

Home Office credibility interviews for Tier 4 visa applicants

- 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 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. 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 Home Office expects most applicants to be able to prove they are genuine at the first stage and that this will in fact speed up the decision process because fewer documentation checks will be required.

Typical questions may include:

Q: *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.

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.

Q: *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.) 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.

Q: *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? 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?

Q: *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.

Q: *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.

Q: *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?

Q: *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.

Q: *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?

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.