

INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS

2024

Your guide to getting started and protecting
your Student visa in the UK

Introduction and Contents

Welcome to UEA.

This document will provide you with information on how to get started with your time in the UK, what support there is for International students at UEA, and what you need to know to ensure you are protecting your Student permission.

You can find more information on the [Student Life International my.uea portal webpages](#).

Getting Started

[Healthcare](#) - Page 4

[Opening a UK Bank Account](#) - Page 7

[Settling In](#) - Page 8

International Students at UEA

[UEA Support for International Students](#) - Page 10

[Absences](#) - Page 12

[Changes to Study](#) - Page 13

You and Your Visa

[Protecting your Student Visa](#) - Page 16

[Working in the UK](#) - Page 19



Healthcare

Accessing Healthcare

If you are on a Student visa that lasts for more than 6 months...

...you would have likely paid the [Immigration Health Surcharge](#) (IHS). By paying this, you are able to use the [National Health Service](#) (NHS) as if you were a resident of the UK. There are some things you will still need to pay for which include services such as prescription medication, dental treatment and eye tests.

If you are studying for less than 6 months...

...you would likely not have paid the IHS and would not be eligible to use the NHS for free. You should ensure you have medical insurance to cover you for your time in the UK. If you did need medical care, you would most likely still use the NHS but this would not be free.

Registering with a General Practitioner (GP)

GP's are doctors that work in community practices. You should register with a GP as soon as possible after entering the UK. Registration is free and is a requirement of the [UEA General Regulations for Students](#).

GP's will most likely be your first point of contact for medical care. Most day-to-day illnesses can be treated and managed by GP's. They will refer you to specialists if they cannot provide the treatment needed.

There is a GP surgery on the UEA campus - the UEA Medical Centre (information below). If you live on campus, you should register with this surgery. If you live off campus but still in Norwich, you can still register with this surgery. Alternatively, you can [find a GP](#) closer to where you live and register with them instead. You will need to use this if you live outside Norwich as you will be unable to register with the UEA Medical Centre.

UEA Medical Centre

You can find information on how to register for the [UEA Medical Centre on their website](#). Staff at UEA Medical Centre specialise in student health. Female and male GPs are available, and you can request an appointment with a GP of a specific gender.

Levels of Treatment



Other Healthcare Services

Dentistry

We recommend that you register with a dentist whilst at UEA. Patients accessing dental services will still incur charges, whether or not they are registered with an NHS dentist. NHS charges are regulated and are lower than accessing dental treatment with a private dentist, but it can be hard to find an NHS dentist who is taking on new patients. You can register with the dental practice at UEA Medical Centre, if you wish. Alternatively, you can find other NHS dentists using [this link](#). You do not need to speak with a GP before going to see a dentist.

Opticians

Optical services are mainly provided by private companies - Specsavers, Boots, or Vision Express are some examples. Eye tests and glasses will need to be paid for - they are not available on the NHS.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

If you are experiencing difficulties with your wellbeing or mental health, you can seek free and confidential support from:

- Your GP
- [UEA Student Services - Wellbeing Team](#) - who have a range of online resources available as well as a team of advisers here to offer support.
- [Health Assured](#)* - a 24-hour helpline staffed by experienced advisers or fully qualified therapists. (*UEA Log in required)

If you are facing an emergency where you do not feel you can keep yourself safe, or someone else's life is at risk, you should call 999. Both mental and physical health emergencies can be handled this way.

Sexual Health

Sexual Health and family planning services are available at UEA Medical Centre and other services across Norwich. Services are free, confidential, and can be accessed for advice and information, as well as for treatment. You can access these services for:

- Contraception (birth control)
- Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)
- Sexual Health Screening
- Pregnancy testing and questions about pregnancy

[iCash](#) on Oak Street, Norwich, is an alternative NHS-funded clinic that also offers free contraceptive and sexual health services.

