

# The UK's points-based immigration system

## Information for EU, EEA and Swiss business travellers



# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
Irish citizens	3
Travelling to the UK via Ireland	3
<b>General business activities that are permitted under visitor immigration rules (without a visa)</b>	<b>4</b>
General business activities	4
Intra-corporate activities	4
Manufacture and supply of goods to the UK	5
Work-related training	5
Legal activities	6
Creative activities	6
Sports activities	8
Volunteering	9
<b>Business activities that require a visa</b>	<b>10</b>
Temporary Worker	10
Internships and work experience	11
Longer-term work visas	11
Intra-company visa	11
Other work visa routes	11
<b>Check before you travel</b>	<b>12</b>
Entering the UK	12
Use of ID cards	12
How to apply for a visa	13



# Introduction

If you're an EU, EEA or Swiss citizen travelling to the UK for a short business trip, you may not need to apply for a visa.

Under the **UK's points-based immigration system**, you can continue to visit the UK without applying for a visa. In most cases you can stay for up to six months. You may participate in a wide range of activities including business-related activities such as meetings, events and conferences. You may enter the UK multiple times during that period but you may not live in the UK by means of frequent or successive visits.

As a business visitor, you cannot:

- do paid or unpaid work for a UK company or as a self-employed person
- do a work placement or internship
- sell directly to the public or provide goods and services.

This guide outlines what you can do without a visa and what you cannot.

Before you travel to the UK, you should **check whether you need to apply for a visa** to carry out your intended activities.



## Irish citizens

Irish citizens' status continues to be protected as part of **Common Travel Area arrangements**. Therefore, Irish citizens do not require permission to come to the UK (except in a very limited number of circumstances), and as a result, are not eligible to apply under the new points-based immigration system.

## Travelling to the UK via Ireland

As an EU, EEA and Swiss citizen who is not Irish, if you enter the UK from Ireland there are different immigration restrictions for visiting the UK. You are only able to visit the UK for up to six months on your first visit. If you return to Ireland and from there wish to visit the UK again, you will only be able to stay in the UK for up to two months, unless you are coming as an **S2 Healthcare Visitor**, in which case you may stay for a further six months. However, if you leave the **Common Travel Area**, you will still be able to visit the UK for up to six months on your next visit including if it's via Ireland.

If you are coming for a Permitted Paid Engagement activity, you will only be allowed to stay for one month on your first visit, and for up to seven days on any subsequent visit until you leave the Common Travel Area again.

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# General business activities that are permitted under visitor immigration rules (without a visa)

This list is not exhaustive. The **full list of permitted activities** is available at [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). You should always **check if you need a visa** to carry out your intended activities, before you travel to the UK.



## General business activities

A visitor may:

- attend meetings, conferences, seminars and interviews. If you are coming to the UK for interviews or meetings to discuss job offers, you must then leave the UK to apply for entry under the relevant work route if you are successful
- give a one-off or short series of talks and speeches provided these are not organised as commercial events and will not make a profit for the organiser
- negotiate and sign deals and contracts
- attend trade fairs, for promotional work only and provided the visitor is not directly selling
- carry out site visits and inspections
- gather information for their employment overseas
- be briefed on the requirements of a UK based customer, provided any work for the customer is done outside of the UK.



## Intra-corporate activities

An employee of an organisation based outside of the UK may: advise and consult; trouble-shoot; provide training; and share skills and knowledge on a specific internal project with UK employees of the same corporate group, provided no work is carried out directly with clients. An internal auditor may carry out regulatory or financial audits at a UK branch of the same group of companies as the visitor's employer overseas.

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## Manufacture and supply of goods to the UK

Where an overseas company has a contract of purchase, supply or lease with a UK company or organisation which specifies aftersales services, an employee of the overseas company may install, dismantle, repair, service or advise on the equipment, computer software or hardware it was contracted to provide.



## Work-related training

Overseas graduates from medical, dental or nursing schools may:

- undertake clinical attachments or dental observer posts provided these are unpaid and involve no treatment of patients, where additional requirements are also met
- take certain tests/examinations in the UK (see [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)).

