



High Potential Individual (HPI) visa

1. Overview

A High Potential Individual (HPI) visa gives you permission to stay in the UK for 2 years. To apply, you must have been awarded a qualification by an [eligible university](#) ([/high-potential-individual-visa/eligibility](#)) in the last 5 years.

There is a yearly limit on applications for this visa. The application year runs between 1 November and 31 October. If the limit has been reached, you'll be told when you apply online.

How long you can stay

An HPI visa lasts for 2 years. If you have a PhD or other doctoral qualification, it will last for 3 years.

If you want to stay longer in the UK

You cannot extend your HPI visa.

However, you may be able to switch to a different visa, for example a [Skilled Worker visa](#) ([/skilled-worker-visa](#)). You can switch to a different visa before your HPI visa expires.

Your time on an HPI visa will not count as time spent in the UK if you apply to settle in the UK.

Check you can apply for [another type of visa to stay in the UK](#) ([/check-uk-visa](#)).

How to apply

You must apply online.

How you apply depends on whether you're:

- outside the UK ([high-potential-individual-visa/apply-from-outside-the-uk](#)) and are coming to the UK
- inside the UK and switching from a different visa ([high-potential-individual-visa/switch-to-this-visa](#))

Your partner and children ([high-potential-individual-visa/your-partner-and-children](#)) can apply to join you or stay in the UK as your 'dependants' if they're eligible.

How long it takes

As part of your application, you'll need to prove your identity and provide your documents.

You may need to allow extra time if you need an appointment to do this. You'll find out if you need one when you start your application.

Getting a decision

Once you've applied online, proved your identity and provided your documents, you'll usually get a decision on your visa within:

- 3 weeks, if you're outside the UK
- 8 weeks, if you're inside the UK

How much it costs

You, your partner or children will each need to:

- pay the application fee
- pay the healthcare surcharge for each year of your stay
- prove you have enough personal savings

Check how much money you'll need ([high-potential-individual-visa/how-much-it-costs](#)).

What you can and cannot do

With an HPI visa you can:

- work in most jobs

- look for work
- be self-employed
- live in the UK with your partner and children ([/high-potential-individual-visa/your-partner-and-children](#)), if they're eligible
- do voluntary work
- travel abroad and return to the UK

You cannot:

- apply for most benefits ('[public funds \(/government/publications/public-funds-2\)](#)')
- work as a professional sportsperson
- extend this visa
- apply to settle permanently in the UK

If your application is successful, you'll get a full list of what you can and cannot do with an HPI visa.

Studying with an HPI visa

You can only study with an HPI visa if your chosen course is [not eligible for a Student visa \(/student-visa/course\)](#). If your course is eligible for a Student visa, you can [apply for a Student visa \(/student-visa\)](#) instead, or extend your Student visa if you already have one.

You may need an [Academic Technology Approval Scheme \(ATAS\) certificate \(/guidance/academic-technology-approval-scheme\)](#) if you're studying or researching sensitive topics.

2. Eligibility

To be eligible for a High Potential Individual (HPI) visa, you must have been awarded a qualification by an eligible university.

Where you studied

The list of eligible universities is based on rankings of universities from around the world.

Check the list of eligible universities for the month and year you were awarded your qualification:

- 1 November 2025 to 31 October 2026 (/government/publications/high-potential-individual-visa-global-universities-list/high-potential-individual-visa-global-universities-list-2025)
- 1 November 2024 to 31 October 2025 (/government/publications/high-potential-individual-visa-global-universities-list/high-potential-individual-visa-global-universities-list-2024)
- 1 November 2023 to 31 October 2024 (/government/publications/high-potential-individual-visa-global-universities-list/high-potential-individual-visa-global-universities-list-2023)
- 1 November 2022 to 31 October 2023 (/government/publications/high-potential-individual-visa-global-universities-list/high-potential-individual-visa-global-universities-list-2022)
- 1 November 2021 to 31 October 2022 (/government/publications/high-potential-individual-visa-global-universities-list/high-potential-individual-visa-global-universities-list-2021)
- 1 November 2020 to 31 October 2021 (/government/publications/high-potential-individual-visa-global-universities-list/high-potential-individual-visa-global-universities-list-2020)

UK universities are not eligible. If you're already in the UK on a student visa you may be able to apply for a Graduate visa (/graduate-visa).