Opening a UK Bank Account

Banks have to perform checks on customers wanting to open a bank account with them, to check their identity and immigration status. They will usually ask to see:

- Your passport and/or visa
- Proof of your home country address
- Proof of your UK address
- Proof that you are a UEA student
 - You can download a letter from your e:Vision account. Once logged in, you can find this on the Finance tab, under the heading of 'Bank Letters'.

Which bank should I choose?

There are many banks in the UK, and an increasing number of online banks available, all of which offer different levels of service. We cannot advise on which bank or building society you should choose but you may find it helpful to search online for the best option.

[Save the Student](#) has some helpful guidance for international students. [USwitch](#) enables you to compare different options available.

Further Information

The [UK Council for International Student Affairs](#) (UKCISA) has some helpful information on their website. This includes types of account, changing your address or other personal details, and proving your identity and immigration status.

Finance Support

The Student Life Finance team are available to support all students at UEA with questions about their personal finances, including how to access various sources of financial support. You can find more information on the [my.uea.portal.pages](#).

Settling In

When you move to a different country, it can often take time getting used to a new way of life, new systems, new culture, and possibly a new language.

Our webpage on [Settling In](#) provides information on:

- Being a new student
- Exploring Norwich and beyond
- Life in residences
- Support for International Students
- Events, clubs and societies
- Travel and transport
- Shopping and food deliveries
- English language support

Culture Shock

Culture shock is when someone who moves to a new country, or experiences a new culture, and they get feelings of confusion, anxiety or of being unsettled. This can be common among international students arriving in the UK.

The [UK Council for International Student Affairs](#) has a useful webpage on what culture shock is and ways that you may be able to help overcome it.

Our Student Life advisers can provide you with advice, support and guidance, and can direct you to some resources and activities that might help you. They can be contacted by emailing student.life@uea.ac.uk.

Alternatively, you can find more information about support offered at UEA on [page 10](#).



International Students at UEA

UEA Support for International Students

Student Services provides advice, guidance and support for all students. They provide a wide range of support and aim to put you in touch with the relevant service that you need. You can find information on the [UEA portal](#).

Student Life

Student Life are a team of advisers who offer non-judgemental advice and practical support for many aspects of student life that might impact your experience at UEA.

Advice and Guidance

Our Student Life Advisors offer confidential advice appointments where students are free to discuss anything that is impacting on their ability to be successful and to enjoy their time at UEA. You can find out more on the [UEA Portal](#) and can contact them on student.life@uea.ac.uk.

Community

Student Life Community support students as they transition from campus accommodation to living in private rented accommodation, and manage complaints of disturbance or behaviour in off-campus student residences. You can find out more on the [UEA Portal](#) and can contact them on community@uea.ac.uk.

Finance

Student Life Finance provide specialist advice and support to students who have concerns about managing their finances during their time at UEA. You can find out more on the [UEA Portal](#) and can contact them on studentlife.finance@uea.ac.uk.

International

Student Life International provides immigration advice and support to students. They can provide visa application support for UK Student and Standard Visitor routes, as well as support students to understand and navigate the conditions of their immigration permission, helping them to protect their immigration statuses. You can find out more on the [UEA Portal](#) and can contact them on studentlife.international@uea.ac.uk.

Residential Life

The Residential Life team are a 24/7 team working to ensure your life in UEA residences is safe and enjoyable. If you are in UEA Residences, the Residential Life team can look into any issues you may have and provide in-person support outside normal business hours. You can find out more on the [UEA Portal](#) and can contact them on residentiallife.advisers@uea.ac.uk.

Wellbeing

[The Wellbeing Service](#) supports your wellbeing while you study at UEA. They provide support if you are experiencing difficulties with your wellbeing or mental health. They also assist students with disabilities and long-term health problems, as well as temporary disabilities that might affect your studies.

You can get in touch via the [online referral form](#).

Embedded Teams

In each faculty, wellbeing and student service advisers are embedded to provide direct support to students in their School of Study. They work closely with all other teams in Student Services to help you get the most out of your studies. You can [find out more on the portal](#).