Employees of an overseas company or organisation may receive training from a UK based company or organisation in work practices and techniques, which are required for the visitor's employment overseas and are not available in their home country.

An employee of an overseas based training company may deliver a short series of training to employees of a UK based company, where the trainer is employed by an overseas business contracted to deliver global training to the international corporate group to which the UK based company belongs.





## Legal activities

An expert witness may visit the UK to give evidence in a UK court; other witnesses may attend a court hearing in the UK if summoned in person by a UK court.

An overseas lawyer may advise a UK based client on specific international litigation and/or an international transaction.



## Creative activities

An artist, entertainer, or musician may:

- give performances as an individual or as part of a group, provided they are not being paid by a UK-based organisation
- take part in competitions or auditions
- make personal appearances and take part in promotional activities
- take part in one or more cultural events or festivals on the list of **permit free festivals**.

Personal or technical staff or members of the production team of an artist, entertainer or musician may support these activities provided they are attending the same event as the artist, entertainer or musician, and are employed to work for them outside of the UK. They can also support an artist, entertainer or musician who is undertaking a **paid engagement** in the UK.

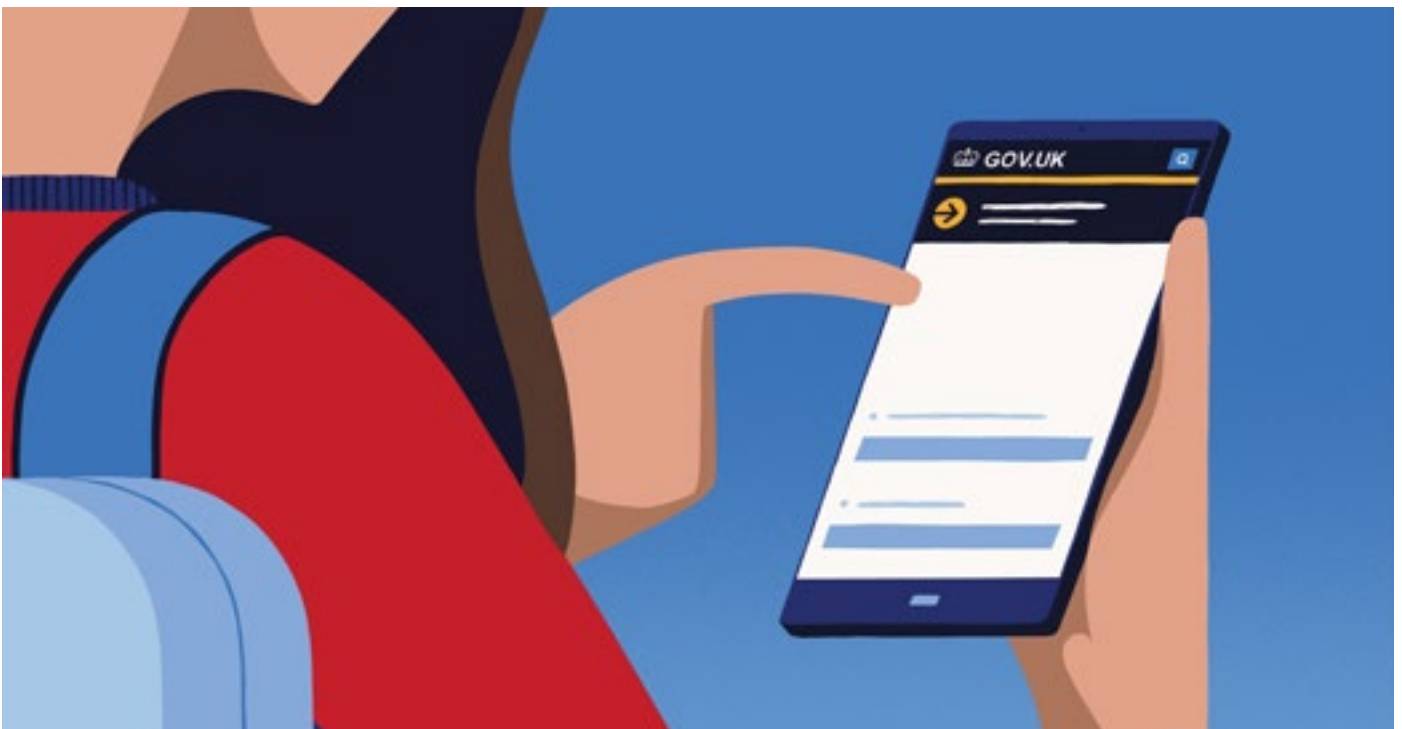
Film crew (actor, producer, director or technician) employed by an overseas company may visit the UK to take part in a location shoot for a film or programme or other media content that is produced and financed overseas.



