

Indefinite Leave to Remain

Guidance for current and prospective staff



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Overview of Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR)

Gaining Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR)/Settlement in the UK is possible through a variety of different routes, and how you gain it depends on the type of visas you hold/held and over what period of time.

The most common route for non-EEA University staff to gain settlement is through either:

- The three-year Tier 1/Global Talent route
- The five-year Tier 2/Skilled Worker Visa route
- The ten-year “long residence” route.

This guidance covers these routes only.

This guidance is designed to for straightforward cases. If, having read this guidance, you are unsure as to your eligibility for ILR through any of the above routes, please seek further guidance from the [Compliance Team](#).

Note: for EU/EEA/Swiss nationals applying for ‘settled status’, that is a different legal route, and guidance on that can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/settled-status-eu-citizens-families>

Three year Tier 1 ET/Global Talent route

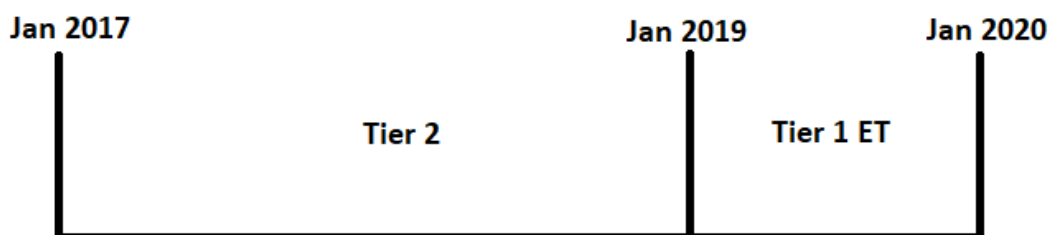
Eligibility

By way of background, the Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) visa was rebranded the 'Global Talent Visa' on 20th February 2020. For staff holding Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) visas prior to this date, this rebrand had no effect on the visas terms and conditions, and no effect on the ability to gain ILR/settlement.

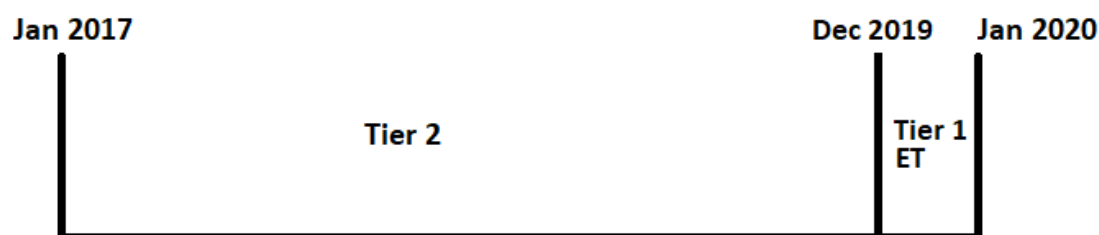
Staff members holding either a Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) visa or a Global Talent Visa (or a combination of both) can apply for ILR/Settlement after three years holding **any** combination of the following visas types:

- Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) Visa
- Global Talent Visa
- Tier 2 (General) Visa
- Skilled Worker Visa

For example, the staff member could hold a Tier 2 visa for two years, switch to Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent)/Global Talent visa and apply for ILR one year later:



Or, the staff member could hold a Tier 2 visa for two years 11 months, switch to Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent)/Global Talent visa and apply for ILR one month later:



Any combination of Tier 2 (General), Skilled Worker, Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) or Global Talent visa is permitted in order to reach ILR/settlement after three years. **The key criteria is that at the point of ILR application the individual holds either a Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) visa or a Global Talent Visa.**

If **before February 2020** you were endorsed as ‘promise’, you are now eligible to apply for ILR via the three year route. You do not have to wait five years before applying for ILR, as you were previously.

