Tier 1 Exceptional Talent

Guidance for current and prospective staff
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Overview of Tier 1 Exceptional Talent Visa Route

The Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) visa route is available for people who are internationally recognised as world leaders or potential world-leading talent in the fields of science and the arts, and who require a visa to work in the UK. The visa comes with many benefits over its counterpart, the Tier 2 ‘skilled worker’ visa:

- Greater flexibility in your employment. With a Tier 1 visa you can freely move between institutions, locations, jobs/roles. By contrast, a Tier 2 visa ‘ties’ you to a particular employer and job role, requiring you in most cases to apply for a new visa if you move jobs.
- A low cost, flat-rate visa (typically half the cost of an equivalent Tier 2 visa).
- Greater flexibility to undertake collaborations within the UK.
- Your choice in visa length (up to a maximum of five years) with the option to retain this visa category indefinitely.
- The route is intended as a route to settlement after 3 years (if you are endorsed as ‘Exceptional Talent) or 5 years (if you are endorsed as ‘Exceptional Promise’), which will exempt you from the requirement to hold a visa to work in the UK.

How to apply

Applying for a Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) visa is a two stage process. You must first apply to be endorsed by one of the Designated Competent Bodies who have been given authority by the Home Office to determine who meets the visa criteria:

- The Royal Society
- The British Academy
- The Royal Academy of Engineering
- Arts Council England
- Tech City UK

You may apply to enter the UK through this route if:

- You can demonstrate to a DCB that you are a leader in your field (known as ‘exceptional talent’); or
- You can demonstrate to a DCB that you have the potential to become a leader in your field (known as ‘exceptional promise’).
There are **three ways** you can qualify for an endorsement:

(1) **If you hold a specific peer-reviewed Research Councils UK, Wellcome Trust, British Heart Foundation, Cancer Research UK or UK National Academies research grant/fellowship.**

   The full list of eligible grants/fellowships can be found here: [https://royalsociety.org/~media/about-us/eligible-fellowships-for-accelerated-process.pdf](https://royalsociety.org/~media/about-us/eligible-fellowships-for-accelerated-process.pdf)

   or

(2) **You have been appointed to any Professorial or Reader position at University of Cambridge (or any UK Higher Education Institution);**

   or

(3) **You undergo a peer-review process of your career and achievements to date, assessed by one of the DCBs (listed above), having met all of the criteria in the table below as a person of either ‘Exceptional Talent’ or ‘Exceptional Promise’**

   *(Note: you do not have to meet the following requirements if you are eligible for an accelerated endorsement under (1) or (2), as above)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Exceptional Talent</strong></th>
<th><strong>Exceptional Promise</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mandatory criteria:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mandatory criteria:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is an active researcher in a relevant field, typically within a university, research institute or within industry; and</td>
<td>• Is an active researcher in a relevant field, typically within a university, research institute or within industry; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Holds a PhD or equivalent research experience; and</td>
<td>• Holds a PhD or equivalent research experience (including industrial research); and</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Provides a dated letter of personal recommendation supporting the Tier 1 application from an eminent person resident in the UK who is familiar with their work and contribution to their field, and is qualified to assess their claim to be a world leader in their field;</td>
<td>• Provides a dated letter of personal recommendation supporting the Tier 1 application from an eminent person resident in the UK who is familiar with their work and their contribution to their field, and is qualified to assess their claim that they have the potential to be a world leader in their field; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And, <strong>at least one</strong> of the following <strong>qualifying criteria:</strong></td>
<td>• Is at an early stage in their career; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is a member of their national academy or a foreign member of academies of other countries (in particular any of the UK)</td>
<td>• Has been awarded, holds, or has held in the past five years, a prestigious UK-based</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
national academies); or

- Has been awarded a prestigious internationally recognised prize; or

- Must provide a written recommendation from a reputable UK organisation concerned with research in their field. The dated letter must be written by an authorised senior member of the organisation, such as a Chief Executive, Vice-Chancellor or similar, on official paper. 

Research Fellowship, or an international Fellowship or advanced research post judged by the competent bodies to be of equivalent standing.

Stage 1 - How do I apply for endorsement?

Application form

The first stage – the endorsement application – is not a visa application. It is an application to be recognised as a person of either ‘Exceptional Talent’ or ‘Exceptional Promise’ in your field of expertise.

This first stage will require the submission of an application form and relevant evidence of how you qualify for an endorsement. You do not need to submit your passport with the endorsement application.