## There are situations where you may need a visa

- If you intend to come to the UK to undertake paid work with a UK-based organisation as a creative worker for up to 12 months, you may need apply for a **Temporary Worker – Creative and Sporting Worker visa (T5)**.
- If you intend to work in the UK for 3 months or less, you may be able to use the **Temporary Worker – Creative and Sporting visa (T5) concession** instead of applying for the visa, provided you have a Certificate of Sponsorship.

You may be able to **come to the UK for a paid engagement** without a visa if you've been invited by a creative organisation, agent or broadcaster based in the UK. **Check if you need a visa** before you travel.





## Sports activities

A sports person may:

- take part in a sports tournament or sports event as an individual or part of a team
- make personal appearances and take part in promotional activities
- take part in trials provided they are not in front of a paying audience
- take part in short periods of training provided they are not being paid by a UK sporting body
- join an amateur team or club to gain experience in a particular sport if they are an amateur in that sport.

Personal or technical staff of the sports person, or sports officials, may support these activities if they are attending the same event as the sports person, and personal or technical staff of the sports person must be employed to work for the sports person outside the UK. They can also support a sports person who is undertaking a **paid engagement** in the UK.

### There are situations where you may need a visa

- If you've been offered work in the UK as a sports person, or you're an elite sportsperson or qualified coach, who's recognised by your sport's governing body as being at the highest level of your profession internationally, you will need to travel and work in the UK under one of the Sporting routes: **Temporary Worker – Creative and Sporting visa (T5)** or **Sportspersons visa (T2)**.
- If you intend to work in the UK for 3 months or less, you may be able to use the **Temporary Worker – Creative and Sporting visa (T5) concession** instead of applying for the visa.

You may be able to **come to the UK for a paid engagement** without a visa if you've been invited by a sports organisation, agent or broadcaster based in the UK. **Check if you need a visa before you travel.**





## Scenario 1

An orchestra is coming to the UK to perform, for which they will be paid by a UK company who is hosting the event.

If they only intend to stay for one month, they can come under the permitted paid engagement route and do not need to apply for a visa in advance.

If they intend to stay for up to three months, they may be able to use the Temporary Worker – Creative and Sporting visa concession.

If they intend to stay longer, they will need to apply for a Temporary Worker visa, which will allow them to stay for up to 12 months.



## Volunteering

A visitor may undertake volunteering provided it lasts no more than 30 days in total and is for a charity that is registered with either the Charity Commission for England and Wales, the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, or the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator.

### There are situations where you may need a visa

If you are a voluntary worker, meaning you have a contract with your employer, you will need to apply for a **Temporary Worker – Charity Worker visa**. You must have a **certificate of sponsorship** from a licensed employer and the work you do in the UK must relate to the work of your sponsor organisation before you can apply to come to the UK to work.

**For further guidance about what you can do under visitor rules, please see the full list of permitted activities for visitors.**



## Business activities that require a visa

If you wish to undertake paid employment with an organisation or business in the UK, then you must apply for permission for the relevant route.

Visitors are not permitted to undertake the following activities:

- take up employment in the UK, including:
  - paid or unpaid work for an organisation or business in the UK
  - establishing or running a business as a self-employed person
  - doing a work placement or internship
  - sell directly to the public
  - provide goods and services
- live in the UK for long periods of time through frequent visits
- get public funds.



