

TIER 4 (GENERAL) VISA APPLICATIONS

As a non-EEA student you will need a visa to study at Writtle University College. The points based immigration system (PBS) was introduced in March 2009 and various changes have been announced since this date. The Tier 4 (General) category is for adult students who want to come to or remain in the UK for their post -16 education. These pages aim to identify some of the things you need to think about in preparation for making an application.

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Visa terminology

There are two different types of Tier 4 (General) application, depending on where you are applying:

Entry clearance: This means applying in your home country, also known as a visa application.

Leave to remain: This means applying in the UK, sometimes called a visa extension.

Basic application requirements

To successfully obtain a tier 4 visa, students must meet the full requirement of the Immigration Rules and also have 40 points in total as awarded below:

30 points will be issued for having a **CAS** which you get for studying a course at an acceptable level with an approved education provider (also known as a licensed sponsor) and for having satisfactory English language skills; **and**

10 points if you can show you have enough finances to cover your fees and monthly living expenses (known as **maintenance**).

Licensed sponsor

If you are able to meet all the requirements of your offer, Writtle University College will become your educational licensed sponsor while you are in the UK. Writtle University College is a Tier 4 Sponsor. Our visa license number is 4TJPFDP34. It is also important to note that Writtle University College is classified as a Higher Education Institution (HEI).

Your sponsor is responsible for you, and must tell the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) if you do not arrive for the start of your course, withdraw from your course, defer or suspend your studies, or if you do not attend classes.

Confirmation of acceptance for studies (CAS)

The CAS replaced the unconditional offer letter; this is now the only route to gaining a tier 4 student visa. It is a unique 14 digit alphanumeric reference number, not a paper document. Your CAS will not be issued until you have met all the conditions of your offer (if applicable) and we receive your deposit or government sponsorship letter.

Writtle University College will send you a 'CAS statement' by email if you are applying from outside the UK. **If you are applying from within the UK, once your CAS statement is ready for issue, you will be required to make an appointment with the International Student Adviser who will assist you with the online application process on the UKVI website.** The CAS statement itself is not required for your Tier 4 application, but it gives you a lot of information that you will need to use to complete the visa application form. You must check this carefully as any differences between the information we have given UKVI and what you provide on the application form could mean that your application is refused.

Visa fees

	Fee if applying by post in the UK	Fee if applying outside the UK for Entry clearance
Main Applicant	£457	£335
Dependent Applying at same time	£457	£335

Immigration Health Surcharge

In April 2015 the Government introduced a surcharge for people from outside the EEA to use the NHS services. Students applying for a course over 6 months in length from either inside or outside the UK are now required to pay a yearly amount of £150 before their visa can be granted. This is towards any healthcare costs they may incur whilst studying in the UK. You'll pay half of the yearly amount if your application includes part of a year that is less than 6 months. You'll pay for a whole year if your application includes part of a year that is more than 6 months. The link below gives an overview of the costs:

<https://www.gov.uk/healthcare-immigration-application/overview>

You must pay the healthcare surcharge for you and any dependents before you submit or send your visa or immigration application (or book an appointment at a premium service center). You'll be contacted by UK Visas and Immigration if you didn't pay the surcharge (or didn't pay enough) as part of your visa or immigration application.

How to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge

The link below takes you to the page where you can register, complete the questions and pay the surcharge. You will be given an HIS reference number which you will be required to fill in on your visa application form to prove that you have paid.

<https://www.gov.uk/healthcare-immigration-application/pay>

Applying within the UK

In order to apply for a new Tier 4 visa in the UK your new course of studies must start no more than 28 days after the end of your current leave, if the gap between the end of your current leave and the start of your new course (as stated on your CAS) is longer than 28 days then you must leave the UK and apply from your home country.

If you are applying for a visa extension you must apply before your current immigration permission ends. If you do not apply before then, you lose any rights of appeal against a refusal and you become an over-stayer, which is a criminal offence. If you become an over-stayer, any future immigration applications may be affected.

Online Application Process

All Tier 4 applicants now take place online by registering and completing the Tier 4 (General) student application form, payment is made on line and then the application is submitted and the applicant has 15 days in which to send their supporting documents. The Tier 4 (General) application form can be found by clicking <https://visas-immigration.service.gov.uk/product/tier-4-student> and clicking on the Apply Now button right at the bottom of the screen.

As part of your application under Tier 4 (General), you will be issued a **Biometric Identity Card**. Your fingerprints and facial image (known as 'biometric information') will be stored on this permit. UKVI will send you a biometric notification letter after they have received your application. You should then attend one of the post offices across the UK who will gather this information from you.