In addition:

- You must pass the Life in the UK test and meet English language requirements (further guidance on this is available below).
- You must not have overstayed beyond the expiry date of any eligible visa; and
- You should not have had more than 180 day’s absence from the UK each year across the three years. This is calculated as follows:
 - Absences from the UK which occurred **before** 11 January 2018, cannot have been for more than 180 days in a consecutive 12 month period, based on the date you apply for ILR.
 - Absences from the UK which occurred **after** 11 January 2018, cannot have been for more than 180 days outside the UK in **any 12 month rolling period**.

However, in practice it depends on when your visa(s) were issued:

For example: If your first visa was granted on **1 July 2015**, your second visa was granted on **28 July 2018**, and your ILR application date was **30 June 2020**, you would calculate the 180 days absences as follows:

- From 1 July 2015 to 28 July 2018 – any absences during this period would be considered in separate 12-month periods e.g. from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016, then 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017, then 1 July 2017 to 28 July 2018 (i.e. start of most recent visa).
- From 30 June 2018 to 30 June 2020 – any absences during this period would be considered on a 12-month rolling basis

When calculating absences, this includes all personal **and** business-related travel.

However, if **you have had in excess of 180 days absence from the UK** and the excess absences were due to ‘research activity’ abroad, these will be waived by the Home Office. Please contact the [Compliance Team](#) if this situation applies to you, so that the evidential requirements of this can be discussed.

Life and Language requirements

Before applying for ILR, you must have passed the Life in the UK test and met English language requirements.

- The Life in the UK test has no expiry date and can be sat at any time prior to making an application for ILR. There is more information on booking the test here: <https://www.gov.uk/life-in-the-uk-test>
- English language requirements are very strict and can only be met in one of the following ways:

EITHER

Being a national of an English speaking country

You will automatically meet the English language requirement if you are a citizen of one of the following countries:

- Antigua and Barbuda
- Australia
- The Bahamas
- Barbados
- Belize
- Canada
- Dominica
- Grenada
- Guyana
- Jamaica
- New Zealand
- St Kitts and Nevis
- St Lucia
- St Vincent and the Grenadines
- Trinidad and Tobago
- United States of America

OR

You will meet English language requirements if:

- You previously held a Tier 2 or Skilled Worker Visa (in which case you are exempt);
- You hold a degree of any discipline from any UK University; or
- You hold a degree of any discipline taught in English, which was issued by a University outside of the UK. In these circumstances, you must use the UK NARIC service to verify comparability: <https://www.naric.org.uk/visas%20and%20nationality/Default.aspx>; or

- You sit and pass an English language test (covering speaking and listening only) at minimum B1 level: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-onapplying-for-uk-visa-approved-english-language-tests>

When can I apply?

The three-year period **starts** from the date the very first qualifying visa was issued (i.e. **not** the date you entered the UK for the first time).

You are then permitted to apply up to 28 days before you reach the three year qualifying period. For example:

- Your Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) visa was issued on **1 July 2018**. You could submit an application for ILR no earlier than **3 June 2021**; or
- Your Tier 2 visa was issued on **1 July 2018**, and you switched to a Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) visa/Global Talent visa at any time after this date, you are eligible to submit an application for ILR no earlier than **3 June 2021**.

Do not apply more than 28 days before you reach the 3 year qualifying period, or your application may be refused.

How do I apply?

You can only apply online, using immigration form SET(O):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/application-to-settle-in-the-uk-form-seto>

Indefinite Leave to Remain costs **£2,389**

Through the ‘standard’ application route, the application can take up to 6 months to be decided. However, in practice, it rarely takes more than 2-3 months for a decision.

There is also the option to expedite via the ‘Super Priority’ service. Both Tier 1 ET and Global Talent visa holders can access this route, which will cost an additional £800. This will result in a decision within 24-48 hours, following which your new ILR Biometric Residence Permit will follow in the post within 5-10 working days.

What documents do I need?

- Your current, valid passport
- Any previous passports you hold (only if applicable – if no longer held, it won’t be an issue)
- Your current Biometric Residence Permit (BRP)
- Evidence of currently working at an ‘exceptional talent level’. **This does not need to cover the full three year period**. We recommend the following evidence:
 - A letter from your department/institution which confirms you are currently employed, dates of employment, your job title and your salary; and
 - Your last 3 months of payslips.