Your qualification

Your qualification must be at the same level as:

- a UK bachelor's degree
- a UK postgraduate degree
- a UK PhD or doctorate

You must have been awarded your qualification in the last 5 years.

You'll need to apply to Ecctis (<https://qls.ecctis.com>) to check your qualification is valid and at the right level. Ecctis will not check if your university is eligible.

If you have already been assessed by Ecctis, you do not need to reapply and can use the certificate from your previous assessment instead.

Other eligibility criteria

To apply for an HPI visa you must also:

- prove your knowledge of English ([/high-potential-individual-visa/knowledge-of-english](#))
- prove that you have enough personal savings to support yourself in the UK ([/high-potential-individual-visa/how-much-it-costs](#)), unless you've been in the UK with a valid visa for at least 12 months

You do not need to have a job offer to apply.

You can apply for an HPI visa from inside the UK ([/high-potential-individual-visa/switch-to-this-visa](#)) or outside the UK ([/high-potential-individual-visa/apply-from-outside-the-uk](#)).

You can only apply for an HPI visa once.

You cannot apply for an HPI visa if:

- you have already been given a Graduate visa ([/graduate-visa](#))
- you have already come to the UK as a Doctorate Extension Scheme student

3. Knowledge of English

You'll usually need to prove your knowledge of the English language when you apply. You can prove it in one of the following ways, by:

- having a UK school qualification
- having a degree from a UK institution
- having a degree from an institution that was outside the UK and taught in English
- passing an English test from an approved provider

If you have already proved your knowledge of English in a previous successful visa application, you may not have to prove it again.

If you have a UK school qualification

You can prove your knowledge of English if you have a qualification from a UK school that you began when you were under 18. You must have one of the following qualifications:

- a GCSE
- an A Level

- Scottish National Qualification level 4 or 5
- Scottish Higher or Advanced Higher in English

If you have a degree from a UK institution

You can prove your knowledge of English if you have a degree-level qualification that was both:

- taught in English
- awarded by a UK institution, even if you studied outside the UK

If you have a degree from an institution outside the UK

If your degree was taught in English and was not awarded by a UK institution, you'll need to apply for an assessment from Ecctis (<https://qls.ecctis.com/>).

Ecctis will give you a code to confirm that your qualification is equivalent to a UK bachelor's degree or higher and was taught in English.

Passing an English test

If you do not have any qualifications that prove your knowledge of English, you will need to pass a Secure English Language Test (SELT) (/guidance/prove-your-english-language-abilities-with-a-secure-english-language-test-selt) with an approved provider.

You must prove you can read, write, speak and understand English to at least B1 level on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) scale (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/table-1-cefr-3.3-common-reference-levels-global-scale>).

From 8 January 2026, the level of English requirement is changing. If this is your first application for a High Potential Individual (HPI) visa, you'll have to prove that you can read, write, speak and understand English to at least level B2.

Who does not need to prove their knowledge of English

You do not need to prove your knowledge of English if you're a national of one of the following countries or territories:

- Antigua and Barbuda
- Australia
- the Bahamas
- Barbados
- Belize
- the British overseas territories
- Canada
- Dominica
- Grenada
- Guyana
- Jamaica
- Malta
- New Zealand
- St Kitts and Nevis
- St Lucia
- St Vincent and the Grenadines
- Trinidad and Tobago
- USA

4. How much it costs

When you apply for a High Potential Individual (HPI) visa, you'll need to have enough money to:

- pay £252 for Ecctis to check your qualification is valid (this includes VAT)
- pay the £880 application fee
- pay the healthcare surcharge - this is usually £1,035 for each year you'll be in the UK
- support yourself when you arrive in the UK - you'll usually need to have at least £1,270 available (unless you're exempt)

You'll be told how much you need to pay when you apply.

