



Guidance on Sponsored Researchers and Academic Visitors

Sponsored Researchers

A sponsored researcher is a person who wishes to come to the UK to lead or to take part in any formal research project and is receiving sponsorship funds for this purpose. Formal research projects are those hosted but not necessarily funded by a UK research institution. The sponsored researcher fills a research post and works under the full or partial control of the institution, which will itself benefit from the research. Sponsored researchers can be funded from sources in the UK or overseas.

Sponsored researchers should enter the UK under the Tier 5, Government Authorised Exchange, of the Points Based System. However those academics who want to come to the UK simply to share knowledge or experience or to hold informal discussions with their UK counterparts may qualify as an academic under the Business Visitors route. This category may also be suitable for those who intend to conduct research for their own private purposes - such as to do research for a book - and are funded from a UK source (some fellowships exist to facilitate such research).

Academic Visitors

Academic Visitors are a sub-group of the Standard Visitor category. To qualify as an Academic Visitor, the applicant must be able to produce evidence that they are highly qualified in their own field of expertise and are currently working in that field at an academic or higher education institution overseas.

Recent graduates, people on sabbatical leave from private research companies, named researchers on grants, those being paid to give a/ series of lecture(s) and sponsored researchers do not qualify as Academic Visitors and should find an alternative immigration route.

Who can come to the University as an Academic Visitor?

Only those employed by academic or higher education institutions overseas in teaching or research roles are eligible to apply to come to the UK under the Academic Visitor sub-category of the Standard Visitor visa route. Research staff should therefore be eligible under this route but research students would not.

Visitors would fall under the Academic Visitor sub-category of the Standard Visitor visa route if they are:

- on leave from their overseas academic institution coming to the University to carry out their own **private research** (e.g. research for a book, for example);
- taking part in **arranged exchanges** e.g. where the University is collaborating with an overseas university on research and exchanges personnel for some or all of the

- duration of the project. Any salary should continue to be paid by the academic's own overseas institution;
- coming to **share knowledge or experience** or to hold informal discussions with UK counterparts (but **not** conducting research on University hosted projects);
 - taking part in a **conference or seminar** that is not a commercial or non-profit venture;
 - **eminent senior doctors or dentists**, (i.e. those considered to be top of their field of expertise) coming to take part in research, teaching or clinical practice.

Please note that Academics coming to the University to collaborate with University staff on University-hosted research projects are likely to be classed as sponsored researchers, could not apply as an Academic Visitor, and would require need to apply for a Tier 5 visa instead.

Please also note that applicants under the Academic Visitor route must be employed by an academic institution outside the UK. Applicants who are **retired** are **not eligible** under either the Academic or Permitted Paid Engagement (PPE) route.

How long can an Academic Visitor and their dependants spend in the UK?

While a Standard Visitor visa is issued for a maximum of 6 months an Academic Visitor can apply for a visa for up to 12 months.

Dependant spouse/partners and children of Academic Visitors can obtain Standard Visitor visas to accompany them in the UK for up to 6 or 12 months in line with the Academic Visitor's visa.

Where dependent children of Academic Visitors are coming to the UK for 12 months the restriction that they must not intend to study at a state-funded school does not apply.

What can an Academic Visitor (up to 12 month visa) do while in the UK?

An Academic Visitor can undertake other activities under their Standard Visitor visa in addition to the activities which form the main purpose of their visit.

What is the Academic Visitor visa application process?

The process of obtaining permission to enter the UK as an Academic Visitor under the Standard Visitor visa route **for up to 6 months** is the same as that for other Visitor visa routes and depends on whether the applicant is classed as a '*visa national*' or '*non-visa national*'.

If coming to the UK as an Academic Visitor **for more than 6 (up to 12) months** both '*visa-nationals*' and '*non-visa nationals*' **must** apply for a visa in advance of travelling to the UK as '*visa nationals*' are always required to.

What Supporting documentation is required?

Those applying for an Academic Visitor (up to 12 month) visa must submit the following documents in support of their visa application before travelling to the UK:

- current **passport** or other valid travel identification

- 1 passport-sized colour **photograph**
- proof that they can support themselves during their trip
- details of where they intend to stay and their travel plans
- an **invitation letter** from the host department/ college within the university
- proof that they are highly qualified in their own field of expertise and currently working in that field at an academic or higher education institution overseas, for example a **letter from their employer**
- **medical certificate** issued by a Home Office approved medical practitioner confirming that they have undergone screening for, and have been diagnosed as being free from **active pulmonary tuberculosis (TB)** - if applying from specified countries. *[in page link to Tuberculosis (TB) pre-screening below]*

Guidance on requirements for supporting documents when applying for a Visitor visa can be found in the [Home Office Guide](#).