No other evidence of employment is required.

- For English language requirements – UK degree certificate, or overseas degree certificate and UK NARIC certificate, or English language test certificate, as applicable.

Dependants

Your dependants can apply for ILR **however**:

- Spouses/unmarried partners/civil partners can only do so after they hold a points-based dependant visa for at least 5 years – **the ability to apply for ILR after 3 years is not presently available to them.**
- Conversely, children do not need to hold a dependant visa for a set number of years in order to qualify for ILR, however before they make an application for ILR the following must be true:
 - They hold a valid PBS dependant visa (of any length) **or** have been born in the UK; and
 - Both parents already hold ILR; or
 - Both parents are applying for ILR at the same time as the child; or
 - One parent holds ILR and the other parent is applying for ILR at the same time as the child.

Discretion is provided for parents who have sole responsibility for their child(ren).

Further guidance/reading

Indefinite Leave to Remain: Calculating continuous period in UK:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/723413/Calculating-continuous-leave-v17.0-EXT.pdf (this guidance only applies to the five year ILR route)

Knowledge of Life and Language in the UK:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/751976/KoLL-v21.0ext.pdf

Tier 1 policy guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-policy-for-uk-visas-under-tier-1-exceptional-talent>

Five year route

Eligibility

- Eligibility for ILR/settlement after five years usually requires that you have held a Tier 2/Skilled Worker visas for a continuous period of five years.
- You cannot combine time spent on a Tier 2 /Skilled Worker visas with time spent on dependant visas – you must either hold dependant visas for a full 5 years or Tier 2 visas/Skilled Worker visas for a full five years.
- Eligibility under the five year ILR route requires five years **continuous and lawful residence** in the UK.

‘Continuous and lawful’ residence is defined as follows:

- You have continuously held Tier 2/Skilled Worker visas in the UK. This can be across multiple jobs and/or employers, and across any number of Tier 2/Skilled Worker visas; and
- Gaps between employment/employers **do not** break continuity of residence; and
- You have not overstayed beyond the expiry date of any of these visa; and
- ‘Continuously’ means no more than 180 days absence from the UK each year across the five years. This is calculated as follows:
 - Absences from the UK which occurred **before** 11 January 2018, cannot have been for more than 180 days in a consecutive 12 month period, based on the date you apply for ILR.
 - Absences from the UK which occurred **after** 11 January 2018, cannot have been for more than 180 days outside the UK in **any 12 month rolling period**.

However, in practice it depends on when your visa(s) were issued:

For example: If your first visa was granted on **1 July 2015**, your second visa was granted on **28 July 2018**, and your ILR application date was **30 June 2020**, you would calculate the 180 days absences as follows:

- From 1 July 2015 to 28 July 2018 – any absences during this period would be considered in separate 12-month periods e.g. from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016, then 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017, then 1 July 2017 to 28 July 2018 (i.e. start of most recent visa).
- From 30 June 2018 to 30 June 2020 – any absences during this period would be considered on a 12-month rolling basis

When calculating absences, this includes all personal **and** business-related travel.

If your absences exceed 180 days for any given year and your most recent Certificate of Sponsorship contains a PhD level SOC Code (2111, 2112, 2113, 2114, 2119, 2311), then any absences for the purpose of research activities overseas shall **not** count towards the 180 day threshold. In those circumstances, the mandatory sponsor employer letter (see Appendix A) will need to include the wording highlighted in yellow.

Salary requirements

From 1 December 2020, there are new minimum salary requirements which must be met for all Tier 2/Skilled Worker Visa holders to qualify for ILR. For roles defined by the following PhD level SOC Codes (which cover the most common roles sponsored by the University), the ILR minimum salary requirements are as follows:

SOC Code	Minimum rate
2111	£25,331
2112	£28,177
2113	£34,629
2114	£24,572
2119	£31,308
2311	£38,613

This represents the minimum salary that the individual must be receiving at the point of application **not** throughout employment.