Talking Therapies

UEA Talking Therapies offer One-at-a-Time (OAAT) Therapy. This means that you can access therapeutic support at the point of need rather than having to wait. OAAT Therapy addresses your most pressing concern in a contained and focussed approach. You can find more information and the referral form on the [UEA Portal](#).

Learning Enhancement

The Learning Enhancement Team (LET) work with students and apprentices from all levels of study and all subject backgrounds and have a range of self-help resource, helpdesks, study cafes, workshops and appointments to help students come up with strategies to make the most of their course. There is also an English Language Support Programme. You can find out more on [the portal](#).

Absences

Engaging fully with your studies is a condition of your Student visa permission. Failure to comply with this condition can lead to UEA withdrawing sponsorship of your visa.

You are expected to engage with all timetabled events, including lectures, seminars and lab sessions. You should attend any supervisor meetings, and complete all assessments and examinations.

Reporting an Absence

If you are unable to attend any timetabled events, you must report this via the Online Absence Reporting System (OARS) which can be found on e:Vision. If you know that you need to be absent in the future, this can also be logged via OARS. If you know you need to be absent in the future, you should discuss this with your adviser as you may be asked for evidence.

You can find more information about OARS, including how to use it, on the [UEA Portal](#).

Extended Absence

If your absence is likely going to impact your ability to complete your course on time, or there is something affecting your ability to study over an extended period, it may be necessary for you take an interruption to study. You should discuss this with your adviser, in the first instance.

UEA is generally unable to maintain sponsorship of your visa whilst you are taking an interruption. If you are not studying due to taking an interruption, UEA has a duty to report this to UKVI and withdraw sponsorship of your Student visa.

If you think you might need to take an interruption and would like to discuss the impact of this on your Student visa permission, please contact [Student Life International](#) for advice and support. There is further information on interruption of studies on the next page.

Changes to Study

There are several reasons why you may need or want to make changes to your studies. This could be because you want to make a change to your course, transfer to a different course, or you may need to take an interruption to your studies.

Course Changes and Transfers

Your Student visa is linked to your course. Changes to your course can include cases where you wish to switch into/out from a Year in Industry and into/out from an integrated Master's.

If you want to change your course you should talk to (in order):

- Your LTS Team
- Your Adviser
- Student Life International

Your LTS Team will give you a form to complete to request the transfer. You will need to write a personal statement to support your request, which your Adviser can assist with. You should contact the [Student Life International](#) team to ensure you are aware of any visa related implications that the course transfer may create.

If your course transfer is approved, UEA must notify UKVI that you have changed course. The Student Visa Compliance team will do this and will be in touch.

Interruption of Studies

An Interruption of Studies is an absence from the University for an agreed length of time. You might request this due to personal or medical reasons that mean continuing with your studies would be very difficult. During an Interruption you will not be considered a 'current' student and your access to UEA facilities may be limited.

If you need to take an Interruption, you will need to speak to your Academic Adviser and your LTS Team to discuss the implications of Interrupting on your course. Your Academic Adviser will be able to help you decide on how long you may need to interrupt for and when you can return. Depending on the course, you may not be able to return until the start of the next semester or academic year.

You can request an Interruption to Studies by completing the Extenuating Circumstances process on e:Vision. PGR students have separate forms which can be accessed [here](#). You will need sufficient evidence for the Interruption to be approved.

If approved, and you hold a Student visa, the Student Visa Compliance (SVC) team will inform UKVI that you are no longer a current UEA student. SVC will contact you to tell you that UEA has withdrawn sponsorship of your visa and you will be advised to make plans to leave the UK at your earliest opportunity.

When you are ready to come back to your studies, you will need to complete a Return to Study form. Once approved, if you require a new Student Visa you will need to request a new Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) statement. You will then be able to apply for a new Student visa.

You can find information on Interrupting your studies on the [Student Life International webpages](#). If you have any questions or need assistance with any part of the process, you can contact [Student Life International](#).



You and Your Visa

Protecting your Student Visa

As a Student visa holder, you must comply with UK Immigration Law and your Visa Conditions. UEA is the Sponsor of your Student visa and we are, therefore, required to report any breaches of these conditions to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI).