The Post Office has prepared a website page to help you locate your nearest participating branch. <http://www.postoffice.co.uk/branch-finder-search>

Academic Progression

Visa extensions will only be granted for students who can show academic progression. This means that each successive application should be for a course at an increasingly higher level e.g. a Bachelor's Degree to a Master's Degree or related to the previous course and genuinely supports your career aspirations. You must also have completed your current most recent course.

You may be asked to attend a credibility interview as part of the application process. Interviews are normally carried out by a secure telecommunications system (similar to skype), although sometimes they will consist of a face-to-face interview. In either case the interview will take place at one of twelve Home Office centers across the UK. During this interview a Home Office member of staff (either in person or by Skype) will assess whether you meet the English language requirements, and also if you are a 'genuine student.' If you are asked to attend such an interview you must do so (unless you have a good reason as to why you cannot), otherwise your application is likely to be refused.

Applying from outside the UK

If you successfully receive an offer to study at Writtle University College you must return the acceptance forms, providing evidence that you have met any conditions (if applicable) and pay your deposit. You can then be issued with a CAS.

The date you apply for entry clearance must be in good time before your travel to the UK but no more than three months before the start date of your course and no later than six months after your CAS is issued.

Applications for a Tier 4 entry clearance outside the UK can be made online, visit: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-uk-visa> to apply.

Information about the application process for UK visas in different countries and territories around the world can be found: <https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa>

From 30 July 2012, entry clearance officers can assess students in order to be satisfied that they are genuine students. You may be asked to attend interview or conduct a telephone interview before entry clearance is granted. Failure to attend without reasonable explanation will lead to refusal.

The Government is currently introducing Biometric Identity Cards for those who have made entry clearance applications in their home country. As part of your application in your home country you will be required to provide a UK address which will determine from which post office branch you will need to attend to collect your Biometric Identity. If your application for leave to remain in the UK as a Tier 4 general student is successful you will receive a decision letter that sets out the leave granted and explains a collection process and a short term visa sticker in your passport, this will have a validity of 30 days from the expected date of travel to enable you to travel to the UK and collect your BIC.

Documents required

In addition to the application form and payment of your fee you will also be expected to provide various documents:

- Evidence required to get your CAS (e.g. Academic transcripts and proof of English proficiency if required)
- Evidence of your Money [see section below]
- Passport and photograph

Documents must be original, on official stationery and issued by an authorised officer of the organisation. If one of your documents is not in English, you must provide the original and a fully certified translation by a professional translator or translation company.

Do not allow an agent or anyone else to send an application for you unless you have seen everything written on it and all documents that are enclosed. Inclusion of false statements or documents could lead to you being barred from coming to the UK for 10 years.

Tuberculosis Testing

In order to obtain a Tier 4 Visa you may need to have a Tuberculosis Test if you're coming to the UK for **more than 6 months** and are resident in any of the countries in this list. (See link below)

You must be tested at a clinic that has been approved by the Home Office. See the guidance linked from each country for a list of approved clinics.

<https://www.gov.uk/tb-test-visa>

English language proficiency

If you are applying to study a course at or above NQF 6 (degree level) you must be proficient in English to a minimum of CEFR B2. We will assess this using an IELTS test result from an approved English language test center. You should include your test certificate with your application.

Alternatively, successful completion of a Pre-sessional English Language could help you achieve the required level of English.

If you are applying to study a course at a lower level, we must use an IELTS test result from an approved English language test center to confirm your English language ability is CEFR B1 or above. You must include your test certificate with your application.

Please check our website for more information <http://www.writtle.ac.uk/English-Language-Requirements>

	IELTS [validity 2 years]
FE [CEFR B1] Evidence of SELT will be required for CAS	Overall score 5.5 Minimum 5.0 in all elements
FDA / Higher Certificates / Higher Diplomas [CEFR B1] Evidence of SELT will be required for CAS	Overall score 5.5 Minimum 5.0 in all elements
UG degree [CEFR B2] Evidence of SELT is not required for CAS	Overall score 6.0 Minimum 5.5 in all elements
PG [CEFR B2] Evidence of SELT is not required for CAS	Overall score 6.5 Minimum 5.5 in all elements

From April 2015 your IELTS test must be taken at a UK Government approved test center. A list of approved tests and providers can be found at the link below.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-applying-for-uk-visa-approved-english-language-tests>

Maintenance

Before you can apply for your visa, you will need to show that you have a fixed amount of money in a bank account in your name, this is known as maintenance. Students applying for visas to study at Writtle University College will need a lower amount of maintenance as the college is outside London.