The application must be completed online:

- [https://visas-immigration.service.gov.uk/product/tier-1-exceptional-talent-endorsement](https://visas-immigration.service.gov.uk/product/tier-1-exceptional-talent-endorsement)

Required Supporting evidence

Accelerated routes

- If you hold a specific peer reviewed fellowship which is eligible for ‘automatic endorsement’ under Tier 1 (see page 3), you only have to declare the name of the Fellowship within the application. No other supporting documentation is required; or

- If you have been made and accepted a job offer at Professorial or Reader level within the University, you will require a letter from the HR Division which confirms this. The letter must contain specific wording concerning your appointment and is only obtainable from the HR Compliance Team: [complianceteam@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:complianceteam@admin.cam.ac.uk)

Once you have been formally endorsed, please see the next steps under ‘Stage 2’ below.
'Standard’ application route

The relevant competent body will assess and review your application and decide whether or not it meets the criteria set out above. For that, you will be required to submit the following documents:

Mandatory Documents you must submit:

- Your most recent CV, no more than 3 pages in length

- A letter of personal recommendation from an eminent person resident in the UK supporting your application. Once completed, the letter should be sent to you for inclusion in your application pack. There are no issues with you seeing and reading the letter yourself. The letter should be dated and must include the following:
  
  o How the eminent person knows you;
  o Your achievements in the specialist field;
  o How in the opinion of the eminent person you exhibit Exceptional Talent;
  o How you would benefit from living in the UK; and
  o The contribution you would make to UK research excellence and to wider society.

- Where you are seeking endorsement as a person of ‘Exceptional Talent’ (as opposed to ‘Exceptional Promise’), you must also include at least one of the following:
  
  o Evidence of membership of a National Academy;
  o Evidence of a prestigious prize being awarded to you;
  o A written recommendation from the Vice-Chancellor (Please contact the Compliance Team directly to arrange this).

Again, please note that if you qualify for endorsement through the accelerated route, none of the above are required.

Stage 2 - How do I apply for the visa?

If/when your application is endorsed you will be notified via the e-mail address you provided in your application form.

You must apply for the Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) visa within three months of notification. You must submit a copy of the endorsement letter that was emailed to you when your endorsement application was approved.

How to apply depends on where you are applying from:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am applying from outside the UK</th>
<th>I am applying from inside the UK</th>
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</table>
| You must apply online: [www.gov.uk/tier-1-exceptional-talent/apply](https://www.gov.uk/tier-1-exceptional-talent/apply) You can apply from **any** country in the world, even if you are only temporarily resident there (i.e. as a visitor) | You must apply online: [https://visas-immigration.service.gov.uk/product/tier-1-exceptional-talent-visa](https://visas-immigration.service.gov.uk/product/tier-1-exceptional-talent-visa) You can switch into Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) from your current visa whilst inside the UK if you hold:  
  - Any category of Tier 1 visa;  
  - Any category of Tier 2 visa;  
  - A Tier 5 (Temporary Worker) Migrant, sponsored in the Government Authorised Exchange sub-category in an exchange scheme for sponsored researchers.  
  If you hold any other type of leave, you are unable to switch in-country into the Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) category and you would instead have to return to your country of residence to submit the visa application. |

> For further information on how to apply, please see the published Home Office guidance: [https://www.gov.uk/tier-1-exceptional-talent](https://www.gov.uk/tier-1-exceptional-talent)

### How much does the application cost?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stage 1 (Endorsement)</th>
<th>Stage 2 (Visa)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>£456</td>
<td>£152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual from Turkey / Macedonia</td>
<td>£456</td>
<td>£97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependant (per individual)</td>
<td>£ -</td>
<td>£608</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Immigration Health Surcharge

The payment of the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS) is mandatory for all non-EEA nationals who are issued a visa of more than 6 months in length. It is an additional charge, over and above the visa fee and must be made up-front at the time of the visa application. Payment of the surcharge will ensure that you have full access to the NHS on the same terms as a permanent UK resident.

The surcharge will cost an additional £400 per person per year that your visa is valid. For example, if you apply for a three year visa, you will be charged an additional £1200. If you have dependants, the surcharge will also apply to their visa applications on the same basis. The full cost must be paid at the point of application.
If a visa application is refused or rejected the NHS Surcharge will be automatically refunded, however, there is no refund if the applicant obtains a visa and then decides not to come to the UK, if they leave the UK earlier than the end of their visa, or if their visa is curtailed by the Home Office; nor is there any refund if they do not use the National Health Service.

➢ For further guidance, please see the UKVI webpages: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-health-surcharge-information-for-migrants.

