



The following message was received for our website on 20th March 2015

Please see below for information regarding changes to the visitor routes and to visa fees.

CHANGES TO THE VISITOR ROUTES

The UK is welcoming record numbers of visitors coming to see our historic sites and sample our vibrant culture. In order to continue attracting the business and leisure travellers who will help the economy grow further, the Home Office is simplifying the immigration system for people visiting the UK.

The changes - taking effect on 24 April 2015 - will create an easier-to-use, streamlined system with more flexibility for those visiting the UK.

The main changes include consolidating the number of visitor routes from 15 to four, rebranding student visitor routes and providing shortened, user-friendly Immigration Rules and guidance to make the requirements easier to understand.

The Visas and Immigration pages on Gov.uk will be amended by 24 April - you may wish to update your communications materials in line with our revised guidance.

Overview of the changes

There will be four new visitor routes:

1. visitor (standard); this consolidates 11 existing visitor routes including business visitors and prospective entrepreneur visitors;
2. visitor (to hold their marriage or civil partnership in the UK);
3. visitor undertaking permitted paid engagements; and
4. visitor transiting the UK.

Entry requirements, including the visa application process are not being changed but the Immigration Rules and guidance are being simplified so people do not unwittingly fall foul of the rules.

In addition, new business activities will be added for visitors, which include:

- delivering global training to UK-based employees of an overseas business;
- UK-based organisations that are not corporate entities providing training in work practices and techniques to overseas visitors; and
- overseas lawyers advising UK-based clients.

Guidance will be added to Gov.uk providing full details of these additions and the restrictions that apply.

Why are these changes being made?

Reducing the number of visitor routes will remove complexity and give visitors greater flexibility over what they can do when they are in the UK. For example, people entering under the visitor (standard) route will be issued with a visit visa that allows them to come for a holiday, attend business meetings and undertake incidental study, instead of applying for separate visit visas. Visitors will also be able to carry out 30 days' unpaid volunteering at a UK-registered charity without having to be sponsored under the work routes.

The redesigned Immigration Rules and guidance for visitors are shorter, and written in plain English to help non-experts understand them. This will help people find what they are looking for more easily.

Applying for a visit visa

We will be changing the name of the visas to align with the new routes later this year. In the

meantime, business visitors should continue to apply for a visit visa through Gov.uk

as they do now (selecting business visit if that is their main reason for coming to the UK).

Visit visas issued prior to 24 April 2015

People who hold a valid visit visa that was issued prior to 24 April 2015 can use this to enter the UK provided they are still a genuine visitor.

They will be able to use this visa to carry out the additional permitted activities. For example, a person with a business visit visa can use this to enter the UK for a holiday or to receive private medical treatment.

Contacts

If you have any questions about the policy and new visit Rules, you can email the policy team at: visitorsimplification@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

VISA FEES

The Home Office was reviewing the fee charges for immigration and nationalist applications. The new legislations for changes to visa fees have now been laid in Parliament:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/id/uksi/2015/768>

The changes to the visa fees legislation will mean that customers will now benefit more quickly and efficiently from any new future services without the Home Office having to debate every visa charge on an individual basis. As a result it will ensure the Home Office can continually assess and review the services we currently offer, to ensure we are providing a visa and immigration service that meets customer expectations and continues to attract businesses, migrants and visitors which benefit the UK.

The new fees apply to all charged visa services currently offered to customers, including visas to visit, work and study in the UK, and optional premium services such as the Priority Visa service and the same-day Super Priority Visa service. Most fees will increase between four and eight per cent. The charges will also ensure those that benefit from these services, continue to contribute more to the cost of operating the immigration system, while UK taxpayers pay less. A copy of the new fees table is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visa-regulations-revised-table>

. If you have any further questions on the fee increases, or would like to discuss any particular areas of interest, please email Feesandincomeplanning.requests@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Home Office Communications