For roles defined by **all other SOC Codes**, please contact the HR Compliance Team for the minimum applicable salary rate.

Life and Language requirements

Before applying for ILR, you must have passed the Life in the UK test and met English language requirements.

- The Life in the UK test has no expiry date and can be sat at any time prior to making an application for ILR. There is more information on booking the test here:
<https://www.gov.uk/life-in-the-uk-test>
- English language requirements are very strict and can only be met in one of the following ways:

EITHER

Being a national of an English speaking country

You will automatically meet the English language requirement if you are a citizen of one of the following countries:

- Antigua and Barbuda
- Australia
- The Bahamas
- Barbados
- Belize
- Canada
- Dominica
- Grenada
- Guyana
- Jamaica
- New Zealand
- St Kitts and Nevis
- St Lucia
- St Vincent and the Grenadines
- Trinidad and Tobago
- United States of America

OR

As you currently hold a Tier 2/Skilled Worker visa, you will automatically meet the English language requirements. **However**, see the note below.

- **English language tests** – if you sat an English language test in order to get your first Tier 2 visa, and that test was **anything other** than an IELTS or a Trinity College London Test, then you **must** re-sit the English language test before applying for ILR, as your previous test results will no longer be valid.
- **Overseas degree taught in English** - if you used your overseas degree taught in English to get your first Tier 2 visa, and didn't use the UK NARIC process to verify it (because there was no requirement to do so at that time), then you do not now need to use the UK NARIC process for the ILR application.

When can I apply?

You must have held Tier 2/Skilled Worker visas for a continuous period of five years (as above).

The five-year period **starts** from the date the very first qualifying visa was issued (i.e. **not** the date you entered the UK for the first time).

You are then permitted to apply up to 28 days before you reach the five year qualifying period. For example, if your very first Tier 2 visa was issued on **1 July 2015**, you could submit an application for ILR no earlier than **3 June 2020**.

Do not apply more than 28 days before you reach the 5 year qualifying period, or your application will be automatically refused.

How do I apply?

You can only apply online, using immigration form SET(O):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/application-to-settle-in-the-uk-form-seto>

Indefinite Leave to Remain costs **£2,389**

Through the 'standard' application route, the application can take up to 6 months to be decided. However, in practice, it rarely takes more than 2-3 months for a decision.

Tier 2/Skilled Worker visa holders can access the 'ILR Priority service'. This costs an additional £500 and will provide a decision within 5 working days, after which your new ILR Biometric Residence Permit will follow in the post within 5-10 working days.

There is also the 'Super Priority' service. Tier 2 visa holders can access this route, which will cost an additional £800. This will result in a decision within 24-48 hours, following which your new ILR Biometric Residence Permit will follow in the post within 5-10 working days.

What documents do I need?

- Your current, valid passport
- Any previous passports you hold (only if applicable – if no longer held, it won't be an issue)
- Your current Biometric Residence Permit (BRP)
- Your most recent payslip at the time you make the application
- Your most recent bank statement at the time you make the application (which shows the deposit of your last salary payment)
- If applicable, for English language requirements – UK degree certificate, or overseas degree certificate and UK NARIC certificate, or English language test certificate
- Sponsor employer letter – your department/institution normally creates this letter for you (please find a template in **Appendix A** of this guidance document). If the department/institution requires any guidance on the production of this letter, they should contact the HR Compliance team.
- A list of work-related absences for period of your employment at Cambridge, certified by your department/institution (please use the template in **Appendix B** of this guidance document).
- If applicable – a list of work-related absences from any previous employers who sponsored you through Tier 2 in the past five years.