### Temporary Worker

You can apply for a **Temporary Worker - International Agreement Worker visa (T5)** if you'll be contracted to do work covered by international law or treaty while in the UK. For example, if you'll be:

- providing a service under contract as a contractual service supplier or independent professional
- working for a foreign government
- working as a private servant in a diplomatic household.

Other temporary worker visas are available for EU, EEA and Swiss citizens who want to come to the UK as a **Charity worker (volunteer)**, **Religious worker** or **Seasonal worker**.

## Scenario 2

A Spanish organisation has been contracted to provide a service for a client in the UK and wishes to send an employee to the UK to complete the work. The service being provided is covered by the contractual service supplier sectoral commitments in the **EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement**, so the client can sponsor the worker for a T5 (Temporary Worker) International Agreement Worker visa to enable them to come to the UK. The worker fulfilling the contract will need to meet all the eligibility requirements for the T5 (Temporary Worker) International Agreement Worker visa.

## Internships and work experience

Under the new points-based immigration system there is not a dedicated visa route for internships and work experience. Internships and work experience are not permitted under the visitor rules.

If you want to come to the UK for a short time for work experience or to do training, an Overseas Government Language Programme, research or a fellowship through an approved **government authorised exchange scheme**, you can apply for a **Temporary Worker – Government Authorised Exchange visa**.



## Longer-term work visas

### Intra-company visa

An Intra-company visa allows you to come to the UK if your employer wants to send you to do an eligible job at its UK branch. There are two types of Intra-company visas:

- Intra-company Transfer visa – apply for this visa if you're being transferred by your employer to a role in the UK. The maximum total stay allowed is five years in any six-year period if you're paid less than £73,900 a year, or nine years in any 10-year period if you're paid £73,900 a year or more
- Intra-company Graduate Trainee visa – this visa is for transfers to the UK as part of a graduate training programme for a managerial or specialist role. The maximum total stay allowed is 12 months.

**Find out more about how long you can stay and what you can and cannot do with an Intra-company visa.**

### Other work visa routes

Under the **UK's points-based immigration system**, there are a range of visa routes for longer term work in the UK for EU, EEA and Swiss citizens, including Skilled Worker visa, and those for specialist occupations including Ministers of Religion visa, Health and Care Worker visa and Sportsperson visa.

Investor, business development and talent visas are also available; including the Innovator visa, Start-up visa, Global Talent visa, Entrepreneur visa and Investor visa.

**Find out more about working in the UK and the routes available, including information on Frontier Workers.**

# Check before you travel



## Entering the UK

You must provide a valid passport or travel document. Your passport should be valid for the whole of your stay in the UK.

You may also be asked to prove that:

- you meet any eligibility requirements for the activities you want to do
- you've arranged accommodation for your stay
- you'll leave at the end of your visit
- you're able to support yourself and your dependents during your trip (or have funding from someone else to support you).

For more information on **entering the UK**, check **GOV.UK** before you travel.



## Use of ID cards

From 1 October 2021, you will not be able to use an ID card to enter the UK. You will need to provide a valid passport.

You can continue to use your national ID card to enter the UK until at least 31 December 2025 if you:

- have settled or pre-settled status under the **EU Settlement Scheme**
- applied to the **EU Settlement Scheme** by 30 June 2021 but have not received a decision yet
- have an **EU Settlement Scheme family permit**
- have a **frontier worker permit**
- are an **S2 Healthcare Visitor**
- are a Swiss national **Swiss Service Provider**.

Find out more about **travelling to the UK** on **GOV.UK**

## How to apply for a visa

If you're travelling to the UK to undertake activity requiring a visa, you should begin your application on GOV.UK. You will need to demonstrate that you meet the relevant criteria required for the visa you're applying for.

You will need to pay an application fee. The cost for each visa route varies and details can be found [here](#). If you are coming to the UK for more than six months, you may also have to pay the **Immigration Health Surcharge**, which will enable you to access the UK's National Health Service (NHS) in a similar way to permanent UK residents.

The **processing times for applications** vary depending on the visa you are applying for and the service available. You must apply and receive confirmation that you have been successful before you travel to the UK.

**More information on the points-based immigration system, including application guidance, is available on GOV.UK**