Length of course	Maintenance (Finances) needed
If you are making an initial application from inside or Outside the UK for a course of longer than 9 months e.g. Undergraduate degree/ Postgraduate Masters	First Year of Course Fees plus £1,015 per month of the course up to a maximum of 9 months totaling £9,135.
If you are making an initial application from inside or Outside the UK for a course less than 9 months	Course Fees plus £1,015 for each month of the course

Your deposit monies and any other sum of money already paid towards tuition fees will be taken away from the total amount of money you will need to show. With regard to accommodation fees a maximum of £1,265 will be taken into consideration when calculating the amount of maintenance you are required to show. This applies even if you have paid more than £1,265 in advance for accommodation. These values will be clearly stated on your CAS and should be checked carefully.

You must be able to show using original bank statements that you have held the money in an account in your name for at least 28 days and the end of that 28 day period cannot be more than one month before the date of the application. **Please do not apply for your visa if you cannot meet this requirement – your application will be refused.**

Low risk nationals are not required to provide evidence of their funds. However, they still have to meet the immigration requirements relating to funds and be able to provide evidence if UKVI asks them for it. It is advisable to have the evidence available in case it is requested as failure to provide the evidence would result in delayed application process or a refusal. Please refer to 'Appendix A'.

More information on maintenance requirements can be found by clicking the link below and reading the section titled Money:

<http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Visas-and-Immigration/Tier-4-eligibility-and-requirements#RL>

If you are using overseas currency you are expected to write the balance in pounds sterling. Please use the official exchange rate on OANDA website, which can be found at www.oanda.com/convert/classic

It could be difficult for you to produce the evidence that you may need for future immigration applications if you do not use a UK bank account whilst you are in the UK. When you arrive you are advised to open a UK bank account in your own name rather than using a bank in your own country. Use the account regularly so that it shows money you are receiving as well as the money you are spending on your living costs.

<http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Living-in-the-UK/Opening-a-bank-account>

Dependants

Students can have a dependant with them in the UK if they fall into one of the following categories. They are:

- sponsored by a higher education institution on a course at NQF level 7 or above that lasts 1 year or more
- a new government-sponsored student on a course that lasts 6 months or longer
- a Doctorate Extension Scheme student

Application forms and guidance can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/tier-4-general-visa/family-members> Dependants also have to apply online using the online application process. Please refer to page 3 of this document 'Applying within the UK'

Please Note:

If you want to bring your dependants with you, you will need to show that you have a further £680 per month maintenance for each dependant that you bring with you for each month of your course up to a maximum of 9 months a total of £6120. However, if you have student-related immigration permission, which has not expired and

- you are applying for immigration permission to continue to study a course of which you have completed six months

OR

- you have completed a course of study in the UK that was six months or more in length, within your most recent period of immigration permission in this case the amount of money that each dependant has to show is reduced £920.

However, the Policy Guidance suggests will only be reduced in this way if:

- you the student are applying at the same time and in the same country as your dependant, or
- you are not applying at the same time as your dependant, but you did benefit from showing 'established presence' (and therefore only 2 months' funds) in your most recent immigration application.

You will need to complete a separate form online for each dependant and pay an additional fee. The dependant's application forms should be submitted at the same time as the main applicant.

From 9 July 2012, children applying as a dependant of a tier 4 student must have both parents lawfully residing in the UK. If this is not the case the main applicant must show 'serious and compelling' reasons why both parents are not in the UK. This is unless the tier 4 migrant is the sole surviving parent or has sole responsibility for the child's upbringing.

Length of stay

A Tier 4 (General) student is allowed to spend no more than **2** years in the UK studying below UK Bachelor's degree level. UKVI cannot approve new leave for a Tier 4 (General) student to study below UK Bachelor's degree level, if they have already been studying below UK Bachelor's degree level for two years.

In addition to the 3 years of permitted study below degree level for Tier 4 (General) students and any time spent in the Tier 4 (Child) category, the time that a Tier 4 student can spend studying at or above degree level will be limited to **5** years, except in very few circumstances, for example PhD students where the cap is at 8 years.

Calculation of time is based on what was previously granted by the way of leave and level of the course rather than periods of time that the course was actually studied.

<u>Length of main course of study</u>	<u>Length of stay allowed</u>
12 months or more	The full length of the course plus four months after the end of the course
At least six months but less than 12 months	The full length of the course plus two months after the end of the course

A Master's course starting in September and ending the following September would result in leave being given for 17 months. One month prior to course start date plus 12 months for the course plus 4 months at the end of the course.