Healthcare surcharge

You'll have to pay [the healthcare surcharge \(/healthcare-immigration-application\)](#) when you apply.

If you're eligible for an HPI visa for:

- 2 years - it will cost £2,070
- 3 years - it will cost £3,105

If you work in public sector healthcare

If you get a job in public sector healthcare after you have paid the healthcare surcharge, you may be able to [get a refund \(/apply-immigration-health-surcharge-refund\)](#).

Money to support yourself

You must have at least £1,270 in your bank account to show you can support yourself in the UK.

You will need to have had the money available for at least 28 days in a row. Day 28 must be within 31 days of applying for this visa.

You'll usually need to [show proof of this when you apply \(/high-potential-individual-visa/documents-you-must-provide\)](#), unless you've been in the UK with a valid visa for at least 12 months.

Your partner and children will also need to prove they can support themselves while they're in the UK. [Check how much they'll need \(/high-potential-individual-visa/your-partner-and-children\)](#).

[Read the guidance on financial evidence \(/guidance/financial-evidence-for-sponsored-or-endorsed-work-routes\)](#) for more information about the money you need and how to prove it.

5. Documents you'll need to apply

Before you apply, you must [pay for Ecctis to check your qualification is valid \(<https://qls.ecctis.com>\)](#) unless you've already been assessed by Ecctis.

When you apply you'll need to provide:

- a valid passport or other travel document that shows your identity and nationality
- proof of your [knowledge of English](#) ([/high-potential-individual-visa/knowledge-of-english](#))
- your unique person identifier number or certificate that was given to you by Ecctis when they checked your qualification

Other documents you might need

Depending on your circumstances, you might be asked to provide:

- proof you have enough [personal savings to support yourself in the UK](#) ([/high-potential-individual-visa/how-much-it-costs](#)), for example bank statements (unless you've been in the UK with a valid visa for at least 12 months)
- proof of your relationship with [your partner or children](#) ([/high-potential-individual-visa/your-partner-and-children](#)) if they're applying with you
- [your tuberculosis test results if you're from a listed country](#) ([/tb-test-visa/countries-where-you-need-a-tb-test-to-enter-the-uk](#))

If you're switching to this visa from another visa, you'll also need to provide either:

- your biometric residence permit (BRP) - you can use it for 18 months after the expiry date printed on the card
- online proof of your immigration status if you have an eVisa - you'll need to [get a share code](#) ([/view-prove-immigration-status](#))

If your documents are not in English or Welsh you'll also need to provide a [certified translation](#) ([/certifying-a-document](#)).

6. Apply from outside the UK

You must apply online for a High Potential Individual (HPI) visa.

Check which [documents you'll need to apply](#) ([/high-potential-individual-visa/documents-you-must-provide](#)).

There's a different process if you are already in the UK and are [switching to the HPI visa from another visa](#) ([/high-potential-individual-visa/switch-to-this-visa](#)).

When to apply

You must apply within 5 years of being awarded a qualification from an [eligible university](#) (/high-potential-individual-visa/eligibility).

There is a yearly limit on applications for this visa. The application year runs between 1 November and 31 October. If the limit has been reached, you'll be told when you apply online.

Proving your identity and providing supporting documents

As part of your application, you'll need to prove your identity. How you do this depends on where you're from and what type of passport you have.

You'll either:

- use the 'UK Immigration: ID Check' app to scan your identity document - you'll also create or sign into your UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) account
- have your fingerprints and photo (biometric information) taken at a [visa application centre](#) (/find-a-visa-application-centre)

You'll be told what you need to do when you apply.

