

This document has been produced to give HEIs more clarity on this GAE and the persons eligible to be sponsored under this scheme. The content has been approved by the Home Office.

Tier 5 (Government Authorised Exchange) Sponsored Researcher scheme

The Tier 5 (Sponsored Researcher) Government Authorised Exchange (GAE) scheme enables researchers, including academics, researchers, scientists, research engineers or other skilled research technology specialists, to come to the UK on a temporary basis, where they are hosted at a UK higher education institution (HEI).

Mobility enabled under this scheme supports HEIs to engage with researchers abroad and promotes the UK's position as a world leader in research, education and innovation. It also maximises the effectiveness of public funding, including government initiatives such as the Global Challenge Research Fund, the Newton Fund and bi-lateral initiatives such as the UK-China Joint Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation Co-operation.

It should be noted that this GAE scheme for HEIs mirrors the route available to research institutes through the UKRI GAE. The definition of research and permitted activities under these schemes are identical.

Scheme Criteria

The HEI, as a Tier 5 Sponsor¹, is able to assign a Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS) to researchers (which includes academics, researchers, scientists, research engineers or other skilled research technology specialists) for a maximum duration of 2 years to undertake the following activities:

- A formal research project or collaboration
- A period of work-based training/work experience/internship/placement;
- Skill development/knowledge transfer;
- A series of lectures, which doesn't amount to a formal teaching post;
- External examinations.

The researcher may be funded by their host, their overseas employer, or an independent UK or non-UK funding body. The researcher cannot be self-funded and must be in receipt of funding in line with, or above, the National Minimum Wage.²

The researcher does not have to be employed overseas to be eligible for sponsorship under this scheme, and if necessary, it is permitted for the host to issue an employment contract to the researcher, provided the activity does not amount to a genuine vacancy, as below.

The work or activities undertaken must never amount to what the Home Office terms 'a genuine vacancy'. In accordance with the Home Office rules, the role must be over and above the organisation's normal staffing requirements, and which would not be automatically refilled once the post holder leaves

¹ Current Tier 5 Sponsors will not be required to renew their Licence until the date allocated via the Sponsorship Management System in relation to their Licence end date.

² Individuals undertaking work experience or internships may not be entitled to the National Minimum Wage due to specific legislative exemptions. Further guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-minimum-wage-work-experience-and-internships>

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Roles are not normally advertised and recruited to in the conventional way (although work experience, internships and other placements may be subject to a degree of competition to ensure equality of opportunity – for example Newton Fund, Rutherford Fund, Global Challenge Research Fund, European Molecular Biology Organisation or similar funded projects).

Any work or activity undertaken within the scheme must be at or above RQF level 3, or the equivalent in Scotland.

Migrants sponsored under Tier 5 may do courses of study, however, any study undertaken cannot interfere with the purpose of the engagement, as defined on their CoS, and must be ancillary.

Organisations eligible to sponsor under this GAE include:

- A UK Higher Education Institute as defined by law: a UK recognised body (as defined by [The Education \(Recognised Bodies\) \(England\) Order 2013](#)) or a body in receipt of public funding as a higher education institution from the Department of Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland, the Office for Students and Research England in England, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales or the Scottish Funding Council

Compliance Activities

Expectations are:

When issuing CoS, the HEI is required to adhere to Home Office sponsorship responsibilities, ensuring the scheme criteria are met for any sponsored migrants and maintaining relevant sponsorship requirements in accordance with Home Office guidance. Failure to do so may result in the revocation of the sponsor license(s) of the HEI.