

# What Students Need To Do To Get Ready For The Points-Based Immigration System

The UK Government has announced that it intends to make big changes to the immigration system for students in 2009 (these are not likely to happen before April 2009). It has published a 'statement of intent' explaining some of its ideas, but has not yet decided much of the detail.

This note aims to identify some of the things you should be thinking about doing now, in preparation for the new system.

## Your studies

- Think very carefully before choosing your course, and college or university. It will be very difficult to change college or university after you arrive in the UK, once the new system starts. This is because you will have to obtain permission from the immigration authorities to change college or university, and will not be allowed to study while you wait for that permission. The process of obtaining permission is likely to be very expensive, and may also be slow. You cannot be sure that permission will be granted.
- When the new system comes in, you might be prevented from obtaining student extensions or entry clearance to allow you to study at a level that is below level 3 of the National Qualifications Framework (or its equivalent in Scotland) if you are aged over 16. GCSEs, and National Vocational Qualifications at levels 1 and 2, are all below level 3 of the National Qualifications Framework. Ask your college or university if you do not know whether the qualification you want to study is below level 3 of the National Qualifications Framework.
- If you want to study English, the level is slightly different – it is level A2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. So when the new system comes in, you might be prevented from obtaining student extensions or entry clearance to allow you to study English at a level that is below level A2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Ask your college or university if you do not know whether the English course that you want to study is below level A2.
- Do not expect to be allowed to study for more than three years below degree level.
- Under the new system you will almost certainly have to study towards a qualification.
- It is safest not to start a course where more than 50% of the time is spent on work placement (if the course is going to end after the new system starts). Such

courses will not be allowed under the new system, and we cannot be sure what will happen to people who have already started.

- If you want to study at a private college, check that the college will meet the requirement to be 'accredited' which will apply when the new system starts. If it does not, you will not be able to obtain a student extension to study there if you need more time. Private colleges accredited by the following organisations are automatically 'accredited': Accreditation UK; British Accreditation Council; Accreditation Service for International Colleges; Ofsted (but there are other ways of being 'accredited', too).
- Keep good attendance on your course – if you do not, this will be reported to the immigration authorities.
- Make every effort to pass each stage of your course, and progress well. It is not clear how much flexibility colleges and universities will show towards students who get behind with their studies. If you need an immigration extension because you have spent longer than usual finishing your course this will be very expensive.
- Do not interrupt or defer your studies at any point, or become a part-time student. If you feel that you have no choice but to do one of these things, go to see the international student adviser at your college or university to talk about the implications this might have for your immigration status.
- If you are already on a course in the UK, attend well and try to complete it on time. Do not change course, or college or university, without talking to the international student adviser at the new college or university about the implications this might have for your future immigration status.

## **Your money**

- It is not yet definite how much money students will be expected to have to cover their living costs. But it might be as high as £800 a month (plus £535 for each dependant who accompanies you).
- Remember you will also need to have money for your course fees.
- There are likely to be strict requirements about how long you should have had the money for before you apply. We do not know what those requirements will be, but if you have a choice about holding money in your own bank account or leaving it with someone else, it will be better if you hold the money in your own

bank account. Always use bank accounts rather than holding money as cash, so that you can produce evidence of how long you have had it.

- Find out about these financial requirements at least four months before your course, so you can make any changes to your financial arrangements that are necessary for the application.
- While you are in the UK, use a UK bank account, in your own name (do not do your banking through a bank in your home country). It will be difficult for you to produce the evidence that you need for immigration applications if you do not use a UK bank account. You should use the account regularly, so that it shows the money you are receiving as well as the money you are spending on your living costs. Do not use an internet-only account, as this makes it difficult to provide the right evidence.

## **Your immigration applications**

- Do not allow an agent to send off an application unless you have seen everything that it is written on it and all the documents that are enclosed, to check that it is all correct. If the agent includes any false statements or documents it could result in you being barred from coming to the UK for 10 years.
- Keep all the letters (and any other documents) that you receive from the UK immigration authorities about any applications you make to them. You might need some of the details from them when you fill in an immigration application form in the future.

## **Your passports**

- Take photocopies of all the pages of all the passports you use when you come to (or stay in) the UK. The only pages that you do not need to photocopy are the blank ones. Keep the photocopy up-to-date, each time more stamps or stickers are added.
- If you are issued with a UK identity card, take a photocopy of both sides of that.
- When a passport expires, keep hold of it (unless your country requires you to give it back). You may be asked for it in connection with a future immigration application.
- Your passport is a valuable document – keep it somewhere safe.

- If a passport is stolen, report this to the police (and take note of when 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 you.

## Your travel tickets

- Take photocopies of all the tickets that you ever buy for travel to the UK, from another country. If you have letters or documents relating to the bookings, keep those too. And keep all the ticket stubs that are given back to you by the travel operator (or even better, the whole ticket). You may need these for future immigration applications.

## Your stay in the UK

- The length of your permission to stay in the UK is shown in your passport. Make a note in your diary now, 4 months before this date. At that stage you should seek advice from the international student adviser at your college or university if you want to extend it. **DO NOT REMAIN IN THE UK AFTER THE DATE SHOWN IN YOUR PASSPORT** (unless you have already submitted your application for an extension).
- Do not do any work or work placement (even if it is unpaid) if you have the words “*no work*” in your passport.
- If you have the words “*able to work as authorised*” or “*work (and any changes) must be authorised*” in your passport, **DO NOT WORK MORE THAN 20 HOURS IN ANY SINGLE WEEK** (unless it is your vacation time, or the 4 months after you finish your course, or you are doing a placement which is part of a sandwich course).
- Do not do business in the UK – students are not allowed to do this.
- Do not take up a permanent full-time job vacancy – students are not allowed to do this.
- Do not claim Child Benefit, tax credits or any other ‘public funds’, and do not allow anyone else to make a claim for them on your behalf.
- 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 at your college or university if you do not know where to go).