If you need an appointment:

- you'll need to take your passport with you to the visa application centre (you'll be able to collect it on the day)
- you may have to travel to get to your nearest centre (this could be in another country)

Apply for an HPI visa

Once you've started your application, you can save your form and complete it later.

Start now

Continue your application

You can sign back into your application if you've saved it.

[Find out how to sign in to your account \(/sign-in-visa\).](#)

How long it takes to get a decision

Once you've applied online, proved your identity and provided your documents, you'll usually get a decision within 3 weeks.

You'll be contacted if your application will take longer, for example because:

- your supporting documents need to be verified
- of your personal circumstances, for example if you have a criminal conviction

After you apply

You can ask to [cancel your application \(/cancel-visa\)](#). You'll only get your fee refunded if UKVI has not started processing your application.

You'll get an email containing the [decision on your application \(/apply-to-come-to-the-uk/getting-a-decision-on-your-application\)](#). This will explain what you need to do next.

7. Your partner and children

Your partner and children can also apply to join you or stay in the UK as your 'dependants' if they're eligible.

If your partner or child's application is successful, their visa will usually end on the same date as yours. If a child's parents have visas with different expiry dates, the child's visa will end on the earlier date.

A dependant partner or child is any of the following:

- your husband, wife, civil partner or unmarried partner
- your child under 18 - including if they were born in the UK during your stay
- your child over 18 if they currently have permission ('leave to enter' or 'leave to remain') to be in the UK as your dependant

You'll need to provide evidence of your relationship to your dependant when you apply.

Your partner

You must be able to prove one of the following:

- you're in a civil partnership or marriage that's recognised in the UK
- you've been living together in a relationship for at least 2 years when you apply
- you've been in a relationship for at least 2 years when you apply but you cannot live together, for example because you're working or studying in different places, or it's not accepted in your culture

If you're not living together, you'll need to prove that you have an ongoing commitment to each other, for example by providing evidence that you:

- communicate regularly with each other
- support each other financially
- care for any children you have together
- spend time together as a couple, for example on holiday or at events

Your child

They must:

- live with you, unless they're living away from home in full-time education - for example, at boarding school or university
- not be married or in a civil partnership

You'll need to provide evidence of their address, such as:

- a bank statement
- credit card bills
- driving licence
- NHS registration document
- an official letter from their university or college

Money they need to support themselves

Your partner and children must have a certain amount of money available to support themselves while they're in the UK.

You - or your partner or child - will need:

- £285 for your partner
- £315 for one child
- £200 for each additional child

Example

You - or your partner or child - would need to have £600 to bring your partner and one child with you to the UK (£285 for your partner and £315 for your child).

You would also need to have £1,270 available to support yourself for your own application.

You - or your partner or child - will need to have had the money available for at least 28 days in a row. Day 28 must be within 31 days of you or them applying for this visa.

You'll usually need to show proof of this when they apply (/high-potential-individual-visa/documents-you-must-provide), unless either:

- you have all been in the UK with a valid visa for at least 12 months
- your employer can cover your family's costs during your first month in the UK - this must be confirmed on your certificate of sponsorship

If your partner or child is applying at a different time to you, they'll only need to prove they have enough money to support themselves if they have been in the UK for less than 1 year.

Healthcare surcharge

Each family member will have to pay the healthcare surcharge (/healthcare-immigration-application) when they apply.

If you're eligible for a High Potential Individual (HPI) visa for 2 years, it will cost:

- £2,070 for each adult family member
- £1,552 for each child aged under 18 at the time you apply

If you're eligible for a HPI visa for 3 years, it will cost:

- £3,105 for each adult family member
- £2,328 for each child aged under 18 at the time you apply

If one of your family members works in public sector healthcare

If one of your family members gets a job in public sector healthcare after they have paid the healthcare surcharge, they may be able to [get a refund \(/apply-immigration-health-surcharge-refund\)](#).