When you are on your course

Protect your Immigration Status by following the guidance produced by UKCISA:

<http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Visas-and-Immigration/Protecting-your-Tier-4-status>

- Keep good attendance on your course and comply with the attendance monitoring scheme operated by Writtle University College. Unauthorised absences will be reported to UKVI.
- Report any change of address to the College immediately.
- Do not interrupt or defer your studies; change course, college or university without talking to the International Student Adviser about how this could affect your immigration status.
- Do not work more than the hours permitted by your visa.

Working during your studies

Most overseas students in the UK have immigration permission which allows them to work during their studies.

As a Tier 4 international student at Writtle University College you can work up to 20 hours a week in term-time if you are studying at degree level or 10 hours per week during term time if you are studying below degree level. You may work unrestricted during the holidays and once your studies have finished. You cannot do any work or work placement (even if it is unpaid) if you have 'no work' in your passport.

Under Tier 4 you can do a work placement that is more than the 10 or 20 hrs. per week as part of your course of study, provided that the work placement is an assessed part of your studies and is no more than 33% of the total length of your course or 50% if you are studying at degree level. The international admissions office must be made aware of your work placement details as soon as they are finalised.

Please keep in mind that any course related work you do that is not assessed (i.e. 'work experience') will come out of your weekly allowance whether it is paid or unpaid (voluntary). e.g. If you are a Level 3 or foundation degree student (who applied for their visa after 4 July 2011) you are entitled to work 10 hours per week during term time. If you do 8 hours work experience, whether it is paid or unpaid, you may only then work another 2 hours per week. If you have a weekly 15 hour assessed work placement this can be completed in addition to the standard 10 hours.

Importantly the hours you work should not be an average per week; you must ensure that you do not, at any point during term-time work more than the permitted hours. If you are found to be working more hours you will be in breach of your Tier 4 visa and your leave to stay in the UK could be stopped.

Getting a job while you study in the UK can improve your language skills and enhance your CV. Writtle University College careers service may be able to assist you so please do visit them on the top floor of the library.

For more information please read: <http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Working/Can-you-work>

Changing institutions

Think very carefully before choosing your course. If you apply for a course using a CAS provided by Writtle University College your visa will be issued to study at Writtle University College only. If you decide to move to another college or university after you arrive in the UK, you will have to return home to make a fresh Entry Clearance application under Tier 4 to study at another college or university. Depending on the sponsor status you may not be able to start study at the new college or university until the new visa has been issued and this can take several months at peak times.

If you are currently in the UK in any other immigration category, including student visitor, you must leave the UK and apply for a Tier4 (General) visa from your country of residence.

Can I apply/switch to the Tier 4 (General) student visa without leaving the UK?

You can switch into Tier 4 (General) student visa without leaving the UK if you were given permission to stay in one of the following categories.

- Tier 4 (General) Student,
- Tier 4 (Child) Student,
- Tier 1 (Post-study Work) Migrant,
- Tier 2 Migrant,
- Participant in the International Graduates Scheme (or its predecessor, the Science and Engineering Graduates Scheme),
- Participant in the Fresh Talent: Working in Scotland Scheme,
- Postgraduate Doctor or Dentist,
- Prospective Student,
- Student,
- Student Nurse,
- Student Re-sitting an Examination,
- Student Writing-Up a Thesis,
- Student Union Sabbatical Officer,
- Work Permit Holder.

Your documents

Your passport is a valuable document – keep it somewhere safe. Take photocopies of all the pages of all the passports you use when you come to (or stay) in the UK. The only pages you do not need to photocopy are the blank ones. Keep the photo copies up to date, each time more stamps are added.

If you are issued with a Biometric Residency Permit (UK identity card), take a photocopy of both sides. When a passport expires keep it (unless your country requires you to give it back). You may be asked for it in connection with a future immigration application.

If your passport has been marked with an instruction to register with the police, make sure that you do this, (Talk to the International Student Adviser, if you don't know what to do or where to go).

If your passport is stolen, report this to the police (and take a note of where you reported it, which police station you reported it to and any reference number they gave you). Keep hold of any letters or documents the police give to you.

Please ensure that you keep all the letters and any documents that you receive from the UK immigration authorities. You might need some of the details from them when you fill in an immigration application form in the future.

Further reading and information

Writtle University College website

<http://www.writtle.ac.uk/International-Student-Support>

UK Council for International Student Affairs:

<http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/>

GOV.UK:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/477366/T4_Migrant_Guidance_No_v_V1_0.pdf

For enquiries please contact us; international@writtle.ac.uk; Tel: +44 (0) 1245 424200 ext. 25655

Appendix A - 'Low risk' applicants

To be considered 'low risk', you must be sponsored by a Highly Trusted Sponsor, and you must be already in the UK or applying for a Tier 4 visa in your country of nationality.

