirming they are supporting you.
- If you are being supported by a company or organisation, they must have an international presence. This means an office or branch in another country other than your home country.
- Any educational, or other, loans should be in your name, or the name of your parents.
- If the money you have is in a currency other than Sterling/British Pounds/GBP you should check the current exchange rate and provide a currency conversion from [OANDA](#) with your bank statements. If the money converted to GBP does not meet the required amount you will be refused.

Credibility Interviews

There are two types of credibility interview. The first type will take place at the same time as your biometrics are taken at the Embassy or designated agency. This initial interview should only take five minutes and will be via video link with the Home Office in the UK. The interview is designed so that the UKVI can decide if you are a 'genuine' student or not.

The Home Office will record the interview and send a summary to the Entry Clearance Officer who will decide if a second, more detailed, interview is needed.

The focus of this interview will be your reasons for choosing the UK, Northumbria University and your particular programme of study. You may also be asked questions on the content of your course and how it fits into your career aspirations. It may be helpful for you to reflect on the thought process which led you to choose Northumbria so that you can easily recall this, if asked, in a credibility interview.

It is essential that you are well-prepared as questions can cover a wide variety of subjects and you may be asked something you were not expecting to be asked – on the structure of your chosen course or the type of jobs you will apply for once your study is finished. In order to help you prepare, we have outlined seven common themes of questions that are likely to be asked in an interview. This is not an exhaustive list and so should be used as a guideline only and to ensure that you are confident in answering certain questions before you attend the interview.

The points below have been written to help you prepare for a credibility interview but they will also be useful if you are still to make a firm decision on what and where to study.

Typical Questions may include:

1. Why have you chosen to study in the UK?

Answer preparation: Think about why you chose the UK rather than your home country, other English-speaking country or country which other students of your nationality choose to study in. This is especially important if the same course is available in your home country; what advantage do you feel studying overseas, in particular in England, would give you over a degree from your home country?

2. Why did you choose Northumbria University?

Answer preparation: Think about why you chose the UK rather than your home country, other English-speaking country or country which other students of your nationality choose to study in. You should study the Northumbria University website which contains information on the university and the city of Newcastle and its region. Many other UK universities will offer courses similar to the one you have chosen at Northumbria University. Why choose us over those others? Is our reputation for your particular chosen subject better? Or, is this course only available at Northumbria? Why us?

Answer honestly and say why you chose Northumbria University above others. It is not a trick question and there is no right answer but the interviewer wants to hear evidence that you have thought about your choice and you know why you made it. You may want to mention that the city of Newcastle was a deciding factor, for example, and if you do you will be expected to display a level of knowledge about the city; for example its location, geography, the relatively low cost of living compared to other UK cities and any other information which influenced your decision to study in Newcastle.

3. Why did you choose your programme?

Answer preparation: There will probably be many programmes in the same subject area as the one you plan to study at Northumbria. The interviewer wants to hear why you chose this course above all others. You should re-familiarise yourself with your course description so that you know all of the important details. Questions will probably include the name and content of modules, course structure (i.e. when modules are studied, how many credits each module is worth etc.), subject areas, the total number of credits, academic calendar, likely career opportunities and progression. This is not an exhaustive list and you should ensure you know as much as you can.

If you have family living or studying in the UK, you may be asked if this has influenced your choice of destination. It might be helpful to explain that, whereas their presence would offer you support, if needed, it was not the primary factor in your decision of where to study. This was your chosen course, the reputation of Northumbria University and future career prospects.

4. How do your studies fit into your career plans?

Answer preparation: Think about what your plans are after you graduate - how will the knowledge and skills you gain from your programme of study help you with the type of work you hope to do? Does your course lead to any professional qualifications and are these recognised in your country? What are the prospects of finding a job in your home country following your proposed study? Do you know what others graduating from the course you will be following went on to do? If the course you plan to study is at a similar academic level to previous studies you have undertaken, be prepared to explain how it represents progression and whether it has a vocational focus?

5. What is the average salary for graduates of this course?

If you have already worked in your home country, will studying this subject lead to a rise in any salary you may have earned beforehand? If it will be your first job, what will you realistically expect to earn once you start work?

6. *If the costs of pursuing your course of study are higher in the UK than in your home country, why have you decided to incur the extra costs involved with studying in the UK?*

Answer preparation: Think about the advantages that a degree from the UK might give you and why you and/or your family are prepared to make this investment. Have you made a realistic assessment of all the costs involved and how you plan to pay for them? Remember that these costs include accommodation and costs of living.

7. *You have previously studied in the UK - why have you chosen to return?*

Answer preparation: Think about how the new programme relates to previous studies and how it might build on your previous learning.

8. *You have had a long break in your studies, why are you returning to study now?*

Answer preparation: Think about how you explain your decision in the context of your long-term career plans. What did you do during your break in studies? Do you have a job now? Does this new course complement previous studies or will it enable you to do your current job better?

9. *Do you plan to work whilst you study in the UK?*

Answer preparation: You cannot rely on funds from working to pay your course fees and living costs so you need to be aware of this. The main purpose for being in the UK is your studies so, if you do hope to work, think about how this would enhance your academic studies. You also need to demonstrate an understanding of the hours you are allowed to work (maximum of 20 hours per week) and typical rates of pay.

10. *How will you fund your studies? (This is normally asked only at a second interview)*

Answer preparation: The purpose of this question is to check that your funds are genuinely available to you for your studies. As part of your application you will have submitted proof of your finances - ensure that you are very clear about the source and availability of these funds, also how you plan to pay for subsequent years' fees if your programme is more than a year in duration. If you have official financial sponsorship make sure you are aware of the amounts and exactly what is covered. If you have a loan, how will you afford to pay this back? How much will your accommodation cost and are you clear about the cost of living in the UK?

11. *What do you know about Newcastle and the north of England?*

Answer preparation: Northumbria University is in the north of England, nearer to the Scottish border than to London. What do you know about it? Was our location an important factor in your decision? What do you know about the region and city?

The interviewer will also be checking your ability to converse well in English, if there is any issue with hearing them clearly e.g. via the video link, you should ensure that you raise this so that they are aware that it is a technical issue not one of comprehension.

Universities UK (UUK) have produced videos outlining the visa process. These share the experience of Indian and Chinese students but will have relevance to any student making a Tier 4 application overseas. The videos can be watched below or on [YouTube](#) and [Youku](#).

Disclaimer: *The information provided on this page is given in good faith and has been carefully checked with [The UK Council for International Student Affairs](#) and [UK Visas and Immigration](#). Please note that the University accepts no legal responsibility for its accuracy. Immigration law is subject to regular change and it is important that you ensure you have the most up to date information by checking the websites listed above before you apply for your visa.*