You must ensure you do the following:

- Attend all teaching events (lectures, seminars, labs etc)
- Report/request any absences on e:Vision (see [page 12](#))
- Attend all University visa checks
- Keep your personal details up to date with UEA (via e:Vision) and UKVI
- If you work, comply with the relevant [Student work conditions](#)
- Report and replace lost or stolen Biometric Residence Permit cards
- Leave the UK (or apply to extend/switch your immigration permission) before your current visa permission expires

Failure to comply with any of the above conditions could result in withdrawal of visa sponsorship, curtailment (cancellation) of your visa permission, and/or criminal prosecution. If you are ever in doubt, contact [Student Life International](#) who can provide support and guidance.

Biometric Residence Permit

If you have a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP), this is your physical visa document. It is very important that you keep your BRP safe. Replacing your BRP can be time consuming and costly. You should not try to leave and re-enter the UK without your BRP.

Errors on BRP

When you first receive your BRP, you must check it carefully for any errors. This includes that the expiry date is correct.

[Click here](#) to see what information you should check on your BRP.

If you believe you have found any errors, please contact [Student Life International](#) who will be able to advise on how to fix these.

Lost / Stolen BRP

Before reporting your BRP as lost or stolen, please allow 5 working days for it to be handed in. You should check with UEA Library, UEA Security Lodge, Norfolk Police, and places you have recently visited (such as cafés, event venues, and friends' accommodation). If you have recently used public transport services (bus, train, or taxi) you should contact them to see if your passport or visa has been found. If you cannot locate your lost or stolen document after 5 working days, please contact [Student Life International](#) for support.

Change of Personal Details

You must keep both the Home Office and UEA informed of any changes in your personal details.

Reporting changes to UEA

- New BRP or passport - you must supply the university with a copy of these documents. You can take a photograph or scan of them and attach them to an email containing your full name, student number and a brief description of the reason why you have received a new BRP or passport. You should email this to the Student Visa Compliance team who will update your record - student.visacompliance@uea.ac.uk.
- For most other personal details, you can update them via your e:Vision account. If you need assistance with using e:Vision, or are unsure on how to update details, you should contact the [Student Information Zone](#).

Reporting changes to UK Visas and Immigration

The process you follow will depend on what details need to be updated.

Complete a [Change of Circumstances](#) (MCC) form, or if you have digital status, you can [update your UKVI account](#) for the following:

- New passport
- New criminal convictions
- Your dependents' details have changed
- You have changed your contact details

If you have a BRP, you will need to [apply for a replacement](#) if any of the following change. For digital status, you can [update your account](#) by supplying the requested documents.

- Your name (for instance, if you got married)
- Your gender identity
- Your nationality
- Your appearance
- Your date of birth (for instance, if it was wrong)

Withdrawal of Sponsorship

As your Student visa sponsor, UEA is required to withdraw sponsorship of your visa in certain circumstances, including where:

- You fail to register at the beginning of your course
- You are required to withdraw from your course (for instance, due to academic failure, unsatisfactory attendance or disciplinary reasons)
- You have to defer studies for more than 60 days
- You decide to withdraw from your course
- You complete your course earlier than the end date on your CAS statement
- You interrupt your studies
- You move to a different immigration category

The Student Visa Compliance team will contact you to let you know that we have withdrawn the sponsorship and will provide you with advice. You will be advised to make plans to leave the UK as soon as possible.

If you have any questions about this, please contact [Student Life International](#) who can advise in the first instance.

Working in the UK on a Student visa

Most international students who hold a Student Visa will be allowed to work in the UK. It is important to check your visa for any work-related conditions. It is your responsibility, as the visa holder, to ensure you do not breach your visa conditions. Certain courses may also place restrictions on the amount of work you can undertake whilst studying.

As with any other condition of your visa, UEA has a responsibility to report any breaches that it becomes aware of to UKVI. Breaches of visa conditions can result in curtailment of your visa and/or the refusal of future applications.