Additionally, you must be a British national (overseas) or a national of one of the countries below:

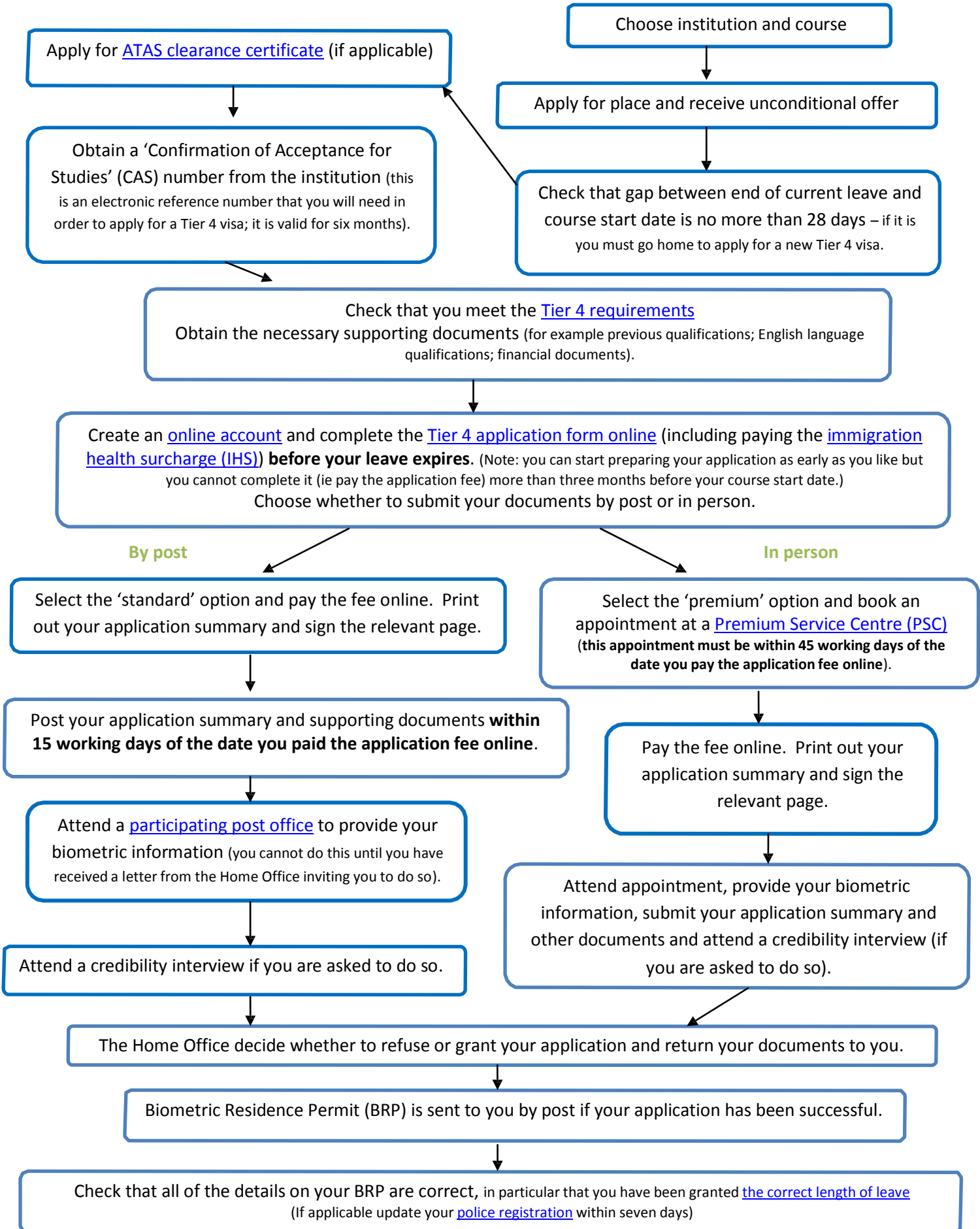
- Argentina
- Australia
- Barbados
- Botswana (from 01/10/12)
- Brunei
- Canada
- Chile
- Croatia
- Hong Kong
- Japan
- Malaysia (from 01/10/12)
- New Zealand
- Singapore
- South Korea
- Taiwan (if you hold a passport issued by Taiwan that includes the number of the identification card issued by the competent authority in Taiwan)
- Trinidad and Tobago
- US

We and UKVI will confirm your nationality using your passport. The list of 'low risk' nationalities is reviewed annually.

Applying for a Tier 4 visa in the UK using the online application

Continuing your course of study at the same institution

Beginning new course of study



**Applying for a Tier 4
visa from your home
country**

