

### **20 December 2018 - Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS) increase**

The IHS (also known as the NHS surcharge) increase will take effect on 8 January 2019, as follows:

- Students/Tier 5 (Youth Mobility Scheme) visa holders: increase from £150 per person per year of the visa to £300 per person per year of the visa
- All other visa and immigration applications: increase from £200 per person per year of the visa to £400 per person per year of the visa

This will be payable by all applicants coming to the UK or extending their leave to remain for more than six months and any dependants will normally pay the same amount. You'll pay half of the yearly amount if your application includes part of a year that is less than 6 months, and you'll pay for a whole year if your application includes part of a year that is more than 6 months.

### **19 December 2018 - UK immigration system from 1 January 2021**

The UK Government has issued a White Paper on the future of the immigration system in the UK. The new system will apply to all overseas nationals (including EU citizens except Ireland) entering the UK after 31 December 2020, and will be introduced in a phased process before the the end of this implementation period.

Proposed changes include expansion of the Tier 5 (Youth Mobility Scheme) visa route, removal of the cap on the number of overseas nationals coming to the UK for work, removal of the requirement to meet the Resident Labour Market Test for Tier 2 (General), lowering of the role skill level for sponsorship from RQF6 (PhD/Masters/Degree) to RQF3 (A Level) and the ability of nationals of some "low risk" countries to apply for work visas within the UK.

Further details, as well as the full document and an executive summary, are available [here](#).

### **17 December 2018 - UKVCAS update**

UKVCAS centres are now up and running and, if you're applying for a visa extension or to switch to another visa category, you'll be given the choice at the end of your application whether you want to attend a Post Office to give your biometric details, or whether you'd like to take advantage of the services offered at a UKVCAS centre. Limited information about this new service is available on the [UKVCAS website](#), and you can download a Q&A document at the bottom of this page.

**Note:** UKVI Premium Service centres are now closed. Applicants who'd planned to apply at a Premium Service centre should choose to use the UKVCAS service instead.

### **5 November 2018 - New process for visa applications made within the UK**

If you're applying to extend your existing visa, or switch to a new immigration route, you may be offered an opportunity to use [UKVI's new service](#) which is run by their commercial partner, Sopra Steria. There'll be UK Visas and Citizenship Application Services (UKVACS) centres opening around the UK over the next couple of months where you'll be able to make an appointment to register your biometric information and submit supporting documents, in most cases electronically, so you won't need to send them to UKVI.

There are 6 centres offering free 'core' appointments (the nearest to Leeds will be in Manchester) and a further 50 'enhanced service' centres which will charge for appointments. The closest of these will be in Burnholme (York), Wakefield and Hull.

In addition to standard services, you'll also be able to pay for additional "added value services". Details of these services, and the schedule of centre openings, is [here](#).

### **Two important points to note:**

1. Use of this service is **voluntary**; if you prefer, you can use the Post Office for your biometrics, and submit your supporting information by post.
2. **The new Visa Centre staff are NOT authorised immigration advisers** and therefore won't be able to provide advice on applications and immigration requirements.

### **11 October 2018 - Immigration Health Surcharge increase**

As mooted earlier this year, the IHS (aka the NHS surcharge) will increase to £400 per year of a visa (eg a 5 year visa will attract an IHS of £2,000). The Home Office has [confirmed](#) that this increase is scheduled to take effect in December 2018.

This will be payable by all applicants coming to the UK for more than six months and it also applies to each of their dependants.

Certain vulnerable groups such as asylum seekers and modern slavery victims are exempt, and students and those entering the UK on a Tier 5 (Youth Mobility Scheme) visa will be charged a discounted rate of £300.

### **12 October 2018 - UKVI partnership with Sopra Steria: new services**

UKVI is introducing a new streamlined online service for visa extensions, switches and applications for ILR and British Citizenship within the UK. The new service, the UK Visa and Citizenship Application Service (UK VCAS) will be run by their commercial partner, Sopra Steria, which aims to provide a modernised digital service which will be fast and convenient, and should allow you to keep your passport and other important evidence.

Six major cities will have locations offering free appointments, with user-pay services available in 50 local libraries and a premium service point in central London.

UKVI will announce further details within the next few weeks.

### **31 August 2018 - using electronic payslips with Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) applications**

The University recently announced the [move to electronic payslips](#) and this has caused some concern in particular for colleagues who plan to apply for ILR which asks for original documents. We've been in touch with the Home Office about this and they've responded as follows:

*“Online payslips would be permitted and will be acceptable for the purposes of an ILR application. Obviously these are incredibly common nowadays, so aren't something that would cause too much complication. I would however recommend that these are either stamped or printed on letterheaded paper to confirm their authenticity - although the sample you attached would be absolutely sufficient to this end [University of Leeds sample payslip]. If you[r staff] remain unsure and want some additional assurance, a covering letter confirming the authenticity of the payslips and highlighting the recent change cannot hurt; even if it's just in the short term until you are more confident of approval using these payslips.”*

If you plan to use payslips to prove residence for a future ILR application and you're still unsure about providing electronic copies, we'll be happy to provide a letter confirming your employment with the University for the relevant time period. Please contact your [HR hub](#) to ask for a letter.

### **Submitting biometric information and supporting documents for a visa application**

The Home Office has awarded Sopra Steria, a digital consultancy company, [a contract to deliver a new service](#) which is aimed at streamlining the visa application process. From October 2018, Sopra Steria will submit your biometric information, and copy/submit your supporting documents (eg your passport), in a single appointment, meaning that you won't have to post important documents to UKVI.