Apply from outside the UK

Your partner and children must either:

- [apply online as your partner](#) (https://apply-to-visit-or-stay-in-the-uk.homeoffice.gov.uk/sort/start/pbs_dependant_partner_out_uk)
- [apply online as your child](#) (https://apply-to-visit-or-stay-in-the-uk.homeoffice.gov.uk/sort/start/pbs_dependant_child_out_uk)

Each family member will need to complete a separate application and pay the [visa fee \(/high-potential-individual-visa/how-much-it-costs\)](#). They must apply before they travel to the UK.

They'll also need your application number - you'll get this when you apply. This number is called a Global Web Form (GWF) or a Unique Application Number (UAN). You'll find it on emails and letters from the Home Office about your application.

Proving their identity

As part of an application, your partner and children will need to prove their identity.

They'll either:

- use the 'UK Immigration: ID Check' app to scan their identity document - they'll also create or sign in to their UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) account
- have their fingerprints and photo (biometric information) taken at a [visa application centre \(/find-a-visa-application-centre\)](#)

They'll be told what they need to do when they apply.

If they need an appointment:

- they'll need to take their passport with them to the visa application centre (they'll be able to collect it on the day)
- they may have to travel to get to their nearest centre (this could be in another country)

How long it takes to get a decision

Once they've applied online, proved their identity and provided their documents, they'll usually get a decision within 3 weeks.

Apply from inside the UK (switch their visa)

If you switch your visa, your partner or child's current visa will still be valid until its original end date. Your partner or child need to apply to switch their visa, either:

- at the same time as you
- at any time before their current visa expires

This includes children who have turned 18 during your stay.

Your partner or children cannot apply to switch to your HPI visa as your dependants if they are currently in the UK:

- on a visit visa
- on a short-term student visa
- on a Parent of a Child Student visa
- on a seasonal worker visa
- on a domestic worker in a private household visa
- [on immigration bail \(/bail-immigration-detainees\)](#)

- because they were given permission to stay outside the immigration rules (</government/publications/chapter-1-section-14-leave-outside-the-immigration-rules>), for example on compassionate grounds

If your partner or child is currently in the UK on a Student visa, they can only switch if they have either:

- completed the course they were sponsored to study
- studied for a PhD for at least 24 months

How to apply

The application form will tell you if you can include your partner and children in your application or whether they need to apply separately.

If your partner or child apply separately, they'll need to either:

- switch to your HPI visa as your partner (https://apply-to-visit-or-stay-in-the-uk.homeoffice.gov.uk/sort/start/brp_reuse_pbs_dependant_partner_in_uk)
- switch to your HPI visa as your child (https://apply-to-visit-or-stay-in-the-uk.homeoffice.gov.uk/sort/start/pbs_dependant_child_in_uk)

They'll need your application number - you'll get this when you apply. This number is called a Global Web Form (GWF) or a Unique Application Number (UAN). You'll find it on emails and letters from the Home Office about your application.

Proving their identity

As part of their application, your partner and children will need to prove their identity.

They'll either:

- use the 'UK Immigration: ID Check' app to scan their identity document - they'll also create or sign in to their UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) account
- have their fingerprints and photo (biometric information) taken at a UK Visa and Citizenship Application Services (UKVCAS) (</ukvcas>) service point

They'll be told what they need to do when they apply.

They must not travel outside of the UK, Ireland, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man until they get a decision. Their application will be withdrawn if they do.

How long it takes to get a decision

Once they've applied online, proved their identity and provided their documents, they'll usually get a decision within 8 weeks.

Children born in the UK

If you have a child while you're in the UK, they do not automatically become a British citizen ([/british-citizenship](#)).

You must apply for your child's dependant visa if you want to travel in and out of the UK with them.