Dependants

Your dependants can apply for ILR **however**:

- Spouses/unmarried partners/civil partners can only do so after they hold a points-based dependant visa for at least 5 years.
- Conversely, children do not need to hold a dependant visa for a set number of years in order to qualify for ILR, however before they make an application for ILR the following must be true:
 - They hold a valid PBS dependant visa (of any length) **or** have been born in the UK; and
 - Both parents already hold ILR; or
 - Both parents are applying for ILR at the same time as the child; or
 - One parent holds ILR and the other parent is applying for ILR at the same time as the child.

Discretion is provided for parents who have sole responsibility for their child(ren).

Further guidance/reading

Indefinite Leave to Remain: Calculating continuous period in UK:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/723413/Calculating-continuous-leave-v17.0-EXT.pdf (this guidance only applies to the five year ILR route)

Knowledge of Life and Language in the UK:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/751976/KoLL-v21.0ext.pdf

Skilled Worker visa guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/skilled-worker-visa>

Ten year “long residence” route

Eligibility

Eligibility for settlement after ten years requires that you have held any combination of UK visas **continuously and lawfully** for a period of at least ten years.

Continuously and lawfully in the context of the ten year route, is defined as follows:

- Any combination of any UK visa types over a minimum ten year continuous period, preceding the date of application; and
- Absences from the UK of no more than 540 days during the full ten year period, with no more than 6 months’ absence at any one time.

Note: Continuous residence is not considered broken if, during the ten year period, the applicant held a valid visa when they left the UK, that visa expired whilst abroad but they re-entered the UK within 6 months of departure, on a new visa type (any visa type).

Example: ‘A’ held a points-based dependant visa, valid until 30 April 2015. They left the UK on 28 April 2015 and re-entered on a Tier 2 (General) visa on 18 July 2015.

Continuous residence in this case is not broken as ‘A’ left the UK whilst their previous visa was still valid and re-entered on a new visa type within 6 months of departure.

However, the period from 29 April to 17 July 2015 does count toward the 540 day limit on absences for the ten year period.

When calculating absences, this includes all personal **and** business-related travel, unless there are compelling compassionate reasons for travel (e.g. reasons outwith your control, such as illness of a family member).

Important note: The Home Office are *highly unlikely* to give discretion for absences for work or business purposes (e.g. conferences, meetings, overseas research trips etc.) where this leads to excessive absences and a breach of continuous residence. If in doubt, please contact the [Compliance Team](#) for guidance.

Life and Language requirements

Before applying for ILR, you must have passed the Life in the UK test and met English language requirements.

- The Life in the UK test has no expiry date and can be sat at any time prior to making an application for ILR. There is more information on booking the test here: <https://www.gov.uk/life-in-the-uk-test>

- English language requirements are very strict and can only be met in one of the following ways:

EITHER

Being a national of an English speaking country

You will automatically meet the English language requirement if you are a citizen of one of the following countries:

- Antigua and Barbuda
- Australia
- The Bahamas
- Barbados
- Belize
- Canada
- Dominica
- Grenada
- Guyana
- Jamaica
- New Zealand
- St Kitts and Nevis
- St Lucia
- St Vincent and the Grenadines
- Trinidad and Tobago
- United States of America

OR

For Tier 2/Skilled Worker visa holders

If you currently hold a Tier 2/Skilled Worker visa, you will automatically meet the English language requirements. **However**, see the note below.

Important note: if for your Tier 2 visa application you sat an English language test as a means of meeting English language requirements, and that test was **anything other** than an IELTS or a Trinity College London Test, then you **must** re-sit the English language test before applying for ILR, as your previous test results will no longer be valid.

OR

All other visa holders

You will meet English language requirements if:

- A citizen of an English speaking country (as above); **or**
- You hold a degree of any discipline from any UK University; **or**

- You hold a degree of any discipline taught in English, which was issued by a University outside of the UK. In these circumstances, you **must** use the UK NARIC service to verify comparability: <https://www.naric.org.uk/visas%20and%20nationality/Default.aspx>; **or**
- You sit and pass an English language test (covering speaking and listening only) at minimum B1 level: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-applying-for-uk-visa-approved-english-language-tests>

When can I apply?