Sopra Steria will be working in partnership with the Society of Chief Librarians to offer the service in local communities, though UKVI Service Centres will still offer caseworker appointments for anyone who needs one.

### **Strike action - Tier 2 and 5 visa holders**

The Home Secretary has [announced](#) that strike action will no longer be counted as unauthorised absence for holders of Tier 2 and 5 visas, bringing immigration policy into line with employment law in the UK.

### **Indefinite leave to remain - continuous residence**

UKVI has issued [updated guidance for its staff](#) on how to calculate the five year continuous lawful period in the UK requirement for an applicant.

### **Updates to the Immigration Rules (6 July 2018)**

#### *Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) visa route*

UKVI has issued [updated guidance](#) on applying for a Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) visa.

#### *Tier 2 (General) visa route*

UKVI has issued [updated guidance](#) on applying for a Tier 2 (General) visa.

### *Applications for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) - 180 day rule*

The 180 day rule which came into effect in January 2018 (see below) will not apply to absences taken before 11th Jan 2018. Absences before this time are subject to previous rule of no more than 180 days during each consecutive 12 month period (ending on the same date of the year as the date of the application for indefinite leave to remain).

### *Tier 5 (Government Authorised Exchange) visa route*

The 'UKRI (UK Research and Innovation) Science, Research and Academia' scheme replaces the 'Sponsored Scientific Researcher Initiative' and allows non-EEA researchers, scientists and academics to come to the UK for up to 2 years.

Appendix N to the Immigration Rules (list of approved authorised exchange schemes) is to be updated accordingly.

### *Turkish workers and their dependants*

A new Appendix (Appendix ECAA) has been added to the Immigration Rules to cover indefinite leave to remain and further leave to remain for Turkish workers and their dependants

### *Dependants of UK visa applicants (Tiers 1, 2, 4 and 5)*

The course length requirement for dependants of Tier 4 migrants has changed.

### *Short term students*

Clarity has been given around genuine short term study, and the maximum length a student can extend their stay in the UK further to their declared intentions in their visa application. The requirements and conditions of stay have also been updated.

### *Tier 4 (General) student visa route*

The guidance has been updated to remove out of date references and links.

### **Doctors and nurses to be exempt from Tier 2 cap**

The Home Office has [announced](#) that it plans to exempt doctors and nurses from the restriction on the number of visa nationals entering the UK under Tier 2 stating that there will be "no restriction on the numbers of doctors and nurses who can be employed through the Tier 2 visa route". The current 'cap' is 20,700 per year which is split into a monthly allocation; this allocation has been exceeded every month since December 2017, leading to visa refusals for doctors, nurses and IT professionals.

The changes are intended to take effect from 6 July 2018, when the Home Office plans to publish detailed guidance.

## Undocumented Commonwealth citizens

The Home Office has launched the [Windrush Scheme](#) to allow it to start to process applications for British citizenship. A [guidance document and application form](#) have also been published; the page also has contact information for the team established to help - you can read about its scope and remit [here](#). Commonwealth citizens can now [register for an email update service](#).

## Citizenship application fees

The Home Office has published [revised guidance on fees for applications for British citizenship](#) with effect from 6 April 2018.

## Restrictions on Croatian workers

The current registration requirements for Croatian workers will expire on 30 June 2018, after which they'll have the same rights to work in the UK as other EU citizens.

## Applications for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) - 180 day rule

If you plan at any point to apply for ILR in the UK, you need to be aware that UKVI has changed the way it calculates the amount of time you can spend outside the UK during the five years before you apply.

You used to have to show that you had been absent from the UK for 180 days or less in each of the five consecutive years counting backwards from the date of your ILR application.

However, on 11 January 2018 UKVI changed this rule. Rather than calculating absence against fixed 12 month periods, the 180 day limit now applies to **any rolling 12 month period** during the previous five years (or 3 years if you're in the UK on a Tier 1 accelerated visa). This rule applies to all ILR applications going forward, even though the rule has only just changed.

## Visa fees change

With effect from 6 April 2018, visa costs will change. You can download a full list below but, in summary:

### Applications made within the UK

Visa type	Current fee	Fee from 6 Apr 2018
Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) - application	£293	£152

Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) - approval letter from Competent Body (see note 2)	£292	£456
Tier 2 (General) with a CoS of 3 years or less	£677	£704
Tier 2 (General) with a CoS of more than 3 years	£1,354	£1,408
Tier 5 (see note 1)	£235	£244
Indefinite leave to remain	£2,297	£2,389

#### Applications made outside the UK

Visa type	Current fee	Fee from 6 Apr 2018
Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) - application	£585	£608
Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) - approval letter from Competent Body (see note 2)	£292	£456
Tier 2 (General) with a CoS of 3 years or less	£587	£610
Tier 2 (General) with a CoS of more than 3 years	£1,174	£1,220
Tier 5 (see note 1)	£235	£244

Notes:

1. A Council of Europe Social Charter (CESC) discount of £55 applies for the main applicant.

2. Not required for accelerated route

#### Access UK - new visa application system

The Home Office is rolling out a new visa application system to replace Visa4UK and paper application forms. The system can be used to apply for visas from outside the UK, and visa extension/changes from within the UK. It's mobile friendly, quicker to complete and you can use it to book your Visa Application Centre appointment to give your biometrics. You can also save partly completed applications to finish later on.