Working and the Student visa

Restrictions on the work you can undertake - in relation to the amount and type of work - can be found on your BRP card or by using the [View and Prove service](#) if you have digital status.

The following conditions are typical for full-time UEA students, but yours may vary. Please contact [Student Life International](#) if you believe there might be an error with your permission or if you have any questions.

Typical conditions:

- You can work a maximum of 20 hours per week, during term-time. This cannot be averaged (e.g. 25 hours in week 1 and 15 hours in week 2) and is calculated from Monday to Sunday.
- You can work full time during your course vacations (usually Christmas, Easter, and Summer for undergraduate students) - your School can confirm these dates.
- You can work full time once you have completed your course, submitted all work, and the official end date has passed (as stated on e:Vision), up until your visa expires.
- You must not:
 - Be self-employed or work on a freelance basis
 - Fill a full time vacancy
 - Be employed as a professional sportsperson, coach, or entertainer

Postgraduate Taught students

Please check your course vacation dates with your School. Postgraduate courses often do not include a Summer vacation period so you may not be able to work full-time during this period.

Postgraduate Research students

The UEA Code of Practice for PGR students states that you "are not normally expected to do more than an average of 6 hours a week of paid employment, up to a maximum of 180 hours per academic year". Even though your visa may allow you to work up to 20 hours, as a PGR student, you should not be exceeding 6 hours a week.

PGR students can work full-time during Christmas and Easter Break closures. You can also work full-time after your final corrections to your thesis have been submitted and your degree is complete until your visa expires.

National Insurance Number (NINO)

If you are offered a job in the UK, your employer may ask you for your NINO. This unique number is allocated to you and helps to record the National Insurance contributions and taxes you pay.

If you have a BRP card, you might already have a NINO printed on the back. If you do not have one, you will need to apply for one if you plan to work. You can only [apply for a National Insurance Number online](#) once in the UK. You can also find the application helpline by following this link. You may be asked to supply supporting documents or attend an appointment.

PLEASE NOTE: if you are asked to provide your Passport and BRP card you may be without these documents for some time and you will not be able to travel outside the UK without them.

Volunteering and Voluntary Work

All Student visa holders can volunteer, but it is important to understand what is classed as volunteering and what is classed as voluntary work. This is because volunteering does not count towards your working hour restrictions. Voluntary work counts as a type of work and will count towards your 20-hours per week limit during term-time.

Volunteering

- You will not have an employment contract
- You will not take the place of a paid employee
- You must not receive payment or remuneration for your role. You can be reimbursed for reasonable travel and subsistence expenses.
- You will usually be helping a charity, voluntary, or public sector organisation

Voluntary work

- You might have a contract or agreement to provide services at regularly agreed times/days (this does not need to be in writing)
- Your employer must provide you with work
- You are usually compensated for your work (this could be with goods/services, not necessarily money, and is sometime referred to as 'payment in kind')

If you are unsure or have any questions, please contact [Student Life International](#).

Internships, Work Experience and Placements

If a placement or internship is an assessed and integral part of your course, this will have been listed on your CAS statement when you applied for your Student visa. An internship or placement that meets these requirements will not be subject to the work restrictions on your visa.

If you wish to arrange your own internship or work experience, this will be subject to the conditions of your visa, even if it is unpaid.

Finding Work

UEA has its own career service called CareerCentral. This is a dedicated careers service ready to help you explore your options, build your work experience portfolio and increase your confidence to succeed.

They have a hub in the library and a dedicated online portal, [MyCareersCentral](#). MyCareerCentral is where you will find everything you need to know about Careers. There are hundreds of resources, a specialist vacancy service, event listings, appointment bookings, CV builder and support for anything careers related.

If you have any questions relating to your career, or anything you find on MyCareerCentral, you can email the team at career.central@uea.ac.uk. You can also find further information on their [my.uea](#) webpages.

The [UK Council for International Student Affairs](#) (UKCISA) also has some information on their website that includes links to place where you may be able to find suitable jobs while you are in the UK.

Questions?

studentlife.international@uea.ac.uk