**Tuberculosis Testing**

Individuals applying to enter the UK from one of the below countries are required to provide a valid medical certificate issued by a medical practitioner approved by the Secretary of State, confirming that they have undergone screening for active pulmonary tuberculosis and that such tuberculosis is not present in the individual.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Afghanistan</th>
<th>Algeria</th>
<th>Angola</th>
<th>Armenia</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Azerbaijan</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>Benin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>Brunei Darussalam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>Burma</td>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>Cambodia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cape Verde</td>
<td>Central African Republic</td>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>Cameroon</td>
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<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Congo</td>
<td>Congo Democratic Republic</td>
<td>Cote d'Ivoire</td>
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<tr>
<td>Democratic People's Republic of Korea</td>
<td>Djibouti</td>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>Ecuador</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equatorial Guinea</td>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Gabon</td>
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<td>Gambia</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>Guatemala</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guinea</td>
<td>Guinea Bissau</td>
<td>Guyana</td>
<td>Haiti</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hong Kong or Macau</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Kiribati</td>
<td>Korea</td>
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<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>Laos</td>
<td>Lesotho</td>
<td>Liberia</td>
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<td>Madagascar</td>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Mali</td>
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<td>Marshall Islands</td>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>Micronesia</td>
<td>Moldova</td>
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<td>Mongolia</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>Namibia</td>
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<td>Nepal</td>
<td>Niger</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
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<td>Palau</td>
<td>Papua New Guinea</td>
<td>Panama</td>
<td>Paraguay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Russian Federation</td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sao Tome and Principe</td>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>Soloman Islands</td>
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<td>Somalia</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>South Sudan</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
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<td>Sudan</td>
<td>Suriname</td>
<td>Swaziland</td>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
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<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>Timor Leste</td>
<td>Togo</td>
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<td>Turkmenistan</td>
<td>Tuvalu</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
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<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>Vanuatu</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Zambia</td>
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<td>Zimbabwe</td>
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Dependants

Your dependants can apply at the same time as you to enter the UK. Alternatively, they can wait until you have entered the UK and started work before they apply. Dependents are not involved in any way with the first stage – the endorsement application.

A dependant visa provides the right to work in the UK and/or study at any private or State-funded school, Further Education College or University.

We have comprehensive guidance concerning dependants available here: http://www.hr.admin.cam.ac.uk/hr-services/immigration/visas-and-right-work-uk/time-limited-right-work/dependant-visas

On your first day of work

Your departmental administrator will contact you in advance of your arrival to make arrangements for your first day. Under UK legislation, as an employer we are required to check that you hold permission to live and work in the UK before you start work. You can evidence this with your passport and your 30 day vignette or your BRP.

You must bring your identity documents as above to your department for copying before work commences. If you have not yet collected your BRP before your first day, you can start work on the basis of your 30 day vignette provided it is still valid. You then must obtain your BRP from the Post Office as soon as possible and present this to your departmental administrator.

Extension of Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) visa

If/when you are applying for an extension of your Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) leave which you already hold, you only need to make a single application and you do not need to obtain a new endorsement. You will need to pay the full Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) fee in a single payment.

To be approved you must meet the following criteria:

- The Designated Competent Body that originally endorsed your stage 1 application has not advised the Home Office that this has been withdrawn; and

- During your most recent period of leave as a Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) migrant, you have earned money in the UK as a result of employment or self-employment in your field of expertise. This is the field for which the Designated Competent Body endorsed you. For practical purposes, a copy of your employment contract with University of Cambridge will meet this criteria.

- Apply online here: https://visas-immigration.service.gov.uk/product/tier-1-exceptional-talent-visa
Settlement

You are eligible to apply for settlement after **3 years** (if you are endorsed as ‘Exceptional Talent) or **5 years** (if you are endorsed as ‘Exceptional Promise’).

If you are successful in gaining settlement, you are no longer subject to visa restrictions in the UK and you will have the unlimited right to work.

- You are required to show you have knowledge of language and life in the UK (unless you are exempt), this can be demonstrated by passing both the life in the UK test and holding an English speaking and listening qualification at level B1 or above (if applicable).

- The Designated Competent Body that originally endorsed your stage 1 application has not advised the Home Office that this has been withdrawn; and

- During your most recent period of leave as a Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) migrant, you have earned money in the UK as a result of employment or self-employment in your field of expertise.

Absence requirements:

- For any absences from the UK which occurred **before** 11 January 2018, you cannot have had more than 180 days absences in each 12 month period ending on the same date of the year as the date of the application for indefinite leave to remain; and

- For any absences from the UK which occurred/occur **after** 11 January 2018, you cannot spend **more than 180 days outside the UK in any 12 month rolling period**.

- Applications for ILR can be made up to 28 days prior to completing the 5 years residence requirement. Applications must be made **before** your Tier 1 visa expires.

The application and guidance can be found here:  