The form you fill in depends on if:

- your child is inside the UK (https://apply-to-visit-or-stay-in-the-uk.homeoffice.gov.uk/sort/start/pbs_dependant_child_in_uk)
- your child is outside the UK (https://apply-to-visit-or-stay-in-the-uk.homeoffice.gov.uk/sort/start/pbs_dependant_child_out_uk)

You'll need to provide a full UK birth certificate for each child, showing the names of both parents.

You must apply for their dependant visa before they turn 18 if they want to stay in the UK.

What your partner or child can and cannot do

Your partner or child can:

- work, except as a sportsperson or coach
- study
- travel abroad and return to the UK

They cannot apply for most benefits (public funds), or the State Pension.

If their application is successful, they'll get a full list of what they can and cannot do.

8. Switch to this visa

You might be able to apply to change ('switch') to a High Potential Individual (HPI) visa if you're already in the UK on a different type of visa.

Your partner or child's visa will not automatically switch to this visa if you switch yours. They can either apply at the same time as you, or at any time before their current visa expires.

You must not travel outside of the UK, Ireland, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man until you get a decision. Your application will be withdrawn if you do.

When to apply

You must apply within 5 years of being awarded a qualification from an [eligible university](#) (/high-potential-individual-visa/eligibility).

If you're currently in the UK on a Student visa, one of the following must also apply:

- you've completed the course you were sponsored to study
- you're studying for a PhD full time, and have been for at least 24 months

There is a yearly limit on applications for this visa. The application year runs between 1 November and 31 October. If the limit has been reached, you'll be told when you apply to switch to this visa.

Who cannot apply to switch to this visa

You cannot apply to switch to this visa if you're currently in the UK:

- on a visit visa
- on a short-term student visa
- on a Parent or a Child Student visa
- on a seasonal worker visa

- on a domestic worker in a private household visa
- on immigration bail ([/bail-immigration-detainees](#))
- because you were given permission to stay outside the immigration rules ([/government/publications/chapter-1-section-14-leave-outside-the-immigration-rules](#)), for example on compassionate grounds

You must leave the UK and apply for an HPI visa from abroad ([/high-potential-individual-visa/apply-outside-the-uk](#)) if you're in one of these categories.

You cannot switch to this visa if you're on a Graduate visa.

Fees

Each person applying will need to pay:

- the visa application fee ([/high-potential-individual-visa/how-much-it-costs](#))
- the healthcare surcharge ([/healthcare-immigration-application](#)) for each year of their stay

You'll also need to have your biometric information (fingerprints and a photo) taken. There's no fee for this.

If you've been in the UK for less than 1 year, you'll also need to prove you have enough money to support yourself ([/high-potential-individual-visa/how-much-it-costs](#)).

Proving your identity and providing supporting documents

As part of your application you'll need to prove your identity.

How you do this depends on where you're from and the type of passport you have.

You'll either:

- use the 'UK Immigration: ID Check' app to scan your identity document - you'll also create or sign in to your UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) account
- give your fingerprints and a photo (biometric information) at a UK Visa and Citizenship Application Services (UKVCAS) ([/ukvcas](#)) service point

You'll be told what you need to do when you apply.

Apply to switch to an HPI visa

You must apply online before your current visa expires.

Once you've started your application, you can save your form and complete it later.

Start now

Continue your application

You can sign back into your application if you've saved it.

Find out how to sign in to your account (/sign-in-visa).

How long it takes to get a decision

You'll usually get a decision within 8 weeks of your application date.

You'll be contacted if your application will take longer, for example because:

- your supporting documents need to be verified
- you need to attend an interview
- of your personal circumstances, for example if you have a criminal conviction

After you apply

If you need to change something in your application after you've sent it contact UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) (/contact-ukvi-inside-outside-uk).

You can ask to cancel your application (/cancel-visa). You'll only get your fee refunded if UKVI has not started processing your application.

You'll get an email or a letter containing the decision on your application (/apply-to-come-to-the-uk/getting-a-decision-on-your-application). This will explain

what you need to do next.



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