As stated, you must have held any combination of UK visas types for a continuous period of at least 10 years.

The ten years period **starts** from the date you first **entered** the UK.

You are then permitted to apply up to 28 days before you reach the ten year qualifying period. For example, if you entered the UK on **1 July 2000**, you could submit an application for ILR no earlier than **3 June 2020**.

Do not apply more than 28 days before you reach the ten year qualifying period, or your application will be automatically refused.

How do I apply?

You can only apply online, using immigration form SET(LR): <https://visas-immigration.service.gov.uk/product/set-lr>

Indefinite Leave to Remain costs **£2,389**

Through the ‘standard’ application route, the application can take up to 6 months to be decided. However, in practice, it rarely takes more than 2-3 months for a decision.

There is an option to expedite the application, through the ‘Super Priority’ service, for an additional £800. This will result a decision within 24-48 hours, following which your new ILR Biometric Residence Permit will follow in the post within 5-10 working days.

What documents do I need?

- Your current, valid passport
- All previous passports you hold
- Your current Biometric Residence Permit (BRP)
- The Life in the UK test certificate
- If applicable, for English language requirements – UK degree certificate or overseas degree certificate and UK NARIC certificate/English language test certificate

- **Note:** If you do not hold current/expired passports going back at least ten years, you will need to prove residence in the UK for the ten year period. This can be a combination of any of the following documents:
 - Letter from employer
 - Payslips/P60/P45
 - Bank statements
 - Tenancy agreements/mortgage statements
 - Letters from an official source (local council, NHS, DWP, other government departments)
- **These are not required if you hold current and expired passports going back at least ten years.**

Dependants

Your dependants **cannot** join your application for ILR via the ten year route. They would be required to have lived in the UK for ten years, and therefore would qualify in their own right for ILR under this route.

Further guidance/reading

Long Residence guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/long-residence>

Knowledge of Life and Language in the UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/knowledge-of-life-and-language-in-the-uk>

Appendix A – Sponsor employer letter

Instructions:

- This letter is only required for those applying through the five year ILR route where they hold a Tier 2 or Skilled Worker visa.
- Departments should complete the letter with the required information. **No other text within the letter must be altered or removed.**
- **For salary requirements** – see page 9 of this guidance to ensure that the individual is being paid the minimum required salary to qualify for ILR.
- The letter must be accompanied with a list of absences for the applicant (see Appendix B for a template)
- **The letter must be dated and placed on University headed paper.**
- For further guidance on using this letter, please contact the HR Compliance Team.

Dear Sir/ Madam

We are writing this letter in support of **name** application for indefinite leave to remain in the United Kingdom.

We confirm that the employee started working at the University of Cambridge on **date** at **Department** and has been employed continuously since this time. We have identified SOC 2010 Code '**Number**' as the most applicable to **name's** role. We confirm that we are his/her current sponsor and he/she is still required for the employment in question and for the foreseeable future.

Name salary is currently £xxxx; this is in line with the usual annual increments which are paid to all employees at this level. **Name** is contracted for **x** hours per week and we confirm that **name** is currently, and for the foreseeable future, being paid at least the salary as required in paragraph SW 24.3 of the Rules.

We further confirm that **name's** business and non-business-related travel is set out in the attached schedule and this is in line with his/her annual leave and that he/she has not taken any unpaid leave during his employment. **[delete if not applicable]** Where there were absences in excess of 180 days during any given period, we confirm that these were for research and academic purposes, and therefore should be waived.

We trust that this letter is satisfactory for your purposes; however, should you have any queries in relation to the above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,

Appendix B – List of absences

Instructions:

- This letter is only required for those applying through the five year ILR route where they hold a Tier 2/Skilled Worker visa.
- This letter accompanies the sponsor employer letter, as found in Appendix A.

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find below the list of absences that **Name** has had from the United Kingdom during the period they were employed by us:

[illegible]

Yours Sincerely,